CONCLUSION

Gokhale established the SIS in 1905, in order, "to train men, prepared to devote their lives to the cause of the country in a religious spirit". Its ideology was constitutionalism. Such men, given to a life self-obligation, renunciation of material interest and subjection to rigorous discipline were to strive for the social and political uplift of their country. Through the selfless work of these "ascetic pilgrims of politics", Gokhale intended to spiritualise public life in India. "According to him young men with intellectual capacity, devotion to duty and mental elevation" would work as "national missionaries".

The SIS was considered the powerhouse of Indian national movement though it was not conceived as a political organisation. One of the three men who had joined Gokhale at the founding of the society, G.K. Devadhar, was intimately associated with the SIS work in Kerala. Prominent nationalists and members of SIS like V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, H.N. Kunzru, (Kunzru later also served as member of the Kerala state formation committee) A.V. Thakkar also had connections with SIS work in Kerala. The Society was engaged in a variety of political and social activities, like organisational work for Indian National Congress, journalism, education and social reform. Gokhale was a pioneer in the field of universal elementary education in India. For him
Elementary education meant more than mere capacity to read and write. It meant greater moral and economic efficiency of the individual.

It was the Malabar Rebellion of 1921-22, which occasioned the functioning of SIS in Kerala. It began its work as a relief agency to the people who were in distress consequent on rebellion. But eventually the Society found it necessary to extend its work in a variety of areas such as relief and rehabilitation of the sufferers not only of the rebellion but also of distress caused by disease, famine, flood and other calamities. The DMRT established under the aegis of the SIS further extended activities in the field of education, rural reconstruction and social reform. The SIS work thus signifies an important phase of constitutionalism in Kerala.

The invaluable services rendered by the Society for about four decades, however, was not properly recognised and so remained decimated in the historiography of modern Kerala. It was also a concentrated phase of Constructive Swadeshi as motivated by the Economic Nationalism, which was asserted through the Swadeshi Movement. It is especially noticeable that while most part of Kerala was swept by a wave of socio-religious movements, Malabar was largely unaffected by the new consciousness. In such a condition of insularity the task of infusing a spirit of social, educational, the SIS undertook economic and cultural empowerment. The result of such a multi-faceted task was highly creditable as was attested by the resurgent
political consciousness of Malabar in terms of secular, democratic ideals after the rebellion of 1921.

In Kerala, for historical reasons, the people of Malabar had been the beneficiaries of the services of the SIS. G.K. Devadhar laid down the foundation for SIS work in Kerala. In fact he provided a blue print for action which was improved by workers like Suryanarayana Rao and V.R. Nayanar. The greatest achievement of Devadhar was that he identified the educational backwardness of Malabar as basic to all her problems and handicaps. He was also a pioneer in the field of co-operative movement in Kerala. The role of Devadhar in initiating a wave of social reform on a secular basis was quite remarkable.

Besides ameliorating the distress of the people in the wake of the rebellion, the SIS/DMRT worked constantly against untouchability, pollution, communal disharmony and illiteracy. It was through the selfless work of Suryanarayana Rao, that the people of Malabar realised for the first time the significance of voluntary service in her hours of need during rebellion, famine, epidemic and flood. He was able to get a wide variety of people ranging from laymen to royal personalities and government officials, irrespective of caste and creed, involved in the DMRT programmes.

Suryanarayana Rao was succeeded by V.R. Nayanar under whose leadership and guidance the SIS work, especially as executed through the
DMRT reached the lowly of the lowest and the people who were subject to the most hapless and miserable conditions of life. To the common people of Malabar Nayanar was SIS incarnate. He was soon recognised as a byword for relief and rehabilitation. He was an educationist, social worker, journalist and reformer all rolled into one in remarkable proportions. As a great champion of communal harmony, he was highly revered throughout Malabar. The contact, guidance and inspiration of personalities like A.V. Thakkar Bappa, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri and H.N. Kunzru all contributed to the work of SIS in Kerala which was persuade with extreme zeal and commitment.

The rebellion shattered the communal harmony of Malabar. When hatred and distrust between the Hindus and Muslims grew to larger proportions the SIS worked hard to rouse public spirit to restore amicable relationship between them. Owing to political reasons and governmental opposition the Congress could not enter into large-scale relief operations. The space was creditably filled by the Servants of India Society. Though they had to work in quite inhospitable conditions, relief work received a new pep with the arrival of SIS in the scene. They strove to get more governmental involvement in mitigating the distress of the people. In the true constitutionalist spirit they did not go for any confrontation with the government, but with a sense of spirituality brought consolation to the people, who were beset with agony and misery.
The SIS continued their work even after the winding up of the functioning of the Malabar Central Relief Committee at Calicut. They engaged themselves in the rehabilitation of the released Mappila prisoners, belonging to Calicut, Ernad and Valluvanad Taluks. In this context special mention must be made of the services of R. Suryanarayan Rao in mediating with government and other agencies and influential persons, for the rehabilitation of the released prisoners.

The SIS through the DMRT was the most important relief agency for the people of Malabar who were afflicted by the flood of 1923, the famine of 1939-40 and the cholera of 1942-43. The work of the SIS/DMRT in such occasions was in fact a great feat for even the government machinery was confounded to mitigate the distress of the people. The services of Nayanar in protecting the orphaned children and destitutes by setting up several orphanages and by providing medical aid by opening up a string of 'Serve India' dispensaries throughout Malabar were in fact highly commendable works.

The lessons learnt by the SIS workers during their relief operations, in respect of the wide spread illiteracy, superstitions and evil practices prompted them to undertake extensive educational activities. Throughout the rebellion affected areas of Malabar, educational work became central to the SIS activities as conceived by its master Gokhale. As a staunch advocate of
universal elementary education, Gokhale's ideas had been a source of inspiration for them.

DMRT schools, which were set up in Malabar, were pioneers of vocational education. They evolved a system of education that was "functional" based upon the concept of "application" of knowledge. These schools acted simultaneously as centers of instruction as well as of rural reconstruction and social reform. They fostered the messages of literacy, social change and self-reliance. The DMRT's stress on the education of woman and backward sections was a pointer to their lofty conceptions. They used education as a means to fight against social evils such as untouchability, pollution, unapproachability and the like injustices. The teachers of these schools were in fact known as DMRT workers, as they were involved in all its activities. They strove to bring the depressed classes such as Harijans and outcastes like Nayadis to the main stream of society though education. The DMRT was the only organisation which worked for the Nayadi's, the most wretched of the depressed classes of Malabar. Thus they made an organised attempt for the education of Dalits.

The caste rigidity of Malabar was such that it ruthlessly ostracised large sections of people especially the entire people demarcated as "polluted" from the public sphere. The stigma of educational backwardness further aggravated the condition. DMRT schools and reconstruction centers were
also centers which spearheaded campaigns against untouchability, pollution and other social evils like drinking habits, black magic, animal sacrifice and child marriage.

They were also pioneers in the field of literacy, adult education and library movement. The DMRT could well anticipate such modern emphases in education as vocationalisation, social extension and cultural awakening. It is significant to notice that these are aspects seriously discussed and recommended by present day academicians, not only as part of school instruction, but also of higher education curriculum. The DMRT fostered ideals such as equality, justice and communal harmony through their academic programmes.

As in other parts of India, the condition of Malabar villages was quite heart rending. It was strangled by age-old social evils, a handicapped economy, frequent natural calamities and epidemics and widespread unemployment and rural poverty. Such a dismal state of affairs provided the SIS ground enough to initiate several constructive programmes in Malabar villages. In embarking on such projects the DMRT workers like V.R. Nayanar were informed by a socialistic vision. As he pointed out, landlordism and money lending, coupled with exploitative and oppressive administrative machinery of the British, could only entrench the worst form of capitalism. According to him the effective antidote for such a condition had
to be sought in the constructive swadeshism. Thus the SIS executed programmes to encourage improved agricultural practices and a variety of cottage industries. They set up a string of co-operative societies and stores and motivated the people to enter into co-operative ventures. Through these activities a sense of self-reliance was imparted to the rural poor belonging both to the economically backward and to the depressed classes like the Harijans.

The SIS was characteristically disinclined to agitational politics. Therefore they lost no time in launching programmes to alleviate the sufferings of the villagers. Without waiting for governmental initiative, they started constructive programmes on their own, which, in course of time were well received by the people of Malabar. They conducted surveys and ascertained the real causes of rural backwardness and on the basis of which urged the government to evolve a comprehensive programme to rescue the poor villagers from their plight. The DMRT programmes were a great consolation to the various occupational groups like agriculturists, weavers and fishermen. Organising Seva Samiti Scout Sangh channelised even children into social service and constructive work.

The DMRT village reconstruction centers were quite unique as they combined instruction and reconstruction within the same framework. The workers of the DMRT also joined hands with the activities of the Harijan
Sevak Sangh for the cause of the upliftment of the depressed classes. Art and letters were also brought to use in urging the ideals of social justice, rural reconstruction and communal amity. They could thus go along way in checking communalist and other fissiparous tendencies. The value of solidarity between community in the larger interest of the society and the nation has become ever significant now a days in the face of ever increasing divisive, fundamentalist, terrorist and other antisocial activities. Recent eventualities in Kerala and elsewhere have proved beyond doubt that if secularism and communal harmony are allowed to slacken, the society has to pay a heavy price.

A significant aspect of the DMRT programme was the emphasis given to women in the rural upliftment programmes. They initiated women of all classes to join social work and constructive programmes. That way, they had done quite a lot by way of fostering the ideal of women empowerment in Malabar, vis-à-vis the current stress on the subject. Women were encouraged to come out their domestic confinement to the mainstream of public life.

The DMRT's emphasis to tap indigenous resources and local potential was also quite farsighted. They were perhaps the first to introduce the idea of decentralised planning in developmental programmes. The greatest achievements of DMRT in the matter of rural reconstruction were that they were able to pump considerable energy into the impoverished body of
Malabar society. In this process they could co-ordinate people of all strata of society from the lowly to the highest. The non-sectarian and secular approach followed in the constructive programmes was to form a lasting legacy of the political culture of Malabar.

If Swami Vivekananda called Kerala a "mad house", Mahatma Gandhi described Malabar as the "blackest spot in the untouchability map of India". These two descriptions bring out the nature of the social life of Malabar within the larger context of Kerala and India. This is further born out of the fact that inspite of the progressive ideals and the egalitarian and humanistic outlook propagated by a host of socio-religious reform movements within Kerala, Malabar remained by and large insulated from radical changes in social life. The social and cultural backwardness of Malabar made the DMRT to focus its attention in the area of social reform. But their idea of reform was radically different from contemporary reform movements, which were essentially religious or communitarian in nature. In contrast to these, the DMRT project in this direction was based upon liberal, egalitarian and secular principles.

The DMRT realised that the stability of Malabar society would be a distant dream if it was not built on the bed rock of communal harmony. Therefore they made every effort to remove the distrust between the Hindus and Muslims, which was perpetuated by the rebellion. The DMRT
programmes were all carried out with the active co-operation of the Muslim community. Special attention was paid to the education of Muslim girls. Through their multifarious activities, DMRT could go a long way in institutionalising healthy practices like communal amity and social cohesion in the public life of Malabar.

An important achievement of the SIS/DMRT work was that their idea of rural reconstruction was emulated throughout Kerala as a common agenda. Inspired by them, there sprang up in almost all villages association of men, mainly youths variously known as 'desaposhini', 'deasevini', 'gramodharana samithi', 'gramsevasamithi', 'desasevasamithi' etc. Several such associations came up throughout Kerala during the period under study. It is to be noticed that village level, micro planning, has now been recognised as crucial to modern decentralised developmental programme.

Though generally dubbed as a "moderate" organisation, quite often pejoratively by the extremists, it was a fact that the progressive ideals of the SIS/DMRT had to appealed to men like A.K. Gopalan who later became an eminent communist leader of Kerala. Some of them had their early training in public service in DMRT centres. The SIS/DMRT activities were the models for later day voluntary organisations in Kerala. A close parallel could be seen between the DMRT activities and the various programmes of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad: in their work against social evils for hygienic
practices, for literacy, in using act and letter to spread progressive ideas, in adopting scientific procedures like surveys, in enabling the people to improve and use local resources and in the advocacy of village level decentralized planning.

The way the SIS/DMRT introduced in issue and on occasions of urgency was a remarkable model for crises management. The essential import of dedicated and selfless voluntary service was enormously realized in Kerala during the last Tsunami incident as well as during the widespread attacks of Dengue fever and Chicken Guinea in various parts of Kerala. What committed work with a sense of a public spirit can achieve inspite of the work of the Government was amply missionary proved in such occasions.

In short the SIS/DMRT had done quite a lot towards the cultural renaissances of Malabar, thereby to complement the general awakening of Kerala.