THE FEATURES OF KERALA SOCIETY AND EDUCATION BEFORE TWENTIETH CENTURY - AN OVERVIEW

Chapter-1

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This chapter contains a detailed discussion about the features of the traditional Kerala society. An attempt is also made to give a bird's eye view of the Kerala society on the advent of the British. The features of caste system, development of political consciousness, economic relations among various sections of the people and the educational framework are given due attention.

Caste in the Traditional Kerala Society.

The salient feature of traditional Kerala society was the presence of a strong caste hierarchy. Kerala society had displayed extreme caste consciousness for many centuries on end. Kerala was considered to be the most caste-ridden part of India.¹

Scholars have pointed out that caste division in Kerala had the following features:

In the caste society the status of an individual is determined by the status of the group in which he is born. The status remains unchanged by education or wealth or success or failure. A man is born into a caste and he dies in it. No one can change this destiny.²

¹ P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of The Oppressed, Konark Publishers, Delhi, 1994, pp.9-10.
There has been considerable debate on the origin of caste in Kerala. It has been pointed out that during the Sangham period people were divided on the basis of their profession and the nature of the land they occupied.\(^3\) However some historians like Elamkulam Kunhanpillai have argued that caste system became deep-rooted in Kerala after the Chera-Chola war.\(^4\)

Recently there have been other theories linking the growth of caste to the emergence of a hierarchical agrarian order, temple centred society, prevalence of occupational divergence among temple servants and the influence of Brahminical ideology.\(^5\) Such theories have been borrowed from the recent anthropological formulations on the transition from tribe to caste that have attempted to account for the growth of stratification on the basis of the break down of kinship and use of non-kin labour in production. The resulting hierarchical production relations are reinforced by social and ideological factors, which resulted in the formation of caste. For example the Panas, Parayas and Kuravas appear in the Sangham works as distinct social groups. They have become the slave castes of Kerala in the later period. It is possible that they represented segments of a tribal society who later were transformed into slave castes in a hierarchical social form. Caste ideology probably had stronger roots than religious identity. Changing religion did not result in the breaking of caste identity. This type of caste system was beneficial only to the Savarna Hindus, which made the underprivileged

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3 Elamkulam Kunhanpillai, The Studies In Kerala History, N.B.S, Kottayam, 1970, p.15
4 Ibid, p.265
5 Rajan Gurukkal, Medieval Kerala temple and the Agrarian System, Vallathol Vidyapeedam, Sukapuram, 1995, Passim
The main feature of Kerala society was the deep chasm that separated the high castes from the low castes.

Till the 12th century, the only one identifiable social group in Kerala was the Brahmins. Even though the Nairs, Ezhavas etc. come into sight in the epigraphs, it is unclear whether they represent the castes of today. There are references to Mel Nairs, Patamel Nairs etc. who appear to be servants of rulers, and Ezhavas were tied to the soil and were transferred along with land.

In the traditional Kerala society the upper step of the caste ladder was occupied obviously by the Brahmins. The descending order was- Brahmins, Antharalas, Nayars, Thiyyas, Artisans and the aboriginal tribes. The life of the Brahmins was mainly about the temples; they were also the major landlords of the region. They also seem to have practiced medicine, astrology, mathematics and even architecture, and also served as courtiers and scholars in the kovilakams.

The communities upward from Nairs to Brahmin formed the privileged class in the medieval Kerala society.

The Nambudiris and the Nairs together formed the land owning class. By the end of the 13th century, the Nambudiris transformed themselves into land proprietors from being the managers of surplus attributed to a deity with

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6 R.N. Yesudas, People’s Revolt in Travancore, Kerala Historic Society, Trivandrum, p.86
7 P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.9
8 M.G.S.Narayanan, Perumals of Kerala, pp.95-96.
9 C.A.Innes, Malabar, Gazetteer Department, Govt. of Kerala, 1997, pp.95-96
hereditary rights.\textsuperscript{12} Though the Brahmins never seized formal political power, they were respected by the local authorities.\textsuperscript{13} They never needed formal political power since they were in a position to control even the rulers. Some of them had the privilege of conducting the Ariyittuvazhcha ceremony to appoint the Rajas of various Nadus.

The Antharalas, who were next to the Brahmins in the caste ladder, were temple servants. They supported the Nambudiris in conducting the day-to-day activities of the temples. The Nair led his life in the service of the Nambudiris or Janmis. They also formed the army of Rajas.

Even though the Nairs belonged to the privileged class, they too had suffered caste evils like unapproachability. The Brahmins and the Kshatriyas kept the Nairs at some distance while talking to them. If they touched a Nair, they had to bathe. Among the Nair sub castes, the same custom was followed. The general feast and marriage among the sub castes were forbidden. In these matters, the Nairs and the Ezhavas had similar methods.\textsuperscript{14}

Though the Nambudiris had supremacy, they had many problems within their community. The social structure of the community created many problems to its members. Only the elder male members of the family were allowed to seek marital alliance from the same community.\textsuperscript{15}

Due to high death rate in the community, the increase of population was bridled. Later, when the number of married couples increased, the

\textsuperscript{12} Lemercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, Institute for study of Developing Area, Trivandrum, 1994, p.106
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, p.103
\textsuperscript{14} Mannath Padmanabhan, Jeevitha Smaranakal, p.105
\textsuperscript{15} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Atmakatha, Chintha, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, pp.29-30
population began to soar. To tide over this problem, the Brahmins adopted a new system of marriage with the Nairs called Sambantham, which was a type of contract marriage. The Brahmin-Nair combination controlled the society. But the Nairs had many difficulties. Their women were sexually exploited by the Brahmins in the name of Sambantham. The Nair women did not follow the norms of chastity. Some historians argue that the moral degradation appeared between 12th and 16th century. The Nambudiri Janmis made a law that the Nair women need not observe chastity.

Robin Jeffrey writes:

"Nair girls roamed freely in their localities. A girl would be noticed, and when she was old enough, requests would come from Nair men or Namboodiris, other Brahmin or Kshatriya to form a union. If the proposal was agreed to a sacred simple ceremony was performed, this was called Sambantham."

Both the parties benefited from this type of alliance. The position of the Nair in the society was elevated considerably and they got strong support from the Janmis. Similarly the Nambudiris got support of this warrior class to consolidate their hold on the other sections of the people. The children thus born had not enjoyed any right in the property of father. Polygamy also was not considered as a sin in those days and was prevalent then. This custom disappeared only after the spread of English education.

They were ignorant in many respect; they were able to seek alliance only from the same community. This resulted in marriages by even the old Brahmins. Many of the old Brahmins married young women. Since the

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16 Lemercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, p.113
17 Ibid, pp.113-114
18 Elamkulam Kunhanpillai, Studies in Kerala History, p.282
20 Moorkoth Kunhappa, Moorkoth Kumaran, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1975,p.3
21 V.T.Bhattathiripad, Sampoornakrithikal, DC Books, Kottayam, 2000, pp.131-2
community lacked sufficient male members, exchange marriage was also practised.

The lower castes were the next in the caste ladder. The major section among them was the Ezhavas. Until the beginning of the 20th century, their religious practices were little influenced by the Brahminical Hinduism. They worshipped Kaali, the cruel aspect of mother goddess; and it involved bloody sacrifices, which the Brahmin Hindu was opposed to. The lower castes of Travancore society, particularly the Ezhavas, Shanars and Pulayas and Parayas accepted their fate since there was no alternative.

They formed the sizeable section of the total population and were untouchable and unapproachable. The rigid caste system kept them in permanent bondage and ignorance. A code of conduct was strictly followed in keeping the distance by which the upper castes were polluted. The concept of pollution by touch or approach was the chief source of almost all disability the communities below the Brahmins suffered. The Brahmin had to keep 32 feet away from the Ezhavas; 64 feet from the Pulayas. If safe distance was not maintained, they would become polluted. If the Brahmin saw an Ullada he would at once become polluted. The lives of the lower castes were miserable. There was no freedom of movement; they were not allowed to touch the well or pond; they were not given freedom of education.

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22 Lemercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, p.142
23 Robin Jeffrey, The Decline of Nair Dominance in Kerala, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1976, p.28
24 P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.11
25 M. Sahadevan, Towards Social Justice and Nation making...., p.10
26 Payyappilli Balan, Paliyam Samarakatha, Deshabhimani, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, p.20
In the 19th century, even though the Ezhavas did not have unapproachability, their approach had compelled others to take bathe. They had no entry to the Hindu temples.\textsuperscript{27} The lower castes were denied entry to the structural temples during 11th and 12th centuries.\textsuperscript{28} No Brahmin had performed ritual in the house of a Thiyya.\textsuperscript{29} They had no access to the public buildings, even courts.\textsuperscript{30} The Avarnas of the lowest class were not allowed to wear gold.\textsuperscript{31}

In an attempt to keep away from others, the upper castes in Kerala tried to avoid the ‘unapproachables’ even from their ideological world. The Savarnas knew how to write. The written language is the product of this group. The Avarnas never appear in their literary works. Even the Nairs were Sudras in that system. Then how can the Chandala castes appear in their writings? The description how the castes such as the Ezhavas, Parayas, Uralas, Ulladar, Pulayas, and Nayadis lived here can not be seen in their works.\textsuperscript{32}

The upper castes were not ready to accept the down trodden as human beings. The religious proscriptions were so oppressive as far as the life of the unprivileged castes was concerned. The hereditary ‘no’s haunted them through out their life. The traditional ethical code followed the caste system in such a way that the upper layer of the society enjoyed supreme powers in determining the matters relating to the social relations.

\textsuperscript{28} N.K.Jose, \textit{Kshetra Pravesana Vilambaram Oru Padanam}, Hobby Books, Kottayam, 1988, pp.17-18
\textsuperscript{29} Moorkoth Kunhappa, \textit{Moorkoth Kumaran}, p.27
\textsuperscript{30} P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.13
\textsuperscript{31} Payyappilli Balan, \textit{Paliyam Samarakatha}, p.26
The public feast was also served strictly on the basis of caste order. The communal feasts were also carried out in the order of caste. Those not belonging to same caste were driven out of the hall.33

Caste, Janmi system and feudalism together gave untouchability a monstrous character that excluded substantial sections of the labourers.34 The lower castes were not allowed to cover even their bosoms. There was a struggle in May 1822, when the caste Hindus stripped the clothes off the Nadar women and committed atrocities. There was an agitation for the basic needs of the people with the support of Missionaries.35

R.N.Yesudas writes:

"The most important change in the social set up as a result of the introduction of Protestant Christianity in the country by the Missionaries with the help of company people. The most important of their movements was the one by the Nadar and other backward communities for the right of women to cover their bosoms."36

The culmination of the struggle for the right to wear clothes resulted in the Breast Cloth Agitation of 1859 that broke out in Southern Travancore. Although certain reservations were included in the proclamation granting the women the right to cover their bosoms, the Nadar women took their own liberty at their risk to dress decently and freely moved about in the streets and markets without considering the prejudices of the privileged classes. In 1865 the Ezhavas and other backward classes were allowed to cover their bosoms in a proclamation by the Raja.37

33 Cherukad,Jeevithappatha, Current Books,Trichur,1992,p.72
34 Payyappilli Balan,Paliyam Samarakatha, p.17
35 R.N.Yesudas, A People's Revolt in Travancore,Kerala Historic Society,Trivandrum, p.83
36 Ibid, p.48
37 R.N. Yesudas, A People's Revolt in Travancore, p.157
It is rather surprising that slavery had existed in Kerala society as well. It is believed that the origin of slavery in India was closely associated with the inception of the caste system, which in turn was based on our hierarchical social order.\textsuperscript{38} Slavery prevailed in Travancore in the middle of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and continued to exist till the 1\textsuperscript{st} half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century in a mild form. The slave communities were denied all human rights.\textsuperscript{39} There were several slave classes like the \textit{Pulayas, Paraya, and Vettuvas} etc. But the \textit{Pulayas} contributed the bulk of the total slave population.\textsuperscript{40} They lived in huts, which were near the fields, or in the valleys.\textsuperscript{41} They were denied human considerations; they had no right to education.\textsuperscript{42} K.K.Kusuman thinks that the debtors who failed to repay money were also compelled to accept slavery.\textsuperscript{43}

This might have happened after the 15\textsuperscript{th} century. The \textit{Kanakkans} also belonged to the \textit{Cheruma} community but they had more freedom than the \textit{Pulayas}.\textsuperscript{44}

These communities were given special rights on particular days that came to be called as \textit{Pulappedi} and \textit{Mannappedi}. \textit{Pulappedi} and \textit{Mannappedi} had existed in Kerala.\textsuperscript{45} The religious system of the slave castes was built on the belief in

\textsuperscript{38} K.K.Kusuman, Slavery in Travancore, Kerala Historic Society, Trivandrum, 1993,p.15
\textsuperscript{39} P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.6
\textsuperscript{40} K.K. Kusuman, Slavery in Travancore, p.28
\textsuperscript{41} T.H.P.Chentharassery, \textit{Ayyankali}, p.24
\textsuperscript{42} P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.7
\textsuperscript{43} K.K.Kusuman, Slavery in Travancore, p.29
\textsuperscript{44} Chentharassery, \textit{Ayyankali}, p.27
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p.16
supernatural beings whose function was to do evil, in order to foment human beings over in the smallest details of their daily lives.46

Very cruel punishments were meted out toward the lower castes. Thurston narrates the case of a Nair killing a Pulaya, who polluted the former in 1904. This was believed to be done for the pleasure of god.47 When the male members of these communities suffered bitter humiliation, the plight of the women was really shocking. They were not allowed to wear better clothes or ornaments. The women had used stone chains and stone rings.48

To perform strict untouchability and unapproachability, the upper castes needed some apparent symbols of caste from the unprivileged groups. The low caste was recognized by the colour his skin. The fair of them were not allowed to cover the parts above waist. New clothes were to be used staining black colour on them. They were forbidden to wear chappals, umbrellas, costly jewellery, and good clothes. Even the umbrellas were used only by the Brahmins.49

The gap between the Savarnas and the Avarnas acted as a hurdle in the progress of the Hindu community particularly that of the lower castes.50

Seeing all the workers untouchables, and denying sufficient wages for them were better ways for the landlords to get more wealth. The Nairs were given certain privileges so that the land and the temples could be protected.51

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46 Lamercinier Genevieve, Religion and Ideology in Kerala, p.143
47 P.K.V. Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.14
48 T.H.P. Chentharassery, Ayyankali, p.25
49 Ibid, p.14
50 A. Sreedhamonen, Kerala Samskaram, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1978, p.223
51 K.N. Ganesh, Kerala Samooha Padananagal, pp.244-5
Religious faith was one of the factors that helped maintain the practice intact. Another factor was psychological one. The practice of untouchability and unapproachability was certainly not a welcome thing for the inferior caste in whose disfavour it was practised. Every caste had a psychological satisfaction of being in a position to practise it in their favour with the caste inferior to their own in the social ladder. This clever device successfully prevailed in the lower castes prevented them from revolting against the system for a long time till the 1st half of the 20th century.52

The atmosphere changed absolutely when the Missionaries began their work in Kerala. The Christian Missionaries, for their selfish ends, brilliantly exploited the social conflict in Kerala and began proselytization. The converted people enjoyed many rights that their counterparts had not.

The converted Pulayas and Parayas could travel along the way through which an Ezhava could not walk.53 The Missionary activities brought about many remarkable changes in the realm of education and social life.54

By the end of the 19th century, the lower castes in Travancore became conscious of their rights for which the Christian Missionaries played an important role. The caste Hindus were not ready to tolerate the Missionary activities. They lashed out at the Missionaries and the Christians because they believed that the Nadars and other socially backward classes used Christianity a means to evade taxation and Corvee labour as well as to raise their social status, which, they believed, would weaken their position.

52 P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of the Oppressed, p.15
53 Mannath Padmanabhan ,Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal, p.133
54 M.K.Kumaran, R.Sankar,Department of Cultural Publications, Trivandrum,1990, p.49
So they thought of destroying the Missionary activities as the only way of checking the innovation and to establish the old customs and practices.55

The lower castes were eager to grab the various privileges that were denied to them. It was the Ezhavas who inaugurated the protest movement for the entry in to the temples. No other section among the Hindus was in a position to demand the same. Later the Pulayas under the leadership of Ayyankali came forward with the same demand.56

It is apt to quote P.K.V.Kaimal in this respect.

"Social differences may be a universal phenomenon, but nowhere in one’s birth the criterion to determine one’s position in the society as in Travancore and else where in India. However low might be the social status of the family in which a man has been born in another countries, he can by his own merit and ability to rise to even the highest rung in the social ladder"57

**Economic Relations**

From the earlier times the economy of Kerala had been basically agrarian. Land and its produces determined the economic foundation of the region. However it is quite remarkable that peculiar type of activities were there connected with land in the traditional society. The cultivators were not the actual owners of the land property. They neither had the authority to own it nor use it according to their will. The relation between the actual owners of the land and the cultivators determined the economic foundation of the region.

The beginning of the formation of a stratified social order in Kerala is attributed to the coming of the Brahmins. During the 7th and 8th centuries

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55 R.N.Yesudas, A People’s Revolt in Travancore, p.125
56 N.K.Jose, Kshetra Pravesana Vilambaram Oru Padanam, Hobby Books Kottayam, 1986,p.35
57 P.K.V.Kaimal, Revolt of The Oppressed, p.16
Brahmins poured into Kerala from the northern parts. The religion and culture of the Brahmins spread rapidly building a new synthesis of Brahmin and indigenous cultures. This culture was invariably bound up with the matrilineal system, the rise of the Nairs and, above all, the feudal system in Kerala.

The extension of Brahmin influence into Kerala resulted in the old chieftains being brought under the control of the Brahmins, and in the emergence of a new warrior class known as Nairs, paved the way for a new and effective form of feudal land lordship in these numerous principalities.58

The Aryanisation resulted in the emergence of four main caste groups as elsewhere in India. But there was absence of Vysya community- the commercial caste.59 The Brahmin lawgivers did not assign trade to any community. In fact, they discouraged castes from directly engaging in trade. The Thiyyas, Christians and the Muslims became traders.60

The rise of many temples also paved the way for consolidating the domination of the property owners. To rule the temple there was a management of board of trustees or Ooralas. They were selected from the patrons of the temple. The Brahmins were invariably chosen in almost all the cases.61 They enjoyed the temple property according to their will. So not only the trustees but also the priests and the Tantris became wealthy.62

58 T.C.Varghese, Agrarian change and Social Consequences, p.12
59 Ibid, p.15
60 Ibid, p.16
61 Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, Studies in Kerala History, p.329
62 Ibid, p.348
From 9th to 13th century A.D, most of the land was owned by the non-Brahmins. During these centuries lands were bestowed on the Nambudiris and the temples.63

Buchanan says in 1800 A.D. that the Nambudiris pretended to be the possessors of the landed properties in Malayala from its creation. Before the advent of Hyder, they claimed to be the actual lords of the whole soil except Devaswam and Cherikal.64

The Janmis and the nobles in Kerala were able to convince the common people that the legends concocted by them to cement the feudal system were true in no mean achievement. Its effects were unparalleled and extraordinary; the Janmis could continue their exploitation for centuries without the least opposition from the oppressed classes.65

The historical reasons for this strange phenomenon were:

1. The willingness of the intelligentsia to serve the feudal lords and their consequent failure to guide the common people to a correct appreciation of events and things.

2. The mental slavery that resulted in from economic servitude.66

During the medieval period, as in other matters, the Janmi-Kudiyan relations were also determined on the basis of traditional laws. The traditional laws were called Kana Janma Maryada.

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63 Ibid, p. 325
64 C.A.Innes, Malabar, p.306
65 Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, Studies in Kerala History, p.324
66 Ibid
All sections of population were obliged to observe these laws. But this *Kana Janma Maryada* was restructured by Tippu Sultan and then by the British. Tippu appointed many officials to look after the land and to levy of taxes from it. This system was largely unknown to the *Janmis* and peasants in Malabar.

From early 18th century onwards the situation was favourable for the proliferation of small landlords. When land revenue was initiated, officers known as *Adhikaris* were appointed to collect revenue. They had vast powers. They were mostly *Nairs* and many of them became *Janmis* in later years. The number of *Janmis* was also increased by the practice of Kings bestowing titles in return for the monetary payments.

These titles, *Janmis*, were conferred on people among all classes of people. Thus by the 19th century the whole of the land in Malabar was the private property of the *Janmis*. The largest landowner or *Janmi* in Malabar was Zamorin.

In Malabar, the land was distributed in large scale among the following groups:

*Kovilakams*- for example, Zamorin, Chirakkal, Arakkal, Kadathanad, Mankada.

*Naduvazhi Nairs*- like Kavalappara, Nilambur, Koodali.

*Namdudiri* Families-like Poomulli, Olappamanna, Desamangalam.

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68 Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, Studies in Kerala History, p.361
69 Ibid, p.362
Devaswamas-like Guruvayur devaswam.\textsuperscript{72}

In Kerala the hereditary property (Janmam) was freely bought and sold.\textsuperscript{73} Janmam was the ‘full property right’ in the soil, subject to payment of the Government revenue.\textsuperscript{74} Kanam was a tenure partaking of the nature of both a mortgage and a lease; the tenant would pay a lump sum to the Janmi; an actual rent was fixed according to the capacity of the land, and from it the tenant was entitled to deduct the interest due to him on the amount of the Kanam the net balance payable to the Janmi actually was called Purappad or Michavaram. The Kanamdar was entitled to twelve years enjoyment. After a ‘renewal fee’ he could enjoy the same for another term. The Janmi normally fixed this fee. The Kanamdar could sub mortgage the land. In the Kuzhikkanam tenure the sum expended on improvement was considered and the necessary reductions were given.

The tenant was entitled to enjoy the land rent free or for a nominal fee for twelve years. At the end of that period he must get an ordinary Kanam or Verumpattam lease from the Janmi or must surrender on receiving the value of his improvements.\textsuperscript{75} Verumpattam was the single lease from year to year; the rent was often the whole of the net produce after deducting the bare cost of the seed and cultivation in each case the tenant was practically a labourer on subsistence wages; but the order confirms for one third of the net produce, after deducting cost of seed and cultivation, to be reserved for the tenant, and the remaining two thirds paid to the Janmi.\textsuperscript{76} The large peasantry constituted a hierarchy with the Nairs as the Kaanakkars at the top, Thiyyas

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, p.102
\textsuperscript{73} C.A.Innes, Malabar, p.310
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, p.320
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid, p.321
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, p.322
and Mappilas as Verumpattakkar in the middle, artisan and service castes as Cherujanmakkar below them, and the polluting castes as agriculture labourers at the bottom.  

During the invasion of Tippu Sultan many Nairs fled to the forests and the Nambudiris to Travancore. In the confusion many people illegally owned property saying that the original owners had gifted them. They constituted a new breed of Janmis.

This new generation of Janmis too harassed the tenants. Their aim was to squeeze out as much as possible from the tenants and become wealthy.

When the Nambudiris and other landowners came back, they got their properties back. The British helped them to regain the land lost and they also offered Malikan to the Naduvazhis and the kings.

The Janmis were unable to meet the military might of the British and thus they learned to live under the British as local chieftains.

The Janmi system in Malabar was the result of mutual understanding and respect of the Janmis and the Government.

The British changed the traditional land relations altogether. Laws were enforced in place of the traditional systems. Not only in the field of economic relations but also in other areas, especially in social, economic and political, the old system was the basis.

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77 P. Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social Change, 1988, p. 42
78 Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, Studies in Kerala History, p. 360
79 E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil, p. 105
80 Ibid, p. 106
Thus the age-old tradition ended. Instead, an economic relation was accepted between the landholder and the person who wanted land on lease.\textsuperscript{81} In the traditional system there were laws for shares for the Janmi and the tenant. At the same time the Government stood in favour of the Janmis.\textsuperscript{82} ignoring the realities.

The English East India company took over the responsibilities of collection from the Rajas and the old system was considered to be ryotwari and framed a new tax system. The new scheme also put forth an intermediary class between the Government and the actual cultivator as the owners of the land and they were allowed to have a share of agricultural produce.\textsuperscript{83}

The tenants had no permanent right of occupancy.\textsuperscript{84} The court also upheld that the Janmis were the owners of land and they should give the land revenue. The settlement should be reached with the landlords not with the cultivators.\textsuperscript{85}

The landlord or Janmi was considered as the possessor of Roman Dominium, and all other groups connected with land and agriculture were pushed down to the position of tenants. The Kanamdars were considered as mere mortgagers, and Kuzhikkanamdars and Verumpattakkars as tenant-at-will and all of them could be evicted by the freedom of contract enjoyed by the owners.\textsuperscript{86} With the help of a central power the rules were ruthlessly

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, p.95
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, p.98
\textsuperscript{83} T.C.Varghese, Agrarian change and Social Consequences, p.27
\textsuperscript{84} C.A.Innes, Malabar, p.320
\textsuperscript{85} T.C.Varghese, Agrarian change and Social Consequences, p.28
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid, p.29
implemented. The inferior tenure holders became more and more dependent on the Janmis.  

Large-scale evictions of the Kanakkudiyans by the Janmis occurred even though there were no rent arrears, and the same was handed over to those who offered more rent.  

Harder and harder terms were imposed by the Janmis on the Kanakkaran according to their will. The British police and the court supported them. The Hindu tenants were almost submissive. But the Mappilas were not in a position to tolerate it. So many Mappila revolts resulted.  

The important fact is that all the Janmis formed only 2% of the total population in Malabar in the second half of the 19th century. The rest of the population, about 98%, was virtually the sufferers of the age-old Janmi system.  

In other regions especially Travancore and Cochin, the Janmis were not so oppressive as in Malabar since the land property was mainly under the control of the Government. Even though the Janmi system was in vogue in these regions, the Government had a close watch on the Janmis. The influence of the Nambudiris and of large chieftains was less in Travancore. The presence of a centralized Government was the main reason for that. The assessment of land revenue from the tenant was in light terms compared to that of Malabar. The Pattom Proclamation of 1865 is believed to be the starting point of major changes in the land relations in Travancore. It  

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87 Ibid, p.29  
88 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Kerala Charithram Marxist Veekshanathil , p.97  
89 P.Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social Change,1989,p.42  
90 T.C.Varghese, Agrarian change and Social Consequences, p.39
allowed the full ownership rights to the tenants who occupied the Sirkar land and paid the land revenue.91 Another proclamation in 1867 extended the same privileges to the tenants of Janmam lands.

The Cochin administration had an intermediary position between Malabar and Travancore. About 40% of the cultivated land was under the possession of the Government, which was called Pandaravaka and the rest Puravaka. The Janmis paying Rajyabhogam, which was made by the tenants, cultivated the Puravaka lands.92

The Raja, through an edict in 1863, prevented eviction of Kanam land before the completion of the term of 12 years. Landlord-tenant relations on the Janmam lands were similar as in Malabar.93

Appointment of Commissions

The Government was forced to appoint a Special Commissioner, T.L. Strange in the 1850s to investigate into the causes of the Mappila riots of 1838. Meanwhile the eviction from land crossed all caste barriers and created many social and economic problems during the period from 1841 to 51. The scale of evictions had become a major disturbing factor in Malabar land relations. Restlessness seemed to exist everywhere. In 1852 the special Commissioner submitted his report to the Government. Many corrective measures were put forth to address the grievances of the tenants.94

1. The courts should consider the usages and practice them in Malabar before making any interpretations of land lord-tenant relations.

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91 Ibid, p.64
92 Ibid, p.33
93 Ibid, p.69
94 Ibid, p.52
2. Registers should be prepared of the lands held by tenant families from earlier times.

3. The collectors should be given powers to decide summarily the questions relating to the issues between the landlords and the tenants before going to the courts.

4. An attempt has to be made to explore the possibilities of restricting the absolute rights enjoyed by the Janmis over wastelands.

The Government accepted the first three and rejected the fourth. But the Government did not implement the first three in real spirit.95

In 1880, the Government received an anonymous letter, which stated that the unjust activities of the Janmis were responsible for the agrarian discontent. The Government soon appointed a commission led by William Logan in 1881.96 He was of the opinion that the British land policy in Malabar was faulty from the beginning to end. Rack renting, the exorbitant renewal fees, and indiscriminate evictions were the root causes for the agrarian unrest.97 His suggestions included the curtailment of the powers of the Janmis in ousting of the actual cultivator.

He also favoured in giving the full benefits to the tenants that they had enjoyed in the traditional system entitling them to sell the improvements of their holdings.98 He also suggested that wasteland might be distributed to the contractors to create a class of owners of small gardens.

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95 Ibid
96 P.Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social Change, p.47
98 P.Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land Reforms and Social Change, pp.67-68
Logan's report was unpalatable for the Government. So the Government appointed another commission headed by Madhava Rao in 1884. He recommended for occupancy right to the tenants holding land directly from the Janmis. The Government referred the same to the High Court. The court upheld the rights of the Janmis on land. So the Government did not accept the recommendation.99

The first law to regulate the relation between the Janmis and the tenants was the Malabar compensation for Tenants Improvement Act 1887. This was enacted to end the clash between the Janmis and the tenants. This act was not effective in attaining the goal. So an amendment was made in 1900.100

The Master Commission submitted its report in 1887. The report of the Commission contained strict guidelines about eviction of tenants from land. The eviction should only be done at the end of the agriculture year and after giving six months notice. He also favoured legislation in this matter.101

**Political Consciousness**

Kerala was divided into three distinct political entities-Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The first two regions were ruled by Kings, and the last one-Malabar- was ruled by the British. Malabar was a district under the Madras state. Political awareness in Kerala in the 19th century can be discussed considering all the three units a single entity.

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99 Ibid, pp.68-69
100 Elamkulam Kunhan pillai, Studies in Kerala History, p.368
101 P.Radhakrishnan, Peasant Struggles, Land reforms and Social Change, p.70
In Travancore formation of a new state came into existence in the late decades of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th century. In Cochin and Malabar also new political entities had come into being.\textsuperscript{102}

The modern states described here are centralized states such as Travancore and Cochin. Malabar was under the direct rule of the British.

Political consciousness as a phenomenon appeared very late in Kerala, especially in Travancore and Cochin.\textsuperscript{103} It appeared in Travancore in the last quarter of the 19th century in the form of protest movements. These movements were against the domination of the out of state Brahmins in the 1880s.\textsuperscript{104}

The first manifestation of political consciousness in the organized manner in Travancore could be found in the mammoth petition submitted in 1891 to the Maharaja.\textsuperscript{105} The Malayali Memorial movement of 1891 was led by G.P.Pillai who was a guide even to Gandhi in some respects. It was the first popular movement in modern Travancore.\textsuperscript{106}

He released a notice in which he wrote 'Travancore for the Travancoreans'.\textsuperscript{107} The Malayali Memorial of 1891-92 meant only that the Government service should be opened for the Nairs of Travancore. The movement was arranged

\textsuperscript{102} M.K.Kumaran, R.Sankar, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1990, p.72
\textsuperscript{103} T.K. Ravindran, Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala, Kerala Historic Society, Trivandrum, 1972, p.LXX
\textsuperscript{104} M.K.Kumaran, R.Sankar, p.78
\textsuperscript{105} T.K. Ravindran, Asan and Social Revolution ..., pp. LXX-XI
\textsuperscript{106} Perunna K.N. Nair, Keralathile Congress Prashthanam, Current Books, Trichur, p.200
\textsuperscript{107} M.K.Kumaran, R.Sankar, p.80
in such a way to make sure the participation of other communities. Later they came to know that they were let down.\textsuperscript{108}

The bureaucracy was so corrupt and the people were in a state of fear that they could not raise their voice against them. But there were sparks of fury against this situation. In 1892, a 14 year old boy wrote in the newspaper that the Neyyattinkara Munsiff was corrupt and thus the people suffered much difficulty. He was Ramakrishnapillai, called \textit{Swadesabhimani} in later years.\textsuperscript{109}

The political history of Travancore from \textit{Malayali Memorial} to the Abstention Movement could be considered as the struggle for representation of various communities in the Government service.\textsuperscript{110} The lower castes were not appointed to the Government jobs. Their rights were bluntly denied. They had no political or social rights. Even though Palpu had studied medicine, he was denied a job by Cochin and Travancore Governments, for he belonged to a lower caste. The princely reluctance for going any employment, the rudimentary political right of the subjects of the state was bread by religion and caste predictions.\textsuperscript{111}

Dr. Palpu made a vain attempt to gain constitutional rights to the \textit{Ezhavas} also. It was the firm decision that gave energy for the \textit{Ezhavas} to rise from the ashes of sound disabilities like a phoenix to the political liberty in later years.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, p.57
\textsuperscript{110} M.K.Kumaran, \textit{R.Sankar}, p.82
\textsuperscript{111} T.K. Ravindran, Asan and Social Revolution....,p.LXXI
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, p. LXXII
Kumaran Asan was quite aware of the situation in which the upper caste had political domination. He found that the political evils too had its origin in the caste problem.\textsuperscript{113}

It is, however, significant that people of Kerala, Travancore in particular, were rather inert during the entire 19\textsuperscript{th} century except some sparks from flamboyant persons like Dr. Palpu, Kumaran Asan, C. Sankaran Nair and others, as well as incidents like the \textit{Mappila} revolts. The brutal suppression on the part of the British regime was more visible in Malabar since this area was directly under the control of the colonial regime. They tried to squeeze out even the last paisa of the people, which brought about bloody out breaks. Many rebellions rocked Malabar during the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The Janmi-Government nexus was mostly responsible for the many agrarian upheavals in Malabar.

The poverty-ridden people of Malabar had to face the mighty British Government with whatever weapons they got. The so-called \textit{Mappila} uprisings reveal the socio-political grievances of the common people. These rebellions were responsible for a number of measures taken by the Government. Though the people were aware that the British Government had been denying their rights, their grievance was limited to their miserable plight as tenants and labourers. When sharp fall in agricultural prices occurred, the people had no other option to find a means for subsistence. The \textit{Mappila} revolts should be approached in this context.

Another interesting event in Malabar in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century was the participation of Sankaran Nair in the meeting of the Indian National

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, p. LII
Congress. He belonged to a family in which many had held important posts under the British regime. His father was a Thahsildar.\textsuperscript{114}

After education, he began to show interest in social activities. He wanted to change the matrilineal system existed in Malabar. He was opposed to the domination of the Karanavar in the Taravadus. This precedence brought about the break down of many families, he believed. But the Government was against the proposals and thus his attempt failed.\textsuperscript{115}

In the 1887 Madras meeting of the Indian National Congress, he argued for doing away with the Chathurvarnia system of caste and to mobilize movement against the oppression towards the Hindu women. He was a social activist rather than a political leader. His name was more connected with the marriage bill. But his interest in this field gradually led him towards political activities. He was not ready to tolerate any discrimination towards the Indians. Once he was invited to participate in the Dasara festival by the Raja of Mysore. Everybody had to present some gift to the Raja except the English. Unable to tolerate the humiliation, he left the place.\textsuperscript{116}

Even though Sankaran Nair had chaired the 1897 Amaravati session of the Indian National Congress,\textsuperscript{117} the political activities in Malabar stood where it had been. No organized political forms were visible in Malabar until the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

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\textsuperscript{114} K.P.S. Menon, C. Sankaran Nair, Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1971, p. 6 \\
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p.29 \\
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, p.76 \\
\textsuperscript{117} Perunna K.N. Nair, Keralathile Congress Prasthanam, p.10
\end{flushright}
We have examined the social, economic and political situation in Kerala but the study can't be complete without going into the system of learning that the society followed.

**Learning in Kerala.**

We have already examined the social, economic and political situation in Kerala before the 20th century. It is equally important to understand how the people of Kerala learnt.

The system of learning prevailed in Kerala may be classified into two.

1. Indigenous education in the traditional mode.

2. The modern education imparted by the Government and other agencies.

1. **Indigenous Education**

   The traditional education in Kerala was followed by many generations for centuries. The education thus imparted was strictly on the basis of caste. The *Brahmins* and other castes never had the same system of education since their roles in the society were different. It is necessary to have a general understanding of the terms of education of different castes.

   **A. Education of the Brahmins.**

   The *Brahmins* had been following traditional system of education that did not match with the education of the modern times. The initiation into letters took place in the 5th year. That day in addition to *Vedic* rituals, 51 letters of the alphabet have to be written by something made of gold on the rice. On the tongue *Hari Sree Ganapathaye Nama* was written. Then *a, aa*... All the rice used for writing had subsequently been eaten. Primary education continued
until the beginning of the Veda recitation after the ‘sacred thread ceremony’. First lesson was the learning of 51 letters. Letters were written on sand. Four or five letters were learned a day. Compound letters were learned after learning individual letters and consonant vowel compounds. Then the *Akshara Samkhya* was taught. Then the pupils would read letters from the palm leaves. One had to recite by heart the lesson previously studied irrespective of the class in which he was studying. If there was no need to repeat the lessons, the pupils were to write them on the palm leaves. Sanskrit lessons, verses for astrological calculations and practice, and the calendar time reckoning were taught. Lessons started after break fast in the morning and lasted up to 11am. The classes started again before 2 p.m. and continued till 5 p.m. The students used to recite moral verses then.

There were centres for higher education for them as well where they learned the advanced lessons.

The *Nambudiris* with the help of their superior knowledge of Sanskrit had supreme influence in the religious and the cultural life of the people. They succeeded in giving a new way to education separating linguistic education from the vocational and military component. Literary education replaced the system of all round education given by the *Kalaris*.

This was a typical *Gurukula* system of education. The personal relation between the *Guru* and the *Sishya* was given due importance in this system.

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118 Ananda E Wood, Knowledge before printing and after, Oxford, Delhi1985, p.35
119 Ibid, p.39
120 Ibid, p.40
As the residents of the Sabhamadam, the Nambudiri children were given free food and accommodation. The subjects were Vedas, Upanishads, Mimamsa and Vyakarana. The Sabhamadams of north Kerala had done much to the spread of education. Like the Salais that existed in different parts of Kerala earlier, these Madas had spread the Vedic education. These centers were mainly for the Nambudiris. Vedic education started for Brahmins after Upanayanam and continued till the 16th year.

Rigveda was learnt by heart, without understanding the meaning. The Purohita would recite one Rik and the pupil would repeat and learn it by heart. The pupil was not trained to read or write in Malayalam or Devanagari. Even though the knowledge of letters was compulsory, there was a leaning towards the Sanskrit language.

During the study of Vedas no language other than Sanskrit was allowed to be spoken by the students. This manner of teaching, and all these lessons, including Gunapatham, constituted the traditional education in those days not only for the Nambudiris but also for all caste Hindus i.e. of Sudra and higher.

The indigenous institutions were unable to meet the hard terms of knowledge that developed under colonialism. The western schools gradually replaced the Pathasalas and the Kalaris, where only a relatively small number of pupils could be trained under one teacher.

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122 A.Sreedhara Menon, Kerala Samskaram, N.B.S., Kottayam, 1978,p.181
123 Ibid, p.180
124 Palakkeezh Narayanan (Editor), V.T.Oru Ithihasam, Current Books, Trichur, 1996,p.81
125 Ananda E Wood, Knowledge before printing and after, p.39
126 M.P.Sarojini Amma, p.78
The pulse of the modern times was well recognized by some progressive Brahmins and they demanded that the Nambudiris should adopt the western style of education. But there was strong opposition from the orthodox. The Yogakshemam stressed the need for the educating the boys for the first time. Then the opposition and support increased. When the uncle of E.M.Sankaran Nabudiripad started Namboodiri School at Edakkuni, the discord between the orthodox and the progressive factions became more detectable.127

B. Education of the Non Brahmins.

Before the implementation of the modern system of education, the Ezhuthupallis were the basic units of learning. The teacher was called Ezuthachan. The initiation of the child to the study was called Vidyarambham, which was considered to be a sacred religious ritual and was normally at the age of three, sometimes it might go to seven. The child was first initiated in to the letters of the alphabets by writing in the sand. After which they were trained to write short sentences on the palm leaves. Most of the texts and verses were commuted to memory. Simple arithmetic, a little of astrology and astronomy were also taught. It was obligatory for all to learn Amara and Sidha. The study of the Puranas and the epics was also carried on by assiduous pupils.128

Normally Janmis or other powerful persons in the village, often for the education of their children, founded Ezhuthupallis. They also allowed other children generally of the same caste.

128 Kerala District Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.711
Cherukad describes about the founding of an *Ezhuthupalli* in his village:

"Krishnan Nair was very rich. He started an *Ezhuthupalli* at his Pathayappura. He appointed Gopalan Ezhuthachan as the single teacher. There were about 25 pupils in that school."\(^{129}\)

If there was more population, there existed more than one *Ezhuthupalli*. The discipline was strict in the *Ezhuthupallis* and there would be no excuses. The salary was not paid in cash instead the things for their day-to-day life was given.\(^{130}\)

In his auto biography Mannath Padmanabhan describes about the early education in Travancore thus:

"I was taught *Nilathezhuthu* and *Enchuvadu* by Kesavan Asan himself. I went to some other Kalari and learnt Vakyam, Paralperu, Amarakosam, Pathinaluvritham, some *Veethakkanakku* and *Keezhkanakku*. Writing on the palm leaf was also learnt. The children went to the *Ezhuthupalli* wearing the *Konakam*. The first who gets into in the *Kalari* was given the name *Elan*. Severe punishment was there. Hanging down from the *Kondamaram* was the supreme punishment."\(^{131}\)

The children had to reach the *Kalari* before 7 O' clock. The child who studied very well was *Chattampi*. He would closely watch the activities of the other children. When just entered, they had to write on the floor what had previously studied and repeated that had learnt in the previous day. If wrong, big blows would result. There was no common timetable. Different children had different lessons.\(^{132}\) The last period was reserved for the enquiry of crime and punishment. Those who did not come to the *Kalari*, those who took bath in the ponds without permission, those who stole something at home, those who quarreled on the way to *Kalari* were punished. There were at least eight or ten hours of class every day.

\(^{129}\) Cherukad, *Jeevithappatha*, p.56
\(^{130}\) A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*, p.182
\(^{131}\) Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal*, pp.4-5
\(^{132}\) Ibid, p.6
Beating with the stick was a common punishment. People used to frighten the children saying that the Asan was coming.\textsuperscript{133} *Vakyam, Adivakyam, Paralpperu, Siddharupam, Balaprabhodhini, Sreeramodandam* and *Amarakosam*, the first parts all these became good education of the Nair child.\textsuperscript{134} It was compulsory for the children to read the *Ramayana* daily as part of the learning process.\textsuperscript{135}

This system of *Ezhuthupallis* continued till the advent of the British. After their coming the *Ezhuthupallis* began to disappear gradually.\textsuperscript{136} But they continued to exist in poor condition even in the strong influx of modern system of education that the people of Kerala accepted with great suspicion and interest. The *Kalaris* were unique type of educational institutions that offered martial training in addition to the general education.\textsuperscript{137}

The *Kalaris* were constituted for the education of the *Nairs*, but some other castes like the *Thiyyas* also had access to the *Kalaris*. The children after primary education in village school would either go to the *Kalaris* or take to the study to Sanskrit in *Vedic* schools or had them training by reputed teachers.\textsuperscript{138}

C. Education of the Backward Classes.

Education was generally the monopoly of the caste Hindus. The right to education of the Backward Classes was prevented by the upper castes.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid, p.7
\textsuperscript{134} P. Narayanan Nair, *Ara Noottantilude*, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1999, p.16
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid, p.18
\textsuperscript{136} A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*, p.183
\textsuperscript{137} M.P. Sarojini Amma, p.73
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid, p.74
With the influence of the Brahmins, the educational field began to be more exclusive. The Chathurvarnia was also a reason for the same.\textsuperscript{139}

The purpose of this denial was the consolidation of supremacy by the upper castes. By denying right to education to the Sudras, the Brahmins could easily suppress them and exploit their services for the benefit of all the other divisions of society.\textsuperscript{140}

Those who were engaged in the physical labour including the Panas were pushed to the lowest stratum of the social order. The female education also was not allowed. Education was confined to the upper layer of the Hindu community.

This was the situation in Kerala till the recent years. This situation began to change, when organized efforts were made to change the lamentable condition of the oppressed.\textsuperscript{141}

Besides the fields of literature and art, other fields like the cultural life of the society, a minority group always tried to dominate. They flourished well and created many poets, wise men and philosophers. At the same time, the majority of the people were in ignorance. There were no attempts to lift them from their plight.

The upper castes tried to prevent the progress of the group by imposing laws and restrictions.

The Vedas and the Vedangas could only be learnt by the Brahmins, the Sastras and the Kavyas in Sanskrit were also not for the lower castes. Thus only the

\textsuperscript{139} A.Sreedhara Menon, \textit{Kerala Samskaran}, p.175
\textsuperscript{140} K.K. Kusuman, \textit{Slavery in Travancore}, p.19
\textsuperscript{141} A. Sreedhara Menon, \textit{Kerala Samskaram}, p.175
old songs and some plays were left to the perusal of the lowest stratum of the society. The situation came to exist that the people—a minority had the knowledge of Sastras, Vedas, Upanishads—at the same time there existed a group where there was no knowledge about anything. In the land of Thunchath Ezhuthachan, Kottayam Thampuran and Unnayi Warrier, there lived a vast majority of people who depended entirely on the oral Pattu tradition. Thunchath Ezhuthachan wrote epics by keeping a bird in front, for the low caste people should not see Saraswathi the goddess of knowledge.

The classrooms were also centers of caste evils. The untouchable students were punished in a different way in the Kudippallikkudam. They must stretch their arms to the front and the teacher would throw the cane so that the teacher would not be polluted. There were a number of Kudippallikkudams all over Kerala.

The Thiyyas also had run the Ezhuthupallis and there were pupils among Nairs and other upper castes in them. But such institutions were less in number.

With the advent of modern education by the Missionaries, it influenced the lower stratum of the caste hierarchy. All communities after the Nairs and the Christians began to receive English education and accept the new culture to become intelligentsia.

142 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, Keralam Malayalikalude-Mathrubhumi, Chitha, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, pp.52-53
143 Ibid, p.53
146 Moorkoth Kunhappa, Moorkoth Kumaran, p.27
The *Ezhavas* and other oppressed castes also realized the relevance of modern education in their life. They believed that the best way to get the slave model of life away was to educate themselves. The British Government and the Christian priests, who spread that equality was their supreme priority, supported them. But it also did other functions. English education in Malabar became instrumental in igniting a national feeling and kindling movements of emancipation or the caste structure. Even though modern education had greater role in changing the society.

The caste Hindus were bitterly against it, as they believed that the introduction of modern education would disturb the caste structure in which they had supremacy.

The upper castes in Malabar, especially the *Nairs* and the *Brahmins*, never ran after the English education due to communal reasons. At the same time, the lower castes never had the financial stability to attend the modern schools.

D. Education of the Muslims.

In the 19th century the Muslims were rather illiterate and mostly belonged to the agricultural labourers, traders etc.

In Kerala, the Muslims were far behind the other communities in the field of learning. They considered *Malayalam* the Hindu language and English, the language of the hell. This prevented them from mingling with the

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147 E.M.S.Nambudiripad, *Keralam Malayalkalute Mathrubhumi*, pp.67-68
148 M.P.Sarojini Amma, p.104
150 C.A.Innes, Malabar, p.186
mainstream. This also alienated them from the common ancestry. The standard of the Muslim pupils was also behind the children of the other castes.\textsuperscript{151}

Moidu Moulavi recalls:

"During the period of my education there were very few people in remote villages. Connecting the Othupallis there were schools which had classes up to three i.e. today's 4\textsuperscript{th} standard."\textsuperscript{152}

This kind of schools existed in villages like Maranchery. Before admitting to the schools, they had to learn the Qur-an.\textsuperscript{153}

As far as the Muslim population was concerned, the ultimate learning centre was the Mosques and the Madrassas attached to them.

The mosques of the state were the centres of religious education. With religion they taught history and geography.\textsuperscript{154}

Attached to each mosque there was a Madrassa, where the Muslim students were initiated in to Arabic language and literature.\textsuperscript{155} The study in Madrassa was in Arabic Malayalam.\textsuperscript{156}

The alphabets in Arabic were taught by heart. At the same time, the Qur-an and the method of writing are also taught. Then only the pen was allowed. They used to spread white powder on a flat board and used a bamboo stick dipped in a pot of ink to write letters. There was no syllabus then. The Mollas

\begin{footnotes}
\item[151] P.K. Muhammed Kunhi, Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1982, p.191
\item[152] Moidu Moulavi, Moulaviyude Atma Katha, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 1935, p.11
\item[153] Ibid, p.11
\item[154] P.K. Muhammed Kunhi, Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum, p.183
\item[155] Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuran, p.711
\item[156] Moidu Moulavi, Moulaviyude Atma Katha., p.14
\end{footnotes}
taught according to their liking. Reading of Qur-an was the foremost thing. If one had learnt to read the Qur-an, his education was almost complete. The girls' education ended there and they would be thrown to the dark rooms of the houses. The boys who had learnt the Qur-an would be sent to the mosques to study the Kithab. For this study also there was no syllabus. The study begins with Pathu Kithab. After learning this, the child enters to the grammar. There was no benefit from the study at the mosques but any opposition would invite the wrath of the conservatives and their torture. Most of the pupils were given lessons on Qur-an and trained to read the holy text. Only Qazis and Ullemas, who came from far off places and were fed by the local people and taught the pupils. A few learnt the advanced courses on Islamic religion and theology.

Boarding and lodging were free for knowledge seekers. The supreme educational centre in respect of education was Ponnani. With the assumption of power by the British, the aged social equilibrium began to get disturbed. The disturbance was much in Travancore and Cochin, which in Malabar was not remarkable since the British did not try to disturb the feudal landlords. They wanted support of the land owning class. The Malabar area witnessed many Mappila revolts and which, the English thought, were the result of ignorance. So the Government decided to provide education to the Muslims in large scale.

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157 Ibid, p.11
158 Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.712
159 Ibid
160 P.K.Muhammed Kunhi, Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum, Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1982, p.182
The communal disturbance and the feud between the Muslims and the British were in vogue. There was no progress of education in Malabar except the establishment of a few higher secondary schools and colleges.\(^{161}\)

Owing to the recurring rebellions, the Company’s Government took steps to improve the education imparted to the Mappila children in the Madrassas attached to every mosque. In 1871-72, a plan was derived to induce the Mollas whoever in the instruction of the Madrassas religious training with Elementary Education through the vernacular language.

Those who followed the instruction were given grants but this did not succeed.\(^{162}\) For imparting education, arrangements could be made in the schools attached to the mosques.

The Mollas were instructed to start vernacular education together with religious training.\(^{163}\) Since the Mappilas had aversion to join the common schools, the Government decided to open Mappila schools. A special Assistant to the District Education Officer was appointed in 1926. Twelve Deputy Inspectors were also appointed to look after education of the Mappilas. Eight of them were employed in Ernad and Ponnani taluks, which had a large number of Elementary Schools for this community.\(^{164}\)

The Mappilas were ardently opposed to the English education. They thought that the traps of proselytization were behind the introduction of modern education, so most of the Muslims kept away from the stream. The rule of the British was, the Muslims thought, a curse on the community, on business

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\(^{161}\) P.R. Gopinathan Nair, Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala, C.D.S., Trivandrum, p.6

\(^{162}\) Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, p.71

\(^{163}\) M.P. Sarojini Amma, p.103

\(^{164}\) Kerala State Gazetteers, Malappuram, pp.713-14
and freedom. So they believed that the education imparted by them should also be rejected at once. Languages such as Sanskrit, Urdu and Persian had faced the same fate. But no community showed opposition like the Muslims in resisting the imposition of the English language. Later during the National Movement, this policy became noticeable. Those Ulemas who stood in the forefront of the freedom struggle opined that the English education should be opposed or boycotted. So strong was their hatred to the English language and culture in the beginning of the 20th century. They were far behind other communities in education. They gave importance to religious education. Similarly majority of the parents had no interest in giving material education to their children.

2. Modern Education.

The advent of the English education began a new epoch in the history of Kerala. A conscious effort for change, an intelligent awareness among the literates and an excited enthusiasm in the field of culture set in during that period. This was not only the case of Kerala but also throughout India. Myriads or factors, internal and external, contributed to this change.

Christian Missionaries who diffused the spirit of gospel through the length and breadth of Kerala played a very decisive role in bringing about this renaissance. The early reforms mooted by the Christian Missionaries, the Aryanaj and others did not satisfy the backward classes and felt disappointed with the benefits that trickled down from the reform movements, led by western educated, urbanized Brahmins and other high

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165 P.K. Muhammedkunhi, Muslimingalum Kerala Samskaravum, p.149
166 Ibid
167 M.Rasheed, Muhammed Abdurahiman Sahib, Islamic Publishing House, Calicut, 1994, p.4
168 K.J.John (Editor), Christian Heritage of Kerala, 1981, p.128
castes. The Backward Class agitated against the upper castes that had monopolized the use of resources and benefits.169

The East India Company came to India for business and then to rule for which it needed clerks. To meet the situation it started schools and colleges. This was the place from where the intellectuals came out. These clerks were not available for the Indian business group. The Nairs and other upper castes tried to enter the civil service and for achieving the necessary basic qualifications, they also began to join the schools and colleges.170

In the 16th century itself, seminaries and grammar schools were founded for Keralites and Europeans. Models were started in Kerala by the catholic Missionaries. They started a seminary for Syrian Christians in 1541 at Kodungallur. (The seminaries can not be considered as a modern educational institution. They were just like the Othupallis that once existed in Kerala.) They also started a school at Chennamangalam in 1548 and also a school for native children at Kodungallur. A college was started at Kochi in 1585 and it is clear from the Portuguese records that there were about 300 students in this college. This necessitated writing books in vernacular for the children. The Missionaries took up the children and ventured writing about the teachings of Christ in Malayalam and later some text books for the use of primary classes also.171

From 1800 A.D, the British power began to consolidate in Kerala. By then the Missionary educational institutions mushroomed all over India. The first of

169 M.S.A. Rao, Social Movements And Social Transformation: A Study of Two Backward Class Movements in India, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1987, p.31
170 E.M.S. Nambudiripad, Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi, p.166
171 K.J. John (Editor), Christian Heritage of Kerala, p.130
this kind was started in Nagarcoil. This institution played a major role in the educational attempts of the state.\textsuperscript{172}

It was the activity of the Missionaries that the Government entered in the field of education. In 1817 Gowri Parvathi Bhai with the help of Col. Munro tried to invoke free and compulsory education. An effort was made to start English and Malayalam primary schools all over the state. The children from 5 to 10 age group were to be educated compulsorily. Teachers were also appointed and the Government disbursed salaries. And the principle spread that it was the duty of the Government to impart education. In 1834 Swati Thirunal started the first English school in Travancore. Mr. Roberts was the first Head Master there. He was invited from Nagarcoil to take up the responsibility.\textsuperscript{173}

When Munroe was the resident of Travancore, he encouraged Missionaries. Benjamin Bailey, Gundert and Buchanan were some among in the field. The Missionaries promoted the native language as well.\textsuperscript{174}

The Protestant Missionaries were the first to bring the western education into Kerala. Ringle Taube had established many schools in different parts of Trivandrum and Nagarcoil between 1806 and 1816. Irrespective of caste restriction, everybody was welcome there. The learning was free for all. The premier position of this field was Dr. Mead who belongs to L.M.S. In 1817, he came to Kerala and started many ordinary schools besides vocational institutions. He spread girls' education as well.\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{172} M. P. Sarojini Amma, p. 82
\textsuperscript{173} A. Sreedharamenon, \textit{Kerala Samskaram}, p. 187
\textsuperscript{174} K. J. John, \textit{Christian Heritage of Kerala}, p. 131
\textsuperscript{175} A. Sreedharamenon, \textit{Kerala Samskaram}, p. 186
In 1813 the Syrian Christians started a school at the Kottayam Seminari for the training of the priests. In 1821 a grammar school was started in Kottayam. Their wives started a Girls' school in Kottayam. In 1818, a Missionary English school was started by J.Dawsen in Kochi. It was at Mattancherry.

The Madras Local Board Act of 1834 gave a boost to modern education in Malabar. A number of primary and secondary schools came in to being managed by local bodies, which was not very common in Travancore and Cochin areas. Basel Mission also was very active in educational activities. The Roman Catholic Mission also contributed their share in education but not as much as they had not done in other fields.

In Malabar, the educational activities were started by the Germans. In 1841, Rev. Hobile started an English school at Varanasseri in Kannur. The teacher was Ambu Gurunathan who was well respected by the people. He was a Thiyya.

The Basel Mission started a primary school at Kallayi in 1848, and it was transferred to Calicut in 1872. It was made a Middle School in 1878. This became a High School and then a Second Grade College in 1907. Another school was Victoria College Palakkad, which began in 1866.

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176 Ibid
177 Ibid
178 M.P. Sarojini Amma, p.101
180 M.P. Sarojini Amma, p.101
181 Ibid
In 1871 it was made a High school and in 1888 a college. A B.E.M school was also started at Thalassery in 1856. This commenced the beginning of English education in Malabar.

To spread Christianity, education was a means, Freels believed. So he started schools at Ananchery, Kozhikkode and on the either side of the Kallayi River. As the Bible was taught, there was little time for Suvisesham. The Malabar Christian College was the school established by him in 1842. In 1846 Hoober became the manager. He roamed everywhere for Suvisesham. The Sisusalai started in 1846 became the Girls School. In 1847, 27 girls learned copying the Bible there.

After the exit of Freels, Fouflor came to take up the works. Soon this school was attached to the Kozhikode school. To the girls' school the non-Christian children were also admitted. They had the following aims: The Malayala Sabha should have to be self reliant in preaching of the Veda, and learnt in it. The members should also have the knowledge of letters. So many Vedasalas were founded. It was the necessity that each and every girl should undergo primary education.

In 1851 Yoden came to Kannur and established the Sunday Sala. In orphanages not only the orphans but others also had studied. Apart from the Bible, the history of the church, the question and answers of Luther, the

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182 C.A. Innes, Malabar, p.297
183 A. Sreedharamenon, Kerala Samskaram, p.186
184 Malayala Basel Mission Sabhayude Charithram, pp.95-97
185 Ibid, p.107
186 Ibid, pp.187-188
*Pavithra Charithram, Vedoktham,* the Christian songs etc. had also been taught.\(^{187}\)

Along with the evangelical work they involved in educational activities.

They started schools for girls and boys, introduced modern curriculum and even wrote textbooks in vernacular. Naturally the scientific study of Malayalam literature occupied an important place in their curriculum. It inaugurated a new chapter in the development of language and literature.\(^ {188}\)

The Basel Mission, under the leadership of Dr. Herman Gundert, promoted educational activities in Malabar. The mission ran many schools. One was at Tellicherry, the Brennen School established in 1862. It was mainly for English education. In 1872, the Government took over the school due to mismanagement and converted it into a District school in 1883. In 1891 it was affiliated to the Madras University and recognized as a Second Grade College. The administration of the Middle and High schools was handed over to the municipality.\(^ {189}\)

As a result of the activities of Herman Gundert, many people belonging to the upper castes joined Christianity. This also was the main reason for the spread of *Suvisesham* among the masses, for which they started special schools. These schools were established at Nettur, Thalassery. The spread of *Suvisesham* by the *Mats* and the use of regional language, and English was a success in Karnataka. So they tried the same strategy in Kerala. Gundert took charge of these schools. The custom of schooling in the state was that the children studied in the *Nattupallikkudam* where they learned reading and

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\(^{187}\) Ibid, p.188

\(^{188}\) K.K.N. Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India,* p.115

\(^{189}\) M.P. Sarojini Amma, pp.100-101
writing. Then they would learn *Thullal, Kilippattu,* and *Manipravalam* etc. And then *Amaram, Roopam, Kavyam* etc. The teacher would write on the palm leaf, the children would learn it by heart. Gundert at first contacted the learned people and gained considerable knowledge in Malayalam. He began to use Malayalam as a familiar language and became an authority in it. The teacher would write on the palm leaf, the children would learn it by heart. Gundert at first contacted the learned people and gained considerable knowledge in Malayalam. He began to use Malayalam as a familiar language and became an authority in it. He began to use Malayalam as a familiar language and became an authority in it. He began to use Malayalam as a familiar language and became an authority in it. More over he wrote textbooks for teaching in schools, which included History and Geography. He was the first to prepare a grammar book in Malayalam. 

When the B.E.M constituted a network of educational institutions in north Malabar, the Thiyyas were the first, as a significant minority, to join these institutions. They got into the colonial administration as Thahsildars, Lawyers, Readers, and Sub judges up to the rank of Deputy Collectors. There were two colleges, the Brennen at Thalasseri and the Zamorin’s at Calicut. But the Thiyyas were denied admission to the Zamorin’s college till 1918.

The impact of the spread of the B.E.M schools brought about amazing changes in Malabar. A number of Thiyyas interestingly took part in the process of education there by creating a friendly group in the Kerala society. All castes were allowed to enter the schools. The Lower castes also were allowed to take up jobs and this elevated their position in the society. Children belonging to all communities joined the new breed of schools and colleges and they began to challenge the culture of the old

190 *Malayala Basel Mission Sahayude Charithram*, pp.19-20
191 Ibid
193 K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India,* p.108
Kerala. The Vedic intelligentsias were not respected and were considered to belong to the old school. The new learnt men were much respected. This was the greatest blow that the old Kerala culture received at the hands of the new culture.\textsuperscript{194}

The Missionary schools were open to all. But there was difficulty in recruiting children from the lower milieu so that they did not in fact enjoy the advantages. A series of cultural obstacles existed in Kerala to block any such move. They had played an important role in the growth of primary and secondary education in the latter half of the 19th century. As the public instruction was not a major responsibility of any colonial Government, the Missionaries in India tried to shoulder this responsibility and their objective was to propagate the gospel.\textsuperscript{195} They started learning the vernacular and also wrote for the masses, spreading the message of Christian religion.\textsuperscript{196}

For the purpose of spreading Christianity they used the vernacular very cleverly. In Malabar and south Canara, most of the textbooks were in vernacular language and English. They were compiled, edited and published by the Missionaries for using them in their educational institutions. They were not free from religious character and also contained criticism against the native customs and manners.\textsuperscript{197}

The primary reading materials in Malayalam were prepared on the basis of the gospel. Some excerpts are: ‘the wage of sin is death’ ‘those who die with Christ shall live with him.’ Some lessons were written incorporating the

\textsuperscript{194} E.M.S.Nambudiripad, \textit{Keralam Malayaiikalude Mathrubhumi}, p.166
\textsuperscript{195} K.K.N.Kurup, Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India, p.109
\textsuperscript{196} K.J. John (Editor), Christian Heritage of Kerala, pp.128-9
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid, p.101
parable of Jesus. Among the stories, a popular one from the *Panchathantra* was included. It narrated how a *Brahmin* carrying a sheep for sacrifice, was mocked at by some hooligans that he was carrying a dog. Finally the *Brahmin* gave up the sheep believing that it was a dog. Although the story was didactic, it was against the *Brahmins*, the custodians of the Hindu religion. The theme of most of the songs used in the schools were Biblical in spirit.

In the matter of education, especially in the fields of elementary education, Basel Mission schools served a model for the British Government to follow. Solid, airy and spacious were the buildings; where the children sat on benches and used desks; and wrote on slates and paper. There were textbooks to learn. Gundert was made the first inspector of schools in Malabar and Canara. He wrote and printed textbooks. The B.E.M also was the first to open boarding schools. Night schools were also founded. No one in the Basel Mission congregation was illiterate. There were special adult schools for the converts. The Missionaries were also the pioneers of English education in Kerala.

For training the evangelists and the teachers, there started a *Madhyasala* in Nettur in 1852. This was the first middle school in the district. Those who had completed four years in this school would be considered for becoming *Upadesis* and masters. Those who had interest to become *Upadesi* would be

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198 Ibid, p.104
199 Ibid
200 Ibid, 105
201 Ibid, p.234
sent to the Mangalore monastery and those wished to become teachers would be sent to the training schools.\textsuperscript{202}

They also tried to distort history according to their interests.

The textbooks like ‘The Malayalam Country and history’ (1869) included distorted historical writings. For instance, it states that most of the native people had lost their belief in false gods and idolatry. They accepted their religion due to the fear of others.\textsuperscript{203}

The textbook on Indian history was one abridged by Marsden, who describes that law and order was established in India by the British.\textsuperscript{204} The educational activities of the Missionaries, dominated by their religious ideals, were opposed by the dominant classes of traditional society later. This opposition was not organized in a systematic way. The theosophists and other nationalists began to propagate the concept of national education.

By the end of the century there had been a religious revivalism among the Hindus and the philosophers like Vivekananda inaugurated a counter religious movement in the western society declaring Hinduism as the mother of all religions. The waves of this new spirit echoed everywhere in India. The Missionaries’ attitude towards the new situation had been profusely recorded in their tracts and reports.\textsuperscript{205}

It is relevant to go through the role that mass education played in society of late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

\textsuperscript{203} R.Prakasam, Kerala Thile Trade Union Prasthanatheinte Charithram, Prabhat Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1978, p.9
\textsuperscript{204} K.K.N.Kurup, Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India, p.105
\textsuperscript{205} Ibid, p.106
When Moorkoth Kumaran joined as teacher in the Basel Mission school in 1884, Panangadan Raman, B.T, was the head master of the school, he was a Thiyya. It would have been impossible for a Thiyya to become a teacher in other schools. Kumaran joined as teacher in the St. Joseph European Boys' school in 1897. He worked there for about two years.

As a result of the propaganda by the Missionaries, several schools were established in Malabar and south Canara. There was a movement for the intellectual uplifting of the Panchamas. A religious revival had also taken place among the castes like the Thiyyas.

Their works to educate all; their kind approach towards the people attracted many, especially the lower castes. Many people were converted to the Christianity. The converted people never had the restrictions of the non-converted. The untouchability was not followed. They could walk along the road without the fear of polluting the upper castes. They could even go near the temples. They could also enter the post office and schools. This attracted many people to the Christianity. The activities of the Missionaries gave the people the air of freedom.

In the factories of the Basel Mission most of the workers were belonging to the backward classes. They were not allowed to walk on the road or use the public well. Education was almost denied to them. The Missionaries exploited this atmosphere and converted them to the Christians.

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206 Moorkoth Kunhappa, *Moorkoth Kumaran*, p. 37
207 Ibid, p. 65
208 K.K.N.Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India*, p. 100
209 Ibid, p. 115
They were responsible for the education and some economic elevation of the lower castes. It is to be remembered that they could achieve even this limited success only in the teeth of opposition from higher castes whose interests the princely rulers were anxious to safeguard.

Thus it was due irresistible pressure was built from the Christian Missionaries, the residents and the Madras Government that the native rulers were forced to meet the demand of the Missionaries partially.\textsuperscript{210}

The educational activities of the Missionaries attracted persons belonging to such communities mainly because of the social emancipation that it guaranteed to them.\textsuperscript{211}

It is obvious that the western education gave momentum to the social reforms.\textsuperscript{212}

Robin Jeffrey comments thus:

"As converts were better educated and slightly more prosperous, they became increasingly resentful of the traditional inferiority which they were still legally required to observe. They flouted the Sirkar enforced caste law and turned to the European Missionaries for support. This was usually provided. Alarmed and appalled at such illegal pretensions, high caste Sirkar officials intensified their repression; this further outraged the Missionaries and committed them to the low caste cause. The conflicts between high and low caste pretensions reached a climax in the breast cloth disturbances in 1859."\textsuperscript{213}

The society began to challenge the traditional culture of India. This would either destroy the Indian culture or a new culture would emerge out

\textsuperscript{210} N.I.E.P.A, A History of Educational Development in Kerala, p.106
\textsuperscript{211} Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala, p.13
\textsuperscript{212} A. Sreedharamenon, Kerala Samskaram, p.230.
\textsuperscript{213} Robin Jeffrey, The Decline of Nair Dominance in Kerala, p.54
assimilating the western culture. This was a crisis. This was the situation in the 19th century.\textsuperscript{214}

The main features of the Missionary education can be summarized like this:

1. Mass base was there. The Protestant Missionaries mainly worked for the oppressed castes, Shanars, Pulayas and Ezhavas.

2. They found educational activities a prerequisite for religious work.

3. The Missionaries asserted the right of oppressed classes for modern education; the Mission schools were the only new style of schools where the oppressed classes had access.

4. Conversions and primary education were linked with Missionary led movements against other features of the Hindu society such as untouchability and distance pollution; agrarian slavery and upper caste prohibitions on women of lower caste wearing clothes above the waist.

5. They brought girls of the lower castes to schools.

6. Although the classes were based on the Christian theology, there was a secular component in school studies as well.

7. The medium of instruction was vernacular.

8. They started the first institutions of elementary technical training or craft schools.\textsuperscript{215}

\textsuperscript{214} P.K.Gopalakrishnan, \textit{Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram}, State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum, 1984, p.521

Since the main purpose of Missionary activity was proselytization, their educational activity did not, in general, attract the great numbers from the well to do and higher caste sections of the population.  

Dr. K.N. Panikkar writes:

"The attempts at cultural and ideological hegemonisation of the colonial state and the activities of the Christian Missionaries had created a feeling of uneasiness among the Ulema and those who were depended on religious services for their livelihood" 217

The high castes were aware of the activities of the Missionaries, and the facilities they offering to low castes. Indeed, some Brahmins and evangelists and Nairs attended Mission schools, listened to the evangelists and read tracts. But the majority was hostile and suspicious. 218 In some places the upper castes and classes sent their children to other schools, for they had aversion to the Mission school. 219 The local press called up on the people not to send their children to the Mission schools, instead wanted to build their own schools. 220

Even though the elite classes wanted to object the evangelical works of the Missionaries, they could not develop any strong or systematic movement in this direction.

The activities pioneered by the Missionaries forced the Government to interfere in the education of the masses. So they paved the way for the system of modern education in Kerala.

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216 P.R. Gopinathan Nair, Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala, p.11
217 K.N. Panikkar, Against Lord And State, Oxford, p.60
218 Robin Jeffrey, The Decline of Nair Dominance in Kerala, p.53
219 K.J. John (Editor), Christian Heritage of Kerala, p.22
220 K.K.N. Kurup, Peasantry, Nationalism and Social Change in India, p.234
Though there was progress in the educational activity, there was no mass literacy at the end of the 19th century. The lower stratum of the social ladder enthusiastically welcomed Missionary education. Why were they able to choose the path of modern education ignoring the proscriptions that were laid down by the traditional society?

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221 V.K. Ramachandran, Kerala’s Developmental Achievements, pp. 50-52