EMERGENCE OF PATRILINEY AND CHANGES IN AGRARIAN RELATIONS

The terrain of Malabar also identified as the land of mountains, was occupied by agrarian societies in the earlier period. At the end of conflict with Mysore rulers, the East India Company had captured the northern part of Kerala, reviving the old name of Malabar, as the British Malabar, and organized it as a district. According to Narayanan, (2003) “gradually the term British dropped out and Malabar survived as the name of northern half of Kerala”. Malabar proper is made up of the nine taluks of Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Calicut, Wynad, Ernad, Waluvanad, Ponnani and Palghat (Innes, rpt 1997).

Universally, the shift in inheritance pattern and kinship system especially the emergence of patrilineal system of inheritance has influenced the communities variously and its influence over them is not to be counted equal. As far as the Nayars were concerned, it had greatly affected the community organization and the composition. However, the degree of influence varies from caste to caste. In north Malabar, both matriliny and patriliny co-existed a few decades back. Later on, due to the passing of various enactments, the matrilineal system had changed to patriliny. Naturally, this shift has affected greatly the communities that had followed matriliny and least affected the communities which were patrilineal.
Though matriliny and the traditional agrarian system of Malabar have changed, the sentiments and some of the basic elements of the system are still surviving. The agrarian system of Malabar largely survived on matriliny and allied practices. The joint family organisation was one of the main backbones of the system. With the enactment of laws by the Government, joint family system collapsed and thereby the agrarian life of the villagers. The works of Kurup (2000), Nambuthiripad (1988), Radhakrishnan (1989) et al show that generally the Nambuthiris enjoyed the output of majority of the devaswom lands and were big land owners. But they had no direct involvement in the agricultural activity of their lands in terms of labour.

Descent, which is the ascription of the membership of an individual on birth to the group of his father or mother, is the foundation of kinship organisation. In a community, if the individual is assigned the membership of his mother’s sib or kulam, we would say he is essentially matrilineal even if he inherits property and rank from his father. Descent groups are usually exogamous, i.e., a man should not marry a woman of his own descent group (Aiyappan, 1982).

The changes in an existing system would be possible only through altering the institutional practices and customs. The vigor of the society is very essential for this, along with enactments of laws. At first as vibrant to this and to alter the system, the Malabar Marriage Act was passed in 1896. The Act sanctioned the registration of customary sambandham unions as legalized marriage. Thus, it had touched one of the prime institutions of society i.e., marriage, from which the counterfeit and fake elements imposed for change. Arunima (2003) has mentioned that, this Act was a failure with respect to its
inability to enforce the registration of all matrilineal marriages. The Malabar Wills Act (1898) conferred the rights of testamentary disposition of ones ‘self–acquired’ property.

According to Kurup (1998), in the early decades of the 20th Century, the educated Nayars and later other communities initiated public agitations for statutory intervention in this traditional system of inheritance. Aiyappan also stated that the dissatisfaction with the system which started first among the middle class Nayars of the Travancore region became generalized towards the end of the 19th Century and culminated in organized demand for legal changes with regard to partition and the rights of children to properties of the father. An influential minority of people who had received western style of education in the new schools and colleges began to compare their typical family system with those of others and were eager to place husband-wife and father-children relations on a firm legal basis on the model of patrilineal communities under the Hindu law and they succeeded in getting laws enacted between 1920 and 1940 to register marriages, to partition taravad properties owned in common by members of lineages, and to confer right to paternal properties on sons and daughters (1982).

Though the Marumakkathayam Act implemented in 1933, it took many decades to get a hold and create a changing environment in the society. Actually, it affected mainly the high caste people which in turn resulted in a change in the feudal system of Malabar and caste relationships. The possession of land was one of the major determinant factors of power in the agrarian life of Malabar. According to Ramachandran (2001), Land reform, or passing and implementing new laws to alter or abolish old land tenures and to
create new ones, was crucial to the transformation of agrarian relations in Kerala.

The Marumakkathayam Act of Malabar, 1933 gave the children of a man the right to inherit his self-acquired property (Govt. of India, 1969). This Act reduced the power of the karanavar over sister’s children and the role of father enhanced. The power shift mainly happened in the economic sphere and the religious sphere remains unchanged.

Until 1956, when the Hindu Succession Act was passed, there were two systems of inheritance in Malabar: the taravad property which devolved matrilineally and the self-acquired property devolved on the children of a man and his daughter’s children. The Hindu Succession Act and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956, make the husband legally responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children.....The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 governs the inheritance of Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains. It applies to both matrilineal as well as patrilineal groups. According to this Act, the property of a Hindu dying intestate devolves on his sons, daughters, widow and mother.....The land reform measures have increased the tension between landowners (generally belonging to high castes) and tenants (Govt. of India, 1969). These Acts provided freedom to women in succession, marriage etc.

It is seen that the seeds of most of the reforms have started from the southern parts of Kerala and gradually extended over to other parts. Even before the re-organization of the State of Kerala in 1956, the land of Kerala showed unique social and cultural resemblances. The reforms, regulations and Acts related to the abolition of matrilineal system started mainly in Travancore area. Under the impact of these, later on, such Acts were also passed in
Malabar to abolish matriliny. Actually, the ideologies, laws etc., implemented to change a system wouldn’t restrict to a small locality but spread to areas with similar practices very fastly.

Kerala Joint family Abolition Act of 1976 and Land Reforms Act of 1956 had imposed many changes in the system. The Kerala Land Reforms Act alienated the land holdings of the landlords. Apart from this, land holdings of the Chirakkal Kovilakam have been taken over by the Government and as compensation, Malikhan was fixed and it is still rendering to this royal family.

The period, 1925 to 1940 was the focal period in the history of Kerala. During this period a range of legal provisions were passed by the Travancore legislative Council which resulted in social change among the Nayars, Ezhavas, Nambuthiris, Vellar, Kshatriyas and Muslims. These regulations were intended to change the inheritance pattern, marriage, joint family system etc. The main Acts and regulations that laid foundation to transform matriliny to patriliny and the regulations which came in the early part of 20th Century made provisions to inherit the earned property of a person after his death to his wife and children.

In 1912, the first Nair Regulation was passed in Travancore... It mainly provided for changes only in certain aspects of their customary practices, viz., marriage and succession (in Saradamoni, 1999). On 13th April 1925 Travancore Government declared Nair Regulation which deserted the joint family system that existed in the Nair society and through this regulation a clear picture developed regarding the taravad property and its division. Thus, in 1925 the second Nayar regulation was passed in Travancore. The regulation of 1912, concerned with changes in Nayar marriage was reinstated in this regulation.
The Travancore Ezhava Act and Nanjanad Vellala Act were similar to a great extent. The Vellalas are a group found in Travancore area. When they came to Kerala they began to follow a mixed pattern of marumakkathayam and makkathayam i.e., Misradayam. In 1926 Nanjanad Vellala Regulation came into force. It has touched all the social spheres. They also got the same rites and regulations as rest of the people of Travancore (Suresh Kumar, 2006).

Nair and Ezhava Regulations came into force on the same day with identical characteristics. This simultaneously led to the disintegration of the joint family system. The main aim of Ezhava Regulation was to modify the laws related to marriage, inheritance and family administration. Ezhava Regulation was formed in harmony with the Nayar Regulation. Due to the commencement of the Act, Karanavar’s rights over the family terminated and simultaneously freedom of individuals and individual property rite and ownership came into existence.

On 2nd Feb 1931, Malayala Brahmana Regulation came into force. This ensured property sharing among the family members. Travancore Kshatriya Regulation Bill came on 31st December 1932. This also ensured equal property sharing to both male and female members. The main aim of this Regulation was to ensure property sharing to all the members and to solve the familial and social problems of the community (Suresh Kumar, 2006).

Kshatriya Regulation passed on 31st December 1932, in Travancore. Transparency related to Kshatriya marriage, property division, taravad Administration etc. came due to the advent of this Regulation. In addition to this, Travancore Krishnan Vaka Marumakkathayam regulation came on 31st
September 1939. These regulations resulted in social change in Travancore area.

All these regulations were to change the system of inheritance from the marumakkathayam to makkathayam. Thus, these regulations facilitated makkathayam pattern of inheritance in Travancore area, and in Malabar the enactment of Madras Marumakkathayam Act paved a means to change the society in this direction.

Madras Marumakkathayam Act came in 1933 and after the passing of it, the powers of the Karanavan had been curtailed and it tolled the knell of disintegration and individualism in the Malayalee family (Balakrishnan, 1981:15-16). This Act again provided for partition among the tavazhi. It affected mainly the high caste people and as a result the feudal structure and caste relationship of that time had changed. In 1933, the Madras Nambuthiri Act came into force which implemented monogamy and redefined the property rights of Nambuthiris.

The Mappila Marumakkathayam Act of 1939\(^{19}\) allowed property division among the Muslims. The Act was passed to define and amend in certain respects the law relating to family, management, partition and succession among the Muslims following the Marumakkathayam Law (Balakrishnan, 1981:190).

The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956 made the legal provision that, the child adopted under the Act must get the status of a member born in the *tarwad* (Varier, 1969). Under the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, females are granted rights of all property acquired either before or after the signing of the Act. The Indian Parliament respecting the feeling of Hindu women, conferred full fledged status of ownership in property held by her either before 1956 or after 1956 (Kant, 1997). These Acts and regulations were passed in correspondence with the growing demands for change in matrilineal system. The Joint Family System (Abolition) Act, which came in 1975 by the Kerala State Legislature, abolished this type of inheritance pattern.

In addition to the Acts and Regulations, colonial influence had changed the basic nature of many caste groups. In Travancore, the associations which stood for the revival of the custom include Malayali Sabha, Travancore Nair Samaj, Keraleeya Nair Samaj, etc. N.S.S, S.N.D.P yogam, Yogakshema Sabha and Sadhujana Paripalana Yogam are also involved in the social reform movements and breaking the traditional caste system. Disintegration of *Marumakkathayam*, individual share of property etc., were the main aims of these associations. Simultaneously, in Malabar also the demands for change in the *marumakkathayam* pattern strengthened. Thus, the number of court cases (Balakrishnan, 1981) against the *karanavans* of *taravad* for the mismanagement of the property reached its maximum in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The social reforms in connection with marriage and family during the late phase of 19th Century and early part of 20th Century changed the mind set of the people and changes began in most of the social institutions. As a result
patrilocal residences and male dominated families became the norm of the society.

The attempt of the Ezhava social reform movement was to for a community identity by uniting all sections of the caste through a common law of inheritance. With a view to initiating this change, Sree Narayana Guru, in a message to the SNDP in 1909, had stated, “Where Marumakkathayam system is followed in the community, legal provision should be made to give wedded wife and children the right to a portion of the man’s individual earnings, otherwise marriage would be meaningless” (in Oommen, 1999). As a consequence, the legislations passed in Travancore influenced the life of the people there and corollary to this, different movements arose in Malabar and Acts were passed. The available materials advocate that the movements intend to change matriliny was stronger in Travancore and its affect diffused to Malabar area over time. With the enactment of Marumakkathayam Act, Joint family system (Abolition) Act, and Land Reforms Act, uniformity was appeared in land ownership patterns and practice of inheritance. This could be noticed in most of the castes and communities of Kerala without regional difference.

Accordingly the Madras Marumakkathayam Act and the Travancore Nair Act promulgated not so back, permitted partition of the taravad properties. Now the new Hindu succession Act of 1956 has dealt a further hard blow to the matriarchal joint family tradition of Malabar. Its disappearance is only a question of time (Fuchs, 1983).

The Hindu Women’s Right to Property Act, 1937 was an important step in the sphere of women’s right to property and this Act introduced major
changes in the law of succession. This gave the women, claim and opportunity to recognize their identity. The Act thus directly or indirectly touched the inheritance pattern, joint family system and residence pattern. Hindu Marriage Act promulgated in 1955 enforced the inheritance of property with equal rights for daughters. The Kerala Joint Family System (Abolition) Act, 1976, abolished the joint family system. Even though, the system altered, the emotional aspect of belongingness still remains among the taravad members.

Besides the economic and social reform movements, the legal measures and Acts hastened the decline of matriliny. The legislations enacted in the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century contributed to the alteration of matriliny. The Acts of such were primarily implemented in southern Kerala and then enacted in central Kerala, which were princely states and in northern Kerala it was enacted only in 1933 (Marumakkathayam Act) to alter the system. In 1939 the Mappila Marumakkathayam Act enacted which ensured right to partition of property. It also brought provisions of the Shari’at rule to apply to the inheritance patterns of matrilineal Mappilas of Malabar. The comprehensive legislations passed in different periods paved way for the disintegration of matriliny.

The societal demand for independent living weakened the taravad system. As a consequence of strong social demands, legislative enactments allowed the claim to division from the joint family system and adopt makkathayam (Patriliny) system. Owing to these, due advantages has been taken by the bulk of the communities and the result was the gradual disintegration of the joint family system and setting up of independent families. Nevertheless the legislative enactments have not fully terminated the marumakkathayam customs and practices. Still, the members of the taravad
follow the family names and titles of the taravad and in the observance of the religious customs, ceremonies and pollutions, the influence of the marumakkathayam system is evident. Though the enactment of Acts has promoted the change in lineage structure, it affected variously the communities and the womenfolk, in such a way that a number of outmoded social institutions get disintegrated and transformed along with the patterns of family units, marriage pattern, authority structure and rules of inheritance of property.

The stress in the matrilineal system of Kerala during the last eight or nine decades, was not the system of descent, but the system of inheritance and also the authority system under matriliny. According to the traditional norm, a man’s wife and children could not inherit the property. Authority over the members of a matrilineage was exercised by the Karanavan, usually the senior among the mother’s brothers who was expected to administer the family affairs in the interest of his sisters and their children. With the impact of changing socio-economic and political scenario, personal incomes became possible through different ways and means and matrilineal norms in regard to inheritance and avuncular authority began to be questioned.

On the decline of joint families, Gough reports that generalized commodity production, wage labour and ownership of the means of production by individuals or corporations bring a decline in the functions of clans and lineages, which very gradually die out. Individual enterprise and wage labour undermine the joint family both as a property group and as a residential unit... A substantial increase is there in the percentages of nuclear
and sub-nuclear households and property groups in every caste, in Kerala between 1949 and 1964 (in Singh, 2002).

The agrarian relations in Kerala, before the passing of Land Reforms Act were a complex one. The agrarian relations can be categorized based on the period of existence into different categories. According to Kurup, (1998) agrarian relations and the tenancy system in Kerala were based on feudal practices. They were retained by the colonial government. The rights for fixity of tenure, fair rent and free transfer were denied to the tenants as a colonial policy. Therefore nationalism became an economic nationalism among the peasants for economic freedom.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the people of Kerala before 20th Century. Associated with this practice, the main land tenures prevailed in Malabar area were Jannam, Kanam and Verumpattom. The people also were categorized accordingly as Janmis, Kanakkar and Verumpattakkar. This shaped the agrarian system of north Malabar. The lowest level of the system was adorned by landless agricultural labourers. In north Malabar, agricultural labourers were mainly from the caste groups like Pulaya and Paraya. The Janmis were the owners of the land, but they have not cultivated the land. The Janmis were mainly from Kshatriya, Nayar and Brahmin castes and rarely Thiyyas and Muslims. Generally the Janmi possesses an infinite area of land and it was not even possible to look after and do cultivation. The Janmi leased the land for cultivation to Kanakkaran (Kudiyan), the holder or supervisor of Kanam land. The Kanakkaran leased the land from the Janmi on payment of an annual rent. This was termed as kanapanam.
The third main category, internally differentiated, was that of verumpattakkaran, or tenant (non-owner) cultivator (Ramachandran, 2001). Mostly the Kanakkars and verumpattakkar of north Malabar were Nayars, Thiyyas and Muslims. If the person who owns the land was not a janmi, and leasing the land for rent was known as kaivasam panayadaram. The land in both of the cases should be retuned back to the actual owner of the land. Choondi panayam was another category in which the land owner would point out the place or field from a distant place and lease out the land for rent. Any person who owns a land can do this and the time period is usually for 12 years. But the land owner can return back it before the time fixed. In the Janmi-tenant system, the rights and obligations of the Janmis and tenants were governed by the existing norms and practices.

The janmam lands in north Malabar were mainly resolute in the hands of the Nileswaram Raja, Zamorin of Calicut, the Raja of Nilambur, Udayamangalath Kizhakke Kovilakam of Aduthila, Chirakkal Kovilakam of Chirakkal and Kottayam Raja. The Nambuthiris of the area also enjoyed high status and owned land properties. The Chirakkal Raja of Chirakkal Kovilakam ruled most part of the north Malabar in the past, especially before the advent of the Britishers. Kolathiri was the earlier term used to denote the Chirakkal Rajas.

The kingdom of Kolathiri (Kolathunad) was located in the northern most part of Kerala. It was one of the chief kingdoms of Kerala which ‘at its zenith extended from the Netravati river in the north to the Korapuzha in the south and from Kudakumala in the east to the Arabian Sea in the west (Menon, 1967). Under Chirakkal dynasty there were about 39 temples, and among
these Madayi kavu is famous and is the family deity of the Kovilakam. After the invasion of Tipu and Britishers, Chirakkal dynasty lost their power and became mere Janmis of the area. The Seringapatnam treaty of 1792 enabled the Britishers to conquer Malabar including Chirakkal dynasty.

**Photograph 4.1 Madayi Kavu**
In addition to the usual *varam* and *pattam* (income from the landed property as kind and cash), the tenants- *(kanamdar* and *verumpattakkar)* had to give presents on important festivals like Onam and Vishu as *thirumulkalcha* (presents to the landlord). In return, the *janmi* used to offer presents like *pudava* (cloths) to the tenants at the time of onam and on festive occasions (Namboothirippad, 1981 rpt 1987). In the Pre-British period, the *kanakkaran* emerged as having rights of control over land. His right in the soil was further reinforced by the *tara*, the village organization and the comparative lack of demand for land (Panikkar, 1992:19).

During British period, especially in the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century, *Janmi* system was existed and the people accepted the *janmis* as the owners of the land. The *Janmi* used to pay land revenue for the land owned by him. They are not directly engaged in cultivation but leased the land to tenants on *varam* (rent as kind or paddy) or *pattam* (rent as cash) basis and were called as *pattakkar*. According to Buchanan (1870:68-69), the *Janmis* in south Malabar were substantial landlords having vast areas of land under them, while the *Janmis* in north Malabar held comparatively lesser areas.

In the past, the Kshatriyas were rulers, landlords and military men. Their landholdings have been taken over under the Kerala Land Reforms Act. ....After Independence and the abolition of such privileges, they suffered dispossession of lands under the ceiling provisions of the agrarian reforms (Singh, 2002).

William Logan was appointed as a special commissioner in 1881 to enquire into and report on the land tenure system, and of tenant rights in Malabar. William Logan after his enquiry recommended the need for
legislation to protect the interests of the peasants and to regulate the relations between the actual cultivators and the *janmis* (Logan, 1951). But the Board of Revenue not accepted the recommendations of Logan and a special commission was appointed to study the matter. As a consequence, the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvement Bill was introduced in the Madras Legislative council in 1886. The objective of the Bill was to grant the tenants the market value for the improvements they made and thereby to check the rising practice of evictions (G.O.No.509.Rev.Dept (confidential), 6 Feb 1896). Though the *Janmis* opposed the Bill, the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvement Act 1886 (Madras Act No. I. of 1887) was passed. This Act was a turning point in changing the traditional agrarian life of the villages.

The different methods adopted to carry out and continue the *kanam* practice in north Malabar include, *Polichezhuthu, Melcharth* etc. *Polichezhuthu* was the renewal of the *kanam* lease before the end of 12 years and *Melcharth* (over-lease) was a *kanam* given by the *Janmi* to a third person. This accelerated evictions and not provided any security to the tenants. This resulted in the inappropriate maintenance of *Janmam* lands by the *kudiyans*. According to Aiyar (1930), it may be granted before or after the expiry of the prior demise and is usually granted to a stranger who can evict the existing tenant. It is called renewal if granted to the existing tenant. In 1893, Bradley, then Malabar Collector recommended legislation prohibiting melcharths and amending certain provisions of the Act (Report of the Govt. of Madras, 1928, Vol.1:15). The *melcharth* and eviction continued even in the early years of the 20th Century but the official approach was not to disturb the *janmis* (G.O.P. No.9 (confidential), Rev. Dept. 2 Jan 1914).
According to Kunhikrishnan (1985:100), “during the years between 1800 and 1900, the only legislation enacted in respect of Malabar land tenures was the Act of 1887, which provided for compensation for improvements effected by tenants, followed by an amending Act in 1900. Malabar compensation for Tenants Improvement Act 1899 (Madras Act I of 1900) made slight changes in the status of the tenants”. However, the Janmis were denying the benefits which were conferred by the Act to the Kanakkars (Krishnakumar, 1999).

The writings of Namboodirippad (1981, 1988), Radhakrishnan (1989) and Panikkar (1992) noted three main factors which had altered the agrarian relations in Malabar. The first movement was referred as Moplah outrages mainly concentrated in the south Malabar taluks, starting from 1836 to the Malabar rebellion of 1921. The second major current in the movement for agrarian change in Malabar was the organized effort of kanakkaran intermediaries to acquire occupancy rights on land over which they had kanam rights. During this movement, sections of working tenants were mobilized and have lasted until the Malabar Tenancy Act was passed in 1930 (Ramachandran, 2001). In the third phase, the struggles were mostly by the lower Hindu tenantry, especially the vast masses of the lower castes concentrated in north Malabar (Radhakrishnan, 1989). Thus, the main political movement in the thirties and forties were against the Britishers as well as landlordism.

The peasant movement was stronger in north Malabar... and was based on the small kanakkaran, the verumpattakkaran, the kuzhikkanakaran. This was basically a movement to safeguard the interests of or protect a peasant class from further impoverishment (Gopalankutty, 1985).
In the later period of the 19th Century and early 20th Century a number of changes began to emerge in the agrarian social order of Malabar. During these periods most of the lands were under the custody of Janmis. Various studies by Logan (1951 rpt), Kunhikrishnan (1985), Radhakrishnan (1989), Kurup (1988, 2000) show the changes that had appeared during these periods especially commercialization of agriculture, introduction of land revenue system, legal interventions in the elimination of slavery system, and growing demand for land and peasant struggles against landlordism and colonialism. Moreover, all these had directly or indirectly made a blow on the Janmi system in Malabar. The peasant riots emerged in different parts of Kerala during 19th Century was both anti-feudal and anti-imperialist. The formation of a peasant organisation, termed All Malabar Karshaka Sangham gave a new orientation to the anti-imperialist movement in Malabar and southern parts of south Kanara. In the words of Kurup (1988: 126), in early revolts like Pazhassi, Kurichiyas and the Mappilas fought against the British during the 19th and 20th Centuries had been highly influenced by tradition and religious forces. But the Kayyur revolt in Kasaragod during early 1940’s highlights the emergence of a new political ideology among the peasants and workers. According to Radhakrishnan (1989: 92, 97), the progress of the peasant struggles during the years 1935-40 was closely bound up with the emergence of the Karshaka Sangham as a strong peasant organisation ... The organised struggles of the peasantry questioning the age-old feudal oppression and exploitation forced the Janmis to give up feudal levies, illegal exactions, and also to switch to the use of standardised measures.

In the transformation of agrarian relations of Kerala, the Land reform laws were of crucial. Land Reform in 1969 is considered as one of the
milestones of agrarian transformation in Kerala. In the early twentieth
Century, not only the legislations related to marumakkathayam but also the
land reforms changed the society of Malabar and Kerala in general. Franke and
Chasin (1994) has highlighted the main aims of this as,

1. A rise levy on the largest owners, to be collected by the
   Government and redistributed to the poor through the fair
   price shops.
2. A ceiling on absolute size of land holdings.
3. The abolition of tenancy.
4. The abolition of rents to the landlords.

Historically, distribution of land across religious/social groups was highly
unequal in the state. ...a good portion of wet and dry land was owned by the
forward communities consisting of Brahmins, Nairs and Syrian Christians. The
backward communities like Ezhavas and Muslims owned relatively small
proportion and the disadvantaged sections of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled
Tribes shared only a negligible proportion of the total land. This land
ownership pattern has been undergoing changes over a time as a result of the
initiation of land reforms, and through demographic pressure, purchase and
sale in the land market (Nair and Menon, 2007). But this situation has changed
extensively due to the Land Reform Act of 1970. The Land Reforms allowed
tenants to become owners of the lands they had cultivated and protected
tenants from arbitrary eviction. According to Kurup (1988) the Act terminated
the vestiges of a feudal age in the agrarian relations.
Using official data, Radhakrishnan reported that the first set of reforms resulted in the estimated transfer of 19.7 lakh acres of land to 12.7 lakh households under the first scheme, 0.2 lakh acres of homestead land to 2.7 households under the second, and 0.5 lakh acres to 0.9 lakh households under the third (1989:185). These transfers had altered the agrarian society of Kerala, land ownership patterns, and landlordism. Moreover, the transformation of marumakkathayam system and the resultant break up of joint family system has significantly contributed to the division and segmentation of lands over time.

Usually the devaswam properties in north Malabar were associated with Temples. Most of the Janmis had owned temples and associated lands. The functionaries associated with temple service were from Nambuthiri, Marar and Variar castes. The families engaged in such activities had been given lands by the landlord-Nambuthiris for performing poojas, Marar for beating drums and Variar for garland making. Later on, Endowment Board came into existence. Land was the main type of wealth in the agrarian social structure. The practice of imparting land to families was a traditional practice. This was for performing various services in the agrarian and religious spheres. Chirakkal Thampuran ruled over Kolathunad was the trustee of so many temples in north Malabar. In order to look after the temple affairs functionaries were appointed by him and imparted land to them. Under this service tenure the possessor’s right was hereditary in nature.

At the risk of explaining all the service tenures in different temples, the service rendered by different Caste groups in Kalarivathukkal Temple of Valapattanam shall be summarized as follows:
According to the informants, Chirakkal Thampuran was the uralan (trustee) of Kalarivathukkal temple. Karaima and service rights in the temple were enjoyed by certain families belong to different caste groups. The rights were closely related to the services bestowed on them. In return to this, the service providers or the permanent tenants possessed the lands on permanent basis, and were transferred by the trustees of the temple. This type of tenure was of permanent in nature compared to other forms of tenure and still continuing. Kanam tenure was like a mortgage in which kanakkaran or the Kudiyan leased land from the Janmi on payment of an amount.
According to the Report of the special officer of the Malabar Tenancy Committee (1947:24), *kanam* in north Malabar is nothing but mortgage and
the kanamdar is a mere mortgagee. The nature of kanam tenure had changed in different periods especially during the middle of 19th Century. Earlier there was no provision to evict the tenants before the expiry of the lease. Later on the kanam was like a temporary lease in which on return of the kanapanam the Janmi could evict the kanakkaran. The eviction was done publicly by announcing with the beating of chenda (drum). The eviction continued till the implementation of Land Reforms Act. The Government of Kerala in 1957 banned such type of evictions.

In the middle of the 19th Century, Kanakkar who subleased the property charged higher rate from their tenants. Thus there was concentration of land in the hands of a few families of Kanakkars in Malabar. They became Janmis of the lands (Krishnakumar, 1999). Kuzhikanam tenure was another important tenure prevailed all over Kerala. A simple lease is termed in Malabar Verumpattom, a bare lease, that is unaccompanied by an advance; where no term is specified, it ensures for a single year (Report with Appendices of the Malabar Land Tenures Committee, 1887). In north Malabar the Verumpattakkar were mainly Thiyya and Mappila-Muslims. In the Verumpattom land, the tenant had no right to cultivate permanently. Actually it was a short term lease in which the tenant holds the land for 2 or 3 years. Verumpattom was to take profits from the land for a fixed period and return may be in cash or kind.

Another lease termed Marupattom was an agreement over land for 12 years and its dealings were done through Land registrar office. The advantage of this lease was that the Janmi has to sign on the document for the exchange of land.
The Malabar Tenancy Commission in 1927 recommended a Bill for legislation. Accordingly, Malabar Tenancy Act 1929 was passed. The Act provided for fixity of tenure on cultivating Verumpattakkar holding wet lands..... Later Malabar Tenancy Act 1929 was amended and the Amendment Bill was passed into an Act in 1951. The Amending Act gave fixity of tenure to all cultivating Verumpattomdars and also to customary Verumpattomdars, Kuzhippattamdars and Kanamdars. Renewal fees were abolished and provided for the simultaneous settlement of fair rents. The 1951 Act was amended in 1954. The objectives of the amendment was to prevent eviction and for safeguarding the interests of the tenants (Krishnakumar, 1999). In 1948, Communist party introduced the slogan, ‘land to the tiller’ and the strategy of militant mobilization of the peasants for an agrarian revolution (in Kurup, 1988:144). The Kerala stay of Eviction Proceedings Act 1957 was enacted and sections 4 to 7 of the Act stayed the eviction of all types of tenants and Kudikidappukars (Krishnakumar, 1999). S.2(a) of the Cochin Verumpattomdar’s Act defines Kudikidappukaran as “ a person who has been permitted to have the use and occupation of a portion of a property for the purpose of erecting a homestead with or without an obligation to pay rent for the use and occupation of the site so given” (in Krishnakumar, 1999:15). The Act of 1961 included provisions for fixity of tenure, fair rent, the right of purchase, right of kudikidappu (hut-dwelling) and land ceiling (Kurup, 1988).

20“Land to the tiller was the slogan of the agrarian move which was enacted and implemented by the communist government of Kerala.
The Act of 1969 abolished tenancy by enabling tenants to purchase ownership rights over leased-out land and cultivators were given ownership rights over their homestead sites (Kodoth, 2004:359). However, the Land Reforms Act passed in 1970 on the whole abolished landlordism and control over land in Kerala and the poor sections of the society benefited out of this.

In short, the social structure and the traditional land holding pattern of the society in Malabar were interrelated. Caste, joint family system and kinship structure form the very base of the social structure. The Brahmans, Rajas and Nayar chieftains detained most of the lands *(janmam)* in Malabar and *kanam* right was occupied by the Nayars. The subgroups of the Nayar, Thiyya and the Muslim were the *Verumpattakkar* and the Pulaya and the Paraya formed the agricultural labourers or agrastic slaves. Throughout the nineteenth Century, this was the pattern of social stratification of society and agrarian relations.

There are still customs and practices that show the continuation of the traditional system and the control and dominance of the *Naduvazhi* or *Janmi* over different caste people, religious institutions like *kavus* and temples. In addition, the patronage of arts and authority to impart honorary titles by the *Janmi* or *Naduvazhi* families show the persistence of the earlier system. So, through a study of the existing practice, the social structure, agrarian relations and tenure of the society can be examined. In short, the Land reforms and the Acts related to inheritance that passed in 1930’s helped to change the agrarian relations and the social structure of the area or which acted as catalyst for social change. The transformation had affected the upper strata greatly but it affected least, the lower strata or marginalized sections of the society.
Narayanan (1991) has explained that lands were granted in consideration of the services performed or to be performed....and under this tenure the holder cannot be dispossessed off as the right was hereditary in nature, but if the granter or of his descendants dies without heirs the land goes to the Janmakkar or proprietor. He also explains karaima as a perpetual lease which applied to lands transferred by the uralars and trustees of temples to those employed in performing certain services. The temple lands held on karaima were inseparable from the services and the land was the property of the pagoda and the tenant held it in consideration of his services. All these tenures highlight the land use and distribution patterns existed in the agrarian society of north Malabar.

Kalariyathukkal is one of the nearby temples of the area and this temple is one of the prime family temples of Chirakkal Raja. This is an ancient famous Bhagavathi temple in north Malabar. The main deities in the temple are Parasakthi, Badrakali and Chandakapalini. It was believed that Parasurama laid prathishta in this temple. In addition to the main deities, there are 36 gods and sub gods. This temple was under the jurisdiction of Chirakkal Kovilakam and according to the temple functionaries, it had a yearly income of 1, 80,000 seers (a traditional paddy measuring device; one seer of paddy is equivalent to more than 2 Kilograms of paddy) of paddy as varam and 1, 80,000 rupees as income. This was the condition up to 1970. After the implementation of the Kudiyan Act, the lands were dispersed and the tenants became custodians of the land, where they were working for a long period.

The temple festival is termed as kalasam or perumkaliyattam and is conducting in the Malayalam month of Edavam (May– June). On this
auspicious day, seven different theyyams are performing. The prime one is (Valiya Thampurattti) having valiyamudi (long head-gear) made of twenty one bamboos and seven arecanut trees. The person adorns as Valiya Thampuratti being given the title as moo than cheri by the Chirakkal Thampuran. The remaining six of them are of short head-geared and the materials needed for small head-gear would be brought by people from Vannan caste of six desams which were under Chirakkal dynasty.

Some of the services rendered by the community members are given below:

The Nalupurakkal Asari family of Kunnauv has the duty of head-gear making during Kalasam (Temple festival) and the wooden works in the temple will be done by the members belonging to this community and they were given titles as, Moothasari and Elayasari. The family members were bestowed with seven kandi paramba (a local measurement of land) for this service from the Chirakkal Thampuran.

The family members of Kunjunakkan Thiyya taravad of Keeriyad had the traditional right to bring avyam (toddy) for the kalasam (festival) in the temple. For the service, the Thampuran allotted twelve kandi parambu for the family. This family later on, began to known as Aveekkaran. About 3 to 4 decades back, they had to bring toddy daily in a bronze vessel and later on confined to only on the day of temple festival. Later on, seven Thiyya taravads of different amsams under Chirakkal had been given the right along with seven Kandi parambu for each of the taravads. The amsams are;

a. Azhikkode amsam b. Varam amsam c. Chirakkal amsam
d. Puzhathi amsam  e. Pappinisseri amsam  f. Chalode amsam  
g. Muzhappilangad amsam.

Among these, only the members of kundathil taravad (Chirakkal amsam) bring kalasam (toddy) to the temple nowadays. The taravad house of the family situates on devaswam land. All other taravad members brought it till 1970s, and dropped principally when laws related to agrarian relations were enacted. The Valluva of Varam kadavil at Kannadiparamba have had the right to bring meenamruth (fish) while festival. The Perum Kollan of Puzhathi Kakkarayil Kalari devasthanam brings Thiruvayudham (sword) and bow and arrow required during the festival day.

On all auspicious occasions, except kalasam or perumkaliyattam day, the presence of Chirakkal Valiya Raja or his representatives or nephews is essential. The arrival of Thampuran in the temple is still a respectable event that he would be received by ringing the bells.

The Peru Malayan performs Kuzhaloothal while kalasam ceremony. Peru Vannan has the right to perform Theyyam in the temple. The Kanisan brings umbrella made of coconut leaves during the month of Kumbham (February-March) and on kalasam festival (Perumkaliyattam) in Edavam (May-June). The Chaliya community’s main duty is to bring cloth and thirusari (holy cloth) and during poorotsavam (pooram festival) they have to bring kodikkoora (cloth for temple flag). The Vaniya caste people bring oil for the kalasam and pooram. According to the temple officials, for the services rendered by different caste people, seven kandi (a traditional measure of land) parambu (land) had been allotted by the Chirakkal Thampuran. Now most of the caste members are not strictly observing the practice as such and the people are not at all averse
about the family or taravads of the communities who are entitled to do service. The Valiya Thampuran of Chirakkal Kovilakam is now only a trustee of the temple. It can be seen that though the traditional agrarian relations had changed, its underlying forces and structures are operational at a small extent.

In addition to the service rendered by these communities, Vannan (Kurup), Variyar, Pitarar, Ambalavasis and Marar have daily duties in the temple. Vannan has the daily duty to wash the pada (cloth) which are used for temple purpose. Marars main duty is drum beating while performing poojas in the temple. Earlier four taravad members had the right for drum beating but two of them became extinct and presently Changoth taravad and Kottayil veedu of the Marar family are doing drum beating in the temple.

It was believed that to conduct sakthi pooja in the temple, Thampuran brought Pitarar from Bengal. They consume meat and fish and do not observe any vratam (meditation). Thus, the pooja commonly termed as adhamanam. They make use of fish and meat for pooja. The four illams of Pitarars in the area are –Vadakke illam, Thazha the illam, Kizhakke illam and Payyarathu have rights related to pooja and related works in the temple. In this temple the Pitarans have three positions such as Mootha pitarar, elaya pitarar and pitarar. At present Kesavan from Thazhathe illam is the Mootha Pitarar; elaya pitarar, Vasudevan is from Meethale Payyarath illam and pitarar is from vadakke illam. These positions are not hereditary. The community members select most efficient person for the respective post. They follow Illam exogamy. The Pitarars follow makkathayam pattern of inheritance. According to the informants they have not been given land by the Chirakkal Thampuran but were given specific rights and jobs associated with temple. The Variars have
the right of making garlands to the temple and even today they bring eighteen garlands daily.

*Kannan veedu, Nallakandi vayal veedu and Puthiya veedu* are the three Ambalavasi *taravads* and are *kazhakakkars* (assistants) of the temple. The main difference between Pitaran and Ambalavasi is that Pitaran wears *poonool* (sacred thread) and performs *pooja*, especially *saktheya pooja*. Ambalavasi do not wear *poonool*. Their main function in the temple is sweeping, cleaning and also collecting flowers needed for *pooja*. In this temple, Nambuthiri (Nambuthiri belongs to *kattumadam illam*) has role only on the day of *prathishta* (on 25th of Malayalam month *Medam* i.e., in April-May). Earlier, especially before 1970 the salary for all the *illams* of Pitarars and *Kazhakakkars* were met from the *devaswam* property. The salary was in the form of kind especially 25¼ *edangazhi* (a local measuring unit) paddy. At present also consequent to the death of the respective person of each *taravad*, they have to inform at Chirakkal *kovilakam* and new member can take charge ceremonially from there itself and is termed as *Sthanappeduka* (initiating to the post). Most of the *sthanams* are hereditary in nature. Thus, in *Kalarivathukkal* temple almost all communities have had different roles during the festival periods. These Caste groups are mainly the Viswakarma, Malayan, Vannan and the Thiyyas.

Like wise, a service oriented tenure system also existed in Madayi *kavu* which was a temple under Kolathiri family. The service relations are still following in this temple.

Up to 1970 there were *Karyasthans* (main custodians of the *Kovilakam* affairs) to look after the *kovilakam* property. Chandukutty Nambiar of Mavilayi
was one of the prime Karyasthans of Chirakkal family that the people still remember. According to the older generation of Chirakkal Kovilakam family, under Chirakkal dynasty, there were thirty nine temples, which were under the control of the Thampuran.

In the past, during the reign of Naduvazhis some of the communities in a village have observed a special rite, known as janmam. The janmam right is a hereditary one, i.e., passing from one generation to the next. The janmam rite actually restricted on certain family members and inherited by the particular family only. In each village, or desam, certain members or family members were appointed to observe these rites and others were forbidden to do that within the particular boundary. In Chirakkal, Chirakkal Thampuran was considered as the authority, who would impart the rite to different communities residing under his frontier.

Malayan community is numerically small, and for making marriage alliances they have to go far places in search of the respective bride or groom. Each of the Malayan families can perform within a certain boundary. The boundary of performance is well demarcated. The boundary area in which they can perform is called cherujanmam. But in the case of Anjooottan (a theyyam performing community in north Malabar), no such boundary was demarcated. They can perform any where they needed. In each desam (a subdivision of an amsam) there is a family, holding the right (cherujanmam) and is passing from generation to generation within the family. Earlier all those things were under the control of Chirakkal Thampuran and had given 3 ¾ Acres of land to each of the Peru Malayan family to render their service in the desam.
In Chirakkal, different caste groups have their own responsibility during the temple festival and also during various occasions of the village. Still the practice is enduring, even though the role and position of Naduvazhis were vanished. Earlier the Naduvazhis involved in all the matters connected with this janmam. They solved the family affairs and issues connected with the janmam. Earlier the concept of desam was the prevalent term related to village social structure. In each desam there should be one or two families associated with the janmam right. Though the power of the Naduvazhi declined, still his involvement in the religious affairs of the village is functioning and retaining as such. There were demarcated boundaries within the janmam in which one can perform. For example, a Malayan or Vannan was permitted to perform within his janmam area only. But he could have also performed in other areas with the consent of the actual performer in the other area. Actually, the janmam is related to specific boundary, the area of which varies from place to place. In fact, the janmam area shall be a village or more than two villages. These aspects and observances are still remaining within the village.

According to the informants, Valapattanam was the place of Kolathiri royal house before the establishment of Kovilakam at Chirakkal. Subsequent to the attack of Tipu, the Kovilakam of Kolathiris shifted to Chirakkal from Valapattanam. Even today, during the pooram festival at Kalarivathukkal, (from the first day to sixth day and also on the eighth day) the thidambu (holy statue) and nandhakam or Khodgam (sword) of goddess’s would carry on (ezhunnallath) to Valapattanam kotta (fort).
In Kerala, Most of the caste groups were associated with their traditional occupations. For example, the Thattan were associated with jewellery making, the Chaliyas as weavers, the Vaniya with oil making or oil pressing, the Asari as wood workers, the Kidaran as dye workers, the Thiyya as toddy tapers, the Kusavan as pot makers, and the Moosari as construction workers and so on. Earlier the caste groups can be easily identified through their traditional occupation and the customs and ceremonies they followed.

During the later decades of the foreign invasion, the Chirakkal Kovilakam dynasty declined as Naduvazhis, which was part of the feudal system in Kerala. The British East India Company made its dominant power over this feudalistic structure. As a result, during 19th Century, structural changes began to happen in the society of Kerala.

In the Feudal system of Kerala, the uppermost layer was adorned by the Naduvazhis. The English East India Company declined their position as mere Janmis. In the past the Naduvazhis extended the special titles and honours to various performers and artists. This is termed as aacharam. During this function, along with the title, a bangle, and a pattu (a special cloth) was also offered and there after the person (performer or artist) would be referred to by the particular titles, such as Peru Malayan, Peru Vannan, Natyacharya and Panikker. The title Peru Malayan and Peru Vannan usually adorned by the excellent performers of theyyam, belong to Malayan and Vannan castes respectively. Along with this honorary title, golden bangle and chooral (bamboo stick) are also offered to them as symbols of his position. The title Panikker usually imparts to the performer of theechamundi, a unique theyyam
which requires high risk in performing. At present the villager’s make initiatives to meet all the expenditures in connection with this.

The consent of the *Thampuran* is necessary for giving the honorary positions such as *Mootha Pitarar* and *Elaya Pitarar* in *Kalarivathukkal* temple. At present most of the temple activities are organized by committees. This again declined the role of different communities and their involvement. Hence, obviously a change has occurred in the traditional village social structure also.

The production process, agrarian and service relations in Malabar were highly interconnected. Later on various underlying forces such as colonial influence, reform movements and legislatures moulded the society of Malabar into a new direction, which is more or less egalitarian.

In addition to this the patronage of arts by the Chirakkal family, one of the *Naduvazhi* or *Janmi* families was essentially the continuation of the traditional system. All these highlight the role and involvement of the traditional *Janmi* system in the cultural, social, economic and religious spheres of the village life. The changes in land relationships, commercialization of the economy, authority of colonialism, and spread of education provided the foundation for the changes in power and capital accumulation among a few families in north Malabar. The conjunction of family and land laws in the 1930s acted as a catalyst for the transformation of matriliny in Kerala. The spate of land sales escalated rapidly and the household began to undergo a steady process of division. This affected not only the property rights of the individual members but also their residence patterns and thus the very structure of the *taravads*. Between the 1930’s and the 1970’s , when the Kerala legislature
finally enacted the law abolishing matrilineal inheritance, most landed
*taravads* all over the state were in a process of disintegration (Arunima, 2002). According to Gough, the relationship with western industrial nations changed the economic foundation and led to gradual disintegration of the *marumakkathayam* system (in Sisupalan, 2006). It is clear that, even though the matrilineal system disintegrated, its elements are still operational in the society. It seeks to show that, like any other social system or institution, the matrilineal system is also capable of adapting to changing social, economic, political, legal, demographic and other changing circumstances. The social system as it operates at present is a modified form having incorporated elements of patriliny over the years. The tendency towards patrilocal residence, patrilineal pattern of inheritance, parental control of children etc. are part of this change.

In Malabar, changes began to appear in the second half of the 19th Century and early period of the 20th Century by the legislative interventions. The legislations had changed the practices and customs which were against the requirements of the society. The major change was the shattering of traditional agrarian relations, land bound authority structure and the role of land in determining the relations among the caste groups. The changes happened in the notions of property rights and inheritance pattern changed the traditional social order. The changes in agrarian relations and *marumakkathayam* system of inheritance had created direct ambiance in the formation of social identity in the later years of 20th Century. This facilitated the involvement of the father in the day to day affairs of the child and his wife, and patriliny emerged as a system or pattern of the society. The collapse of *taravad* system ensured independent life and nuclear family system. Basically,
the transformations in the agrarian relations and there by the egalitarianism of caste groups in the social order, the changes in the notions of gender relations etc., would place the society of north Malabar in the constructive arena of change and development.