Chapter VI
Socio-Cultural Significance of Land Tenure Legislations in Travancore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Part</td>
<td>196-197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Relations of Early Travancore</td>
<td>197-215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Significance</td>
<td>215-226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes and References</td>
<td>227-233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Socio - Cultural Significance of 
Land Tenure Legislations in Travancore

The economic impact of the tenurial system had its imprints on the socio-cultural life of Travancore. It is a matter of scholastic discourses in recent times on how the changes in the land tenure system gave rise to alterations in the socio-cultural relations in Travancore. The economic factors which were generated by the changes in the tenurial system in Travancore led to some fundamental changes in the socio-cultural life of the people of the region. Needless to emphasis, this socio-cultural transformation contributed largely to revolutionary change in the Kerala polity, society and life.

The socio-political structure of early Kerala can be compared with the feudalistic pattern that existed in medieval Europe. The relative position of the early rulers, with the nobles and the priestly class show that the governing system was based on the principles resembling those of the feudal systems of medieval Europe. The social aspect of feudalism remained to some extent in many parts of Kerala as a relic of the past, but the civil and the military aspects disappeared by the end of the eighteenth century. By this time, Kerala had been dominated by the English East India Company. The Company was able to extend its influence in the region by making
treaties with the native states of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar and their domination had its impact on the society also.

One of the characteristic features of medieval Kerala society was the existence of *jenmie* system. The *jenmie* system which was spearheaded by the *Nambudiri* Brahmins developed during the eleventh century as a result of the *Chola-Chera* war. The war led to the total mobilization of the resources of the state. The *Nambudiries* of early Kerala made use of this situation to consolidate their hold on the landed property including those held by the temples. Several ordinary tenants who owned landed properties transferred them in toto to the *Nambudiri* Brahmins and the temples. It was the common belief that the temple property and the Brahmin property which were regarded as the *Dewaswoms* and *Brahmaswoms* were considered to be free from the devastation and destruction at the hands of the enemy forces.\(^1\) While the *jenmie* system was itself evolving in the eleventh century A.D, the political unity of Kerala was also breaking up during that time.

**Social Relations of Early Travancore**

Travancore had an agrarian economy from the very early period. The climate of the region helped considerably for the development of agriculture. Other than the climatic conditions, the structural changes in the agrarian life of Travancore effected by the various Proclamations and other regulations of the native rulers brought about qualitative changes in the agrarian sector.\(^2\) The
agrarian expansion of early Travancore, as well as early Kerala was remarkably different when compared to that elsewhere in the region.\textsuperscript{3} The coming of the Brahmins and their clustering into settlements was a complex process and it influenced the later agrarian set up in the region. There was also the support of the existing social institutions to the hegemony of Brahmins. The Brahmins enjoyed many privileges in the society. While the Brahmins enjoyed freedom from death penalty, the members of the backward castes were given this punishment even for such ordinary offences such as theft, killing of cows etc.\textsuperscript{4} More than this, the power and authority on the land lay concentrated in the hands of the Brahmins. Because of all these, there existed a complicated social set up including that of land relations in Travancore by the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Brahmin landlords who dominated the Travancore society were powerful and even made the authority of the Raja ineffective.\textsuperscript{5} These Brahmins became hereditary landlords in the region and they enjoyed a higher social status. The mutual jealousies between the feudal chieftains often led to unrest in the state. During the later period, changes took place in the political life of Kerala that led to the decline of the old feudal order. One of the important aspects of the new political order was that, all powers and institutions were brought under the control of the ruler. The ruler was able to establish a powerful regular army substituting the earlier feudal chieftains. The administrative machinery was widened and in order
to meet the expenses of the bureaucracy, new measures were introduced in the country. A major step towards this administrative change was the reorganization of the land-revenue administration and the reimposition of land tax. Legislative changes were also made in Travancore for proper implementation of the new administrative set up. In course of time there was the disappearance of the various feudal chieftains and the emergence of a centralized monarchy in both Travancore and the nearby Cochin.⁶

The nature of the tenurial system that existed in Travancore during the early period was more or less complicated. There existed two types of tenures, the *jenmom* land owned by the Brahmins and the temple authorities and the *sircar* or the government owned lands. The *jenmom* lands were exempted from revenue collection. The economy of Travancore was affected by these different tenurial systems and their impact was that the revenue collection was comparatively very low in the region.

With regard to the social set up of Travancore, it was largely based on the rights on the land. When there was growth of population, the pressure on land also increased. Compared with the growth of population, the growth of alternative employment opportunities was slow. The landlords considered land as not just a means of living but as a source of profit. They were demanding more rent from the tenants, otherwise, threatening them to be evicted. The land cultivated by the tenants came around half of the total
cultivated area but the cultivating tenants were not recognized as owners and land transfer was not allowed among them. The government wanted to bring more areas of waste land under cultivation and offered more and more concessions to the tenants who were willing to cultivate the land. The colonial connection with Travancore and the increased need for mobilizing more revenue for the additional expenses necessitated the Travancore rulers to find out more means for fund mobilization. The revenue from land was the chief source of income for the government during that time.

During the pre-colonial period landlordism and the caste system influenced the socio-economic life of the people of Travancore. Land was the production base and labour was tied to land. The lowest classes of people were the actual tillers of the land. Their service was also used for other areas of work like construction and repair of public roads, canals and buildings. Even among the lower sections of society, there was a section of people, viruttikar, who were supervisors and also agents authorized to collect materials and labour and supply them to the government and Dewaswoms. The viruthy holder was to render manual service and supply provisions to the government in lieu of lands enjoyed by them. With the coming of Colonel Munroe, the British Resident, there were some structural changes in the agrarian economy of Travancore. The government as per the advise of the Resident, acquired properties of wealthy temples, and as a result a little less than two thirds of the...
cultivated area, and much larger part of the total area of Travancore came under the direct ownership of the state. The British suzerainty proved to be a catalytic agent for the transformation of Travancore from a traditional to a modern society, though of course it was not instrumental in completing that change. The British created the material conditions for a transformation in the state. Munroe’s reforms destroyed not only the power of naduvazhis and the desavazhis, but also that of the king. This was in keeping with what was done in Malabar and other parts of India.

The rigidity of the land ownership pattern in the state was an obstacle to the promotion of colonial interests and naturally, such interests were keen to introduce changes in the existing system. So the colonial interests were in favour of the structural changes in ownership as well as changes in the land utilization patterns. Though Travancore accepted the British tutelage in its land tenure policy, the rulers were trying to be judicious in implementing the policy. The state tried to pursue an agrarian policy more conducive to the welfare of the actual cultivators. The basic elements of this policy were laid down even at the beginning in assessing the lands very moderately and implementing the purest form of ryotwari principle of land revenue settlement in the whole of sircar lands.

Examples of social commitment of the rulers were seen in the land relations in Travancore. During the period of Rani Gowri Parvathi Bai, more waste land was brought under cultivation. For
the purpose of methodological collection of revenue, each land holder was given a *pattayam* which contained details of the extent of the land held by him, the nature of tenure, the amount of revenue due to the government etc. The later rulers also continued this practice of innovative tenurial changes which were beneficial to the state.

The land tenure legislations that were enacted in Travancore tried to define the rights and obligations of tenants and landlords. It was a fact that about one-third of the cultivated land in Travancore was under the *jenmies* and they were enjoying it as freehold. The *jenmies* in Travancore also showed the same tendency to harass the cultivators like that of other parts, especially in Malabar. But the *jenmie’s* power to exploit to a large extent was restricted by the action on the part of the rulers. The state was quite alert to the interests of the cultivators and even as early as 1829 a royal edict was promulgated directing the courts to maintain the established usage in the country by allowing the tenant to pay the landlord his dues and enjoy the possession of the property.\(^{14}\) This attitude of the rulers towards the peasants was not very common during that time and this may be an influencing factor in the later social developments of the state.

The occupational structure of early Travancore was closely linked to the caste system and caste practices. The low castes, who were the actual tillers of the soil, were forbidden to eat, dress, behave and move like their caste superiors. They were not allowed to
possess property and restrictions were even imposed in constructing houses. Born into agricultural servitude, these slave castes had little chance to escape from the caste restrictions.\textsuperscript{15} The depressed class constituted the backbone of the agrarian economy. This system continued till the middle of nineteenth century with legal sanction. The economy of the country to a large extent, centred on agriculture, and the caste people were the sole custodians of all arable as well as waste lands.\textsuperscript{16} The slaves could not possess lands owing to social and economic factors. Slavery in Travancore arose as a result of crystallization of caste and the growth of various disabilities attached to that institution which brought feudalism to Kerala. The administrative structure was soon feudalized resulting in rigid political domination of Brahmins and complete servility of lower classes.\textsuperscript{17} The Government of Travancore on understanding the gravity of the situation decided to abolish the institution of agrestic slavery in 1855 and slaves were freed.\textsuperscript{18} This liberation of the age old social inequality encouraged the concerned people to think in terms of social changes also.

The condition of lower castes of people was very deplorable during this time. The abolition of slavery was a step towards ameliorating the condition of the lower castes. The Proclamation banning slavery was the culmination of a series of reforms aimed at the abolition of slavery of the past and an open challenge to the existing customs of the land. The half hearted manner in which
those in higher echelons of power and the manner in which the society approached these issues is evident from the fact that the emancipative steps were not followed immediately by adequate economic reforms. The severity of the whole problem was that of the growth of capitalism in agriculture. The traditional landed aristocracy which had exploited the centuries old caste system and social relations in perpetuating the feudal mode of production had depended much upon slave labour for fulfilling their economic interests.

Social reform movements were initiated during this time through the activities of the Christian missionaries and Christianity had taken root among the lower castes. According to the existing Hindu law of the time, the one who changed his caste forfeited all his rights to property. To overcome this problem, the Travancore Government, following the British Indian government, gave the converts the right to enjoy the property of their parents. The lower castes were also allowed to wear the dress of their choice and also given the freedom of admission to public institution.

The social activists of the Christian Church also led to a social ferment within the Travancore society. They considered it their moral obligation to serve society, particularly those who are victims of ignorance, ill-health, poverty and social injustice and inequality. About one-third of the population of Travancore was made up of untouchable communities. A major group among them was the
Shanars. They lived across the border on Madras territory (present day Tamilnadu). For a long time Shanars had to suffer many social disabilities. The administration under guidance of the British began to view the efforts of the oppressed sections to improve their lot socially in an enlightened way. The upper cloth agitation or the breast cloth agitation otherwise known as the ‘Shanar revolt’ was a product of this environment. This was the most important movement in Travancore in the early decades of nineteenth century. This eventually led to the Royal Proclamation of 1859 abolishing all restrictions in the matter of covering the upper parts of the body by the Shanar women. This change in the social life of Travancore had far reaching consequences. It had the initiative from the administration and influenced the life style of the people including the pattern of the land ownership.

There were tenures called viruthi existed in Travancore as cited earlier. These were service grants which attached certain obligations in the nature of personal labour and supply of provisions to the sovereign. Owing to the force of circumstances and failure to adapt itself to changing economic conditions, it gradually degenerated. The viruthikkar were deprived of certain advantages which they had enjoyed and which had tended to lighten their burden. Previously, every member of the society with rare exceptions was forced to render gratuitous service to government. By the end of nineteenth century, through the gradual process of administrative reforms, the
*viruthi* system was abolished through the *Viruthi* Proclamation of 1882. The Proclamation provided for a re-arrangement of the services and the settlement of the surplus lands remaining and also redistribution of those lands relinquished by the holders seeking relief from the service under the terms offered by the Proclamation.\(^{27}\) Further, there was the expansion of cultivation, especially that of cash crops, the organization of the Public Works Department, the abolition of government monopolies in trade, the emergence of manufacturing industries and the expansion of the service sector guaranteed employment opportunities, and wages even for agricultural labour, often came to be paid in cash.\(^{28}\) As a result, in the place of the existing serfdom and servitude, the system of wage labour came into existence.

The nature of land ownership pattern and the pattern of cultivation in Travancore were intermixed with the social life of the people of the region. Both, the lands belonged to the state and that of the *jenmies* were cultivated by the tenants.\(^{29}\) The cultivation process was supervised by the members of the family together. Joint family system existed during the period and under this system landed property was kept intact and the family or *taravad* in the matriarchal society was a joint family consisting of all the descendents in common ancestress in the female line. The system of partition of land was not common and the consent of all the members of the *taravad* was necessary for affecting the partition.\(^{30}\)
The sale of landed property in Travancore was also very rare during the period under reference. Though selling of land is a natural process of making it available to others, the jenmies in the region had a strong traditional aversion to sell these lands. But in course of time, Travancore was influenced by the colonial interests who were very keen to change the existing land ownership pattern to facilitate their policy of export oriented methods of agrarian practices.

The immediate impact of the tenurial changes in Travancore was that it transformed land and labour into commodities that could be bought and sold. This transformation affected the structure of the society, social institutions and the social relations. The social relations of early Travancore were connected with the caste system and caste system had its connection with the land. When there was change in the ownership pattern of land due to the various measures of the government, the social life also got changed. A major pattern of social system that existed in the state was the joint families as cited above among the land owning communities. With the change in the tenurial patterns, and as an effect of the Pattom Proclamation of 1865, land was converted into transferable and saleable commodities. This influenced the family set up in the region and in place of the joint family, there began to emerge nuclear family system in the state. The joint family system and the nuclear family system existed side by side during the period. Christians and Muslims generally had the nuclear family system while the Hindus, Ezhavas,
Nairs, Vellalas etc. practiced the joint family system. The reforms in the field of land relations as a result of the above mentioned Proclamations had conferred ownership and permanent occupancy right on the tenants. These reforms encouraged the growth of individualism. The subsistence economy was replaced by commercial economy which ruined the joint family system. Travancore, it was noted, was the first to promulgate legislation with regard to the partition of joint families.\(^33\) The joint family system worked as an instrument of tyranny over individual skills and its ruin encouraged diversification of individual skills.\(^34\)

The partition of lands as a result of the disintegration of joint family system encouraged other economically advanced lower castes to acquire lands. There was the redistribution of ownership rights on lands in the region. This redistribution of land among the different communities of people led to the reduction in land concentration in the hands of the superior castes.\(^35\) This change in the land ownership pattern brought drastic changes in the agrarian structure in Travancore and later directed towards the social changes in the region. The tenurial changes that took place in the region awakened the society from its age-long slumber. The changes in the tenurial sector were capable of bringing about a change in the stagnant and decadent nature of the state. There were also the activities of various social reformers for this change and the society soon started showing the symptoms of a social renaissance.
The Travancore Government, under the pressure from the British, encouraged a free trade policy and also encouraged production for export. This introduction of capitalist agriculture in the state had far reaching consequences in the social life of the agrarian community. An important consequence of this structural change was the growth of the plantation industry. Lands were granted at concessional rates to foreigners for the cultivation of coffee and tea. The Travancore Government expected that this policy change would benefit by the introduction of capital, skill, and expertise of Europeans in utilizing tracts of valuable land.\textsuperscript{36} The existing land ownership pattern was also a hindrance to get credit facilities for the tenants for improving the land for better cultivation practices. But the Proclamation of the government in 1865, conferring full proprietary rights to the tenants on the land changed the situation and converted them into land owners. Since then, land might be sold or pledged, on the basis of the Proclamation and money lending against land mortgage became common in the region.\textsuperscript{37} The change in the ownership pattern of land enhanced the power of the money lender in the rural areas. The commercialization of agriculture further widened this. This further transformed the character of the landed property, which became a thing that could be bought and sold like any other commodity.

An argument which is projected by some social scientists is that the \textit{Pattom} Proclamation of 1865 was not intended to protect the
rights of the tenants only but to safeguard the interests of the Government of Travancore and their colonial masters as well. It is an accomplished fact that the government was assured of regular payment of land tax by the land owner as a result of the change in the ownership pattern effected by the Pattom Proclamation. The later reforms which followed the Pattom Proclamation, like the jenmie-kudiyan regulations, while protecting the tenants against arbitrary eviction, defined the rights of jenmies and kudiyans as well. It is presumed that the idea of the government was that, the best conditions for the rapid improvement of landed property are that the property should be in the hands of those who are able to spend labour and capital and that, in their hands it should be on a secure tenure. Necessary legislative provisions were also made for the speedy realization of the jenmies’s dues.

The abolition of compulsory labour such as uzhiyam and viruthi helped to liberate the lower strata of the society from the harassment of their masters, temple authorities and sircar officers. As mentioned earlier, in the place of compulsory labour, a new system of service based on payment of wages and salaries was introduced. The lower strata of the society subsequently demanded more changes in the means for their existence, and thus paved the way for a new social structure. The support given by the colonial rulers, though as part of their political hegemony, provided a new impetus to the social reform movements in the state.
In Travancore, during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the colonial power encouraged reforms in the social field. They encouraged modernization through social changes as a means to enable the economic penetration to the country smoothly. Progress in the field of education and enhancement of social status of the masses meant a wider market ready for western ideas. Along with this the humanitarian instincts aroused by the glaring social injustices prevailed in the society as well as the deplorable conditions of the depressed sections of society also played a major role.\textsuperscript{42}

The social reform movements that had emerged in Kerala Society during the nineteenth century were revolutionary in the idealistic plane, but they were peaceful and non-violent in the practical plane. The complexity of the caste system which had existed in Kerala led to the ill-treatment of the untouchables and unapproachable ones. The influence of caste system was more rigid and powerful in the native States of Cochin and Travancore. Government jobs were not given to the lower castes up to the beginning of the twentieth century. The complex situation along with the atmosphere provided by the ruling class and the new literacy prepared the people to struggle against all restrictions and rigidity.\textsuperscript{43}

The changes in the agrarian filed also encouraged the people in these social reform movements. It is to be noted that, it was through the movement of land reforms among the agrarian proletariat that the political movements pushed further for their demands.\textsuperscript{44}
landless agricultural labourers were mobilized around the demand for land reforms.

The new mode of cultivation and the increase in the production due to the changes in the ownership pattern of land made market the nerve centre of the day-to-day life of the people. The mobility of the lower sections was limited by the practice of untouchability and unapproachability. But the cultivators had to sell their products and to purchase their necessities from markets. This section of the society found that the practice of untouchability as part of the social and religious life impeded their progress.\textsuperscript{45} The attitude of the British authorities as well as the native rulers, were sympathetic towards the demands of the socially weaker sections. The dissatisfaction with the socio-economic fabric resulted in challenges from certain quarters. The position of Ezhavas was not better compared to the other groups in the Hindu Community. They took up the cause of untouchability and organized a movement against this practice in the state. Sree Narayana Guru, the spiritual leader of the Ezhavas, was a great unifying force within the different sections of the community and he himself fought against the sacerdotal prejudices.\textsuperscript{46} His influence was most decisive in accelerating the pace of social change in Kerala. He gave a social basis to the religious reform movements in Kerala. It was Sree Narayana Guru who first challenged effectively the value system followed in India with religious sanction and unstained devotion.\textsuperscript{47}
Social reform movement among the Ezhavas was further campaigned by the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham (SNDP). The campaigns against social evils found its direct expression in the Vaikom Satyagraha. The Vaikom Satyagraha was part of the agitation for the removal of untouchability. The Indian National Congress as well as the social organization like Nair Service Society (NSS) and SNDP supported the movement. Later the Guruvayur Satyagraha (1932-32) was another important landmark in the history of the social reform movement which necessitated the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936. The various social movements as well as the progressive elements in the society were supportive of the lower castes in their fight against the social evils. Similar Proclamations were issued in Malabar in 1947 and in Cochin in 1948.

The influence of English education kindled a new life among the middle class communities. The educated class among the Nair Community was also influenced by the new atmosphere. Till that time, agriculture was their chief means of subsistence. The changes in the agrarian system resulted in the decline of economic growth. The historical hangover did not allow them to engage in commercial activities or trade by which the other communities prospered. Owing to their declining economic condition, they considered government service as the next best option for them. So when there was the spread of English education, many Nair families sent their children
to the new system of education. The result was that by the second
half of the nineteenth century, there emerged a new class among the
Nair Community and this new educated class tried to awaken their
fellow beings.

The initial demands of peasants in Travancore for tenancy
reforms were aimed not only against the exploitation and atrocities of
the jenmies but also against landlordism and feudalism. In a wider
sense, the struggle of the peasants was aimed at democratization of
the administration. It is to be noted that most of the leaders of the
social reform movements came from poor or middle class peasant
families. Even though they were organized on caste basis, it was
through these movements that the poor and the middle class
peasants and the agricultural labourers learnt lessons of unity and
strength of organizational campaign. So the earlier tenurial reforms
and the demands for it worked as a platform for the later social
reform movements in Travancore.

The social life of Travancore became more complex towards the
close of the 19th century and the educated middle classes in
Travancore were greatly demanding administrative changes for
gaining inclusion in the civil services. The tenurial changes
influenced the social relations and the transaction of land expanded
the demand for reservation in government jobs. The resentment of
the people found its concrete expression in the ‘Malayali Memorial
submitted to Maharaja as early as 1891 and later the submission of
The agitation of the Ezhavas, the Muslims and Christian Communities found its expression in the *Nivarthana* (Abstention) Movement demanding necessary representation of the communities in the legislative bodies. In spite of the repressive measures of the government, the agitation ultimately succeeded. These united movements played a major role in the later democratization of the region.

**Cultural Significance**

The concept of culture is an accumulated store of symbols, ideas and material products which are transmitted from one generation to the other. Cultural forms regulate social activities. The cultural processes in Travancore show the various ways through which numerous changes take place. The change in the cultural structure of Travancore has originated from the social structure that existed in the region. Along with the social structure, the economic life, the institutions etc. are all the integral parts in shaping the cultural. It was due to the unique geographical position of the state and its relative immunity from external aggressions, the State of Kerala could evolve a distinctive way of life and institutions without much interference from outside. Institutions like joint family, ‘polyandry’ and ‘*marumakkathayam*’ which were peculiar to Kerala developed here almost independently while the complex institution of caste introduced by the Aryans who came from the north assumed its own form under the influence of local forces.
The *jenmie* system or landlordism, which emerged in the region also, had exercised a profound influence on the political, social, economic and cultural life of Kerala. The origin of the *jenmie* system, as cited earlier, is attributed to the emergence of *Nambudiri* Brahmins and their acquiring the status of wealthy and powerful landlords. Its origin is compared with the circumstances that led to the birth of European feudalism. It should be noted that the continental feudalism was the product of dual process of some people surrendering their landed property to more powerful men in return for the guarantee of immunity from the dangers of the times and some others placing themselves and their properties under similar protection as vassals liable to be called out for active service in times of war or internal commotion.\(^63\)

The impact of *jenmie* system on Kerala was that the literature and arts as well as the social life of Kerala, all have grown up in intimate association with it.\(^64\) It is significant to note that the Malayalam language produced literary works of merit only after the rise of the *jenmie* system.\(^65\) The cultural and social life of early Kerala had an intimate association with the *jenmie* system. Art forms like *Kathakali* and *Chakyarkoothu* were connected with the social conditions that prevailed during the period. The arts and literary movements which are claimed to be Kerala’s special contribution to the main stream of national culture also grew up around the *jenmie* system.\(^66\) Kerala, rich in its national cultural
heritage had also developed through the arts and literary movements.

In the field of general cultural development, Kerala has been influenced by other states in India and also foreign countries but maintained its individuality. Along with the rest of India national festivals like Deepawali, Durga Puja, Sivaratri, Ashtami Rohini, Vinayaka chaturthi etc. were observed by the Hindus of Kerala as a part of their solidarity with their Hindu brethren elsewhere in the country. But at the same time they developed their own festivals like Onam, Vishu, Thiruvathira etc. which were not observed elsewhere. The celebration of Onam has in fact, become an occasion for get-together of all Keralites in any part of the globe. Some of the festivals like Vishu, even now is the harvest festival in many parts of Kerala. There are many temple festivals in Kerala which were noted for their impressive processions of caparisoned elephants and performance of temple arts like Chenda Melam, Panchavadyam, Kathakali, Ottam Thullal etc. All these have their significance in the cultural sphere of Kerala. The indigenous temple festivals like Chenda Melam have influenced the celebrations in the churches, Perunals and Nagaswaramelam had connection with the Chandanakudam festival in the mosques.67

There is no doubt that the changes that took place in the social life of Kerala as a result of the tenurial changes brought about the growth of the cultural as well as the festive nature of the people. The
reciprocal relation between the landlord and tenant is seen in the cultural development of the state. It is to be noted that there was a favourable environment irrespective of the caste and creed for the cultural growth of the state.

In the earlier stage the demands for social changes were turned down by the rulers of Travancore.\textsuperscript{68} It was this attitude of the government which encouraged the different sections of society to organize and to submit ‘\textit{Memorials}’ to government as referred earlier. Along with the social reformers, well known cultural giants like Kumaran Assan took up the task of fight against the rigidity of caste system through his works.\textsuperscript{69} Kumaran Assan took up the seriousness of the issue not only through his writings but also as a member of the legislative body.\textsuperscript{70} To a greater extent, it was the pitiable condition of society that encouraged the cultural renaissance in the state. It is also to be noted that the rulers were supportive of the cultural progress. Dating back to the period of Marthanda Varma in Travancore, the ruler encouraged the great cultural scholars of early Kerala like Kunjan Nambiar, Ramapurathu Varrier and the others.\textsuperscript{71} The later rulers of Travancore also followed this tradition.

The cultural field showed a new awakening during the nineteenth century under the royal patronage. The royal patronage was considered as a great recognition during those days. Apart from the encouragement given to the men of arts and letters some of the
rulers themselves were great artists and literary scholars. Among them Swathi Tirunal Rama Varma (1813–46) was a well known ruler, a multi linguist, an able musician, lyricist and also a good administrator. The credit for having given to Kerala an important place in the field of Karnatic music goes to Swathi Tirunal.

The ascendancy of Brahmins to Kerala led to the temple centred society. Though the Brahmins stood for the old *jenmie* system in Kerala, the Brahmin temples which represented as an after effect of the tenurial system, became centres of cultural revival in Kerala. The sculpture of Sri Padmanabha Swami temple bears eloquent testimony not only to native traditions but also to outside influence. Some of the performing arts that have developed in Kerala with the temple as the centre owe their present form to the influence of other religious communities. The temple was the nerve centre of all cultural activities. New festivals were instituted with a view to making the Hindu religion more attractive to the common people. The Onam festival was celebrated on a large scale at Trikkakkara temple. The religious festivals helped to stir feelings of deep spirituality among the people and they provided an opportunity to the people for the expression of their deepest spiritual cravings. Along with the festivals, fairs were held which gave an impetus to trade and business activity among the people. So the temple centred social set up in course of time directed towards the overall development of the society.
The Christian migration from west Asia into the interior parts of Kerala is a significant historical development. The land-ward movement of the Christian community is testified by the creation of churches in the inland-agrarian pockets of central Kerala from third century onwards.\textsuperscript{75} The work of Christian missionaries and the spread of western education helped to bring about a radical social change. Moreover the evangelical work by the missionaries among the backward classes served to highlight the evils that existed in the social organization and to create an atmosphere in favour of radical religious and social reform.\textsuperscript{76} In course of time the Christian community as traders and agriculturalists, also contributed to the overall development of the region. Their contribution to the commercialization of agriculture is no less. The community had remarkably contributed to the commercial and economic prosperity of Travancore. Other than this, they paid attention to the uplift of the downtrodden sections of the society. They did commendable work in the field of education.

The socio-cultural life of Travancore was enriched by the Christian community through the development they gave to Malayalam language and literature. The compilation of grammar and dictionaries enriched the language. The Portuguese missionaries were the first to introduce printing in Kerala. The members of the Christian community distinguished themselves in the field of agriculture, industry, trade and other professions and they were
always seen in the forefront of the public life of the region. The agrarian based life style was also helpful in encouraging the cultural symbiosis of the region. The church encouraged the development of the performing arts in the region. Among them, a theatrical art called chavittunatakam was important. It was evolved during the seventeenth and eighteenth century as a Christian ‘alternative’ to Kathakali.\textsuperscript{77}

The social reform movement in Kerala was not confined to the Hindu and Christian community alone. The Muslims who were educationally backward were also affected by the winds of change. The prominent Muslim social reformer was Vakkam Abdul Khadir Maulavi (1873-1932). On the pattern of the caste organization started by the Ezhavas and the Nairs, Maulavi founded such organizations as the Travancore Muslim Mahajana Sabha and Chirayinkil Taluk Muslim Samajam for carrying on active work for the social uplift of the Muslims. The progress of the Muslim community of Kerala in the educational and social fields is largely due to the pioneering work done by Abdul Khadir Maulavi.\textsuperscript{78} The tenurial changes that took place in the Travancore society as a result of the legislative measures by the rulers encouraged these social reform movements.

A major impact of the socio-cultural situation in Travancore as a result of the tenurial changes was that there was a growing consciousness among the peasants. The existing socio-cultural life
of Travancore was interrupted by the land tenure legislations implemented in the state. The change in the ownership pattern and the expressions of ideas through the cultural platform made the people bold enough to demand more concessions from the rulers. The nepotism and selfishness of those occupying higher positions were democratically questioned for the first time by the united movements of the people of Travancore during the submission of the *Malayali Memorial*.\(^79\) It was the growing consciousness on the part of the peasant or tiller of the soil later led to the rise of agrarian movements aimed at land reforms.\(^80\) The changes in land relations transformed the socio-economic changes of later Kerala state. Land tenure was instrumental to all subsequent socio-economic as well as cultural changes in the later Kerala State. The performing arts which at one time depended on the patronage of the leisureed feudal aristocracy for their development have since been released from its clutches and assumed a new form and direction at the hands of the lovers of art belonging to all classes and communities.\(^81\)

It was the socio-cultural impact of the land tenure systems that created an awakening among all classes of people of Travancore and later Kerala to spread the democratic egalitarian ideas into their minds. The increasing pace of industrialization, the migration of people from villages to town, the improvement in the level of the educational standard which all hastened the pace of social change in the region could find its basis in the changes in the land relations.
The gap of the age old social and economic disparity between the different sections of people in the society was reduced as a result of the changes in the land relations.

The break up of old social institutions like the joint-family and the *jenmie* system along with the changes in the land relations helped the people of Travancore and later Kerala to acquire a new dignity and outlook. The benefit of new education as well as awareness of employment opportunities in government services and private undertakings attracted the new generation for migration from their native places to distant places and even to far off countries. The interaction with other people and other nationals further expanded the socio-cultural outlook of the people of Kerala. The migration of people to other far off places helped in spreading Kerala’s cultural traditions to other areas at the national and international levels. The celebration of festivals like *Onam* in other countries and the influence of other countries on the life style of the people of Kerala can be considered as reciprocal attitudes. The social changes in Kerala along with the contact with the European epistemological advances helped for the emergence of realistic and humanistic cultural developments of the state.  

The land tenure system from the period of the erstwhile Travancore rulers helped to bring in the beginning of new ideas, new relations as well as new values in society. This in a way helped the modernization of society and also the economic progress of the
peasantry. These tenurial changes along with socio-cultural impacts no doubt can be considered the basis of the changes that took place in the Kerala society in the later period.

The peaceful socio-cultural revolution that took place in the Travancore society created minimum tension and sentimental dysfunction among the people. The effects of this peaceful revolution further made the Travancore Government more revolutionary in their social attitude. The best example of this was the most revolutionary social reforms by the Travancore Maharaja in the 1936, the famous Temple Entry Proclamation which removed the restrictions on the lower castes to enter temples. The agrarian reforms in the state helped to reduce the complicated relationship between the different sections of the society especially landlords and the tenants. The impact of all these was that the social status of the people improved considerably and Kerala turned out to be one of the few states in India where the motto ‘land to the tiller’ has become a reality. The socio-political structure of Travancore was marked by the existence of diverse forces, mainly the jenmie system. The social relations were largely based on the rights on the land. The influence of the colonial relations in Travancore in the structural changes in the agrarian system is also worth mentioning. The British suzerainty proved to be the catalytic agent for the transformation in Travancore. Along with the colonial interference, the social commitment of the rulers of Travancore also helped this transformation.
The agrarian transformation of Travancore was seen on later land relations in the region. The rigidity of the land ownership pattern gave way to structural changes. While introducing these structural changes, the rulers were alert to the interests of the cultivators. This could be seen from the introduction of the various legislative measures upheld by them. Steps were also taken for ameliorating the condition of the lower sections of the society. The changes in the land relations affected every aspect of social life of the region. Much of the existing social order as well as customs and practices were changed. An example was the break up of the joint family system. Various social reform movements also began to spring up in the region. For this there was the sympathetic attitude of the rulers along with the social reforms connected with the various sections of the society.

The social changes as a result of the tenurial transformation brought in cultural regeneration also. The arts and literary life of Travancore were enriched by this new social atmosphere. The cultural field showed a new awakening. Some of the rulers of the region were also promoters of this cultural awakening. Even the temples which once represented the old traits of the _jenmie_ system became centres of cultural revival in Kerala. The various communities in the region also contributed to this cultural growth. The growth and development of the Malayalam language also could be traced to this atmosphere of social transformation. Further more,
there was a new outlook in the lifestyle of the people. The migration of people, the assimilation of new ideas and values in society which later resulted in revolutionary reforms in the region could be traced back to the changes in the tenurial systems in Travancore.

The transformation that took place in the land tenurial systems in Travancore and the impact on the socio-cultural life of the State had their reflections in the later history of Kerala. The contemporary history of Kerala is nothing but the continuation of the early historical flow of events as history is an unending process of development, progress, change etc. and also ‘an unending dialogue between the past and present.’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes and References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 <em>Revenue Settlement of Travancore</em>: Final Report, 1913, pp. 87-91.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11 In Malabar and other parts of India, the collector or other British officials were the direct authorities appointed by and representative of the British King.


15 Ram Chandran Nair., *op. cit.*, p. 17.


17 Suresh Kumar., *op.cit.*, p.43.


19 Suresh Kumar., *op.cit.*, p.47.


21 Ram Chandran Nair., *op. cit.*, p.18.

22 *Selected Proclamations of Sovereigns* (Mal.) *op.cit.*, 178, pp.301, 302.

23 Ram Chandran Nair., *op.cit.*, p.18.

25 The Shanars of South Travancore started a struggle also called as the “Breast-Cloth Agitation,” and the Government of Travancore in 1859 was compelled to issue the Proclamation by which permission was given to wear clothes over their breasts and shoulder. A Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

26 *The Viruthi Committee Report, 1889*, p.59.


33 The Nayar Regulation of 1925, Travancore Ezhava Regulation of 1925, the Nanjinad Vellala Regulation of 1926 and the Travancore Malayala Brahmin Regulation of 1931 were the earliest regulation in this regard, ref. T.C. Varghese, p.p. 100–101.


37  Robin Jeffry., *op. cit.*, p. 89.

38  Bipin Chandra., *Nationalism and Colonization in Modern India*, New Delhi, 1984, p.96.


42  Suresh Kumar., *op.cit.*, p.38.


45  Ram Chandran Nair., *op. cit.*, p. 92.


47  Gopalakrishnan P.K., ‘*Sree Narayana Guru - Torch Bearer of Enlightenment for Revolutionary Changes,*’ paper presented at the seminar on the History of Political Development in Kerala, organized by the Dept. of Politics, Kerala University, 1986.

48  *Vaikom Satyagraha* (1974-25) was a major struggle for getting the approach roads to the Vaikom Temple opened for the lower castes of the Hindu Community. Gandhiji visited the place in
1925. At last the Government of Travancore agreed to open all the roads around the Vaikom Temple to all castes and communities.

49 The Guruvayur *Satyagraha* was started on Nov. 1, 1931, under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Congress in order to get the Guruvayur temple opened to all Hindus.


51 Mannath Padmanabhan., *‘Ente Jivita Smaranakal’* (Mal.) Chenganacherry, 1957 pp. 103-117.


53 Suresh Kumar., *op.cit.*, p.43.


55 One example is that of Ayyankali who organized for the first time the peasants belonging to the depressed classes in and around Trivandrum.

56 Sivadas S. Dr. and Dr. C.N. Somarajan., *Poura Samathuvavadam Thiruvithamcooril* (Mal.), The State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum, 2001, p. 17.

57 The *Malayali Memorial* was submitted to the Maharaja on Jan. 1, 1891. The petition which was signed by 10028 persons
belonging to all castes and creeds drew the attention of the Maharaja to the exclusion of the educated natives from the higher grades of the public service and pleaded for a fair quota of government appointments.

58 The *Ezhava Memorial* was submitted on Sept.3, 1896, signed by 13, 176 members of the Ezhava Community under the leadership of Dr. Palpu, demanding equal rights and privileges to Ezhava community like that of others.


64 Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai P.N., *op. cit.*, p.369.


68 Sivadasan S. Dr. and Dr. C.N. Somarajan., *op.cit.*, p. 25.


70 *Proceedings of the Sreemoolam Popular Assembly (SMPA) 1912*, March 5, p.164.


76 Sreedhara Menon A., *op.cit.*, p.397

77 Sreedhara Menon A., *op.cit.*, p.118. In *chavittunatakam*, the actors not only speak and sing but also stamp on the wooden platform with their feet to the tune of songs and beating of drums. This art form, no doubt, enriched the cultural life of Travancore during that period.


79 Suresh Kumar., *op.cit.*, p.113.

