CHAPTER - III

GANDHIJI AND KUMARA GURU
The purpose of this chapter is to analyse the untouchable socio-religious movement and untouchables leader like Kumara Guru under the organizational banner of PRDS. Like Socrates, or Christ, or Buddha, Kumara Guru never wrote anything but only preached to his disciples (Upadêśtās) in the tune of folk songs. These folk songs contained his religion, the religion of untouchables (oppressed/exploited) deliverance. Kumara Guru being a contemporary of Gandhiji, his modus-vivendi as well as modus-operandi were much influenced and reflected by Gandhian paradigms. So it is essential to peep into the Gandhian modus in order to get maximum reflection to the meliority of the untouchable's movements of Kerala.

Gandhiji as a truth seeker in all perspective, the watch word of his schema contained in the principle of,

"the seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust".

Being a truth seeker Gandhiji was much influenced by his mother Smt. Putlibai, and he came under the ambit of her spiritual propositions, she used to share her rich spiritual experiences with her son Gandhi during his

boyhood. The stories of Prahaladan, Harichandran, and Shravana had much impressed him. No doubt this stories of legendary truth seekers moulded his future ethical propositions.

"Still both Harichandran and Shravana are living realities for me and I am sure I should be moved as before if I were to read those plays again today."4.

Since his early days he has some upper hand to truth in his life.

"Truth to Gandhi was both transcendental and immanent"5.

Gandhiji in the coming days of his life, found the spirit of religion as well as life under the purview of truth. He believed it as the only everlasting and enduring gems of humanity.

"It was this belief and experience which saved him from an escape into metaphysics and made him the torch bearer for actively spiritualising the whole life"6.

Gandhiji believed, truth and non-violence are inseperable and perfect and his entire axioms and postulates operated on this terrain of truth.

4. M.K. Gandhi, op. cit., p. 4
6. Ibid.
“Gandhiji himself was a great believer in non-violence—
it was an article of faith with him”.

He believed that the truth, that is inherent in every individual which form
intuition in him. Irrespective of faith and belief it is latent in every individual.
Gandhiji believed truth as the basic principle of social morality. It is the
core of his philosophy. He had given stress to the pragmatization of the
dual values of non-violence and truth in every walk of life. He was very
particular in his life to make it operational at every possible manner and
extent. History proves it very well. Gandhiji used this dual tools as powerful
weapon in the ongoing struggle for freedom and social justice.

As a highly spiritual man with value added approach to truth, he
was much influenced by Tolstoy, Ruskin, etc. in moulding the final shape to
his wisdom. In addition to this influence, his interaction with the basic groups
of the Indian social hierarchy much helped him to build the superstructure of
his practical and ethical framework for future India. He used the terrain of

7. Bipan Chandra, The Epic Struggle, Orient Longman,
Hyderabad, 1992, p. 10.
8. K. Ramachandran Nair, Gandhijiya Ariyouka, Kerala Public
Religious Department, 1995, pp. 5, 6.
National Movement to provide room for all kinds of people \(^\text{12}\). The new national spirit which penetrated through the veins of all walks of India was used for the betterment of God’s own people (Harijans) of this land is a notable parameter of Gandhian paradigm. Therefore Gandhiji was able to share the practical fruit of his paradigm of truth and non-violence to the humble Indians through \textit{Satyagraha and Sarvodaya}.

“Rich in form, novel in technique, creative in thought, and constructive in action; Gandhiji’s \textit{Satyagraha} which is the practical application of \textit{ahimsa} in life, is rebellion through love and suffering” \(^\text{13}\).

**Tolstoy and Gandhiji**

Gandhiji being a born philanthropist, acquired more inspiration from the great man like Tolstoy, while he started his experiments with truth. As a truth seeker he himself much pleased to known as a disciple of Tolstoy \(^\text{14}\).

“There moderns have left deep impress on my life, and captivated me: Raychandbhai by his living contact;

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12. Bipan Chandra, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 8, “The National Movement provided room for all kinds of people to participate in it in an infinite variety of ways; it had a role for everybody”.

13. M. Maharajan, \textit{op. cit.}.

Tolstoy by his book, 'The kingdom of God Is Within You'; and Ruskin by his 'Unto This Last'.

On the other hand, Tolstoy deeply penetrated into Gandhiji through his passive resistance movement in South Africa. Tolstoy sent a letter to Gandhiji on 7th September 1910, which was a morale booster to Gandhiji and contained his boundless appreciation to Gandhian passive coercive technique against a mighty empire with anti-Christian postulates.

When Italian anarchist group attacked the King of Italy, Tolstoy strongly and Vehemently criticised the act of violence and advised them that the use of violence was morally wrong and practically of little use. While Gandhiji inaugurated his passive resistance movement in India, he unequivocally asserted his indebtedness to Tolstoy. This passive resistance, to Gandhiji, is not a new one, albeit Tolstoy had outlined it many years ago. Hence Gandhiji was much impressed by Tolstoy and vice versa. They together cultivated friendship and brotherhood which much benefited the humanity.

Gandhiji as a disciple of Tolstoy's ethical postulates, subjected to an intensive study of Tolstoy's works.

18. Ibid.
“The Gospels in Brief, 'What To Do?' and other books made a deep impression on me. I began to realize more and more the infinite possibilities of universal love”20.

The dichotomous and self contradictory preaching and practice of the Christian Church, according to Tolstoy, was responsible for social tensions21. Tolstoy recommends the philosophy of non-violence as a panacea for all negative impulses of church. In the case of India, communalism is the core of the social contradiction. To Gandhiji, a practical sagacious Indian philanthropist,

"religion is a personal affair of each individual. It must not be mixed with politics or national affairs"22.

As far as Gandhiji is concerned, communalism, the curse of this nation, was basically a colonial construct, and it was the weapon of the colonial government, by which it contained the nationalistic fervour23. No doubt Gandhiji imbibed much about nonviolence from Tolstoy, which helped him to sharpen the weapon of _ahimsa_ and passive resistance in his struggle against untouchability, communalism and political bondage24.

22. Bipan Chandra, _op. cit._, p. 47.
23. Ibid, pp. 48, 49.
Ruskin and Gandhiji

Gandhiji’s interaction with Ruskin was not a dialectical one. It was through Ruskin’s book ‘Unto This Last’. Thus it brought an instantaneous and practical transformation of Gandhiji’s vision and life. The spirit of the book which imbibed by Gandhiji much helped him to develop the tool of social development, that is Sarvodaya, the welfare of all. Sarvodaya became the lifeblood of all Gandhian technique of resistance and his modus-vivendi. He, like Karl Marx or Buddha, was not a system builder. But he was a path finder. As a path finder he imbibed a lot from Ruskin. Ruskin’s book ‘Unto This Last’ and its message deeply penetrated into the soul of Gandhiji and transformed his life thoroughly. The concept of Sarvodaya has its foundation on egalitarian society, which governed with the fundamentals of truth. In this new paradigm Gandhiji negated the Marxian conceptual framework of ‘End justifies Means’ and it was substituted with the ethical postulate of purity of Ends and Means. Gandhiji’s own social philosophy, Sarvodaya, much indebted to Ruskin. The new axiom, formulated by Gandhiji, practically

28. Bipan Chandra, op. cit., p. 12, “... I do not think Gandhiji ever supressed the people’s views. He had great difference with people who believed in means other than satyagraha, as a way of winning freedom” and Jawaharlal Nehru, op. cit., pp. 14, 15.
viable to Indian conditions was Sarvodaya. Gandhiji’s conceptual framework of Sarvodaya was aimed to the deconstruction of the tired Indian society. This new social philosophy has universal significance.

Gandhiji’s interaction with the textual world of Ruskin through his ‘Unto This Last’, opened rather newer conceptual as well as philosophical framework, either vague or unknown so far to Gandhiji. The striking message of Ruskin’s work was.

“(1) That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. (2) That lawyer’s work has the same value as the barber’s in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work and, (3) That the life of labour, i.e, the life of the tiller of the soil and handicraftsman, is the life worth living.”

It was a new experience to Gandhiji; second message had been vaguely realized and the third was not encountered with Gandhiji’s thoughts. Through Ruskin, Gandhiji acquainted clearly with second and third universal and heavenly message. The actualization of the message of ‘Unto This Last’ transformed Gandhiji and he became a subject of Ruskin.

31. Ibid.
"Thus Gandhiji studied the lesson of co-operative labour from Ruskin, and without any delay he put it into practice, living as a peasant and handicraftsman"\(^{32}\).

**As a paradigm Builder**

Gandhiji, thus build his paradigmatic superstructure of Indian National Movement on the conceptual foundation of truth, non-violence, *Satyāgraha*, *Swadēsi*, equality and bread - labour\(^{33}\). He cannot see *Swarāj* and *Sarvodaya* from two angles. His metaphysical approach to the problems of *Daridranārayanaś* of India got a new dimension in his struggle for social justice to all.

"......... no greater sin than to oppress the innocent in the name of God"\(^{34}\).

His ontologic stand was slightly differed from the nineteenth century *Bhakti* saints. It was so pragmatic rather than mystic.

"I believe in the Bible as I believe in the *Gīta*. I regarded all the great faiths of the world as equality true with my own"\(^{35}\).

32. J. Thekkinedath, op. cit., p. 32.
33. J.D. Sethi, op. cit., p. 33.
As a truth seeker, Gandhiji, discredited the profit motive approach towards societal facts. The system which he advised is far away from the traditional theoretical empiricism. He devoted his time and space for experiment with truth\textsuperscript{36}. To him there was no separation between truth and God\textsuperscript{37}. These are the two sides of the same coin. Again truth is as old as God and vice versa. Finally he believed in the pragmatical end game in which,

"the seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust"\textsuperscript{38}.

**Religious Postulates of Gandhiji**

All Gandian ethical, religious, social, economic and political conclusions are of ontological in appearance, but not absolute or reduced, and it was the outcome of the rich experiences of his own. More religious, more humane, Gandhiji was not the subject of any conceptual religious framework\textsuperscript{39}. His interaction with various religions made him just like a pantheist. It proves through his conceptual conclusions about religion, viz;

\[\text{belief as ipso facto true or untrue, or absolutely original or God given, subjected to no precedent or influence and to no change or evolution}\].

36. J.D. Sethi, op. cit., p. 33.
38. M.K. Gandhi, My Experiments, op. cit., p. XI.
“(1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have some error in them and (3) all religious are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism”40.

Above all he equally respected all religions irrespective of its quantity or quality41. He negated conceptual framework of personification of God. He believed in the omnipotent and omnipresent divine grace which reflected in the life of the Daridranārayans of India42. As a believer in God and a Seeker of Truth, Gandhiji, realised that wrong notions which attached to religions is the basic reason for the untouchability and related observances in the Indian socio-religious framework43.

Gandhian Tools

The central conceptual tool of Gandhian course of action is truth. It was supplimented with swadēśi, ahiṁsa, aparigraha, satyāgraha, etc. The mutually complementary tools ultimately targeted the removal of poverty

40. Ranjee Singh, op. cit., p. 73.
42. M.K. Gandhi, Harijan, 14/07/1946, “God is not a person. He is the all pervading, all powerful spirit. Any one who bears him in his heart has accession of marvellous force or energy comparable in its results to physical forces like steam or electricity, but much more subtle”.
and alienation. According to Gandhiji self dependency is the cardinal goal.

"When every individual is selfdependent, he never becomes a burden to society .......... Apart from individual selfsufficiency Gandhi stresses the need for corporate village selfsufficiency."

To keep society or village selfsufficient for long, its members (society) must not generate more demands. The prime responsibility of its constituents is to reduce demands and provide all people with the necessaries of life. The idealization of sarvodaya is an essential theme of the Gandhian framework and through which a society can reach at the peak of selfcontained, selfsufficient level. The tools which used by Gandhiji were not confined to a section or region but it was universal in nature and useful in all respect without any time or space limitation. Above all, a life style and culture (in using of tools) cultivated among the mass since its very inception to present day is sufficient to prove the power of Gandhian tools.

44. J.D. Sethi, op. cit., p. 53.
46. Ibid.
49. J.D. Sethi, op. cit., p. 213.
"Gandhi’s concepts of *swarāj* and *swadēśi* began as expression of fierce nationalism. But even in his lifetime he had already transformed his national concepts into universal concepts"\(^{50}\).

**Satyāgraha**

The notion of *satyāgraha* was the brain child of Gandhiji\(^ {51} \). According to Gandhiji it was a soul force, as opposed to armed strength\(^ {52} \). The conceptual framework, *satyāgraha* a tool of Gandhian resistance, evolved from divine spiritual paradigm of *Sat* (truth) and *Āgraha* (firmness)\(^ {53} \). *Satyāgraha*, an ethical weapon, which frequently used by Gandhiji in his entire struggle/resistance as a truth seeker shows his commitment to ethical way of life\(^ {54} \). This ethical weapon an integral part of Gandhian *modus-vivendi*, and its fundamentals are truth and nonviolence. Most of the twentieth century depressed class agitations for social justice opted the Gandhian tool, *satyāgraha* against all powerful establishments. Especially the most weaker sections come under

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) M.K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, 24, September, 1938, “... *satyāgraha* as conceived by me is a science in the making”.


\(^{54}\) M.K. Gandhi, *Non Violence*, op. cit., p. 40, “Since it is essentially an ethical weapon, only men inclined to the ethical way of life can use it wisely”.

Prepared by BeeHive Digital Concepts Cochin for Mahatma Gandhi University Kottayam
the purview of untouchables/Harijans, successfully used it to restore their socio-religious rights which had been lost elsewhere in the historical evolution. Kerala’s backwards and untouchables/Harijans much indebted to Gandhiji and his passive resistance, which much helped them to assert themselves and regain the lost civil rights as well as religious rights.

As far as Gandhiji is concerned, in the programme of satyāgraha there was no room for any violence or vengeance. As a truth seeker, Gandhiji insisted that it should purely come under the notion of truth.

"But as the author of the word (truth), I may be allowed to say that it excludes every form of violence, direct or indirect, veiled or unveiled, and whether in thought, word or deed."

The slightest variation from the exercise of satyāgraha only ends in duragraha. It will be against the path of truth.

"With truth for sword, he needs neither a steel nor gun power."

A satyāgrahi, a fearless, who can fight against errors of the rulers, institution, or society, by disobeying ruler’s orders and his laws in a civil


57. M.K. Gandhi, Non Violence, op. cit., p. 44.

58. Ibid.
manner and willingly subject to punishments such as fines, imprisonment and gallows. Anyhow in the ambit of satyagraha, there is no space for violence. It can be used by individuals as well as communities and it can be used by all walks of life such as men, women, and children, provided the entire course should be nonviolent. Satyagraha is a weapon which can be used against injustice, oppression, inequality, and ignorance, appears as an idealised form of truth.

**Satyagraha, not a monolithic structure**

Gandhiji never insisted the quantity but quality of satyagrahis. When Gandhiji unfurled the wave of national movement in twenties of the twentieth century, he was very particular to the avoidance of the basic conceptual spirit of satyagraha. Between 1921 and 1939 he unequivocally defined the vibrant force of his unique technique. He thus fixed the requirement of a satyagrahi, albeit he was not adamant to his guidelines as God’s words and made it clear that, those are only illustrative. Faith in God is an essential

59. Ibid, pp. 44, 45.
62. M.K. Gandhi, My Experiments, op. cit, p. 239.
condition for the use of the all powerful weapon of \textit{satyagraha}. It is true that religion and faith are helpful means to rebels\textsuperscript{64}. But Gandhiji insisted religion in its true sense, to be the deliverer of ‘tired from carrying heavy loads’\textsuperscript{65}.

\textit{Satyagraha}, at the behest of Gandhiji was not a monolithic, static and concrete modus- operandi but it is forensic and vibrant force. It can be used in the form of fasting, non co-operation, or civil disobedience. In all those forms, its hallmark should be truth and nonviolence/\textit{ahimsa}. Anyhow his commitment to non-violence/\textit{ahimsa} reminds us the saying of Christ,

“........... for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword”\textsuperscript{66}.

His concept of \textit{grāma swarāj} was the idealized form of all his ethical and economic postulates. Gandhiji’s conceptual value added welfare state/society came under the ambit of this ethical/economic propositions. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister and the architect of modern India, a few months before his demise, lamented that, his failure was largely due to the elimination of Gandhian conceptual paradigms with regard to the national problems.

“We have failed him (Mahatma) in many things”\textsuperscript{67}.

64. M.K. Gandhi, Harijan, 25/03/2939.

65. Ifran Habir, op. cit., April 1993, “Religions has played its role not only in supression of popular revolts, but also, on the other side, in rallying the rebels”.

66. St. Mathew, Chapter XXVI, Verse 52, Bible, King James Version.

Gandhiji being a selfless soul, a saint of high order, had gone through the problems of the multitude of India at the grassroot level and suggested remedies not only to the political question but also to the very question of social justice at all levels. He identified and viewed every question, whether national or international at the ambit/purview of truth and nonviolence/ahimsa. In short violence is not a solution to any problem and "sword force is brute force". But only truth and non-violence/ahimsa are the two moral forces which are the only way and end to humanity all over the world.

That is why, in an age which reduced/lost the relevance of Karl Marx (failure of communists in different regions of the world), after half a century of Mahatma’s martyrdom/demise, day by day Gandhian paradigms, whether in fight against social injustice, or domestic and international economic and political questions, are becoming relevant. In short Gandhian paradigms are getting wide acceptance in all walks of life due to its forces of ahimsa and truth.

Social Situation of the Castes System in Kerala

As earlier mentioned, the Kerala society from the dawn of the history was highly stratified with untouchability and atmospheric pollution.

68. Ibid, J.D. Sethi quotes Jawaharlal Nehru.
of various degrees. The pollutable communities are the basic classes who operated the agricultural system of Kerala and were numerically twelve per cent of the total population in the nineteenth century A.D. (See table II-1). For a long period to the early decades of this century these sizable number of agrestic communities had been remaining under slave conditions. There is no well documented historical evidence with regard to the origin/birth of slavery and pollution concepts in Kerala. These classes were the part and parcel of Hindu social fabric of Kerala. Thus, the whole Hindu society in this region monopolized various hereditary occupations. On the basis of occupations the society can be broadly classified into two identical groups, viz, savarṇās/superior jāties and avarṇās/polluting jāties.

At the apex of caste jāti hierarchy Brahminical/Nambūthiri with 2.39 per cent (see table II-1) controlled the social momentum through spiritualism and ritualism centered round temple worship. Next to them, the Nairs, with 16.25 per cent functioned under the sudra status with some privileges functioned


72. In South India there was no operation of Chātuvarṇīm as it was in the case of North India. “The new approaches and socio-logical tools of analysis have shown that the varna concept can hardly be used to explain the differences in the regional
as the overseers of Namboothiri properties. In addition to it they functioned as soldiers, servants in the Brahmin houses, etc. The largest of the avarṇās was the Ezhavas known in various names such as Shānnār, Chōgan, and Tiya who functioned as toddy tappers, mat makers, coir workers and untied agricultural labourers in the traditional hierarchical Kerala society. Other avarṇas excluding slave communities were artisans, metal workers and craftsman like weavers, potters, barbers of various orders etc. Anyhow the agricultural labour castes occupied the lowest position in their caste society.

Outside the traditional caste frame work there were the Christians and Mulsims, who had been converted to these alien religion on the passage of time as a reaction to Brahminical onslaughts. They also became the part of traditional caste structure and functioned as agriculturalists and traders. Among the Christians also there were Syrian (early converts) and Latin (later converts) and existed a length of aiyitham between them. The Latin Christians

specificities in social structures (Beck 1972, Stein 1980) except in so far as a polarization into brahmans and sudra (non-brahmana) castes is found to occur uniformly in all the regions, with a conspicuous absence of the ksatriya and vaisyā categories, especially in Tamil regions.” For detailed discussion, see R. Chambakalakshmi, State and Economy: South India Circa A.D. 400 - 1300 in Romila Thaper (Ed). Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1995, pp. 285 ff.

74. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., passim.
75. P.K. Balakrishnan, op. cit.
were the fishermen communities converted to Christianity under Spanish and Portughese (Latin) influence. The relative proportion of numerical strength of caste and religious groups in Kerala at the closing decades of the nineteenth century is given in detail in Table II-1.

Any how, the agrestic slavery was the core of the social stratification of Kerala. Agrestic slavery in this land was closely associated with the Aryanization of Malabar coast. Brahmin migration and Aryanization together restructured the traditional society based on inequalities which led to the institutionalization of caste purity and pollution concepts. In short between seventh and eleventh century A.D. the institutionalization of slavery was spearheaded by the Nambōōthiries/Brahmins by which they acquired spiritual and material glory. Thus the conceptualization of purity and pollution along with power relationship of politico-economic sort epitomized in the dominant caste status of the Nambōōthiries. The castes beneath them, above slave communities discharged/exercised cruelty towards the agrestic slaves got shelter under the jāti dharma. In short the socio-economic and political

77. Ward and Corner, op. cit., passim & Francis Buchanan, Journey, op. cit.


79. “Thus, in South India where Brahmins were not only powerful spirituality, such prohibitions were very strong”, Pauline Kolenda, op. cit., p. 84.

80. Ibid.
situation in Kerala up to the early decades of this century was controlled by the rotten Brahminical paradigms.

Kumara Guru - Life, Teaching and Career

Eraviperoor, a hamlet in the Pathanamthitta district of erstwhile Travancore State witnessed the birth of an untouchable/Harijan saviour in 1054, Kumbārī, 5 of Kollam Era (ME) i.e. in 1879 February 18th, of agrestic Paraya parentage. His parental habitat was near a brook, which is known in Malayalam language as ‘poika’ and was later on referred to as “Poikayil Kumara Guru”. His name was Komaran, a polluted form of the name Kumaran, which was permitted to be used by the polluted/Harijan castes according to the law and custom of the land. Kandan and Lēchi were his father and mother respectively. He got a meagre education from the nearby parochial school of Christian Missionaries, under the teachership of Muthoot Kochukunju Upadesi, a teacher and a preacher, which helped him to identify the morphological aspects of Malayalam typography. Anyhow with this nominal knowledge of typography, he was not able to read or write fluently.


82. On the basis of an interview with V.R. Kuttappan, Joint Secretary, PRDS, HQ: Eraviperoor.


Table III - I
Literacy level of Travancore during 1911, 1921, 1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Community</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmina (Malayalam)</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parayas</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulayas</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was due to land lord’s pressure, he was forced to discontinue his formal education and was deputed in the land lord’s fields as a cow-boy. Albeit, while he was spending his days with animals, his mind was in dialogue/transcended with truth\textsuperscript{85}. As in the words of Tillich,

"....... the statement of the truth of Christian message and interpretation of this truth for every new generation''\textsuperscript{86}.

Very soon, at his younger age, he became a crusader for the cause of his fellow beings in his hamlet.

By dint of his hard work and intelligence he acquired more about the contemporary religions such as Hinduism and Christianity. Even though he was born as a free man (non-slave), his social status was no better than that of the days of slavery. The traditional varṇa/jāti system which operated through centuries in this land earmarked the agrestic communities at the fifth level of social hierarchy. They were antyajās, or outside the caste formation/construct and suffered much from the upper groups/savartās\textsuperscript{87}. However he found time to share his self acquired epistemical gains to his jāti fellows of his hamlet in the scarcely available times at his teenage.


87. S.C. Dube, Indian Society, op. cit., pp. 48, 49. "Untouchability has been abolished by law, but its practice continues in disguised and undisguised forms in almost all parts of the country".
At his teenage, as a cow-boy, his usual dress was a bit of clothes at the waist and a cap made of the bark of the areca tree, whether at work or sharing of knowledge to his fellow beings. Usually the members of his community (Parayas) followed crude forms of worship, witchcraft, etc as the part of their spiritual exercises.

"The Parayas, at the bottom of caste hierarchy, were regarded as powerful magicians, and were consulted by castes in matters relating to thefts and killing of enemies."

He believed that this usual customary discharge of witchcraft degenerated their social ranking below to all, and their slavery was the impact of running away from the true God. Anyway the sordid spiritual condition of his fellow beings was the chief question before him during his teenage. Anyhow he was in a spiritual encounter and was in search of a path by which his fellow beings were to be lead to a space of transcendental glory, both in the spiritual as well as material world.


89. E. Thurston & Rangachari, Caste and Tribes of South India, Vol. III, op. cit., 1909, p. 120 & Peter Rob (Ed), op. cit., p. 248, "Magic was a sphere of activity in which the Parayan outranked, even the Namboottri Brahmins, some of who practised sorcery without a loss in status".

90. On the basis of an interview with V.K. Raman, President, PRDS, & V.R. Kuttappan, Jt. Secretary, PRDS, HQ: Eraviperoor, & Guru Dēva Geēṭāṅgal, op. cit., Song No. 29.
His interaction with the Protestant Christian Missionaries was a turning point in his life. Very soon he converted himself to Christian faith and changed his name to Yōhannān (John). By 1897 he became a true Christian in all respects and shared Christian didactics to his jati fellows. Through his missionary interaction, he realised the truth that all slave communities/untouchables are basically one group and therefore there is no room for any subcaste/upajāti distinctions among the untouchables/Harijans. Among the downtrodden there existed various levels of untouchability and taboos. Then he used his Christian Missionary space to educate his fellow beings about the hollowness of the social taboos within the depressed social formations. As a Christian he joined the Mārthoma (a Kerala Protestant Christian Chruch Order) and emersed in the task of converting his fellow untouchable/Harijan counterparts widely scattered all over Kerala into the Christian faith91. In the Marthoma Chruch he became a freelance preacher (pastor) who opted the path of spreading the message of Christ among upper caste Christians (Syrian Christians) as well as heathen untouchables/Harijans. Here Kumara Guru (Yōhannān) was not a paid regular pastor in charge of chruch duties. Hence he was able to think and interpret the Biblical tenets more pragmatically. Above all, he was able to catch the attention of many and his sermons and interpretations became the talk of the Christian society of Central Travancore92.


As an intelligent and committed *Harajan* /untouchable, he conceived the very basics of a black theology. Liberation theology and Black Theology are the two modern paradigms of Christian approach towards the oppressed. It acquired universal notice in the sixties of this century. But Kumara Guru was able to apply it in an empirical space before it was theorizing.

"......... the black experience as a source of theology is more than the so called “church experience.” more than singing, praying, and preaching about Jesus Christ, God, and the Holy Spirit”.

Kumara Guru began to realize some realities that were hidden in the new Christian way of life. Again the social question of acceptance became a matter of social tension which accumulated among the newly converted *Harajan*/untouchable Christians of the day. As far as Kumara Guru is concerned some safety valve is essential to his community. Later events and experience in the Marthoma Church proved his assumptions and concerns as empirically proved truths. Kumara Guru’s ethical as well as religious postulates evolved

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from the Syrian Christian pragmatic approach towards salvation and love.

To him the theology is

"... the critical discipline devoted for discovering, expounding and defending the more important truths implied in the experience of Christian community."

Now the untouchables/Harijans religious concepts in Kerala was in an evolutionary stage. Therefore a black/liberation theological concepts developed and

"... is the story of black people's struggle for liberation in an extreme situation of oppression."

As a pastor in the Christian Church, he got recognition among Syrian Christians of this region. But as an untouchable/Harijan, he or his fellow beings in the Christian Marthoma Church, did not have any social acceptance and recognition. In the Church services they were not allowed to sit together with Syrian Christians (noble traditional Christians of Kerala). Even the Harijan/untouchable Christians corpse were not permitted to be buried in the cemetery, where the corpse of the savarpa (Syrians) Christians


98. Syrian Christians are aristocratic savarpa claiming Apostolic tradition. No doubt, during the early decades of this century, they were functioned here as a Savarpa Hindu with Christian belief.
were buried\textsuperscript{99}. In addition to it, untouchable/\textit{avarṇa} Harijan Christians were separated from the Syrian Christian Congregations and created new \textit{avarṇa}/Harijan/untouchable congregations exclusively for the traditional agrastic groups\textsuperscript{100}. Kumara Guru as \textit{Yōhannān} openly criticised these dual attitudes and made speeches against it. Therefore the black/liberation religious thoughts began to be expressed in terms of equality and liberation. So their theological reflections about God and religion came under the ambit of struggle for equal justice and freedom\textsuperscript{101}. Hence Kumara Guru ushered the task of conscientization of the \textit{avarṇa}/Harijan Christians about the hollowness of the Christian faith and the discriminative approach of the Christians with in the Christian faith. His oration enkindled and awakened the \textit{avarṇa}/Harijan Christians and this liberation approach of Kumara Guru (\textit{Yōhannān}) infuriated the Marthoma Church authorities\textsuperscript{102}. In the mean time he discarded his first wife Mariam and married Miss V. Jānaṁna of Pārassāla and the Marthoma Church authorities had taken it as a weapon against Kumara Guru.


100. Ibid & Nirmala Aravind, op. cit., p. 181. “Their church had started out by encouraging converts from low castes, but after some time Syrian Christmas could not stomach former untouchables sitting side by side with them on the same pews, and there had been a cleavage. Now there were separate churches in some places, though converts were still admitted. This was one of the major targets of the reformist priests, this legacy of caste and the hypocrisy that surrounded it”.


and expelled him from the Marthoma Church fold. The Church authorities took this instance as a weapon by which they can shut his mouth and drain his popular acceptance among the masses. But it was not happened so, but continued his pastoral ministry.

His pastoral ministry was basically black/liberation theology based on Biblical postulates. His didactical concept of wicked sons and God’s selected was the core of the liberation theology (black theology). Kumara Guru’s conceptual postulate of God’s selected can equate with the Gandhian conceptual paradigm of ‘Harijans’. Gandhiji framed this concept within the Hindu social structure, while Kumara Guru (Yōhannān) in the Kerala Christian/Hindu framework for liberating unorganised agrestic avarṇa Harijan/untouchable groups. Since 1902, the core of his pastoral ministry was the ‘Truth which explained/preached under the conceptual formulation of liberation theology’. The concept of black/liberation theology brought forward by Kumara Guru in the early decades of the twentieth century became the seriously

103. AS 583/1962, High Court of Kerala, Cochin, Judgement on 5th September, 1966. Ashan PRDS Vs Janamma PRDS, ".....He took a Christian wife by name Mariam; but, he discarded her after some years after children were born to her. Then he took the appellant (V. Janamma), as wife, by which alliance also he had children. Naturally, he was expelled from Marthomite creed because of his second marriage; and it was then that he started PRDS in 1085 ME (1910)."

104. M.O. Ipe, Reminiscence, Adiyar Deepam Monthly, op. cit, ’95 January & February.

debated subject of Christian pragmatism in the eighties of this century which is an indication of the depth and extent of his logical as well as philosophical vision. As a prime mover in the new logical as well as philosophical terrain of Christian theology, he faced physical as well as mental threat from the Syrian Christians of Pathanamthitta district of Kerala.

As a true Christian, he left the Marthoma Church in 1904 and joined another socialistic neo-protestant Christian Church order known as Brothren Mission. He continued his ministry of saving the souls for the Kingdom of God as well as the deliverance of the tortured. Within a short while he realised the futility of the Brothren Mission and left the Christian churches in 1908 for the realization of his divine mission of deliverance of the avarña/Harijans/untouchables. Albeit, laid the foundation of a Black theology for the first time, which intended to the deliverance of the impoverished suffering agrestic avarña/Harijan multitudes.

As an enlightened, Kumara Guru ( Yöhannän) started his divine mission of the deliverance of the agrestic untouchable communities from their mental slavery, social disabilities and ageold bondages of the land lords. He realised the basic truth that any form of conversion is in no way a solution to
the basic problems of his fellow beings\textsuperscript{108}. Kumara Guru’s hypothetical conclusion, that is,

“conversion is not a solution to any social problem”.

was empirically proved by Gandhiji in his truth seeking experiment.

“The conversation of untouchables to Islam or Christianity

was criticised by Gandhi. He favoured religious bonds

as it was a ‘matter of heart’, others should not take advantage

of the helplessness of untouchables”\textsuperscript{109}.

Kumara Guru (Yōhannān), then continued his mission outside the periphery of the conventional Christian religious framework. He gathered momentum within the untouchable/avarṇa/Harijan compartments which resulted in the revolts of depressed classes popularly known in the history of Kerala as Adilahāla or slave mutiny. These resistance movements of the depressed classes’ Harijans of Central Travancore bears no such features of a bloody revolution or mutiny. But it was called so by upper castes/savarṇas, both Hindus and Christians, to defame Kumara Guru (Yōhannān) and picture him as a social danger of high order. Any way, all the Adilahālas were of non-violent passive resistance movements in the Gandhian modus in all respects\textsuperscript{110}.

\textsuperscript{108} Gurudeva Geethangal, op. cit., Song No. 33, Last stanza & Song No. 36, and Sooranad Kunjan Pillai, op. cit., pp. 24, 25.

\textsuperscript{109} S. R. Bakshi, op. cit., p. 121.

Adilahalas/Slave Mutiny

Between 1908 and 1913 there were about six such depressed class resistance movements (revolts) had taken place in the Central Travancore. All those revolts (Adilahalas) are equally important as far as the depressed class/Harijan movements of Kerala is concerned. Anyhow all these movements are of historical importance and a turning point in the history of untouchables/Harjans of Kerala. First of all, such a resistance was taken place at Vakathanam near Kottayam in 1083 ME (1908). In the next year such two resistance movements were taken place in Travancore and the first was at Mundakkayam in 1084 ME (1909) and the other one was taken place at Vellanadi in the same year. It was followed by Kozhukkoothira resistance in 1087-88 ME (1912-13), Māngalam resistance movement in 1088 ME (1913) and Vettiyādu resistance was taken place in the same year. Kumara Guru’s effort to establish the rights of the agrestic labour force of these regions irritated the savaṛṇa land lords and the savaṛṇa orthodoxy and they used brutal force against the unarmed agrestic labour communities come under the caste epithets of Pulayas and Parayas. In short the causes of the Adilahalas were an upper caste (savaṛṇa) land lords and orthodox sections conspiracy against Kumara Guru’s task of organizing the scattered and unorganised agrestic labour jātīs. The vested economic groups feared that Kumara Guru’s movement will ultimately make agrestic labour a costly
one. This fear was not a new one, while examining the Indian social structure since the very beginning of our culture. So they opposed Kumara Guru's task of organizing agricestic (Pulayas and Parayas) groups of Travancore. The agricestic Harijans of the day were scattered into small compartments and with various social taboos of high order. This scattered/unorganised condition of the agricestic Harijan communities was a positive factor as far as the varna/orthodox land owning sections were concerned. Agricestic Harijans under the stewardship of Kumara Guru fought a passive resistance agitation inorder to establish the right of an eight hours work in the farming sector and for wages in cash terms, and it was the beginning of a new work culture in Kerala.

**Birth of a Revolutionary**

In 1914, when the World War I broke out, Kumara Guru raised a protest against the war culture which mushroomed in the beginning of the

111. Romila Thapar, Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History, Popular Prakashan (P) Ltd., Bombay, 1995, p. 98, See her discussions regarding the evolution of the notion of social distance in the Indian society during the first millennium BC. "...but also a social distance between those who laboured and those who controlled the labour. This would mean a society where a few were powerful and could order the larger numbers to work for them."


113. On the basis of an interview with V.K. Raman, President, PRDS, HQ: Eraviperoor.
twentieth century. He organised a *Harijan’s/avarna’s* peaceful protest march against the British and World War I from Puramattom to Eraviperoor, in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala. This march covered a distance of five kilometers and in the entire march, the only one slogan that echoed was 'peace, peace, peace, .......’ (*samādhānāṁ, samādhānāṁ, samādhānāṁ* ........)

As a symbol of peace he insisted the volunteers of the march to use pure white garments. This mode of resistance, no doubt, was a unique paradigm which experimented by Kumara Guru before any form of Gandhian technique experimented here. It was his first step towards a collective resistance to effect changes in the contemporary society. This dissent and protest was, no doubt, a symbolic reaction of the dejected sections of Travancore.

"Collective action is very necessary for bringing about social change, and here the role played by symbols and the creation of new symbols require analysis since they are appropriate to ideologies and times- a clever manipulation of symbols is very crucial for kindling protest, dissent and change".

Hence Kumara Guru may be the prime mover of Kerala as far as Gandhian paradigm is concerned.


For his anti-war march, he was arrested by the police on a charge of treason and produced before the Changanacherry court. While on judicial examination, the honourable court found that he was not guilty and was acquitted. When case was in progress, he conceived an organizational framework for his untouchable/avarṇa/Harijan emancipation movement and later it became popular under the name PRDS or Pratyakṣa Rakṣa Daiva Sabha (The Church Of God’s Revealed Salvation)¹¹⁶. As far as Kumara Guru is concerned,

“there can be no freedom for God unless the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, and justice is given for the poor”¹¹⁷.

PRDS is, in a way or other, started the propagation of the religion of oppressed/untouchables/avarṇas/Harijans deliverence, which is far from the conventional conceptual religious framework¹¹⁸. The founder of this new religion (PRDS) believed that,

“God’s freedom for the poor is not less than the liberation of slaves from bondages”¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁸. T.H.P. Chentarassery, op. cit., passim.
The new black/oppressed theology of PRDS gave protection to *avarnas Harijans* from the onslaughts of upper class/savrṇa hegemonial religions, both Hindu and Christian. insured prestige, social acceptance to *Harijans avarṇas*: depressed classes, mental status, elasticity to their life style and converted them as a resistance group in the case of Kerala in general and particularly in Travancore in terms of social relations\(^{120}\).

Kumara Guru was not only a parochial *Harijan* reformer/leader, but to a large extent he was a visionary of high order. In 1921 C.F. Andrews personally met Kumara Guru and appreciated his task of the cultivation of an identity to the depressed classes/*Harijans* of Kerala. In addition to it his efforts to prepare the *Harijans/avārṇas* to fit for the national cause and to drive them towards the national main stream were also subjected to the comment and appreciation by C.F. Andrews\(^{121}\). Kumara Guru was a great admirer of Gandhiji. On 14th January 1937, he met Gandhiji at Kottāmāin near Neyyattinkara in Trivandrum and presented a pocket watch to Gandhiji as a mark of his gratitude. In the conversation both of them were mutually appreciated.

"You are struggling for the national liberation", said Kumara Guru, "and I am struggling for the slave communities"\(^{122}\).

\(^{120}\) Dalit Bandhu N.K. Jose, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, ff. Deliverance from the clutches of various age old socio-religious taboos much helped the process of getting elasticity to the life style of harijans/untouchables in Kerala. Christian Missionary enterprises and their universalization of education opened new havens to indigenous social reformers.

\(^{121}\) M O ipe, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 26.

\(^{122}\) Souvenir, *Kumara Guru Birth Anniversary, 1990*, p. 44.
Almost all resistance as well as social reform movements acquired Gandhian style and modus-operandi will, no doubt, prove Kumara Guru’s acceptance of Gandhiji as an inspiration and source to his task of *avarṇa/Harijan* emancipation. With this passive formula, Kumara Guru, challenged the traditional patterns/models effectively.

“The ideology of Backward Classes movement is double-edged; expressing the feeling of dissatisfaction; dissent and protest with the existing situation and working out a positive programme of redressing the malady”¹²³.

As a recognition to his *Harijan/avarṇa* emancipation services, the King of Travancore nominated him to the Sree Moolam Popular Assembly in 1921 and in 1931 to the Sree Mōolāṁ Praja Sabha¹²⁴. As a representative in the legislative councils, he advocated for the welfare of the whole body of *avarṇa/Harijan* communities. He represented the problems of the *avarṇa/Harijans* in an impressive and polite manner, so he received positive response from the rulers¹²⁵.


¹²⁵. Ibid.
Builder of new religion/God of depressed classes/Harijans

God’s Revealed Salvation,\textsuperscript{126} or salvation in terms of material life, was the long cherished dream of the avarṇās/Harijans of Kerala. To them Kumara Guru became the embodiment/incarnation of their dreams. Kumara Guru by early interactions with Christian as well as Hindu religions, realised a factual truth that the aborigines/avarṇās conversion to any faith/creed is not a solution to their age old basic problems. Untouchable through a conversion to any contemporary religion, will generate a new group of untouchables within the structural framework of the particular religion\textsuperscript{127}. That is why he was in search of a God, creed, and a way of life, which reflects the pulses and feelings of the depressed millions of Kerala\textsuperscript{128}. Here the avarṇās/Harijans, from the very ancient, used to maintain a religion of their own, without concrete philosophy or priesthood, which included magic, witchcraft, worship of the dead ancestors, (worship of Chāvar), etc., and is not competent to cater the spiritual as well as temporal needs of the contemporary (twentieth century) avarṇa/depressed sections of Kerala\textsuperscript{129}. Above all, due to historical reasons,

\textsuperscript{126} Almost all religious preaching a salvation after the death. Paradoxically Kumara Guru conceived the concept of a visual salvation revealed through him. It is popularly known as liberation theology or the theology of depressed classes. See Guru Deva Geethangal, Songs No. 100, 101, 105, 97, 88, 91, 83.

\textsuperscript{127} Ainslie T. Embree, Utopias in Conflict, Religion and Nationalism in Modern India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1992, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{128} Guru Deva Geethangal, op. cit, Songs No. 102, 103, 104.

inside the avarṇa/Harijan compartments there exists contradictions and tensions that brought disunity among them\textsuperscript{130}. Hence the need of the disunited, compartmentalised, and segmented Harijans of India, in general, and avarnas/Harijans of Kerala in particular was a unifying force which can penetrate into the personal as well as social living of an individual\textsuperscript{131}. Kumara Guru, through the idolization of his religious postulates, just strived to attain the general aspirations of the avarṇās/Harijans of Kerala. Above all, he found that the existing religions are not sufficient to cater the needs and demands of the avarṇa/Harijan sections, the flotsam and jetsam of the society, he set to sail alone with the aspirations of the low ranking in all spheres of life to the new jetties of God's revealed salvation and temporal deliverance.

In spite of low ranking in terms of socio-economic milieu, the avarṇās/Harijans under Kumara Guru, pioneered the liberation theology, operated well within the orthodox and conservative saṅkarṣa society of Central Travancore in the early decades of the twentieth century and achieved tremendous mental deliverance and social freedom to the depressed sections/Harijans through the new ontological stand of liberation theology and which projected as a model to other Harijan/avarṇa organizations and movements.


\textsuperscript{131} P.N. Vijaya Kumar, Social Justice and Legal Protection for SC and ST, Adiyar Deepam Annual, February 1994.
elsewhere in South India\textsuperscript{132}. Kumara Guru, indeed, developed a monotheistic belief, which in its total surrender to God and rejection of all ritual, goes far beyond to the boundaries of Hinduism or Christianity. The unity of God becomes for Kumara Guru the means of comprehension of the unity among man and thus reminds the need of an absolute rejection, both explicit and vocal, of the concept and practice of caste purity and pollution, and of all ritualistic religion irrespective of its quality or quantity. In his humble attempt to redefine the religion, he used his conceptual framework of liberation theology and acted the role of a prophet of high order. Any how

"\ldots\ldots\text{PRDS is not even a Hindu creed, but only a new venture to start a new casteless creed for the depressed and socially disabled communities...........}

\ldots\ldots\text{prds is not a Christian organization"}^{133}.

Long before, the question of untouchables began to be discussed at the national level, the idea of keeping the identity of untouchables was conceived in his mind. Later B.R. Ambedkar felt that,

"the untouchables had to beware of the various elite communities whose interests were at variance with those of the exploited untouchables"\textsuperscript{134}.


\textsuperscript{133.} AS No. 583/62, op. cit., September 5, 1966.

\textsuperscript{134.} Vijaya Prashad, The Untouchable Question, Economic and Political Weekly, Bombay, 2 March 1996.
Hence, his new framework of liberation theology which maintained an equal distance from both Christianity and Hinduism and it paved the way for a passive resistance to get a pari pasu treatment in all respect to avarṇās/Harijans/untouchables with other savarna sections of the society is the defacto and de jure condition of it\textsuperscript{35}. Simplicity is the core of the new faith conceived by Kumara Guru. Truth and tolerance is the foundation stone on which the superstructure of the PRDS is built. Habits like smoking, use of intoxicating drinks are non tolerable to the faith of Kumara Guru. He insisted to its followers (Harijans) to maintain mental as well as physical cleanliness for attaining revealed salvation. Eating of beef is regarded as impure but not gave any particular sanctity to the animal cow\textsuperscript{36}. In short, as a prime mover, Kumara Guru led a passive movement for the deliverance of the depressed classes and has no parallels in history.

"There is no liberation without transformation, that is, without struggle for freedom in this world. There is no liberation without the commitment of revolutionary action against injustice, slavery and oppression"\textsuperscript{137}.

Kumara Guru as a social and religious reformer of the Harijans or untouchable of Travancore believed that,


\textsuperscript{136} Kumara Guru Birth Day Souvenir, 1990, p. 46.

\textsuperscript{137} James H. Cone, op. cit., p. 152.
"the untouchables needed to lead themselves"\textsuperscript{138}.

In short, this was the sum and substance of his religious and social postulations. These notions of Kumara Guru penetrated into the structural framework of the Harijans and the general atmosphere which generated by Gandhian movement much helped the transformation of Harijans in Travancore into an organizational form.

**In the Legislative Council**

In the Travancore legislative assemblies (Sree Mōōlaṁ Praja Sabha and Sree Mōōlaṁ Popular Assembly) so many untouchable communities (Harijans) were represented, they were Ayyankāli, N. John Joseph (Pampady John Joseph), P.K. Das, Poikayil Yōhannān (later Kumara Guru), Kandan Kumāran, Daivathān Kuñjān, Pāraṇi Abraham Issac, N.J. Joshua, V. John, etc. Each and every in the representative body only performed in a narrow and parochial manner and they only represented the problems of the respective caste/jāti\textsuperscript{139}. The only one exception was Poikayil Yōhannān (Kumara Guru), who was represented not only for Parayās (parental caste/jāti of Kumara Guru) but for the whole of the untouchables/depressed classes of the state of

\textsuperscript{138} Vijaya Parishad, op. cit., 2 March, 1996.

Travancore. As a member of the highest political body of the state, he represented the entire slave communities/untouchables and he believed that they all are the part of one bogey of the entire depressed social fabric. No doubt he was the only responsible representative of the slave communities who ignored narrow and parochial considerations. He represented the problems in the floor of the Legislative Assembly in a pleasing manner.

“Honourable Maharaja, please consider the agrestic slave communities/untouchables as your younger sons and so they deserves more attention from you”, was the request of Kumara Guru (Poikayal Yōhannān) before the Legislative Assembly.

In 1937 he was able to start a weaving school for depressed classes at Eraviperoor in Pathanamthitta district with the grant of Royal Government of Travancore. was a commendable gain on the part of Kumara Guru as the representative of the agrestic slave communities in the legislative assembly. He believed that self-reliance is a necessary condition for deslaving the agrestic slave communities. That is why he started the weaving school for

140. Proceedings of Sree Mōōlaṁ Popular Assembly, op. cit., 11/03/1931. Kumara Guru (Yōhannān) raised demands for the welfare of the untouchableś/śahrījans, such as educational concessions, land for cultivation, loan facility for agricultural activities, etc.


Table III - 2
Literacy Level of various communities in 1931 - (Males & Females) State of Travancore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Community</th>
<th>Literacy in Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hindus excluding Harijans</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depressed classes/Harijans</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table III - 3
Illiteracy rate of Travancore compared with other countries in the world (As per 1931 Census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Country</th>
<th>Percentage of Illiteracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Travancore</td>
<td>76.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Portugal</td>
<td>68.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. China</td>
<td>80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Egypt</td>
<td>92.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the agrestic slave communities/untouchables. In the next year he started another weaving school for agrestic slave communities/untouchables at Amara near Changanacherry\textsuperscript{143}. In 1937 he started one Lower Primary School at Amara and another English Medium Upper Primary (residential school) School at Vehgalathukunnu in Pathanamthitta district. These schools were opened to all irrespective of student’s birth or social status\textsuperscript{144}. The ultimate object of these institutional building was to wipe out the slave sentiments which were inherent among the agrestic slave communities/untouchables of Kerala through centuries. For this purpose, the technical word deslaving is used. Further deslaving techniques which used by Kumara Guru may be examined under the title ‘modus-operandi’.

Anyhow, a least educated man in the Legislative Assembly cynosured the millions of Travancore. As a member of the Assembly he attempted to wipe out sordid economic and social conditions of the old agrestic slaves of Travancore through acquiring farm lands, technical schools, formal schools and personal supervision to improve the health and sanitary conditions of these people\textsuperscript{145}. He was able to identify the progressive decay of Kerala society in general and the agrestic slave community/untouchable compartments

\textsuperscript{143} Editorial Board, Sree Kumara Guru Devan, SKGDS, Kottayam, 1983, pp. 58 - 60.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} T.H.P. Chentarassery, op. cit., pp. 10 ff.
in particular. Therefore he was more concerned with social structure rather than individuals in the society. For social transformation he used Gandian technique of passive resistance (\textit{ahimsa} based resistance) inside and outside of the Legislative Councils. On the other hand the contemporary depressed class/\textit{Harijan} leaders like Ayyankāli used extreme and aggressive modes in their fight for social justice\textsuperscript{146}. In his fight for social justice and deliverance he used the weapon of liberation theology as an ideational postulate. Generally, "Liberation theology has been regarded as a challenge to structural evils, but at the same time it depends much upon Marxism and violent means"\textsuperscript{147}.

But Kumara Guru was very particular to non-violence (\textit{ahimsa}) while accepting liberation theology as a tool to liberate his fellow beings from the bondages of religious decay.

\textbf{Modus-Operandi}

In a highly stratified society like Kerala caste, caste purity, and pollution concepts were deeprooted in the veins of every walks of life. From birth to death an individual's destiny was decided by the taboos and racial status. In such a society a social reformer has supposed to work in multi-dimensional

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{146} Malayala Manōrama Sadabdhipatippu, Kottayam 1988, p. 25.
\end{footnotesize}
ways. Kumara Guru as a prime mover of the socio-religious scenario of Travancore, was in the himalayan task of restoring the rights of *avarṇas*; Harijans/aborigines, once lost as well as deslaving the untouchable/agrestic slave community psyche, was always in a paranoic condition, never abandoned the path of non-violence (*ahiṃsa*) or never resorted to the short cut of violence (*hiṃsa*)\(^{148}\). The sanctum sanctorum of his spiritual life was the idolization of the liberation theology which aimed the overall liberation of the poor and oppressed in the society. Therefore, Kumara Guru gave a large measure of his address to proclaim the emptiness and tragedy of *avarṇa*ś (*Harijans*) of contemporary Kerala. The tragedy of *avarṇa*ś was due to their failure to identify the true God, that is truth. His conclusion of the regular theological framework was that the God is gracious, just and good but hesitant to meet the challenge to liberate the poor from their bondages. That is why the diabolic social structure remained unchanged through ages\(^{149}\). This is the general paradigm still operating elsewhere in the contemporary world. Kumara Guru being a visionary successfully identified this dialectical morphology of the contemporary theology.

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149. Guru Deva Geethangal, op. cit., Songs No. 60, 61, 62, 78.
Table III - 4
Literacy level of various depressed classes including Ezhavas in Travancore during 1931

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Community</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Percentage of literacy</th>
<th>Percentage of male literacy</th>
<th>Percentage of female literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>869863</td>
<td>27.40%</td>
<td>42.70%</td>
<td>12.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parayas (Hindu)</td>
<td>70684</td>
<td>4.90%</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parayas (Christian)</td>
<td>71680</td>
<td>15.70%</td>
<td>23.80%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulayas (Hindu)</td>
<td>207337</td>
<td>4.10%</td>
<td>6.90%</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulayas (Christian)</td>
<td>157813</td>
<td>13.10%</td>
<td>19.40%</td>
<td>6.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

His modus-operandi was progressively revolutionary but not violent and rebellious. So his religious outlook was a holistic functionalism and was a forensic one. He never insisted the Harijans/untouchables/agrestic slave communities under his purview to resort to the violent path. Whenever they opted the path of violence he rushed to the scene and discouraged them from the act of violence. For instance, the Adilahala (1087-'88 ME) of Kozhukkōchira near Rānni of Pathanamthitta district raised to the standard of a blood feud and the timely intervention of Kumara Guru avoided the bloodshed and eased the situation and established the rights of Harijans/avarṇās or the erst while agrestic slave communities over their land holdings150. In short Kuumra Guru was an embodiment of Christian love, and Gandhian truth and ahimsa151.

He never attacked the superstructure of the system but only directed towards the base of the system. His priority was to obtain savarṇa recognition and acceptance to the rights of the oppressed/erst while agrestic slave communities as the creation of God. Through his Christian love and Gandhian penance, insisted the savarṇās to register the concept of justice to the poor as a way of their life. His early task was to create a dialogical situation in the upper class intellectual scenario. For that he used the tool of

Christian theology\textsuperscript{152}. Hence he propelled a peaceful dialogical transition in the socio-religious scenario of the Central Travancore. Contemporary Christian postulates were much more influenced by western liberalism and expediency. At the same time his interaction with Christian paradigms much helped him to restructure the \textit{Harijan} society in terms of modernity and to create an impulsion of social awakening in the \textit{Harijan avarṇa} scenario\textsuperscript{153}. In addition to it his firebrand oration based on various religious postulates was a source of inspiration to the rank and file of the \textit{Harijan avarṇa} compartments of this region\textsuperscript{154}.

He was on the anvil of a revolution through the angles of economic and social embarking. As a revolutionary in the strict sense of Gandhian postulates, he realised the inevitability of education. That is why he started schools to educate the downtroddens and erst while agrestic slave’s young ones in a formal way. It much helped them to acquire the symbols of social status and opened the ways to tap the economic and professional opportunities in the later years\textsuperscript{155}. Anyhow, he was able to build his social revolution into

\textsuperscript{152} T.H.P. Chentarassery, op. cit., passim.

\textsuperscript{153} Y.B. Damle, op. cit., p. 78.

\textsuperscript{154} A letter to B.R. Ambedkar by V. Janamma (w/o Kumara Guru), on 9th June, 1950.

\textsuperscript{155} Dipankar Gupta, op. cit., p. 321.
Table III - 5
Administrative Structure of PRDS

President
(Elective Post)
(President controls temporal matters and supervise spiritual matters)

An elected Council from bottom to top

27 Regional Councils

Elected Regional Council presided by a President and Secretary

Under each Regional Council there are five Primary Councils/Sākās

Each Sāka has an elected council which looks after administrative as well as welfare programme

Gurukula Śreṣṭḥa (Chief Priest)
Selective Post from among regional Priest (Gurukula Upadeśaṣa)

27 Regional Gurukula Upadeśaṣas (Selective Post)

Under each Gurukula Upadeśa there are five primary Upadeśaṣ with nominal priestly duties (Selective post based on dedication and religious knowledge)

Source: PRDS Bylaws.
an anti-structural one instead of anti-savarna which experimented elsewhere in India in modern times by different social reformers156.

Even after the abolition of slavery in Travancore, all the erst-while slave communities remained under the same structural combination of the same political economy. That is why the ego and self status, even after the abolition of slavery, remained unchanged. In brief we can say this mood of the erst while slave compartments was in born and their slavish mentality was inherent. Kumara Guru was able to identify this sordid and weak personality which operated in the psyche of the Harijans/erst-while agrestic slave communities. In order to save them from the ambit of this state of mind, he attempted to reconstruct the social framework of the Harijans/untouchables through building/establishing exclusive colonies for Harijans/untouchables irrespective of their compartmentalism or segmentary attitude157.

For that he acquired the possession of lands at various parts of Travancore by way of land grants from the Royal Government or by way of purchase from the janmies. Then he collected or mobilised the old slave families from the janmies land holdings and rehabilitated in the newly created colonies of Harijan avarna exclusive. Then the colony life was not familiar to the Kerala

156. Y.B. Damle, op. cit., p. 64.
society. Anyhow it was a novel action plan of Kumāra Guru as an emancipator of Harijans/avarṇās. In the practical terrain of social action this new way of collective living introduced among the Harijans/avarṇās boosted their mental courage, morale, social status, political bargaining power and organizational tempo. It was another strategy of Kumara Guru to deslave the age old agrestic slave communities who lost everything in the course of history, in addition to technical education and formal education. At first an experimental colony of fifty five acres was came into existance in 1917 at Amara near Chaṅganācherry. In this colony, later an L.P.School and a weaving school were started under the management of PRDS by its founder Kumara Guru. In a short while Kumara Guru found that this experiment is successful and a novel one. In 1920 he purchased seven acres of land at Eraviperōr in Pathanamthitta district and rehabilitated two dozen families, of untouchable origin, there. In 1932 through government channels he acquired forty acres of land at Veṅgalthukunnu in Pathanamthitta district, where he rehabilitated one hundred families and there started an English Medium Residential U.P. School. The process of restructuring of erst while agrestic slave communities through exclusive colonies was questioned by the upper caste land owning sections of Travancore. In 1936 P.C. Kurien, an honourable member of the

Sree Mōōlām Popular Assembly, raised some doubts in the floor, that these rehabilitation programme of Kumara Guru (Yōhannān) will jettison the agricultural scencio of Travancore. The rehabilitation of agrestic labour communities in exclusive colonies will endanger the labour distribution pattern and create labour scarcity in the state and will paralyze the agricultural operations. was the doubt of the honourable member160. In the thirties of this century Kumara Guru was able rehabilitate a major chunk of the erst while agrestic slave compartments of the Central and Northern Travancore in the protected areas of exclusive Harijan/avarṇa colonies in various parts of the Pathananthitta and the adjoining districts of Central Travancore area.

The new black/liberation theology which propagated by Kumara Guru broke the traditional upper caste hegemony in the spiritual domain of Travancore.

“Now it has become evident that dalits themselves can meaningfully involve in the process of theologizing”161. In short Kumara Guru, to the erst while agrestic slaves (Harijans) of Kerala, is what Moses was to Israelites in Egypt in the context of slavery. To Israelites it was a mere physical deliverence but to the Harijans avarṇās of Travancore

it was an endeavour of restoration of dignity and social recognition through deslaving exercise. Hence,

"dalit theology is not the theology of any caste group, but it is the theology of all who are poor and oppressed"\textsuperscript{162}.

The historical character of liberation as an essential ingredient in Revealed Salvation of God (Pratyaṣa Raṣa Daiva Sabha) is also seen in the Kumara Guru's theological perspective. To him salvation is not merely an abstract spiritual idea but liberation to untouchables, food to the hungry and removal of inner blindness. Martin Luther King Jr. viewed slavery and oppression as a contradiction of the divine will. Therefore, in the words of James H. Cone,

"liberation then cannot be separated from the historical struggle of freedom in this world".

Agrestic slave communities of Kerala, as elsewhere in India, had no formal and uniform religious practices of their own. This condition continued since very ancient to the modern times, so far the beginning of this century.

"Their religion was a congeries of primitive cults and practices which included spells, chants and incantations used for beneficial and baneful ends"\textsuperscript{163}.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., p. 3.

The context of his conceptual as well as empirical framework of deslaving through rehabilitating, imparting technical as well as formal education and actualization of the new religion of liberation to the constituents of the old slave communities was much result oriented one. In the newly formed *Harijan avarṇa* habitats, he was able to generate a spiritual dialogue within the untouchable/*Harijan* ambit and was able to take them back from the old and traditional religious practices. He taught them first the religion of liberation that was rather far away from the conventional Christian or Hindu religious postulates. The core of his religious postulate was 'exploitation of and hatred towards neighbours are regarded as sins of high order'\(^{164}\). The new theology of Kumara Guru was a vibrant force of untouchable communities emancipation. In this new religion of Revealed Salvation (PRDS) Kumara Guru became a prophet, and his words were regarded as the Gods own dialogue to the depressed/untouchables and it became the foundation stone of the new liberation theology.

**Philosophy of Kumara Guru**

As a prophet, preacher and a teacher to the poor *Harijan* compartments of Kerala, Kumara Guru gave his tenets in the form of folk songs. These folk songs are about fivehundred in numbers. While the composition was

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simple but bears in-depth philosophical as well as ideological aspects. It can be classified under four captions, viz., heritage, value added living, healthy social relations, and predictions. A set of songs which threw light to the golden days of the Harijan in this land. It actually much helped the aborigines to develop their ego and self esteem. Building of ego is a si-ne qua non to deslave the erstwhile agrestic slave communities. Through these songs Kumara Guru made an attempt to find out answers to social questions such as ‘when and where the Harijans lost their paradise and how it happened so’. No doubt Kumara Guru was able to find answer to all when, where and hows and the answer was the institutionalization of his religious concepts".165.

He put forward a moral code to all in general and particularly to the Harijans through the songs of value added living. It explains minor to major questions of social relations. He insisted the need for healthy individual, healthy family, healthy society and healthy state for peaceful and happy living. Mutual respect and recongnition of neighbour’s freedom was the core of his teaching. For a healthy life each and every individual should keep away from the vices like consumption of intoxicating drinks, smoking, chewing and extravgance. At the same time he insisted all to be pure vegeterians. The present day medical science justifies the need for the elimination of non-vegetarian food for a healthy life".166.

165. Guru Dēva Gēēthaṅgal, Part I & II.
166. Ibid.
He was more aware of a healthy social relation between communities that is why he insisted his disciples to follow the path of *ahimsa*, while dealing with problems. He advised his people to give respect to and take respect from the society. He himself be a paradigm in giving respect to others. He believed that, respecting of elders, respectable people, etc., was a necessary condition for a healthy social living\(^{167}\).

Kumara Guru, being a social reformer insisted for a healthy social living. As a visionary, he predicted some social changes in the near future. He anticipated the decline of British empire, decline of princely states and emergence of democracy in India. Above all the economic changes in the near future were also forestalled. All later events proved Kumara Guru's predictions reliability and validity which in turn increased the relevance of his ideology among the followers\(^{168}\).

**Gandhian and Christian Influence on Kumara Guru**

PRDS is not only a social reform movement but also a progressive religious movement which much indebted to Gandhiji and Christ in true sense. The postulate of ‘love your neighbour as you love yourself’ and ‘the liberation of those shouldering the weight of the society’ are basically true Christian

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167. Ibid.
168. Sooranad Kunjanpillai, op. cit.
concepts. But to the contemporary Christian society the Biblical stories and
tenets can be visualized only in the perspective of economic and social
paradigms\textsuperscript{169}. To Kumara Guru it was a source of inspiration, hope and
model in the unending struggle for social justice.

Kumara Guru's concept of self sufficiency or non-dependence on
others is the only path which getting out man from his inner slavery, and has
been influenced by Gandhian conceptual axiom of economic freedom\textsuperscript{170}.
Gandhi and Kumara Guru were basically standing for the cause of Harijans/
untouchables.

"Thus the steps for the upliftment of Harijans taken by
Gandhi were unique in our history............, he was
ardently identified himself with numerous causes which
had deep connection with the daily life of a downtrodden
member of our society"\textsuperscript{171}.

Gandhi and Kumara Guru worked for the restoration of denied honour and
respect of the Harijans/untouchables. The former had chosen the whole of
India as his field of action and latter had operated at a parochial level and it

\textsuperscript{169} James H. Cone, op. cit., p. 93.
\textsuperscript{170} K. Ratnam Chetty, op. cit., p. 79, "In Gandhian economic
order, dependence on others in slavery and self sufficiency is
freedom".
\textsuperscript{171} S. R. Bakshi, op. cit., pp. 3 ff.
was the only difference between them in the cause of *Harijan*/untouchable emancipation.

Kumara Guru as a social reformer opted the path of *ahimsa/*non-violence, which was redefined and overhauled by Gandhiji through his personal as well as national experience. In a highly stratified society like Kerala, it was quite difficult to use Marxian or violent methods to attain the specific goal of *Harijan*/untouchable liberation. The passive method used through the religious postulates slowly but sharply and deeply penetrated into the social structure and the *savarnās* themselves recognised the *Harijan*/untouchable communities as their counter parts very shortly. That is why the rulers as well as various religious sects of Kerala in this century, before our political independence, opened the doors of recognition to the *Harijan*/untouchable segments, in the form of temple entry and other piece meal reforms.

Christ through his revolutionary movement broke the parochial bar of regionalism and superiority ego of Hebrews/Jews. Here Kumara Guru by pouring moral as well as mental courage to the *Harijans*/untouchables ceased the growth of *savarna* pragmatism which much helped the political consciousness among the low ranking of the Kerala society. *Harijans*/untouchables elsewhere in India are still functioning as votebanks to political parties, deprived of all their political rights and above all they are not conscious
of their function and status in the political framework. In Kerala they are above to all these general defects and it was due to the vibrant force which unsheathed in the early decades of the twentieth century by Kumara Guru under the spiritual and ethical influence of Gandhiji and Christ.\footnote{172}

Kumara Guru as a preacher and social reformer, operated his divine mission of emancipation of the culturally poor and economically and socially backward sections with little literacy and with an empty purse, in a successful manner. He taught these poor people high ideals of life and indepth religious concepts through a simple style of folk songs with common and familiar syntax. The only modus of his philosophical discourse was this vocal recital of humble and simple folk structure. His structural compilation of folk songs which used to enlighten the Harijan/untouchable multitudes was unique in appearance and depth.

"The religious component provides the chief mechanism to improve self-image and self-respect, and it also helps to establish an identity."\footnote{173}

As a prophet and philosopher, Kumara Guru, left nothing in written form or of typographical exercise and through his lore in the form of folk songs taught the disciples the depth and extent of truth and value added life and

\footnote{172}{M. Stephen, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 3 ff.}
\footnote{173}{S.C. Malik (Ed.) M.S.A. Rao, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 62.}
therefore still it is glittering among the three lakh odd Harijan/untouchable sections in and around Pathananthitta district of Kerala state.

Kumara Guru’s whole efforts were directed towards the elimination of class, caste, and surplus accumulation, and the building of a welfare society based on Gandhian postulates which was noteworthy. He realised that caste, class, and surplus accumulation is the root cause of all the ills of the society. His main concern was also the same. To this direction he called for the sufferers to ran away from the “cheap grace” guaranteed by the existing religions and systems. By putting physical, mental and cultural oppression, the dominant caste/religious formations, had been reducing the ‘poor sons of God’ to the level of sub-human elements in their society. This upper caste/class strategy was identified by him and his construct of PRDS, operated as a machinery to counter the age old caste/class/religious oppression mooted by savarna society, under a Gandhian style.

Building a healthy social relation was the core of his mission. For attaining the ultimate goal, that is to establish an identity to the aborigines of this land, he successfully utilised the time and space factor of the then

Travancore. He was always aware of the need of eliminating friction with the orthodox society of Travancore. That is why he embraced the Gandhian strategy of *ahimsa*. He believed in the rationale of truth that,

"the religious aspect is as important as the economic, educational and political one"\(^{177}\).

That is why he wore the clad of a saviour and Messiah of erstwhile agrestic slave communities.

**Schism, Disintegration and Resurrection of PRDS**

In 1939 Kumara Guru's physical presence in the material world was over. The absence of written teachings/tenets of Kumara Guru created interpretation crisis in the rank and file of PRDS\(^{178}\). It led to an ideological as well as interpretational question in the *Harijan* movement master-minded by Kumara Guru under the PRDS banner. As a result of it, the organizational setup underwent a rupture. Ultimately the interpretation crisis led to the emergence of eleven independent church organizations within the body politic of PRDS with identical administrative setup and followers of their own. The following were the names of such independent PRDS groups, *viz.*, *Eṭṭupāra* PRDS, *Sebalōṇ* PRDS, *Karimbanākuzhi* PRDS, *Satya* PRDS, *Mannūthadam*

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PRDS, Aīnavar PRDS, Āṣṇ PRDS, Kāṇakēri PRDS, Thōṭakkādu PRDS, and Jānāma PRDS. The Constitutional protection and reservations in governmental jobs and in other matters to Hindu Harijans/Scheduled Castes in the post-independent period generated much confusion among the PRDS leadership and it led to the ideological crisis as well as identity crisis among the erstwhile agrestic slave communities of Kerala. In 1950 the Janaamma PRDS embraced Hinduism and it led to a legal battle between the Hindu and pro-Christian factions of various PRDS groups and it prolonged for about fourteen years and ended with the final verdict of The High Court of Kerala on 5th September 1966179. While the case was in progress the Janamma PRDS abdicated their Hindu faith and openly declared that they are neither Hindus nor Christians in identity, faith and custom and they are a solid mass of aboriginal faith and culture (Ādi Dravida Faith)180. By the time Janamma PRDS acquired the official colour and status. In the mean time the PRDS under the leadership of V. Janaamma (official group), the wife of Kumara Guru, declared that the founder of the PRDS (Kumara Guru) as true God and its followers accepted it181. In a society where majority are innocent and poor, the sorry fact is that the dominant minority are competent to make

179. Dēsābandu Daily, 1125 Mēēnām 9 (ME), Kottayam & Baby and Babu Rajan, op. cit., pp. 75, 76, and OS No. 34/1952, District Court, Kottayam, AS No. 583/1962 High Court of Kerala, Cochin.


181. PRDS By law - 1956.
decisions and they can regulate the structure. Therefore this ideological/structural change was neither noticed nor challenged by the poor ‘sons of God’. Hence the poor multitudes of PRDS exercised their will in favour of the structural realm of PRDS.

Between 1950 and 1985 so many changes took place in the brand wagon of PRDS faith. Final shape of PRDS as an identical religion acquired in 1985. Hereinafter the PRDS (Janamma group) elevated Kumara Guru, his mother, wife, and sons as true gods and began to worship as ‘five gods’ (anjēēśwaranmār). The five gods (anjēēśwaranmār) are known among them as Kumara Guru Devan (founder of PRDS), Kumara Guru’s mother Lechi as Lechi Mātāvu, Kumara Guru’s wife V. Janamma as Ammachi, and Kumara Guru’s two sons, P.J. Baby as Āchāriya Guru, and P.J. Thankappan as Kochu Tirumēni. The sincere and faithful laymen/believers of PRDS believed that all these five men were the incarnations of the God Almighty. To the socially and economically suffering majority, a liberating God is the necessary condition of their faith and religion, which is absent in the traditional religions. That is why they visualized hope and salvation in the anjēēśwaranmār. No doubt, PRDS is now a religion of twentieth century, functions with all paraphernalias of a traditional religion of the day182.

Almost all ideological as well as structural problems arose in PRDS out of the power struggle which crept into it after the demise of its founder, Kumara Guru. In the lifetime of Kumara Guru, he acquired immense wealth for the welfare of the untouchable communities of Kerala. After the demise of Guru, the management of the properties and institutions became a matter of contention among the leadership. In short the accumulated wealth of PRDS and its utilization/appropriation became another cause for sore of confusion in the rank and file of the PRDS groups which was mentioned earlier in this chapter\textsuperscript{183}.

In 1939, immediately after the death of Kumara Guru, PRDS ventured into a more lucrative field of Commercial Banking. No doubt, it was the outcome of the three decades guidance of Kumara Guru and the material progress acquired by the erstwhile agrestic slave communities through a disciplined life which had been shown and taught by Kumara Guru. PRDS registered a Commercial Bank at Changanacherry under 1939 (1114 ME) Travancore Companies Act, Section 9; and its name was \textit{Bharath Independent Bank Ltd.}, under the directorship of P. Vivekanandan\textsuperscript{184}. It collected its capital from amongst the Harijans/untouchable communities of Travancore through

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid, pp. 72, 73,

\textsuperscript{184} See the copy of the prospectus and application form kept in the files of PRDS, HQ at Eraviperoor. Ibid, pp. 67, 68, and PRDS Proceedings 1945.
shares. The shares of the bank were issued at par at Rs. 5/- each per share.\textsuperscript{185} It was the maiden one of the erst-while agrestic slave communities in the modern capitalistic ventures of Travancore. It was incorporated in 1939 at Changanacherry and functioned as a poor man’s bank and very soon it was closed.

The schism and fragmentation crept into the main stream of PRDS aborted the maiden venture of erstwhile agrestic slave communities of Travancore. The tempo of industrialism and entrepreneurship was very vibrant amongst the members of the PRDS people in the forties of this century. With the contributions collected from the hand to mouth wage earners, the PRDS inaugurated an industrial unit at Eraviperōr in Pathanamthitta district, where the Head Quarters of the PRDS is functioning. The new industrial unit was a bamboo based one. So it absorbed a lot of its members, being the traditional field of the untouchable communities (Pulayas and Parayas). In 1946 they entered in the passenger transport service sector through a contributed capital from its members.\textsuperscript{186} From the bank to the bus service, all its (PRDS) ventures proved practically a failure, because of the ideological degeneration and staggering loyalty of its leadership. Anyhow the entrepreneurial tempo which cultivated and fostered by their leader Kumara Guru through out his

\textsuperscript{185} P. Vivekanandan, Karakkadu, Sucheendram, Nagarcoil, Circular.

\textsuperscript{186} Baby and Babu Rajan, op. cit., pp. 66 ff.
life was not retained or protected by its later leadership. The failure in the industrial ventures really frustrated its multitudes and they lost all their thrift and savings habit which cultivated by Kumara Guru through years and developed spending habit and due to this they still remain isolated from the economic main stream of Kerala.

Running after of PRDS leadership for governmental concessions and benefits such as job reservations (most probably last grade services in the government offices), etc punctured the entrepreneurial spirit and tempo of the community which has been cultivated by its visionary founder Kumara Guru. Their fragmentation, conversion to Hinduism, recasting of ideological framework, etc drained their kinetic energy. The unending legal battles in the courts of law damaged their credibility and prestige, and the institutions which was built by its founder Kumara Guru and finally ruined in course of time. The prestigious English Medium School was closed for ever in 1957. The tempo of entrepreneurship extinguished for ever due to the premature deaths of commercial bank, weaving school, bamboo industry, educational institutions, loosing of landed property, and their declining numerical strength; all gradually ruined and now the only surviving PRDS (Jähnima

187. Ibid, passim.
group)\textsuperscript{188} has had hardly three lakh membership which is merely a spiritual expression in the highly potential Harijan/avarṇa groups of Kerala. Anyhow the shifting away from the lofty ideals of its founder led to the negative gains/impact of getting a number of last grade servants to its community in governmental services of Kerala.

188. AS No. 583/1962 High Court of Kerala, Cochin.