Chapter 3

British Colonization in Kerala

3.1 Introduction
3.2 The Advent of the British East India Company
3.3 Impact of British Colonialism
   3.3.1 Political Effects
   3.3.2 Infrastructural Changes
   3.3.3 Educational Changes
   3.3.4 Impact on Society
   3.3.5 Impact on Languages and Literature
   3.3.6 Economic Impact
   3.3.7 Agricultural Changes
3.4 Conclusion
CHAPTER - 3
British Colonization in Kerala

3.1 Introduction

Modern Kerala comprising the three princely states of Travancore, Cochin and British Malabar has had a long tradition of trade and commercial relations with the outside world. If we agree with the contentions of the classical and neo-classical economists that foreign trade could make an impressive contribution to a country’s development and if not viewed simply as a device for achieving productive efficiency, but as an “engine of growth”¹ Kerala possessed a rare advantage. Up to the fifteenth century Arab traders enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the field of trade relations between India and the outside world. From the accounts left by Megasthene, the great Ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya and Pliny, a Roman traveller, it is clear beyond doubt that Greece and Rome traded with the western coastal regions of India. Pliny speaks of the great importance of Muziris, the modern Crangannore, as main seaport in Malabar.² After the Greeks and the Romans came the Arabs, who concentrated their activities in Malabar. The Arab travellers of the ninth and tenth centuries considered Malabar ports as great centres of maritime trade. For a considerable length of time from the eight century the Indian Ocean was in the hands of the Arabs.³ The capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks and the consequent closure of the land route to the East and compelled the European countries to find a new sea route to India. In the field of maritime exploration and geographical discoveries the Spanish and the Portuguese adventurers took

the lead. The Portuguese King Don Manuel and his son Henry, known as 'the Navigator', lavishly patronized the sailors. At last the Portuguese succeeded in discovering a new sea route to India in the last decade of the 15th century.

3.2 The Advent of the British East Company

The disappearance of Dutch power from Malabar politics left for the English East India Company as the only European power capable of maintaining a hold on Malabar and the rest of India. It is reliably learned that the first Englishman to come to India was Thomas Stevans, a Jesuit Priest. He came to India in a Portuguese ship in 1583 and stayed in Goa for some time. The first Englishman who came to Kerala was perhaps Master Ralph Fitch. In 1583 he left England for the East in the company of some merchants and landed in Cochin. Even before his arrival, in 1580 Robert Walsingham, the Secretary of State, put forward a proposal to Queen Elizabeth I that Sir Francis Drake be sent to Calicut, to try and establish trading agreements. However this did not materialize. Ralph Fitch frequently traveled between Calicut and Cochin. In 1615 Captain Kneeling arrived off the Calicut coast with three ships, which brought Sir Thomas Roe to the court of Jahangir. Kneeling visited Malabar in March 1616 and concluded a treaty with the Zamorin. Thus the Zamorin became one of the earliest allies of the English in India. As per the treaty signed with the Zamorin the British agreed to assist Calicut in expelling the Portuguese from Cranganore and Cochin. In return the Zamorin provided several trade facilities to the British. During the last days of Portuguese power in Kerala, the English entered into an agreement

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with them, which gave the latter access to all Portuguese ports in Kerala.\textsuperscript{8}
The British East India Company founded its first factory in the south in 1644 at Vizhinjam. In the same year the Zamorin gave them permission to build a factory at Calicut, but as he was suspicious of the motives of all foreign traders he was not inclined to give them further sites in his territory. In 1684 the British got permission from the Rani of Attingal to erect a factory at Anjengo and along with this they built another at Kovalom. The East India Company as a mere association of London merchants had at that time no political aims whatsoever. It was concerned only with acquiring for itself a monopoly of commercial activities. When, later they began to be supported by a military force, this caused the first conflict between the politico-economic coalition (the Rani and the Company) and the dominant castes of the Pillais (Tamil Brahmins) and the Madambis (the Nair Officers). The quarrel led to an attack in 1698 on the British fort at Angengo, by the local Nayar army-which was speedily defeated by the military superiority of the British troops.\textsuperscript{9} In March 1659, Robert Masters was sent to the newly started factory at Calicut. Later two Englishmen, Charles Smeaton and Robert Barbor were sent to establish another factory at Calicut on the invitation of the Zamorin.

Towards the end of the 17th century the English East India Company's choice for the location of its main factory on the Malabar Coast fell on Tellicherry. This was chosen probably because of its proximity to five pepper producing areas of Kottayam and Randattara. Cardamom was also available in the area lying at the head of the Periah pass into Waynad, to which Tellicherry was the nearest point of the coast. They obtained from the

\textsuperscript{8} K.V. Eapen, \textit{Church Missionary: Society and Education in Kerala}, (Kottayam: Kollet Publications, 1985), 27.
ruler of Kolathunad, permission to set up a factory at Tellicherry. Travancore was one of the earliest among the princely states to cultivate friendship with the East India Company. The chief interest of the British in Travancore was to establish their relations with that state “on a permanent basis of security for all times to come”. As early as 1723, a treaty of friendship and alliance was signed between Travancore and the East India Company. During the reign of Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) that friendship was further strengthened and consolidated on the basis of reciprocal assistance. The Company helped Marthanda Varma with arms and ammunition, receiving pepper in exchange. The friendship between the two continued unabated throughout the reign of Marthanda Varma. The last injunction of Marthanda Varma to his successor was to continue that friendship at any risk. Hence Rama Varma, popularly known as Dharma Raja (1758-98) also maintained friendly relations with the English.

The Mysorean invasion (1766-92) was a blessing in disguise for the English to strengthen their power in Kerala. During the time of Tipu’s invasion, the Malabar rulers sought the help of the English and their Tellicherry factory gave asylum to a number of Malabar princes. Tipu Sultan’s march towards Travancore forced the British to declare war against the Sultan. After the Mysorean interlude the English concluded fresh treaties with the rulers of Cochin and Travancore. A formal treaty was concluded between Travancore and the English East India Company in 1795 according to which the Raja accepted British supremacy and the Company agreed to help the state in the event of external aggression. It was also decided that the

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British should be represented by a ‘resident at the court of Travancore and Cochin.’ During the period of Balarama Varma, a treaty was concluded with the Company in 1805, which permitted the British to interfere in the internal affairs of Travancore in the event of internal strife or rebellion. The Raja also undertook to abide by whatever advice the British East India Company might choose to give him in regard to internal administration of the state. After the suppression of Velu Tampi rebellion the British could not face any formidable rival from Travancore. The stage was now completely set for their political interference in Travancore. As far as Malabar was concerned, it fell into the hands of the British from Tipu Sultan as per the provisions of the treaty of Seringapatam of 1792.

3.3 Impact of British Colonialism

3.3.1 Political Effects

The political climate in any state is determined by its internal affairs as well as its external relationships. In Kerala at the close of the eighteenth century the external relations were more decisive in determining the political features of the state. Generally, the British in India had two main objectives, in addition to their desire of prosperous trade activities - the domination of Indian states and the spread of Christian religion. The policies they propounded were calculated to make the Indian territories advantageous to the development of a market economy. By the second part of the eighteenth century, capitalist inroads had been made into a feudal social structure which proved suitable for the rapid expansion of a mercantile economy. It was their commercial and strategic motives that dominated British policies in Kerala. The treaties of friendship arrived at between the British and the

Kerala kings placed at their disposal a permanent army capable of putting down any possible revolt (as in the case of the Velu Tampi rebellion) and at the same time the said army was maintained at the expense of the state revenue. All possible steps were taken to preserve the social, economic and political interests of the British although socio-economic and political transformation came as by-products.16

In the princely states of Travancore and Cochin the foundations of a modern administrative system was laid by Colonel Munro (1770-1856), who was the British Resident for the states of Travancore and Cochin from 1810-1819.17 In Travancore he also functioned as Dewan.18 Munro realized how the weakness of the local administrative machinery since all powers–civil, military and judicial–were concentrated in the hands of officials called Kariakars. He curtailed their powers, re-designated them as tahasildars and reduced them to the position of revenue collectors 19 He introduced a regular system of civil service through the creation of a staff selection board and the officials were paid salaries and pensions. Administrative rules called

16. Recently there exist a lot of controversies regarding the issue of British impact on India. The easier assumptions have been questioned with the publication of volumes of literature on Indo-centric idea, which undermined the glorification of western impact. The British had their own motives, intentions and aims in picturising their role in transforming India society either to justify their responsibility of uplifting the little brown brother or it may be due to their commercial motives. Here in this study a balanced approach is adopted regarding the impact of British policies in Kerala.

17. Col. Munro was born in Scotland and came to India in 1791. He entered in the Madras state as a captain of the British army. He rose to the position of Quarter Marshall. In 1810 he was appointed as the Resident of Travancore. Kerala Society Papers 2, Series 7, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Society 1930; 1. George Mathew, Col. Munroe (art), (Kottayam: Malayala Manorama Diamond Jubilee Souvenir (Mal), 1950), 343-45.

18. Munro became the Travancore resident on October 1810. The Travancore King Balarama Varma died on 7 November 1810 and Rani Lakshmi Bai became the Regent Queen. On 10 December 1810 she wrote a letter to Munro to dismiss the corrupted Dewan Ummini Thampi and assume himself as Dewan. Thus he became the Dewan of Travancore in June 1811; N.K. Jose, Dewan Munroe (Mal) (Vaikom: Hobby Publications, 1983),7-11.

19. T.K. Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual, vol 2, (Thiruvananthapuram: Government Press, 1940), 630; Col.Munro after assuming the charge of the Dewan entrusted himself with the arduous task of thoroughly restricting the administrating Travancore. The primary object of Munroe’s administration was the removal of evils like corruption, maladministration and turbulence. See R. N.Yesudas, Col. John Munro in Travancore.
Chattavariyolas were introduced and a separate army for Travancore was constituted. As early as in 1811 the Devaswoms were placed under governmental control. Gouri Lakshmi Bai introduced the secretariat system in Travancore because of the instigation of Munroe. The very first matter that engaged the attention of Munroe was to thoroughly overhaul the machinery of the administration, which was still being, maintained on a quasi-feudal basis. The Huzur Cutcherry was thoroughly reorganized. The post of superintendents and deputy superintendents were created. He organized two battalions of Nayar sepoys and one Company of cavalry as “body guards” and escort to royalty and appointed European officers to be in command of the force. The police duties, which had till then been discharged by the military, were entrusted to a separate police corps, independent of both the judiciary and Revenue Department. The British unified the small kingdoms of Kerala, which were in constant conflict with each other. As per the provisions of the treaties signed with the rulers of Travancore and Cochin, they were authorised to maintain their own garrisons on two conditions; that these were never to be used for aggression, and that no member of the Nayar caste (in the case of Travancore) was to form part of them. The British wanted to ensure effective themselves of control over the administration of the native states. The position of the “Resident” was created for this purpose. Although the administrative power remained in the hands of the local rulers and other agents, decisions were subject to the previous approval of the Resident. On the political level of the of the two kingdoms- Travancore and Cochin, the alteration in the function of the East India Company gave rise to a peculiar kind of structure, due to the dual sources of power. There was first of all British authority - which had no

20. During the period of Velu Thampi 30 Devaswoms were placed under governmental control. Col. Munroe placed 348 Major Devaswoms under Government; George Mathew, Op.cit; no.15, 345
direct power to legislate, but possessing the power of veto, secondly the Rajah, now became Head of state, but a state which possessed only a weak administrative system because of the strongly autonomous character of the social units at the base and which had in addition lost the major element on which its power had depended; the Nayar army.

The British contact with the native states in Kerala contributed largely to the development of political consciousness. Perhaps English education was a major factor in articulating political consciousness and nationalism. The new generation had facilities to be able to obtain a modern English education and had therefore, gradually developed into a group of professionals, serving as the backbone of the middle class.21 However, the growth of nationalism was a slow process in Malabar. The anti-British nationalism and the emphasis given to native culture had not received much attention in South India in general and in Kerala in particular.22 The reforms introduced in Kerala were pointed in two directions. They are 1) the modernization of the state administrative structure, and 2) the creation of a more efficient and comprehensive revenue system, enlarging the revenue base with efficiently organized tax collection, which would overcome the problem of paying tributes to colonial powers. Meanwhile, the introduction of measures enabling the private purchase of land (1865) and the abolition of state monopolies promoted an economic climate that favoured direct colonial investment. The East India Company had been investing in spice plantations


22. When the British influence came, there emerged a dominant group with a grouping desire for a return to everything Indian, Whether Hindu or Muslim. Europeanisation was ridiculed, the ancient Sanskrit classics were emphasized and religious rites and ceremonies went on as before. Effect to synthesis western science and efficiency. English forms of law and administration, with traditional Indian custom and concepts were inevitable. However in literature, education, industry, law and social reforms the “Pax Britanica” left its impress upon Indian society for a long time to come.
in North Malabar since 1798. The British crown introduced laws facilitating grants of land to Europeans in India, while in the 1840s coffee production regions were created in Waynad, Nilgiris, Coorg and Travancore. Several social reforms were promoted from the mid 19th century onwards by colonial powers and missionaries in the form of promotion of education, abolition of slavery, promulgation of laws excluding low-caste converts from untouchability rules and a progressive curtailment of the powers of the traditional landed upper-caste aristocracy. These must all be seen in the context of the progressive commercialization of Travancore’s economy in particular against the development of European-owned plantations and the need for cheap, docile, mobile labour. In the political sphere westernization gave birth not only to nationalism but also revivalism, communalism, casteism and heightened linguistic consciousness and regionalism.

3.3.2 Infrastructural Changes

In Kerala, political disintegration set in with the disappearance of the Kulasekhharas as an imperial power by the end of the eleventh century. Innumerable petty states sprang up on the ruins of the Kulasekhara Empire. It was only under the British rule that unity was restored. In Travancore and Cochin the foundation of the modern administrative system was laid by Colonel Munroe. He gave a thorough overhaul to the entire administrative machine, bringing everything into line with the system prevailing in British India. In these states the indigenous system had given rise to corruption, inefficiency and mismanagement. No wonder ideas and institutions prevalent in British India gradually found their way into Kerala, western institutions like banking, public administration, military organization,

modern medicine, law etc. were all introduced. The hierarchy of political values was restructured. The introduction of modern means of communication such as the railways, bus travel, postal service, air and sea travel, press and radio favourably affected people’s lives in many ways. Western education broadened the outlook of the people, who started talking of their rights and freedoms.\textsuperscript{26} The introduction of new values, the rational and secular spirit and the ideologies of individualism, equality and justice assumed great importance.

The British administration introduced sweeping reforms in the fields of justice and law. For instance, Colonel John Munroe abolished cruel, inhumane and cruel punishments and introduced modern progressive methods. In Travancore, he established Zilla courts at five different centres namely Padmanabhapuram, Thiruvananthapuram, Mavelikara, Vaikom and Aluvaye.\textsuperscript{27} He also set up a court of appeal at Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of Travancore. He introduced the British court of civil and criminal procedures in 1861 in Travancore with the same modifications. A number of local courts were also set up in different parts of the state. Munroe established a Public Service Commission and dealt severely with corrupt government officials. For trying these officials a Huzur Court was constituted.\textsuperscript{28} After the suppression of the Velu Tampi rebellion the British introduced several administrative reforms in Travancore. They disbanded the Nayar militia and organized a new state force. Cutcheries and judicial organizations were introduced in various parts of the state. Officials were redesignated in line with the new reforms. For instance Dalwa became Dewan

\textsuperscript{28} C. Kesavan, “Munroe Saippau” (art) Kaumadi Thirunal Special Issue (Mal), November 1939, 9.
and below the Dewan the post of a Dewan Perishkar was constituted. Census and ethnological studies were started to serve the interest of the British, but indirectly it helped the natives in various ways. As a consequence of the British rule the transport communication, railways, postal and telegraphic facilities etc. developed and western medicine was introduced. Before colonization by the British there were petty Kingdoms and chiefs who were fighting each other. But the British brought them under their control and tried to unify the administration. The British not only reorganized but also expanded the administrative system. New departments such as revenue, agriculture and education, engineering, health, etc. were created. As a result the old system of non-paid hereditary officers who enjoyed certain privileges came to an end. Its place was taken over by a new type of employment, paid and transferable jobs, which were linked to educational qualifications. In the words of K.P Padmanabha Menon, “the administrative machinery established by the company was therefore altogether new and based on a system of an official hierarchy in which the people as a body had no place or voice. The village in whose hands much of the local administration remained and which had continued faithfully to do its work centuries, was completely ignored and eventually ceased to exist.” The people of Kerala regarded the British not simply as traders but as rulers and

32. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, History of Kerala, Vol. 1 (Thiruvananthapuram: Government Press, 1925), 268. Col. Munroe aptly puts it, “The strict gradation of authority established among the Kariagars and the entire commend they possessed over the services of the people contributed to perpetuate Military feelings in the country and to facilitate the means of communication. They were in fact, at once military and civil Governors exercised by the Karrigars were peculiarly liable to abuse in their capacity as revenue servants. Their constant interaction with the people gave them an influence which can be utilized for purposes of corruption. Here Munroe felt that it is necessary for the purity of deprive them of their magisterial powers. Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, "Col.Munroe", Kerala Society Papers, Vol.2, Service 7, 48.
administrators. For getting higher education several persons visited England and other foreign countries and became acquainted with foreign governmental systems. They saw with their own eyes the working of democracy. A spirit of revolt developed among them and they thought that it was their bounden duty to strive for their freedom with no sacrifice to great to achieve this. British rule was responsible for the development of a 'middle class' in India. The wonderful opportunities of trade and exchange brought by the British were instrumental in evolving this class. The ideas of democracy and people representation quickly developed. They began to agitate against the monopolisation of offices by the savarnas in Travancore. The growth and development of community-oriented politics in Kerala was in a sense the after effects of British rule.

It was a fact that until the advent of the British, the Keralites were socially very backward. Until 1850 they did not have proper road network and people had very little contact with people outside their own villages. For legal decisions the authorities mainly depended on smriti works. But from their contacts with the missionaries, a feeling of confidence and self-esteem developed among the downtrodden classes. Through heir acquaintance with people from the west they began to consider the government officials not as their masters but as their servants. They started thinking that a responsible government should function for the welfare of the whole people and not for a selected few.33 The people started conducting meetings and conferences for getting more enlightened, following the western model after their contacts with the British.

3.3.3 Educational Changes

The British authorities and the Christian missionaries were largely responsible for the spread of education in Kerala. Even though Kerala had a rich tradition of education, language and literature, before the arrival of the British, there were no formal educational institutions other than village schools known as *pial* schools, providing instruction to pupils. In most cases teaching was a labour of love and no fee was collected from the pupils.\(^\text{34}\) Even these educational facilities were not easily accessible to all; different educational opportunities were, in those days, determined by the pattern of land ownership based on the caste system. The system of education existing in pre-British Kerala, was that each village had a ‘*Patasala*’ and an ‘*Ezuthachan*’ or ‘*Asan*’ used to teach the children. All the children, belonging to different age groups were taught by a single teacher. This practice was obviously unscientific, as it could not provide the most minimal of mental, moral or intellectual development. Because of early marriages and social custom very few girls remained in school to the end of the course. *Namudiris* had special schools for teaching Sanskrit, Vedas and Sastras. Caste Hindu girls were taught music and poetry at home.\(^\text{35}\) Muslims had their *madrasas*. The Christians had their own church schools. The traditional *patasalas* were run by individual initiative with no aid from the state. Caste wise distribution of students according to the survey of 1822 conducted by James Munroe is shown in the following table (3.1).\(^\text{36}\)

\(^{34}\) Op. cit. no. 27, 691.


\(^{36}\) Economic and Political Weekly, 10 November 1984
In Kerala, in theory, education was the monopoly of the Brahmins. In practice it was, however, within the reach of almost all the socially privileged sections of the population. With the assumption of power by the British, the age-old social equilibrium began to get disturbed. It produced far-reaching consequences in the states of Travancore and Cochin. Malabar, which came directly under the British rule, was the least affected so far as social and economic improvements were concerned. The Protestant missionaries were the pioneers of English education in Travancore and Cochin. The beginnings of a western type of education were laid in Travancore by the British during the second decade of the nineteenth century when Protestant missionaries were invited from England to come to the state and start a process of establishing English schools with a view to converting people to Christianity. The British decided to concentrate their initial efforts in Travancore. It was the London Missionary Society (L.M.S) that laid the foundation of western education in Southern Travancore. The credit for introducing English education in central and North Travancore and Cochin goes to the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S). The missionaries received from the

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### Table 3.1

Caste-wise Distribution of students in indigenous schools -1822

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>2230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaizyas</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudras</td>
<td>3697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>3196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Castes</td>
<td>2760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>14155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Economic and Political Weekly, November 1984*
government large amounts of money, vast tracts of land, building materials for the construction of churches and educational institutions.  

Thomas Norton, with his headquarters at Alleppey was the first C.M.S missionary to propagate the idea of primary education in Travancore. He set up a school at Alleppey for the natives. He also started an orphanage and girls school. In his new schools, the majority of the teachers were Hindu. In 1834 the first English school was opened at Thiruvananthapuram. It was converted into the Raja’s free school on 18 December 1836. The first English school for girls in Travancore was opened in 1859. Because of the compulsions of the Christian missionaries and the social necessity, the Travancore kings opened special schools for *avarnas* and admitted them in government schools in course of time.

The following tables (3.2 and 3.3) compare the non-representation and representation of *avarnas* in schools.

**Table 3.2**

*Caste-wise student strength in English schools of Travancore, 1862.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Sudras</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>32.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malayali Sudras (Nairs)</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>28.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian (All Division)</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>19.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Brahmins</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>16.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namboodiris</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1579</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Travancore Administration Report*

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45. This was the first English School in South India But the backward castes were benefited from these schools; K. Saradamony, Op.cit, no.31, 119.
46. Travancore Administration Report, 1863-1864, 21
Table 3.3
Number of pupils classified according to caste represented in schools 1897-98.47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malayalam Brahmin</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Brahmin</td>
<td>4158</td>
<td>1475</td>
<td>5633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malayalam Sudra</td>
<td>42189</td>
<td>16075</td>
<td>58264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>14207</td>
<td>2486</td>
<td>16687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parayas</td>
<td>1509</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulayans</td>
<td>2236</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>2410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohamadamans</td>
<td>5079</td>
<td>1152</td>
<td>6210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Travancore Administration Report

The kings of Kerala patronized the education of the Brahmins as “a duty enshrined in the Dharma Sastras” and his patronage attracted a large number of Brahmins from Tamil district.48 As to the education of girls, they were educated together with boys in the native schools. The number seems to have been large. In most of these schools, there were from 20 to 30 or more boys and from 2 to 4 or 5 Sudra and Ezava girls.49 Until 1860 missionary institutions dominated in the area of education in Kerala. In 1865-66, in Travancore, for example the government schools had only 1067 pupils, while the L. M. S had 8081 and the C. M. S 2209 students and in addition the Catholics and the Syrians had 5917 pupils.50

The government of Travancore started several schools to give an English education to its people in the first half of the 19th century. But this was conducted under the strong influence of and with the direct help of the missionaries. This step was taken by the British as part of an attempt to create ultimately an India in British image. The missionaries received from the government large amounts of money, vast tracts of land, buildings and

47. Ibid; 1897-98, 135
building materials for the construction of churches and educational institutions. The contribution that the missionaries made to the cause of education in the state was, however, significant, not purely in terms of the numbers that they turned out, but in terms of the awareness that their efforts instilled in the minds of the depressed classes about their social rights and in the minds of the elite in society about the dangers to their social power inherent in giving a free hand to the missionaries in the field of education. The following table (3.4) shows the educational status of the population in 1899.

Table 3.4
The educational status of the population in Kerala in 1899

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community/Religion</th>
<th>Males (%)</th>
<th>Females (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Hindus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Brahmin</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Nairs</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Backward Communities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Ezhava</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Channar</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Depressed Classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Kurava</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Paraya</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Pulaya</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Christians</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V Muslims</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Travancore 1891

The educational system of the L. M. S in Travancore was principally composed of three main parts. The seminary at Nagarcoil as the highest institution, the boarding schools and Anglo-Vernacular schools as secondary schools and the village schools as primary schools. The following table (3.5) gives details about the L. M. S schools.

52. Census of Travancore, 1891.
### Table 3.5

**Educational Institutions of the L. M. S**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nagarcoil Seminary</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding Schools</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo Vernacular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day Schools</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Schools</td>
<td>5425</td>
<td>1290</td>
<td>6715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night Schools</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6346</td>
<td>1507</td>
<td>7853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census of Travancore 1891*

The L. M. S institutions accepted Hindu students also without any hesitation. In 1861, L. M. S had 141 village schools for boys and 31 for girls.

The first C. M. S missionary to be sent out to Cochin was the Rev. Thomas Damon. He opened an English school at Mattancherry in 1871 and another one at Cranganore. During this period, in response to the appeal made by the Jews of Cochin, the C.M.S established a school there. Boys as well as girls attended it and before long it came to have 96 pupils. A missionary by name Henry Baker established a large number of primary schools in different parts of Kottayam. The Christian missionaries also started secondary schools and grammar schools in different places of the state. It was under the direction of Col. John Munroe that the C. M. S established in first college in Kerala, the C. M. S College at Kottayam. Although the main purpose of the college was the better instruction of Syrian priests, the school also produced a number of officials belonging to different strata of the society. The Travancore government also welcomed the move and in 1818 Rani-Lakshmi Bhai donated Rs. 20,000 to the C. M. S College.

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53. Ibid, 1866-1867.
For secondary education, C. M. S created the Grammar school at Kottayam. These schools were an exact copy of grammar schools in Britain. In this school English, Malayalam and Sanskrit were taught to the pupils. In addition to this school C. M. S established seminaries at Alleppey, Cochin and Trichur to impart secondary education. The Travancore education code of 1910 and the Cochin education code of 1911 created severe problems to the C. M.S.\(^{57}\)

The C.M.S. Missionaries also gave due importance to female secondary education and established two schools i.e. the Baker Memorial Girl’s High school at Kottayam (the first of this kind in Kerala) and the Buchanan Girl’s High school at Pallom. The wives of the missionaries were the first to establish girl’s schools. There was some opposition at the beginning, but that was overcome by propaganda. In the course of time many girl schools were opened in different mission centres and female education spread throughout the country. Mrs. Anne Norton did much in imparting education to the girls at Alleppey. In 1881 the C.M.S mission started the girl’s church school to impart primary education to girls. In 1840 a female missionary, Mrs. Chapman started a school at Kottayam. Mrs. Bishop at Kottayam first began schools for the education of Hindu girls in 1872. At Cochin, Mrs. Ridsdale started a girl’s school in 1826. In Trichur girl schools were started by the C.M.S. in 1841. The C.M.S. also started vocational educational institutions. In Alleppey such a school was started in 1842. An industrial school was started at Kottayam by C.M.S. in 1893. While in 1883 such a school was started at Trichur, a third one was started at Tiruvalla in 1910. During the period from 1819 to 1822 the missionaries established a few boarding schools in which training in knitting, spinning and needlework was

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taught. In quantitative terms, the achievements made by the missionaries in the area of women’s education were negligible. But the impact of their efforts on the attitude of the society towards women’s education was important and far-reaching.

Malabar had, in common with Travancore and Cochin, a strong tradition of education. The indigenous system continued to exist among the different higher castes of Hinduism, the Christians and the Muslims. However, since Christians were a minority and the missionary activities were quite limited (confined mostly to the activities of the Basel Mission) the growth of the western system of education was much more delayed in Malabar than in the other two regions.

The impact of western education was greatly felt by various communities in Kerala. The higher castes, the custodians of religion and Dharmas, gradually realized the need for change and were forced to adjust themselves to the new socio-economic situation. The modern ideas of democracy and responsible government, the very centre of western education and culture, opened a new vision of political thought in Kerala, along with the realization of a new sense of personality, self-respect and vitality. To the socially suppressed classes this foreign influence proved to be a great blessing. It opened a new era of social freedom based on the rule of law.\textsuperscript{58} To the upper castes and especially the Nayars, who lost some of their old privileges, the new type of education became a key to jobs, which offered them security without affecting their status and rank. Their caste domination acquired a new form as they established a monopoly in the administrative service in the early years. On the other hand a civic consciousness developed among the avarna class as a result of the British

reforms and educational advancements. A new spirit of enquiry and criticism developed among the low castes.\(^{59}\)

The hierarchy as exhibited by the Hindu society was challenged by the development of this new education system. The concept of social responsibility emerged, domestic ideas developed and people became more and more conscious of their rights. Towards the close of the 19\(^{th}\) century the new elite of all the communities wanted to look forward instead of backwards and embrace the elements of modernization. It widened the contradictions between the \textit{savarna} and \textit{avarna} communities. For the higher castes educational advancement was a means by which they could hope to secure a just share of political power and representation. For the \textit{avarnas} education meant much more than this; it was the door to a new world. It was the instrument of emancipation from the social and economic subjection, which the caste system had imposed upon them. It was a way to escape from hard and exhausting toil and degrading labour. In subsequent periods the \textit{avarna} community leaders never hesitated to proclaim their loyalty and indebtedness to the British contributions. For instance in Travancore, in 1909 the S.N.D.P leader C. Krishnan proclaimed his community’s extreme loyalty to the British Government.\(^{60}\) \textit{Vivekodayam}, the official mouthpiece of S.N.D.P. Yogam argued, ‘the peace and freedom that we enjoy now has not been experienced by us under any other dispensation. Education drives away the darkness hidden in the nook and corners of our country and transforms

\(^{59}\) M. N. Srinivas, writes, “The lower castes wanted a share in the new opportunities and they were also stirred by new equalitarian winds blowing across India. The movement assumed a particularly. Vigorous form in peninsular India where the Non-Brahmin Castes succeeded in obtaining for themselves concessions and privileges; Op. cit. no. 24, 73.

\(^{60}\) He said “our most important duty is to declare the indebtedness and allegiance to the British Government. It is under them that we were enjoying this freedom that their protection that we raised our position to this much level; Presidential address given by C. Krishnan in the 6\(^{th}\) S N D P. Annual meeting held at Ernakulam on 15 May 1909; N. K. Damodaran (comp) \textit{S N D P Yogathile Adiyakshaprassangagal} (Mal), (Thiruvananthapuram: Maryland Publishers, 1982), 54.
millions who were forced to live like animals into human beings. The administrative policy of the British has granted us the freedom, which was beyond our reach within the framework of sublime religion. It has abolished the monstrous practices and corruption and extirpated the fangs of the venomous serpent of the inhuman caste system.”

The contact with the outside world especially through educational and commercial relations opened a world of new experiences to the indigenous people. Before these contacts the people were living like frogs in a well, believing that the sky and surrounding were little wider. But after these contacts people began to look towards different places and periods. C. Krishnan the editor of Mitavadi wrote, “There is at present a restlessness agitating our whole community. Go anywhere you will find a spirit of discontent with the existing state of things, a craving for a better and loftier ideal.” In the words of M. J. Koshi, “It should not however, lead us to suppose that the genesis of political consciousness in Travancore and Cochin was the natural sequel to the kind of tempered monarchy that might have generally prevailed in these states from the days of recorded history. Apart from the above background, the states became sufficiently mature to imbibe the liberal and democratic traditions of western culture which channeled its way through English education, and the British Indian institutions of the 19th and early 20th centuries.”

One of the most important effects of modern colonialism was the wide popularity attained in the field of women’s education. Kerala Chinthamani, a Malayalam magazine stated, ‘within a short span of time English education got wide popularity among the people and womenfolk

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also became its beneficiaries. In earlier times women spent their time mostly in kitchen and having no outside contacts, but now we can see women dressed decently going to the educational institutions with books in hand and engaging in health exercises. Due to their contact with the new culture, the people learnt a new lesson that the primary duty of a state was to work for the welfare of all the subjects and not for the happiness of a few. The \textit{karanavans} or family elders propagated a false belief that if people were educated along western lines they would give up their caste and religion and disobey the elders. The missionary schools were instrumental in destabilizing the caste and class structure in Kerala. The lower castes that were once neglected were educated in the mission schools. A civic consciousness developed among the \textit{avarna} sections mainly due to the missionary policy of accommodating all sections of people in their educational institutions. It was from the Hindu \textit{avarna} castes that most of the people converted to Christianity. The number of converts from the Hindu \textit{savarnas} was negligible. The \textit{avarna} classes began to demand equal opportunities irrespective of castes and classes due to the exhortations of the missionaries. In a letter written by King Uthradom Thirunal of Travancore to the Madras Governor Lord Harrison on 21 April 1856, it has been pointed out, “Due to the popularity of the missionary activities, conflicts arouse on caste, local customs and manners. It began to weaken the traditional controlling power of the state over the Hindu subjects.”

\subsection*{3.3.4 Impact on Society}

Generally the British policy was non-interference in the social issues of the States. Their policy in Kerala was guided mainly by commercial

\begin{itemize}
\item 64. Kerala Chintamony (Mal), Book 7, vol. 8, Trissur, 1913, 210
\end{itemize}
considerations. The British were ready to allow the existence of the individual kingdoms as long as they were willing to accept their overlordship. It is interesting that the customary caste rules and practices were never interfered with by the British administrators, for it was a fixed principle of Government that it should not interfere with social laws and native customs unless there was a general and unequivocal demand for reforms on the part of the people themselves.\(^{67}\) But as part of their commercial and material considerations they were forced to introduce some drastic changes in society. Their general liberal outlook and the need for the facilities to be provided for the propagation of Christianity compelled them to think otherwise. Thus even though there was no direct administrative interference with caste procedure, there was an informal, un-structured sort of action against some of the more barbarous aspects of caste which both the western missionary and the administrator found repugnant to their notions of human dignity.\(^{68}\) When the British administrators realized that they could find a large number of people from the Hindu avarna communities to convert to their faith, they acted immediately. For instance in 1871 J. I. Minchin, the acting Resident of the Travancore and Cochin states asked the Dewans of the state to enquire and report on discrimination faced by the low castes. The Dewans duly reported especially on the prohibitions imposed on them over the use of public roads and exclusion from public offices.\(^{69}\)

The British were always concerned about the outdated and unscientific customs practised in Kerala and persuaded the authorities to rationalize or abolish these practices as soon as possible. The British Resident

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\(^{69}\) Archives News Letter, Vol1 No.4 September 1975, "Kerala State Archives," Nalanda, Thiruvananthapuram
Nevil wrote two letters addressing the Dewan of Travancore on 18 December 1868 to reduce the expenses that the Government was spending for conducting *Murajapam*\(^{70}\) ceremonies. In these letters the Resident reiterated that such ceremonies were wasteful and would not serve the purpose of promoting the welfare of the people. The expenditure was larger than receipts and money had been lavishly spent to promote the idleness of a section of the people (Brahmin).\(^{71}\) This single incident itself was enough to appreciate the modern progressive outlook of a foreign power looking for the welfare of a large community even though commercial considerations too forced them to act accordingly. Again in 1871 the Madras government stated that the cost of the *Dewaswoms* and *Uttupuras* was “an unnecessarily heavy charge on the state” and ordered the Resident to advise the Travancore Government to conduct a careful scrutiny of their expenditure with a view to reducing it. They also advised the Maharaja to reduce palace expenses so as to release funds for more useful purposes such as public works and education.\(^{72}\)

The timely interference of the Christian missionaries and the British authorities helped the low caste people of Kerala to free themselves from the clutches of many social evils. In 1865 *Oozhiyam*\(^{73}\) was abolished while

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\(^{70}\) Murajapam Ceremony consisted of chanting of Vedic Mantras, which lasted for 56 days. This long ceremony included Sahasrnamajapam, Mantrajapam, Murajapam and Jalajapam. The worst thing associated with this ceremony was that for satisfying the Brahmins the state machinery spent lakhs of rupees from the Treasury; Naduvettam Gopalakrishnan, *Kerala Charitradharakal* (Mal) (Thiruvananthapuram: Malabar Publications, 2003), 158; V. Krishnan Nambudiri, “*Murajapu Mahamaham: Udbhawam Chadangkalam*” (art) *Mathrubumi Weekly* (Mal) Calicut, 3 February 1936, 29-34; Rasika Renjini (mal) *Magazine*, vol. iv.no.5, 1905, 284-293; “*Murajaphinte Ulpathi*” (art), *Navajeevan* (mal) *Magazine*, vol.17, no. vi, 1942, 12; Mitavadi (Mal), Book 6, vol.12, January 1918, 9-10; “*Kerala Navodhanam: Kandathil Varghese Mappilayude Mugaprasangangal*”, (Kottayam, Malayala Manorama, 1997), 278-280.

\(^{71}\) Cover File, No 294, “Kerala State Archives”, Nalanda, Thiruvananthapuram


\(^{73}\) It was a sort of personal gratuitous service and forced labour for the government. It was of two kinds namely compulsory manual lab our and supply of vegetables and provisions for the requirement of the palace and other institutions and to render service for repair of public buildings.
Viruthi\textsuperscript{74} was abolished in 1894 in Travancore. The Pandarapattom
proclamation of 1865 granted the possession of the land with the right of
devolution and sale to all tenants. The Jenmi Kudian proclamation of 1867
defined the relation between the Jenmies and the tenants by which a
considerable measure of relief was accorded to the tenants, The British
introduced census in India since it was necessary for them to understand the
people and culture of the land. The census also created division among the
people. The identification of caste and religion with specific economic
interest suggested by the census touches the heart of the communal problem.
Apart from that, modern methods of counting and classification have
affected the formation of new subjective identities.\textsuperscript{75} In 1931 the Travancore
census observed, “the most satisfactory method of dividing the people into
groups of social, political and economic purpose seems to be the one based
on religion combined with race or caste.”\textsuperscript{76} The census reports supplied
necessary data to the \textit{avarnas} and neglected communities encouraging them
to react against oppression. The census revealed many harsh realities
especially affecting the low caste people who realized how minority sections
of the population controlled the vast resources of the state. They raised their
demands for new opportunities by quoting census figures. The census
reports were instrumental in creating communal and caste consciousness in
Kerala.\textsuperscript{77} Thus the most important stimulus towards caste-cluster
consciousness realized by the British presence was neither their advanced

\textsuperscript{74} Viruthi was feudal in nature. The Viruthi holder had to render manual service and supply
provisions to the Government in lieu of lands enjoyed by him. If the Viruthi holder was not
enthusiastic enough to render adequate services, the lands were liable to be resumed by the
Government and assigned to some body else P.S. Velayudhan, Kerala (art), S. P. Sen (ed.)

\textsuperscript{75} Dick Kooiman, \textit{Communalism and Indian Princely States; Travancore, Baroda and Hyderabad in the

\textsuperscript{76} The Census of Travancore, 1931, 329.

\textsuperscript{77} For details on caste and census see Satish Despande and Nandini Sundar, “Caste and Census:
technology nor their military powers and administrative skill, but rather the growth of caste cluster consciousness, which was an unintended but direct consequence of the fact that the foreigners engaged in a continuous attempt to describe, define, interpret and categorize the social complexity that India presented to them—a society so puzzlingly different from their own.”

The British contact with Kerala accompanied by colonial conquest and capitalist penetration led to the restructuring of the society. Colonialism profoundly altered the spatial and material organization of the society. It liberated the society from the stagnation of traditionalism and started an enduring growth process in living standards and general intellectual development. The changes in the material basis of society affected the social institutions, customs and attitudes of the people. The internal social institutions such as the caste system and joint family, social mores, habits, beliefs, attitudes, values and traditions had to adapt themselves to the new colonial environment. The authority of the dominant castes in social matters was weakened by colonial rule. The Brahmin landlords who had the right to exercise judicial power over the members of the low castes, living and working on their land, were deprived of this privilege by new, secular laws, which were based on the principle of equality for all the people. From the 1850’s the balance of the political and social system was increasingly disturbed as new resources became available for which all men, regardless of caste or religion, could compete on fairly equal terms. The commercial or menial occupations of many Christians and low caste Hindus and their association with European missionaries gave them advantages in their

80. Ibid. 158.
competition, which the castes like the Nayars did not share.\textsuperscript{81} As far as the lower castes were concerned westernization became doubly desirable, it subsumed not only things valuable in themselves but something, which the high castes had, and they did not. To catch up with the high castes mere \textit{sanskritisation} was not enough. Thus they became more determined to obtain western education and the fruits that only it could yield. High caste dominance in education and in the new occupations thus provided the reason for the backward class movement.\textsuperscript{82} As a consequence of the western contact, several traditional beliefs and practices unhelpful to society were discarded and many new customs, institutions and social practices were adopted.

It is certainly true that prior to the advent of the missionary activities, Kerala society was as a whole very backward. The caste system and obnoxious practices like un-touchability, un-approachability and un-see ability were used as weapons to subjugate the \textit{Avarnas}. Even the customs, dress, language and occupations were based on the caste prescriptions. Christian missionaries gave a rude shock to the primitive and outdated social abuses through their fearless efforts. They worked among the \textit{Avarnas} and the untouchables. A feeling of confidence and self–esteem developed among the downtrodden as a consequence of their works. The \textit{Shanar} revolt and the struggle started by the \textit{Ezhava} women for covering the upper part of their body were not mere commercial riots, but the result of the development of a socio-political consciousness developed among the \textit{Avarnas} as a consequence of the missionary initiative. The British introduced factories and other industrial establishments. By the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century about 50 factories were opened in

\textsuperscript{81} Op. cit. no. 24, 97.
\textsuperscript{82} Op. cit. no. 67, 213.
Travancore alone. This produced not only capitalist and middle class, but also workers in large numbers. Most of these workers hailed from *Avarna* castes. As a consequence of the new development, Kerala at the end of the 19th century was very different from what it was at the dawn of the new century. The powerful economic forces set in motion by the land and revenue policies of the British, as well as the other measures they introduced shook Kerala society to its core and resulted in new ferment, which gathered tremendous momentum in the next century. But in the highly stratified society that existed in Kerala at that time, the impact of these measures did not fall evenly on all sections of society. Different communities and castes felt the benefits and hardships of the new measures differently and in varying degrees of intensity. The British government had granted the untouchables equal rights to enter public service, attend public educational institutions, walk along highways, and make use of public offices such as courts and post offices. Equality in regard to the enjoyment of these rights by these weaker sections remained a far-away dream, as it was difficult for them to avail it practice.83

One of the far-reaching consequences of the British rule was the impact it had on the life of the women folk. One undisputedly significant development in the late nineteenth century Kerala was the emergence of an English educated class that began to review the existing social order, ideas and institutions in sharply critical terms.84 Several women’s organizations gradually began to take shape, which bear the name *Streesamajams*. Equally

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important was the appearance of several women’s magazines. The earliest of women’s magazines in Malayalam, the Keraleeya Sugunabodini, started publication in 1892. Emancipating women through education and social legislation was one of the most important achievements of British rule. British officials and Christian missionaries launched an intensive campaign against child marriage, the ban on widow remarriage, polygamy and temple prostitution known as the Dewadasi system. In Kerala the Christian missionaries were the pioneers in the field of female education. Contact with the west created in the women of Kerala a new sense of their own importance as individuals and made them aware of their rights in society. Thus the British produced a valuable contribution in the transformation of Kerala society from change resistant nervous outlook to one of confidence and hope for the future.

Contact with westerners had far reaching consequences in the everyday life of the people of Kerala. It impacted on culture, etiquette, manners, behaviour patterns, dress, life style, house building, matrimonial relations and so on. It is an accepted fact that the improvement in the status of women, the abolition of Sati, the amelioration of the sufferings of the low castes and outcastes, were all achieved consequent on the strong advocacy of the Christian ethic. It should also be pointed out that the advent of modern forms of transportation and communication had much to do with the abolishing of the grosser manifestations of untouchability and the lowering of barriers between the castes. For the guidance of the Christian converts the marriage code, embodying twelve basic truths based on the Christian scriptures was also formulated. A summary is as follows:

1) God established marriage as a divine institution and blessed sex, marriage, and family life. Although dishonoured and polluted by
human perversions it is not a social evolution or a heritage from any brute ancestry.

2) When marriage is considered a blessed ordinance and its privileges are used in accord with divine requirements, it brings blessed results to individuals and nations.

3) The marriage relation is ultimately the normal state. Unqualified abstinence because of selfish ambition is wrong and invites retributions.

4) Christian marriage is an unalterable monogamous union of one man and one woman.

5) It is established by mutual and unconstrained consent. Young people will consult their parents and respect their wishes where ever possible.

6) The union is “lifelong”. “Termination, except by death, always involves a transgression of the divine law for either husband or wife. Divorce is permitted only in the case of marital unfaithfulness.”

7) “Common devotion to the one Lord and Saviour” should be a decision factor rating above “wealth physical attraction intelligence and social position.” Compatibility of age and culture is normally essential for mutual understanding and co-operative effort.

8) The husband is head the Christian house the wife is the helping companion.

9) As the purpose of Christian matrimony is the procreation of children, obviating is purpose obstinately and deliberately means the sacrificing of the full blessing and happiness of marriage.
10) Having a family altar in which Jesus Christ as savior is acknowledged and his spirit invoked, “is effective insurance against broken hearts and shattered promises.”

11) In Christian marriage there must be an intensity of pure, self-sacrificing love and no frigid aloofness.

12) The future helpmate should be carefully and prayerfully selected.85

The comparatively high apparent adjustment among married couples among the Christian converts may be credited to a common religious faith and a mutual desire and willingness to work out their personal problems of adaptation in the light of the faith. The contact with the west produced the influenced in the fields of food, clothing, cultural adaptations, transportation, recreations, health conditions etc.

The British rule was largely responsible for the introduction and diffusion of a western style of education in Kerala, which penetrated into and transformed all the communities. The one community, which most profoundly benefited out of this new educational system, was the Nayar community. With the advent of education Marumakkathayam became hopelessly unworkable. It offended against every principle of political economy and of healthy family life. Towards the end of the 19th century the Nayars began to question the existing social institutions. They considered Marumakkathayam a primitive way of life. The advance of English education among the Nayars and the free contact they had with the developed communities made them look down upon the primitiveness of their family institutions and clamour for a change. The western style of education, which

was increasingly propagated and demanded in Travancore, tended to devalue ritual sanctity. The convenience and comfort of a man living with his mother and sisters and his wife and children in the peace and quiet of a separate home has to be preferred to the primitive habit of living and messing together in the uncongenial surroundings of an overgrown Tharavad. Because of the constant demands of the progressive Nairs the Nayar Regulation was passed which abolished Marumakkathayam system. Similar legislation was passed for the benefits of the Christian and Ezhava communities.

### 3.3.5 Impact on Language and Literature

The contact with westerners produced exceptional consequences in the field of Malayalam language and literature. The Christian missionaries lavishly contributed for the growth of Malayalam language and literature. They were credited with the formulation of several lexicons, books and grammatical works. To the Christian missionaries goes the abiding honor of having taken the first tangible step towards the introduction and diffusion of western knowledge. Nineteenth century Kerala witnessed the growth of journalism, which made possible the communication of ideas. In this field also the Christian missionaries were the pioneers. It was the Jesuit missionaries who brought the press to India. They started the first press at Goa in 1556. The Portuguese missionaries started the printing presses for the first time in Quilon and Vipinkotta in the 16th century. English education and journalism spread out in Kerala after the emergence of L. M. S and C. M. S missionaries. For propagating Christianity these missionaries started

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88. Vedopadesam was published from the press started at Goa; M. N. Achuthan, *Swaathamthraya Sanaravum Malayala Sahithiyavum* (Mal), (Trissur: Kerala Sahitya Academy, 2003), 63.

89. Ibid. 64.
printing press in various parts of Kerala and later the indigenous people also followed the suit. The 19th century witnessed the emergence of such printing presses as C.M.S Press Kottayam (1821), Litho Press, Tellicherry (1845), Vidya Vilasam Press, Calicut (1861), Kerala Mitram press, Cochin (1881) Vidya Ratna Prabha Press, Kunnamkulam (1880), Kerala Kalpadrumam Press, Trissur (1880), etc. The Basel mission of Tellicherry headed by Dr. Herman Gundert, published the first paper ‘Rajya Samacharam’ in Malayalam in 1847. ‘Rajya Samacharam’ means News of the Kingdom. It continued its publication till November 1850 and till then 42 issues come out. In 1848 another magazine was started by the C.M.S. at Kottayam known as Jnana Nkshepam or Treasury of knowledge. The persons behind this magazine were Arch Deacon Koshy and Rev. George Mathen. Jnana Nkshepam was the first Malayalam journal from Travancore. An English periodical Western Star and its Malayalam edition Paschima Tharaka started in 1864 constituted a great milestone in the field of journalism. Devji Bhimji started it. Charles Lawson was its first editor. T. J. Pylee and Kaloor Oomman edited Paschima Tharaka. Later the press was shifted from Cochin to Thiruvananthapuram and the work continued by C. J. Kurien. The Catholic missionaries started a newspaper Sathyananda Kahalam from Kunnamavu in 1876. In 1881 Devji Bhimji started Kerala Mitram from Cochin and Varghese Mappilai was its editor. In 1881 another magazine Vidya Vilasini started publication from Thiruvananthapuram. Later under the same name two other publications came- one from Varnaprakasham Press, Mayyanadu, and Kollam in 1897 and


another from Manimohanam press, Kollam in 1899. Vidya Vinodini was a magazine started from Trissur.

Not only did the Christian missionaries learn the Malayalam language but they did everything in their power to popularize its study along scientific lines by providing the necessary study aids in the form of lexicons and books on grammar. The Doctrina Christiana, which contained the teaching of St. Francis Xavier, was the first book to be printed in Kerala. It was in Tamil and was published on 20th October 1578 from Divya Rakshaka’s Kalalayam in Kollam. It is an astonishing fact that Malayalam types were first used outside India in printing the famous Hortus Malabaricus which contained the names of plants in four languages, namely Latin, Arabic, Sanskrit and Malayalam. But the first book, which used Malayalam types exclusively, was Samkshepa Vedantam of Father Clement. Dr. Cladius Buchanan was the first English missionary who took the initiative to get a Malayalam book printed in India. Up to 1839 the Travancore government did not have its own printing press; all the printing needed for the government was done at the Kottayam C. M. S press. In 1807 Claudius Buchanan translated the four Gospels from Syriac to Malayalam. He also took steps for the translation of Bible into Malayalam.

One of the most important problems faced by the Christian missionaries in Kerala was the unavailability of standard books or dictionaries in Malayalam. When the Protestant missionaries came to Kerala at the beginning of the 19th century they had to face the difficult problem of learning a new language in order to establish close contact with the natives. Naturally they turned their attention to the task of compiling dictionaries

92. Ulloor S. Parameswaran Iyer, Kerala Sahitya Charithram (Mal), vol. 1v, Kozhikode, 1974, 143.
and grammar books.\textsuperscript{94} Two dictionaries were prepared by Benjamin Bailey one Malayalam-English and the other English-Malayalam. His main aim was to help the Europeans who wanted to study the Malayalam language. Another missionary Richard Collins made valuable contribution to the development of Malayalam lexicography. With the help of native scholars like Raman Varier and Subrahmanian Potti he compiled a Malayalam dictionary. The valuable contributions rendered by Herman Gundert deserve special mention. He wrote the famous \textit{Malayala Bhasa Vyakaranam} in 1868.

In the field of Malayalam prose writing also the Christian missionaries rendered valuable contributions. The \textit{Varthamana Pusthakam}, of 18\textsuperscript{th} century travelogue by Paramakkal Thoma Kathanar, a Catholic priest was the first of its kind in this respect.\textsuperscript{95} Henry Baker translated “The Scripture History” written by Watt into Malayalam. He worked strenuously for the development of Malayalam prose by writing many hymns and tracts. The work written by Aimanam P. John \textit{India Charitram} served as a useful tool for the foreigner to understand the culture and society of Kerala. Thus for the development of Malayalam language and literature, the service rendered by the British especially the Christian missionaries was praiseworthy.

\textbf{3.3.6 Economic Impact}

The economic changes triggered off by our British relations were more than pronounced than those in any other fields. The policies carried out by the British administrators in their directly administered territories of Malabar and the reforms promoted by them in the princely states of Travancore and Cochin were calculated to advance their commercial interests. With this fixed aim in mind they introduced reforms in agriculture

\textsuperscript{95} Op. cit. no. 94, 39.
and industry, joint stock companies, commercial banks and several other public works. The first joint stock company floated in Travancore was Punalur Paper Mills, started in 1889 by Cameron Chism, a European company based in Kollam. Plantations and factories in Alleppey and Kollam, public works and trade with the British, helped the creation of a thriving economy. The first factory set up at Alleppey in 1859 by Dara, a European. As early as 1793 the British assigned the ownership of lands to Jenmis as part of their economic objectives. However, in Travancore a series of developments strengthening the position of the tenants viz a viz the Jenmis, culminated in 1865 in the granting of full ownership rights to tenants on Sirkar lands, and in 1896 in conferring irredeemable tenancy rights on Kanam tenants on private lands. It was the Europeans who introduced the plantation crops like cashew, tea coffee, rubber, etc. to Kerala. The plantation agriculture became an important form of exploitation of resources in the colonies, initiated by European capital and enterprise. Coffee was introduced firstly in Waynad in 1840. But the systematic cultivation of coffee started in Travancore in the 1860s. The missionaries showed a serious interest in coffee cultivation. In 1870s the L. M. S missionaries themselves started coffee planting in an area of 50 acres to finance their operations. Although tea has a very long history, tea plantations were introduced in south India on a commercial scale around late 1840’s. The tea industry was primarily an export industry when it was first introduced in Kerala. The role played by


British managing agencies in this process of change needs special attention. The institution called the managing agency system became active in Kerala to provide various services to the plantation enterprises viz. the processing and storage of coffee, shipping insurance and the procurement of estate supplies etc. Towards the end of the 19th century when British companies extended the plantation activities, the managing agencies expanded their activities to include budgetary control, cultivation and manufacturing advice, exchange control and handling and staff recruitment at the higher level. By the end of the 19th century the cultivation of rubber was started on an experimental basis in Malabar areas and by the beginning of the 20th century the cultivation was on a commercial footing.

Trade in spices and hill produce increased the wealth of the people. Plantation companies flourished, job opportunities increased in private trade and in plantation companies. A survey conducted in Cochin showed in 1850 the cost of living rose by 103 percent. To give a boost to the growing trade and commerce, the state was forced to introduce many public works. Large funds were earmarked for this purpose. Roads, waterways, canals, ports, harbours and irrigation structures were built. Moreover, there was reclamation of backwaters for rice cultivation, introduction of telegraph, spinning, weaving, manufacture of coir products, tile industry, overseas trade etc developed at about the same time. The native administrators were forced to proclaim new reforms. In Travancore the period of Dewan Madhava Rao (1858-1872) was noted for the introduction of many public works on a European model to modernise the state and to check the ever-increasing conversion of the low castes to Christianity. He set out to remodel

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the administration and won a good name with the British Government for himself and the Travancore Sirkar. His modernization process included such reforms as the establishment of public works Department, construction of roads, waterways canals, ports and harbours, introduction of European plantations, starting postal and telegraphic facilities and the promulgation of commerce and industry. He introduced British currency for commercial transactions. Branches of Madras bank were established at Trivandrum and Alleppey and police department was reorganized on the lines of the police in British India. The British introduced factories and other industrial establishments. By the early 20th century about 50 factories were opened in Travancore alone. But one of the baneful consequences of Kerala’s British was that it ruined prosperous village cottage industries sending thousands of skilled craftsmen out of employment and means of livelihood.

3.3.7 Agricultural Changes

Ever since plantation agriculture, initiated by European capital and enterprise, became an important form of exploitation of resources in the colonies, small holding and small holders in the plantation sector were considered a separate category. There were a number of European proprietary planters among the pioneers. They got phased out with the vertical integration of production, distribution and marketing. Another group of small holders were the indigenous farmers who took up cultivation of plantation crops. In the central Travancore region, there were farmers belonging to the Syrian Christian community who were deeply involved in “cash crop” cultivation particularly in pepper. Subsequently they are found to be active in another plantation crop i.e., natural rubber. In southern Travancore area, though there was a vigorous presence of small holders, they could not withstand the

100. Op. cit. no. 86, 70.
onslaught of the blight; along with big sized holders of coffee. In the neighboring Central Travancore region, the proprietary planters who were active in early planting of coffee also disappeared with the onset of blight. These two regions subsequently shifted to tea.

The habit of drinking coffee and of cultivating coffee beans was known in Kerala well before the arrival of the European planters. Nevertheless it was one of the crops around which the plantation system of agriculture evolved in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As British planters found Travancore to be a peculiarly well adapted for spice and coffee cultivation, successive Residents took interest to promote these plantation crops. In 1824 by a proclamation the Travancore government expressed interest in promoting the cultivation of coffee. For this purpose people were exhorted to develop gardens on the banks of big rivers. Such lands were to be granted free from tax for four years and even then onwards, to be taxed only at the lowest possible tax rate. In almost all the policy measures issued to promote plantations, there obviously was a bias in favour of European interests. In the early years of planting few indigenous persons had shown interest in developing plantations. But the real interest in plantation agriculture developed among the indigenous population only with the emergence of rubber cultivation. Dewan T. Madhava Rao took special interest in introducing plantation industries including coffee.

The missionaries had special interests in popularizing the plantation agriculture throughout Kerala. There were even coffee missions of the London Missionary Society (L. M. S) in Travancore. In 1870s L.M.S missionaries themselves started coffee planting in an area of 50 acres to

102. The Travancore Land Revenue Manuel, vol.v, p.432
finance their operations. In southern Travancore there were eight plantations owned by missionaries with an area of 863 acres covering 4.1 percent of total coffee area and an average acreage of 107 per holding.\textsuperscript{103} The missionaries served as a channel through which converts to Christianity found their way to Ceylon. Even though the missionaries wanted the converts to engage completely in mission work, they could not deny them the benefits accruing from participation in coffee cultivation. Many of them were able to contribute substantially to the building up of self-sufficient congregations. This led the missionaries to actively promote participation by converts in coffee planting. With the added incentive of missionary encouragement a good number of local converts were likely to have moved into coffee cultivation.\textsuperscript{104}

In the course of time the small and big coffee holdings practically got wiped out with the vagaries of a plant disease, depression and competition from Brazil. Most of the coffee land was used for the cultivation of other crops. Nearly 90 percent of Indian coffee was for export. Hardly any home market had developed. But even though from 1896, the area under coffee cultivation in south India declined, it did not show up in export figures. The fact that exports did not decline in spite of the shrinking area under cultivation should be indicative of increased productivity. It was clear that the European planting interests in Kerala shifted to tea along with the proprietary planters being forced to sell or mortgage their coffee interests to tea companies. The following table (3.6) indicates the state of plantation companies in Travancore.


\textsuperscript{104} Op. cit. no. 97, 25.
Table 3.6
Increase in the number of plantation companies in Travancore (1905-1945)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of companies incorporated and operating in Travancore</th>
<th>Number of companies incorporated elsewhere and operating in Travancore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Land Tenures in Kerala 1850-1960

In Travancore a series of developments strengthened the position of the tenants viz-a-viz the Jenmies, which culminated in 1865 in the granting of full ownership, rights to tenants to sirkar lands and in 1896 in conferring permanent tenancy rights on Kanam tenants on private lands. In direct contrast to this in Malabar, the security enjoyed by the tenants in a traditional society was lost in the course of the 19th century. From 1920 onwards a large number of people began the cultivation of rubber. One community, which made good use of the opportunities provided by these developments, were the Syrian Christians from central and eastern Travancore. In fact the pioneering British planters in Travancore were Christian missionaries operating from Kottayam. They also helped the Syrian Christians in getting a foothold in the plantation sector.

Pepper, the native crop of Malabar had been attracting the foreigners to Malabar from very early times. The power struggles waged by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English in the region had the primary

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objective of monopolizing pepper trade. By the beginning of the nineteenth century pepper was the single largest export earner of Malabar accounting for 45 percent of the total value of exports. However the colonial policy of extracting the largest share of agricultural produce as land tax had adversely affected the cultivation. Besides, the policy of importing large quantities of pieces of goods and other consumer goods discouraged the domestic cottage industries. The earliest relations between the British and Travancore state were established on the basis of pepper contract. Due to the importance of the crops, government treated pepper, cardamom and other spices as state monopolies and the cultivators were forced to sell their products to the government. As early as in 1793 a pepper contract was signed between the English East India Company and the Raja of Travancore. Later it was renewed on 26th July 1803. As per the new contract the Raja was bound to deliver all the surplus pepper to the company at the rate of Rs.125.107

Tobacco was another important state monopoly. The major portion of tobacco consumed in Travancore was imported from Ceylon. The Clandestine dealings of the Europeans living under British patronage, adversely affected the revenue of the state. The Travancore Raja made repeated representations before the East India Company for the control of the fraudulent dealings in tobacco, but they fell into deaf ears. Timber was made a state monopoly. The Raja of Travancore was the sole proprietor of all the timber grown in the state forests. He divided the timber producing areas and distributed them among the farmers on a contract basis. The state derived considerable income from this monopoly. On 28 January 1803 the Bombay government concluded a timber contract with the Raja of Travancore. By this contract he was bound to supply a large quantity of teak, timber and plank of

107. Angengo Diary, Vol. 1290, 158
different sizes to the company for the construction of gun ships and a frigate for the service of His Majesty. A penalty of Rs. 20000 was fixed for both parties in case of any default.108

On the whole, except for the encouragement given to coffee, the policy measures of the colonial government were not at all favourable to agricultural development. The policy measures such as a revision of land tax in 1805 and subsequent reduction in the share of produce from the cultivating tenant, the total neglect of irrigation and infrastructural works like roads, inland waterways, the import of mill made cotton yarn, cloth and other products and the taxation of skilled workers, produced a decline in agricultural production. Moreover, regarding Jenmy as the absolute owner of land in 1818 and treating cultivable wasteland and forestland as private property of Jenmies by colonial government discouraged land transfers and land leasing to cultivating tenants for reclamation and expansion of cultivation.

The 19th century saw the coming of new economic enterprises in Kerala. Starting schools on modern lines itself was an entrepreneurial activity because their ownership often brought prestige, economic power and social influence. Perhaps the first capitalist development in Kerala was the setting up of plantations on a large scale. The new economic environment provided opportunities for various vocational professions and occupations. The following table (3.7) provides data regarding the emergence of various occupations in Travancore economy.

108. Ibid. 19.
Table 3.7
Emergence of various occupations in the Travancore economy and the number of persons engaged in them\textsuperscript{109}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Government Service</td>
<td>51,121</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pasture &amp; Agriculture</td>
<td>10,58548</td>
<td>41.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Personal Services</td>
<td>80278</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Preparation &amp; Supply of Material substances</td>
<td>80278</td>
<td>3.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Commerce and Transport of persons, good, messages and storage of goods</td>
<td>1,63967</td>
<td>6.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Professionals, learned, artistic and minor</td>
<td>43,96</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Indefinite occupations and means of subsistence</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Travancore, 1894

It is obvious from the studies that the British colonization brought drastic reforms in the agricultural and economic sectors of the society. It should be acknowledged that they promoted plantations like tea, coffee, spices and rubber etc. and this created employment opportunities for indigenous communities. This fitted in neatly with colonial interests and they directly invested in plantation agriculture enthralled by the fertile soil and climatic condition. By the second half of the 19th century, there were greater opportunities for the colonial capital to derive further benefits from the so-called free trade. There was consolidation and integration of capital, not only in plantation areas but also in other sectors, realized through the managing agency system and the coastal trading firms. The traditional trade pattern consisting of export of manufactured goods had ceased to exist. In its place, this region like other parts of the colonial empire had become a food producing and raw material producing appendage of the British economy.

\textsuperscript{109} V. Nagam Aiya, \textit{Report on the Census of Travancore,} 1894, p. 559
3.4 Conclusion

Social scientists and academics have different opinions about the colonial occupation by the British in Kerala and its impact on social, cultural, political and economic areas of the society. In a sense, colonialism proved beneficial to indigenous society as it promoted social, economic and political equality in the area. The British rule, which lasted for more than two centuries, produced radical and lasting changes in the society. ‘The foreigners had brought with them new technology, new institutions, new knowledge, new beliefs and new values. It was this new technology and a revolution in communications that probably enabled the British to integrate they had never done before.’

Notes and References


Diary and Consultations of Tellicherry Factory, MSS Serial 1520, Tamilnadu Archives, Diary 21, April 1792.


Travancore Administration Report, 1863-64.