INTRODUCTION

The Servants of India Society (hereafter SIS) had made great impact in Kerala society, especially in the Malabar area, in the years following the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. This period in modern Kerala history was characterised by a variety of activities, both political and social. There was the emergence of hectic political activities. Congress was gradually becoming a mass organization in Kerala, though Congress Political Conferences were being held even before the twenties. In the Travancore Cochin area the Sree Narayana Movement, Ayyankali, the N.S.S and others unleashed a wave of social reform. In Malabar also there were religious reform activities initiated by Vagbhatananda from North Malabar among the Hindus, and Syed Makti Thangal in Ernad area among the Mulsims. But these efforts had not percolated into the common people, nor were their preaching's practiced by the upper classes so much as to bring about a general social awareness, to serve as a pre-condition for change.

It appears quite curious that unlike the fervour for change and adaptability to the newly preached ideals, as was found in Travancore - Cochin areas, Malabar was by and large averse to assume an identical mind set. Therefore a socio-economic and cultural milieu punctuated by inequalities, superstitions, injustices, oppression and hegemonic control existed in Malabar especially during the above period. It was precisely this
state of affairs, which provided space for the SIS and DMRT to work in significant proportions for about for four decades.

The particular phase of Kerala history as explained above, and within it the condition of Malabar was quite peculiar. But so far no significant study has been undertaken in respect of the work done by the SIS and DMRT in perpetuating crucial changes in Malabar. Main factors responsible for such a lapse might be the absence of readily available materials. The availability of primary materials was quite scanty. Even those available ones were very much scattered and inadequate. But it is at the same time a period of great transition from an out and out traditional orthodoxy to a distinctively progressive phase. The contours of the process of that transition, especially as it occurred in Malabar continued to be and uncharted area, vis-à-vis social, political development and resultant reforms an changes elsewhere in Kerala.

But a study in the above respect has serious limitations. The available materials were in the form of a few unassorted archival materials, brief reminiscences of a few authors, newspaper reports and articles and quite sporadic references in books of history dealing with the above period. At the same time there are several men in Malabar, very senior citizens, who were associated with the work of SIS during that period and who are still brimful with the memories of the yeoman services rendered by the SIS and DMRT in Malabar, and in a few instances elsewhere Kerala. Their memories are a vital
source of information on the largely unrecorded developments of the above period.

Since the SIS/DMRT work in Kerala was an unexplored chapter in modern Kerala history, it has become quite imperative to make use of all available sources and techniques, inspite of their handicaps. Otherwise some of the significant developments that took place in Malabar during a period of about four decades would continue to be a missing link. And further, the work of SIS in Kerala was confined largely to British Malabar owing to historical reasons. Malabar, which form a part of Madras presidency, was distributed among the Talukes of Valluvanad, Eranad, Kurumbranad, Kadathanad, Chirakkal and Kottayam.

As has already been pointed out, no authentic study has been undertaken on the activities of the SIS in Kerala. There were only a few papers dealing with some of the aspects of their activities. The SIS programmes in Kerala starts with relief work undertaken for the victims of the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. Of course there are quite a number of works on several aspects connected with the Malabar Rebellion. These works however do not deal with the work of the SIS in Malabar in the years following the Rebellion. With the exception of a few passing references, modern Kerala history is silent about the major quantum of the SIS activities in Kerala. Therefore there is nothing by way of significant previous studies to be
resorted to. This is a very serious lacuna, which nevertheless has to be filled in to do justice to this particular phase of Kerala history. More over owing to lack of an objective investigation into the developments of the above period, there have been certain misunderstandings even in the passing references made by reputed historians.

In preparing the present study a descriptive and analytical approach has been adopted. Since the SIS/DMRT activities have been quite unexplored, it is necessary to provide a detailed narrative of the developments in which it was involved, as could be gathered from the available records. Owing to paucity of materials, the feasibility of oral history has been considered and information so gathered was corroborated with documentary evidences. This was found vital to establishing links between experience and evidence. The methodology prescribed by ICHR has been adopted to incorporate documentation.

The study has been executed in five chapters. Chapter I "Sources and Historiography" considers the value of important source materials, both primary and secondary. The subject being an uncharted one, the technique of modern historiography such as oral history had to be enormously made use of and the historiography defined accordingly.

Chapter II deals with "Socio Political and Economic Background" of Kerala against which the outbreak of the Malabar rebellion and the events
which followed it were to be evaluated. The chapter makes an attempt to look at the social stratification and its peculiar nature. An assessment of the general condition of life which paved the way for the Rebellion and the possibilities of alternatives precipitated by the uprising and the injured psyche of the people of Malabar, which provided space for the SIS work were undertaken in this chapter. In the face of the problem to be investigated, this chapter has got considerable historiographical bearing.

Chapter III "The Formation of Servants of India Society", deals with the historical factors, which impelled Gokhale to establish the SIS as a team of dedicated workers to serve as an agency for social transformation. The chapter examines Gokhale's social, political, economic, and educational thoughts from which evolved the cardinal principles of SIS.

Chapter IV "The Servants of India Society in Kerala" deals with the beginning of the SIS works in Kerala. For historical reasons its major area of operation happened to be Malabar. With the formation of the DMRT especially, its activities had become more Malabar oriented and turned out to be of immense benefit to the area. The chapter gives a brief account of the important personalities who gave leadership to the SIS work in Kerala, like G.K. Devadhar, R. Suryanarayana Rao, A.V. Thakkar Bappa, V.S. Sreenivasa Sastri, V.R. Nayanar and Mrs. V.R. Nayanar.
Chapter V, "The DMRT and its Mission", is an extensive description and analysis of the work carried out by the DMRT. This chapter is subdivided into four sections: (1) Relief Operations (2) Educational Activities (3) Rural Reconstruction and (4) Social Reform.

The study concludes bringing out the character of the activities of the SIS/DMRT, their utility and credibility to the people of Kerala, and the way their activities formed a healing touch to the fragmented psyche of Malabar. The social transformation accelerated by the SIS/DMRT was crucial to this transitional phase of Kerala society.