Education and social change

Education should play a vital role by initiating the desired process of social change. The educational development of a country is vitally connected to all other aspects of development and the educational situation in a given period is an inseparable part of the general socio-economic situation of that period. So too the educational system in India has undergone fundamental changes following the transformation of the socio-economic structure of the society through various stages. The First Communist Ministry in Kerala undertook to prepare a statutory basis for the improvement of general education and the working conditions of teachers through the Kerala Education Bill. Although in the light of the long history of educational changes effected in Travancore, Cochin and Madras presidency that had preceded the new Education Bill, there was nothing particularly radical in it; it became highly controversial for the simple reason that it was initiated by the Communist-led Government.

Education like so many other social institutions is two-faced-forward looking and backward looking. Education in the older sense of the word is training in the arts, crafts and values of a tribe or a class or a society. Thus education was largely a transmission of culture of a tribe or society and so the more effective such an education is the more conservative it is; any change is the result of accidents of transmission and reception. But within this rigid framework we also have another definition of education which can be assumed to have change as its aim- ‘ya vidya sa vimuktaye’. In this sense education is liberation from bounds and limits and from
conventional concepts of value and validity. The change is due first to an awareness of new values and secondly to a necessity to adopt them as a whole or in part.

In general the term ‘education’ means the advancement of the mental, aesthetic, physical and moral faculties of an individual. Acquisition of knowledge is the basic purpose of education. The primary mission of education for Aristotle was to produce good and virtuous citizens for his ‘Polis’ (a city state of ancient Greece). That mission is given an utmost importance in every civilization. According to Rabindranath Tagore, “Education consists in enabling the mind to find out that ultimate truth which emancipates us from the bondage of lust and gives the wealth not of things but of inner light, not of power but of love, making truth its own, and giving expression to it”.  

According to Nehru “All education must have a definite social outlook and must train our youth for the kind of society we wish to have. Politicians may strive for political and economic changes in order to bring that society into existence, but the real basis of that society must be laid in the teaching of our schools and colleges. The real change will have to come in the minds of men, though those change can and will help greatly by external changes in the environment. The two processes go together and should help each other.”

In India there are hundreds of villages which are unable to maintain a village school on a very moderate cost and there are thousands of people who are not

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1 From the Correspondent, Kerala on the Boil, EPW, January, 1968, p.1829.
2 Rabindranath Tagore, Education Quotes and Sayings, NMML, New Delhi, p.1.
3 Nehru’s address at the All-India Educational Conference, dated 27th December 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru - An Anthology, Edited by S.Gopal, New Delhi, 1980, p.253.
able to pay the very small fees payable in such schools. Moreover after the advent of the British in India, the tastes of the people have undergone some change. On the other hand it is clear that no real progress can be made in any institution without some sort of compulsion. In many countries like the Aerica and Japan, elementary education has been made compulsory and the results have proved strictly successful. In Baroda itself primary education has been made compulsory between 6 to 12 years of age and the result is stated to be that the percentage of school going children of this age is 79.6 percent. Where as in British India itself it is only 21.5 percent. While analyzing the situation the Malayalam daily Desabhimani wrote, “The progress of a country was measured chiefly by the education of the people and when large number of our people were unable to read and write well, then what progress can one expect in the future”. So it suggested for making education free and compulsory within their respective local areas.

The planners and the policy makers fail to see that education is very much a part of society and is subject to pressures from other parts. On the matter of educational expenditure, The Desamaka, daily states that,” the expenditure on education in European countries is much greater than that in India. Again the education imparted in those countries is more useful than that imparted in India. The education dispels ignorance and those who dispel ignorance of the people lay the latter under a deep debt of gratitude to them. If as in western countries industrial education is imparted side by side with general education, the people will find some independent means of livelihood and the discontent prevailing in India will soon see

its end. So it suggested the government to allot more funds for educational purposes”.

The British rule in India during the nineteenth century created far-reaching social changes which included the introduction of a rational and secular educational system. It differed in many ways from the traditional system of education prevailed in India at that time. For the first time education became, in theory, open to all irrespective of birth. Secondly the literary and sacred education of the Brahmins or priestly castes was replaced by the secular and British system of education. It created new educated elite in the country as education came to acquire significance as the decisive instrument for achieving status in society. English as the medium of instruction further enhanced the status of those who received this new education. Education became linked with occupations in the administrative and judicial set-up. Thirdly, those sections of Indian society who were earlier denied education on grounds of caste and sex were able to enter the educational system as early as the last quarter of the nineteenth century. But the basic purpose of British education was to create an educated working class which was needed for the European labour market.

The British educational system largely confined to urban males of the upper castes, and women and the lower castes received education only less in number. While increasing the gap between the educated elite and the masses, it brought together those Indians who had been exposed to the western secular and liberal ideas. These were the people who later on, led the national movement for independence in

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6 Karuna Ahmad, Towards a study of Education and Social change, EPW, dated 27th January, 1979, p.139.
the country. They also spearheaded movements for social, religious and political reform in various parts of the country.

The goal of educational development may be broadly considered under a number of heads. In the first place there is a universal adoption of the principle of compulsory free elementary education, the second there is the target of universal literacy which entails the development of adult education on a wide scale, third the development of secondary and higher education is a necessary consequence of the development under the first head and the fourth there is the target for secondary and higher education which is derived from man-power requirements for economic development.7 Herbert Spencer is of the view that the aim of the education is to prepare the individual for complete living. He says, “to prepare us for complete living is the function which education has to discharge and the only mode of judging any educational causes to judge in what degree it discharges such function.”8 In the context of modern society, the function of education is not merely to supply some amount of knowledge to the educand; but to develop in him desirable habits, interests, attitudes and skills which help him to lead a full and worthwhile life. An individual cannot grow and develop apart from the social context. An individual is a social being; he lives in society and develops through social contacts and he should be molded to the needs of society.

The education imparted in ancient India helped the students to grow wise and earn their livelihood. It was patronized by the kings of those days. But the British system of education on the other hand destroyed the wisdom of many,

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rendered their minds rather anxious and unsound, created a fascination for all that is western, alienated its recipients from morality made them greedy and selfish and helped them to swim in the ocean of servitude without being able to find the shore.\textsuperscript{9} Such people are unable to serve in any of the movements started for the well-being of society. The only object of the government in establishing the educational institutions is to train students as tools to enable them to carry on the administration of the country.\textsuperscript{10}

The history of education in Kerala may be divided into three stages – the period of Missionary initiative, Communal takeover and commercial approach. Missionary education that aimed mainly at the emancipation of the underprivileged caused the awakening of communalism. In the second stage growth of education under the auspices of major religious communities, while achieving the original purpose of serving their community, subsequently came into clash with the class interests of its leadership. The convergence of the class interests of the state and the Communal Educational Agencies (CEA) now prepared the launching of the third stage, that of commercialization of education which was bound to prevent the empowerment of the underprivileged which is the basic role of education.

The modern education initiated and promoted by the missionaries had two distinct features. First apart from the occasional gifts of land and money from the rulers of Travancore; the missionaries spent their own funds for running schools. Secondly, they established schools not to serve their own community, which they did


\textsuperscript{10} Report on the Native Papers examined by the Government of Madras, dated 3\textsuperscript{rd} October 1923, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai.
not at least during early stages, but to serve the people in general, especially the underprivileged sections of the caste-ridden feudal society. This helped the socio-economic emancipation of the lower castes and the out-caste Christians with the benefit of education. They emerged as the middle class and established their hold over the monetized economy and the Ezhavas also improved their position gradually. This helped the redistribution of land in favor of them to the disadvantage of Nair’s and Namboodiris contributing to further socio-economic transformation.\(^\text{11}\)

The first modern schools in the State of Travancore were established and run by the foreign Christian missionaries. The direct activity of the state in the field of education began in A.D.1817 when many schools were established by government and were brought under the inspection of government officers.\(^\text{12}\) A system of grant-in-aid was sanctioned to private schools in 1869 and this led to an increase in the number of private schools. The grants were later enhanced and given on more liberal terms, so as to cover one half of the estimated salary of the teaching staff. The large number of private educational institutions which admitted students, irrespective of caste or creed, provided facilities even to the backward communities.\(^\text{13}\) Fee concessions were given to students of backward castes both by the government and by the Christian missionaries.

The first modern school in Cochin was established by the government in 1818.\(^\text{14}\) The general feature of the system until 1889 was the large proportion of

\(^{11}\) *International Congress on Kerala Studies vol.2*, AKG centre for Research and Studies, Trivandrum,1994, p.104.

\(^{12}\) N.Jose Chander, *Legislative process in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1981, p.73

\(^{13}\) S.Ramachandran Nair, *Social and Cultural History of colonial Kerala*, Ernakulum, 1999, p.3

unaided schools in the state. The unaided schools comprised about five times the number of government and aided schools. With the introduction of grant-in-aid system in 1889 and opening of a separate department in 1890 for the spread of education in the regional languages, there was a phenomenal growth in the number of aided primary and secondary schools.\textsuperscript{15}

In Malabar too the pioneers in the field of modern education were the church missions. The first primary school in Malabar was started in 1848 by the Basel Evangelical Mission.\textsuperscript{16} The Education Department of the Madras Government had started inspections and control of such schools as early as 1857.

As expected English education changed the taste of the educated people of Kerala. They longed for everything western-houses, food, dress, manners, luxuries, professions, family organization, etc. Gradually English education became a necessary qualification for appointments in the higher grade of service. It also became a powerful instrument in increasing the number of those who learnt to think independently. Naturally they wanted to replace the traditional code of customs and practices that were associated with the caste system by a simple social code based on reason and equality. The impact of western education was intensely felt by the Hindu communities. The high castes, the custodians of religion and dharma, gradually realized the need for change and were forced to adjust themselves to the new socio-economic condition. The low caste Hindus demanded equality of opportunity and status with others. The Muslims and Christians also felt the need for change and the spread of education excited in them a new ambition that of enjoying and exercising

\textsuperscript{15} Orders and Official papers connected with the progress of Education in the Cochin State, KSA, Trivandrum, 1914, p.2.

\textsuperscript{16} A.Sreedharamenon (Ed), Kerala District Gazetteers- Kozhikode, Trivandrum, 1962, p.654.
power hitherto denied to them.\textsuperscript{17} It seemed that a clash was inevitable between the two different groups; one that monopolized power and the other that wanted to share power. This imminent conflict in society drove colonial authorities and their dependents the Maharaja of Travancore and the Maharaja of Cochin to look for loyalists.\textsuperscript{18}

However these healthy developments produced certain counter forces towards the end of the century - the awakening of communal feeling among all sections. The underprivileged realized that their emancipation is possible only through consolidated and collective action on caste or religious lines. So they were forced to organize on caste lines. The result was social tension as manifested through the rise of socio-religious movements. The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP), Nair Service Society (NSS), Sadhujana Paripalana Yogam, Arya Conference, Kudumbi Association, Muslim Service League, Variya Samajam, Vellala Mahasabha, Kshatriya Samajam, Yogakshema Sabah, Tandar Mahasabha, Kerala Muslim Aikya Sangham, The Mujahid Movement, Dheevara Sabha, Atma Vidya Sangh, Sahodara Samajam, Pulaya Mahasabha and The Christian Associations are some of the important caste and religious organizations established during the colonial period. These organizations tried to improve the status and influence of their respective communities by increasing their participation in education, government service and the various professions.\textsuperscript{19} They tried to create pressure groups by emphasizing caste identity in order to secure concessions or rights from the governments.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{19} E.M.S.Namboodiripad (Mal), \textit{Keralathile Desiya Prasnam}, 1957, Ernakulum, p.189.
\end{flushright}
Unlike the missionaries the communal educational agencies also setup institutions only for the benefit of that particular community. The ability of resource mobilization and competitive drive of communal educational agencies helped the expansion of these educational enterprises. As a result education became more accessible to the people everywhere. Through the press, public meetings and debates their members were educated and their grievances were publicized.

The English education had created severe competition for better social and economic opportunities among different groups within the middle class. The strain was greeted in the princely states, which were ruled by Hindu Maharajas because of the division of the society along caste and communal lines. In 1844 the Governor General of India declared that preference would be given in government service to candidates who knew English. This statement of British policy stimulated the spread of English education in India. The educated people aspired for government appointments, which gave them social status and economic stability. “A safe and steady income, comparative lack of strain and stress, a pension for old age, opportunities for leisure and chances of promotion to position of dignity, power and influence.  

Towards the closing decades of the 19th century the educated middle class in Travancore asserted itself. There was widespread resentment among the educated classes against the government’s policy of imparting persons from outside, particularly Tamil Brahmins, to hold the most important posts in the public service even when persons with similar qualifications were available inside the state.  

20 Report of the Travancore Unemployment Enquiry Committee, 1928, KSA, Trivandrum, p.27.

petition was also drafted with the aim of urging the Maharaja, the right of the Travancoreans for a fair share in the government. It was signed by 10038 Travancoreans and then presented to the Maharaja by a deputation of six members led by Shri. Sankara Menon of the Madras Bar.  

This petition – *a petition of rights* – was the famous *Malayali Memorial*. The Malayali Memorial, in ventilating the grievances of the Ezhava community, pointed out that the Ezhava did not hold even a single appointment in the higher services of the state. The following table clearly shows the number of appointments held by the various communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of appointments</th>
<th>Protection to population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malayali Sudras</td>
<td>464,239</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1 man in 8290 men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanjad Sudras</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 man in 4000 men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>387,176</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Brahmins</td>
<td>25,224</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1 man in 293 men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Sudras</td>
<td>25,563</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1 man in 751 men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Christians</td>
<td>287,409</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1 man in 17963 men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christians</td>
<td>211,133</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1 man in 4308 men</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Travancore Memorial dated 4th January 1891, P.14*

Further it paved the way for further agitations for political rights such as the *Ezhava Memorial*, signed by 13176 Ezhavas under the leadership of

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22 *The Travancore Memorial dated 4th January 1891*, KSA, Trivandrum, p.3.

23 *Gazetteer of India*, KSA, Trivandrum, 1962, p.39
The Ezhava Memorial concluded by asking for entry to government schools and employment facilities under government service. The Memorial pointed out that the Christians of Malabar were far more advanced and prosperous, compared to the Christians of Travancore and this, it explained, and was due to the neglect of their interest by the ruling authorities. It is significant to note that the Memorial united different sections of people whose rights were denied by an arbitrary government. The Memorial was significant in many respects, because for the first time a section of the people and that too belonging to an untouchable and discriminated caste came forward to point out to the government their importance in economic strength and contribution to the exchequer. The Memorial certainly marked the beginning of an organized agitation of the Ezhavas for equal rights. This resulted in the founding of the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) in 1903, with Sree Narayana Guru as its patron saint, for the social emancipation and upliftment of the Ezhavas.

In response to the British Indian government’s decision, the princely states of Travancore and Cochin, and the administrations of British Malabar initiated measures for the introduction of new education system in their territories. In Cochin vernacular schools were started in 1818 and the government introduced grant-in-aid code in 1889. In Travancore the state accepted the responsibility of imparting free primary education to all children irrespective of caste or creed. In Malabar also the administrators took measures for the introduction of new education system where the literacy was only seven percent in 1881. The Christian mission schools like, London Mission (LMS) in south Travancore, Church Mission in Central Travancore (CMS)

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24 The Ezhava Memorial dated 3rd September 1896, KSA, Trivandrum, p.2.
and Basel Mission in Malabar (BEM), admitted all, irrespective of caste or religion. As observed by the census commissioner, “The college in full and the district schools are getting crammed with boys from the surrounding villages, whose eagerness for study and the sacrifices of their parents for their education are out of all proportion to the gains in view.”

However in 1911, the government introduced the new education code, throwing open public schools to all communities. The Ezhavas thanked the government for adopting such a liberal policy. In Malabar the progress of education of the depressed classes was not satisfactory. The lower castes in Malabar are more miserable and down-trodden than the corresponding castes of other districts. Referring to the condition of the lower castes in Malabar, Kerala Nandini, a Malayalam daily says that, it is absolutely necessary that they should be given at least an elementary education. On the other side the Namboodiri landlords in Malabar educate their children in English and considered that it was the best means of becoming enlightened. Thus education has not reached the lowest castes of Malabar. “The chief difficulties in the way of Panchama education are the almost insurmountable ignorance of castes like the Cherumar and the reluctance of higher castes to allow them to elevate themselves out of their position as serfs.”

26 The Census of Travancore, 1891, KLAL, Trivandrum, p.509.
29 Report of the Native News paper (Malayala Manorama) examined by the Government of Madras, dated 8th August, 1892, TNSA, Chennai.
Till the turn of the twentieth century the Muslims in the three constituent divisions of Kerala- Travancore, Cochin and Malabar did not take much interest in the political developments in these areas on account of their backwardness in education and lack of organization.\(^{31}\) The Moplahs were very poor, agriculture being their means of livelihood, and they have always been under the thumb of the moneylenders, who were Hindus. The majority of the big landholders in that part of the country also happened to be Hindus. The Moplahs were also not interested in sending their children to public schools. So the government started separate schools for the Moplahs as part of its endeavor to encourage education among the Muslims.

For advance of education in Kerala, most of the educational institutions came to be under the control, by and large, of Christian churches of various denominations Catholics, Orthodox, English missionaries and so on.\(^{32}\) Travancore offered incentives for schools for backward class students in 1896 and abolished fees for such students in 1906; Cochin followed in 1909.\(^{33}\) In 1931, Cochin had the highest literacy rate among princely states and provinces of British India. But in 1941 Travancore took the place of Cochin as a result of rapid development of education in the state. The Travancore University was established during this period. But in the Malabar District of Madras province literacy was only 15 percent in 1931.\(^{34}\) Some sections of Christians achieved tremendous progress in education. The literacy of Roman Catholic Syrians, Jacobit Syrians and Marthoma Syrians were above the state average in Travancore and Cochin states. The growth of literacy among Muslims was

\(^{34}\) N.Jose Chander, *The Legislative Process in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1981, p.77
high in Travancore compared with Cochin and Malabar. The literacy of Ezhavas in Travancore was 46.5 percent and in Cochin it was 34.7 percent in 1941. Among the depressed castes the converts to Christianity achieved more progress than their Hindu counterparts.

**Percentage of literacy of some selected communities in Travancore:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>Literacy in 1911</th>
<th>Literacy in 1941</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins (malayalis)</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nair’s</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhavas</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacobits</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Christians</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholics</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulayas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Census of Travancore 1911, p.163, Census of Travancore 1941, p.162.*

**Percentage of literacy of some selected communities in Cochin:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>Literacy in 1911</th>
<th>Literacy in 1941</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>63.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezhava</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulayas</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>59.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Census of Cochin 1911, p.56, Census of Cochin 1941, p.51*
The practice of untouchability denied the lower castes right to enter some of the major departments of administration in Travancore and Cochin.  

Appointments in the land revenue, palace and military departments were exclusively reserved for high caste Hindus. Preferential treatment towards educationally backward classes for public employment was granted in Travancore in 1915. The declaration of the recruitment policy of the British Government in India in the House of Commons on 20th August 1917 was a turning point in the history of civil service in British India. The policy of increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration was embodied in the government of India Act of 1919.

The Public Service Commission of India was constituted in 1926 and 33 percent of higher posts in the service was reserved for Indians. The Madras Service Commission began to function in 1930. As per the government of India Act of 1935, it was renamed as Madras Public Service Commission and the Malabar District was under the purview of Madras Service Commission. Appointments in civil service were based on merit and there was no discrimination on the basis of caste or religion. Through this a large number of educated low castes were in the service of the British government from the Malabar District. In Cochin also appointments were made without any discrimination or complaints.

The high rate of literacy, especially of English literacy and rapid expansion of bureaucracy in Travancore were mainly responsible for the conflict over appointments. The unrepresented and underrepresented communities formed a united

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36 *Report of the Travancore Public service Recruitment Committee, 1934*, KSA, Trivandrum, p.12
organization called the Civil Right League to fight for equality of opportunity and status in 1919. Supporting the demands of the Civil Right League, Malayala Manorama wrote “Governments in Europe much stronger than the Travancore Durbar have not been able to withstand or oppose the insistent demand of the people for freedom or equality of civic rights, nothing contrary to that can happen in Travancore”. The Government of Travancore clarified that they could not abolish untouchability, as the deciding factors for such a radical step depended on time, education and social improvement.

As years passed, the non-Christian communities saw the field of education being monopolized by Christians. They were very unhappy about this, and they started their own educational institutions. The educated men and the leaders of communal organizations commanded considerable influence within their own castes. The caste solidarity achieved through caste organization was to a great extent, responsible for caste rivalry in the State. The non-Nair communities demanded the distribution of offices in government service in proportion to their numerical strength. The demands of the other communities were strongly opposed by Nairs. The rapidly developing Christian population likely awakened by education and political interest has began to assert itself in the State and as repercussion alarms and jealousies have sprang up among those who hitherto considered they had a prescriptive right to government employment.

41 Census of Travancore, 1931, KLAL, Trivandrum, p.291.
The ill-feeling of community against community, caste against caste gradually went beyond the sphere of politics and contaminated the whole life of the state. The unrepresented communities pointed out that, if efficiency and merit were accepted as the sole criteria for securing representation in the civil service, the unrepresented communities would remain so for ever.42 Their argument was that it was the obvious duty of the state to afford equal opportunities to all citizens. Nairs complained that, as a result of the Christianization of government service, the claims of Nairs were ignored. They requested the government to make opportunities and promotions on the sole basis of efficiency and merit.

For the purpose of recruitment, the government classified the communities into seven groups; Brahmins, Nairs, Ezhavas, the other caste Hindus, Christians, Muslims and others. The appointment of members of these communities in the service would be based on the number of qualified hands in each group available and willing to take up appointment and not on its numerical strength. The Marthoma Christians and the non-malayali Brahmins held a disproportionately large number of posts than the Nairs. The non-malayali Brahmins, Nairs, Marthoma Christians and Jacobit Christians had a high literacy rate in the state. As a matter of fact the Latin Christians, Ezhavas and Muslims had no sufficient representation either in the higher grade or in the lower grade posts in the government service. Their literacy rates were 33.2 percent, 27.3 percent and 15.3 percent respectively.43 The posts in the public service were grouped into three categories; higher, intermediate and lower. Merit and efficiency were the most important criteria for the appointments in the higher grade.

43 Census of Travancore, 1931, KLAL, Trivandrum, p.282.
Recruitment to this cadre was based on a written examination and interview. In Cochin the government instituted Staff Selection Board in 1936 for the selection of eligible candidates for appointments.

There was a difference between the institutions run by the Christian missions and other private managers, as well as between the private and government owned institutions. The Christian owned institutions paid the teachers slightly better than the owners of other private institutions. As for service conditions, private institutions whether church owned or others were completely authoritarian. The owners and managers of private institutions considered educational institutions as one form of property and they did as they liked with the teachers. The Cochin report in 1934 remarked on the very bad treatment accorded to teachers by the managements. Managers often required teachers to sign receipts for larger sums than they were actually paid. The Travancore Enquiry in 1933 found that salaries in privately managed primary schools could be less than rupees eight a month at a time when a working class families monthly expenses were estimated at about rupees seventeen. Even by the 1950’s after the steep rise in prices resulting from the second world war, the primary school teachers earned only about rupees 25 a month, the same as a police constable. The pathetic conditions of school teachers were well expressed in the literary works of Cherukad (Novel Muthassi), S.K.Pottekkad (Inspection), Karur Neelakanda pillai (Atbutha Manushan), etc.

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45 *Report of the Education Survey Committee, Cochin State, 1934*, KSA, Trivandrum, p.35.


The people choose the teaching profession because a small regular income was better than nothing at all. The pay was poor but it was fairly regular and teachers commanded a certain respect. The title ‘Master’ by which teachers was often known, occasionally affixed itself to people’s names for life. Though perhaps exploited by school managements, the teachers still had great attention paid to them by pupils and parents, and a popular teacher could exert considerable influence. The erstwhile teacher, A.K.Gopalan, later declared that “a good teacher could become the leader of the people of his village”. On the part of the government the teachers became a dangerous class. Their frustrations, coupled with their broader general knowledge, made them pivots in politics. The career of A.K.Gopalan, who began his working life as a teacher, illustrates the role of the growing Communist party in implanting a new culture in Kerala in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Along with the newly developing Trade union and Kisan movement, the teacher’s movement too began to organize in Malabar during 1930’s. The central demands of the teaches movement came to be first to end the arbitrary way in which private managers dealt with the teachers like suspending them from employment and dismissing them as they liked and second, direct payment of wages to teachers by the government, without any deductions by private managers.

The organization of government-aided elementary school teachers that was established in 1936 in Malabar, made a clear declaration that their struggle was basically directed against the educational system established by the British rulers, and that their organization was part of the anti-imperialist movement in the country. In

48 A.K.Gopalan, In the Cause of the People, New Delhi, 1973, p.5.
January 1939, one thousand teachers gathered for a general meeting, by which time the Congress government in Madras seeing them as a source of unrest, banned teachers from forming the political organizations. Many teachers belonging to the Aided Primary School Teachers Union were actively involved in peasant movements. The treatment of teachers in privately managed schools in Malabar was even more oppressive and unjust than that suffered by their Travancore and Cochin counterparts. The continuous abuse, to which teachers in Malabar were subjected, was not removed until the introduction of a system of direct payment of salaries to teachers by cheque or money order which was enacted into legislation during the regime of the Rajagopalachari’s Congress government in 1953.

Although not in the same way as in Malabar, School teachers began to organize in Cochin and Travancore as well. The development of the democratic government for responsible government in the two states roused the socio-political consciousness of the teaching community. Joseph Mundasseri, who was later become education minister in the Communist government, was one of the main organizers and leaders of the teacher’s movement in Cochin State. Many members of the Kerala legislature were also teachers and some of them were founders of the organized teacher’s movement. This was the political background to the situation in which the Communist government prepared an Education Bill, which was introduced in the legislature almost at the same time as the Agrarian Reforms Bill.

52 T.V.Satyamurthy, India since Independence Vol.I, Centre-State Relations the case of Kerala, Delhi, 1985, p.390.
In 1934, an Education Reforms Committee was appointed in Travancore to go into the question of how the abuses against the teachers in privately managed Schools should be eradicated, especially in view of the fact that large sums of government money were involved.\(^53\) In 1933, the Education Minister of Cochin in a statement made before the Legislative Council emphasized that it was necessary for the government to interfere in the matter of appointment of teachers to private schools in view of the fact that government money was being misspent if not misappropriated by the managements.\(^54\)

In response to a general call issued to the governments of Native States throughout India, the government of Travancore appointed the Travancore Education Re-organization Committee (TERC) which was made up of members drawn from various walks of life especially educational, legislative, industrial and commercial in 1945. The committee unanimously recommended that primary education should be made compulsory and free and that parity should be introduced between the conditions of service of teachers in departmental and government schools.\(^55\) The government accepted the recommendations by passing a legislation to make primary education for all boys and girls compulsory and to bring within a period of ten years primary education under direct and full State control throughout the State. As an immediate reaction, number of private schools was to close down or simply surrender to government. The Church however, saw in these reforms an attack against its fundamental rights and a political act of revenge on the part of C.P.Ramaswami Iyer,

\(^54\) *Proceedings of the Cochin Legislative Council, 1933*, KSA, Trivandrum, p.171.
\(^55\) *Report of the Travancore Education Re-organization Committee, 1945*, KSA, Trivandrum, p.89.
the Hindu Brahmin. In these circumstances, Ramaswami Iyer’s administration aimed at a steady increase in the degree of control exercised by the State over education.\(^56\)

The systematic effort at building an educational system, relevant to national needs and aspirations, began soon after India achieve freedom; more purposefully with the initiation of economic and social planning in 1950. Education henceforth was to sub serve national needs of manpower, of bringing about technological development in production processes and generally of creating a society based on principles of equality and social justice.\(^57\) At the time of independence and during the successive stages of the integration of the State of Kerala, the State government was besieged with representations of an urgent nature from organized groups. In 1950, the government of Travancore-Cochin state launched the Private Secondary School (PSS) scheme, at the initiative of Panampalli Govinda Menon, the then Education Minister. Under this scheme, tripartite consultations involving representatives of the government, teachers and managements looked into the conditions of works in private schools and made a number of recommendations of teachers, payment of salaries to teachers, the appropriate method of dealing with school fees, and the role of the government in ensuring not only that properly qualified teachers were appointed but also that a sizeable proportion of those appointed belonged to disadvantaged communities. The Catholics at first accept the PSS scheme, soon went back on their agreement and mobilized strong protests both at the Central and at the State government level, claiming that the compulsory lodging of 80 percent of the fees with the government was an encroachment on their rights.


Three successive ministries of the state government from 1951 to 1953 were divided among themselves over the attitude that should be adopted towards such protests.

The main beneficiaries of the education system of Kerala prior to the First Communist Ministry were the Brahmins, Syrian Christians, Nairs and certain sections of Backward Christians. The system however did not work to the advantage of Ezhavas, Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, that means 65 percent of the total population of the State. The educationally privileged communities owned and managed 6000 private schools; the socially backward castes were denied the opportunity of receiving sufficient education. In this Kerala was similar to other States, though the political consciousness of such deprivation was for more widespread there mainly due to the active role played by left wing forces. The Communist government which came to power in 1957 conceded that “private schools had rendered commendable services in the matter of promoting education whether for profit, or perhaps for self-rewarding social service”,\(^{58}\) but the free for all situation could not be allowed to continue. It was alleged that the private managers looked upon their schools as profit making concerns where student fees kept rising unusually and teachers appointments turned in to a sort of auction, anyway would land up in a “disgraceful situation in which they were treated as servants of the management”.\(^{59}\) The injustice towards teachers was augmented by the rising educated unemployment which was directly related to the nature of the educational system. Therefore there is a great political necessity for re-organizing the educational systems in Kerala.

Commenting on the report of the Government of India on education in this country, *Mathruboomi*, the Malayalam daily deplores that “there is not even one

\(^{58}\) *The Hindu* dated 4\(^{th}\) January 1958, KSA, Trivandrum.
School for each of the villages in India and observes that the lack of facilities even for primary education can never be justifies. When power is in the hands of educated and capable members of a few communities, they will only use that power to suppress the uneducated and poor folk”.  

The implementation of many of the schemes suffered due to lack of proper and effective co-ordination between the Centre and States. The State schemes and the Central schemes were formulated independently of each other. The States were unable to participate fully in the Central schemes, for which financial assistance was available because the resources of the States were already pledged for the State schemes. Moreover, there was not adequate exchange of information between the States and the Centre or amongst the States themselves to enable a proper evaluation of the programmes being made.

In these circumstances the Central Government for discussing the allocation made for the educational development under the Second Five Year Plan, convened the Educational Ministers Conference on September 1956 at New Delhi. The Prime Minister addressed the Conference on the morning of the 2nd September 1956. The Conference was attended by two Union Deputy Ministers Dr.K.L.Shrimali and Dr.M.M.Das, the secretary Shri.K.G.Saiyidain and other officers of the Union Ministry of education and State Education Ministers. Shri.P.S.Rao, educational advisor represented the Travancore-Cochin State. In the opening remarks the Union Education Minister explained that the purpose of the conference was to bring about closer understanding and co-operation between the Central and State Governments, so


that the objectives and the targets laid down for the plan are fulfilled. He made it clear that, “the Centre had no intention of imposing any rigid pattern of its own about the various schemes of the State Governments but was interested in offering its co-operation for the attainment of common objectives and an educational pattern that had been evolved after careful and prolonged consultation”. The Conference ended with the findings that, the amount provided for education is totally inadequate to meet the requirements of either the constitutional provision in regard to free and compulsory education at the primary stage or the general demand for more extensive facilities in all stages and phases of education. So it urged the Central government to allot more fund for the promotion of basic education and take measures to make better co-ordination between the Central and State governments.

In conformity with the Article 45 and 46 of the Directive principles of the Indian Constitution the Communist government reformed the primary education in the State. According to which “the imparting of free and compulsory primary education is the responsibility of State government and prescribed penalties to parents, if they fail to send their children to schools”. Within three months of getting into power the first major action taken by the government was to bring out a bill to assume full control and complete direction of education from the primary to the University stage.

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62 Ibid.
63 G.O.No.149, Minutes of the Education Ministers Conference, dated September 1956, New Delhi, TNSA, Chennai.
64 The Constitution of India Modified upto 1st November 1956, Government of India, CSL, New Delhi, p.46.
The government introduced the *Kerala Education Bill* on 13th July 1957; it was aimed to provide for the better organization and development of educational institutions in the State.\(^{66}\) The architect of the Kerala Education Bill was Shri. Joseph Mundassery, veteran educationalist and one of the three independents in the cabinet, who had direct experience of the malpractices of the privately run colleges in the State. The Education Minister undertook responsibility for introducing the bill in the Assembly and says that, “*the bill will end the disgraceful situation in which the teachers were treated as servants of the managements.*”\(^{67}\)

The Kerala Education Minister, before introducing the KEB in the Assembly on 11th July 1957, in a press conference reaffirmed that “the KEB proposed to be introduced in the ensuing session of the State Assembly was not a nationalization measure as was being wrongly interpreted in certain sections of the press. The bill was simply and purely, a piece of protective legislation intended to secure and safeguard the interests of teachers employed in schools under private management in Kerala”. \(^{68}\) The minister again said it was not the policy of government, so far as the present bill was concerned to nationalize education nor was it the government’s intention to eliminate private agencies from the education field. On the other hand “Government acknowledged with gratitude the services of all agencies, which have been working in the field for the last so many years and which intend to work in the future also with a spirit of service. At a time when the government had not come forward to take up social service activities direct, this role had been fulfilled by charitable institutions. The government activities in such field

\(^{66}\) *Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, dated 13th July 1957*, KLAL, Trivandrum, p.1643.

\(^{67}\) *The New Age dated 21st July 1957*, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, p.3.
were restricted to the extension of help to such organizations and institutions. But
today, the outlook had changed and it was the duty of the government in a welfare
State to take over social service activities under their direct responsibility. The
government hoped that the KEB would be the source of encouragement to all sections
whose object was selfless service in the field of education”.  

In a press release on 19th August 1957, the aim and purpose of the KEB have been explained in detail by the Minister for Education himself that, “it was the
duty of all citizens to see that the KEB now before the Assembly is discussed in a calm
and peaceful atmosphere devoid of sectarian passions or political pressure, so that a
piece of legislation which would affect the lives of thousands of teachers and the
entire generations of students now and in future”. After the liberation of India from
foreign domination, the continuous agitation of teachers for better salary and
conditions of service has considerably improved the situation. At present, we have
more than 10,000 schools and 70,000 teaching personals in the State. More than half
of the Schools in the State are owned by private agencies. In the Travancore-Cochin
area the most outstanding agencies are Christians (Churches), Nairs (NSS) and the
Ezhavas (SNDP) and of three, the foremost is the Christian community. In the
Malabar area most of the agencies are individuals. In addition to the standardization
of courses, textbooks and examinations, the government has prescribed qualifications
and scales of pay for teaching personal in both the primary and secondary schools.
Teaching of religion which was once upon a time the aim of missionary schools has
since been taken out of the curriculum. But school managed by private agencies are

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69 Ibid.
free to teach religion before time or after time within the school premises, provided the parents of the children, who attend religious instruction do not object.\textsuperscript{71}

The KEB was comprehensive in scope and aimed at organizing general education on a sounder and more equitable basis. In particular, the Communist led Ministry was concerned to ensure that teachers in private schools were properly paid, recruited on the basis of their qualification, enjoyed security of tenure and that the educational institutions in the State were administered, by and large, without undue interference from the managers. Before drafting the bill, the State government and its Education minister had not only conducted a thorough review of past attempts to reform education in the three different parts of the State, but also took the precaution of seeking the view of educationalist, Governor, Leader of the Congress Legislative Party, Shri P.T.Chacko, the Leader of the PSP Legislative Party Shri.Pattom.A.Thanupillai and the Ministers of Law and Home Affairs of the Central government.\textsuperscript{72}

The \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika} reported that, “the KEB aims primarily at improving the aided schools in the State through extending control over management and through recruitment of the right type of teachers. It may be noted that the Bill provides for extension of pension, provident fund and insurance benefits to teachers in private aided schools, the entire cost of which will be met by the State governments.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Press Release of Education Minister, dated 19\textsuperscript{th} August 1957,} PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{72} Joseph Mundasseri (Mal), \textit{Kozhinja Ilakal}, Trivandrum, 1963, p.125.
This move of the Kerala government should provide food for thought to other State governments.\footnote{The Amrita Bazar Patrika, dated 10\textsuperscript{th} July 1957, PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.}

The KEB which consisted of thirty six clauses was divided into three parts; General, Compulsory Education and Miscellaneous. Firstly, the KEB sought to impose certain responsibilities on the managers of the private schools such as to maintain record and properties of their schools and submit a list of such properties to the concerned authority.\footnote{The Kerala Education Bill, 1957, KLAL, Trivandrum, p.4.} It banned them from transferring schools property and from closing down schools except in the prescribed manner. The bill also prescribed fine and imprisonment in case of failure to comply with these provisions. Secondly the bill aimed at improving the status of teachers by regulating their appointments and service conditions. The teachers of private schools were to be appointed by managers from the State Register of trained teachers eligible for appointment to private as well as government.\footnote{Ibid, p.5.} The managers would be held responsible for the proper conduct of school administration with the interests of the pupils. If failures occurred on the part of managers to discharge statutorily laid down responsibilities could lead to forfeiture of maintenance and contingency grants or a direct assumption of control of such schools by the government for a maximum period of five years.\footnote{Ibid.} Furthermore, the bill envisaged compulsory free primary education for all children up to the age of 14, with the provision for free mid-day meal, text books, and writing materials. A State Advisory Board and appropriate local level educational authorities were to be set up.

\footnote{The Amrita Bazar Patrika, dated 10\textsuperscript{th} July 1957, PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.}
\footnote{The Kerala Education Bill, 1957, KLAL, Trivandrum, p.4.}
\footnote{Ibid, p.5.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
to advice the Department of Education in various aspects of its work under the new law.77

In the discussion of KEB, member Smt. Leela Damodara Menon said “No teacher can work his best and render a dedicated service to the cause of education if he does not have enough to live a happy life. So, the elementary school teachers require a lot of sympathy”.78 Another member Shri. P. T. Chako said, “The KEB is one of the very important bill as for as our nation is concerned, so all the members were seriously discussed the bill without considering any party affiliations and passed the bill in a peaceful atmosphere by avoiding all sort of confrontations”.79 The member Shri. M. Umesh Rao said, “If the right to select and appoint teachers taken away from the management would not affect in any way the discipline and control of either teachers or students”. The member Shri. P. Govindapilla said, “The KEB was not a bill for restricting Educational Institutions, but it was an Bill for regulating the Educational Institutions and the Managements”.80

The Hindustan Times mentioned that “the welcome provision in the bill is the one enjoining on the government to take education compulsory for children between the ages of six and fourteen within the ten years. If this scheme is enforced the State will be able to claim a distinct position in the country”.81 The Hindu reported that, “the bill destroys the independence of pioneering Schools who depend on fee

79 Ibid, p.2091.
income and who should be left free to develop their own system of education. The teachers may benefit financially but the final result will be iron control of the government over all schools in the state and politics will enter a field where it ought to be completely excluded”. 82 The Indian Express daily reported that ,”the Kerala Government’s bill for reorganizing and reforming school education has been necessitated as much by the need to bring about uniformity in the three different regions of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar as by the Communist urge to secularize and standardize education. While it seeks power to take over for a limited period, any aided school whose present management had neglected its duties. The main purpose of the bill is to deal with the general situation rather than with particular institutions”. 83

The Deepika, the Catholic mouth piece “served a severe warning to the government against any attempt to touch the field of education”. 84 The Orthodox Syrian Church, the Marthoma Church and the Church of South India which are the other major constituents of the wider Christian community also joined hands with the Catholics. The Malayala Manorama, the Malayalam daily owned and operated by a prominent Jacobit family group also took an equally strong line against the

81 The Hindustan Times dated 5th September 1957, Published by PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.
82 The Hindu, dated 17th July, 1957, Published by PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.
83 The Indian Express, dated 9th July 1957, Published by PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.
84 The Deepika, dated 17th April 1957, Published by PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.
educational policy of the Communist government. Subsequently a joint statement was
issued by all the Christian Bishops against the government’s policy.  

Initially, Mannath Padmanabhan and the NSS had supported the Act in the hope that the provisions for the filling of teaching vacancies on a communal rotation would allow Nairs greater access to employment in Christian school. However, the final legislation made it clear that the main beneficiaries would be lower castes Hindus, primarily Ezhavas. So NSS and its leader Mannath Padmanabhan were turned against the government. When the government denied him sanction for starting a Private Engineering College at Palghat, immediately joined with the Catholic Bishops and opposed the government tooth and nail.  

The Ezhava community supported the bill because; the provision for communal rotation opened the prospect of a few more jobs in a respected, regularly paid occupation. The chief organ of the Ezhava, Kerala Kaumudi extended full and unreserved support to the Communist government. The editor of the daily, K.Sukumaran went round the State making hard-hitting speeches against Mannam and the Nair community.

After discussion which lasted over ten and a half hours in the Assembly, the KEB was referred to a Select Committee. Of the 23 members actively participated in the discussion, 16 belonged to the opposition and seven including the Minister for Education to the treasury benches. The Select Committee consisted of 19 members

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85 The Deepika, dated 14th July 1957, Published by PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.
87 Kerala Kaumudi, dated 17th July 1957, Published by PRD, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum.
with the minister in-charge as its chairman. The ruling CPI has 9, the Congress 6, the PSP and IUML has 2 members each. The Select Committee members are Shri. P.T.Chako, Shri. A.Thanu pillai, Shri. C.H.Mohammed Koya, Shri. P.M.Kunhiraman Nambiar, Shri. K.Moideenkutty Haji, Shri. E.P.Paulose, Smt. Leela Damodara Menon, Shri. R.Pراسsocket. Smt. Rosamma Punnoose, Shri. P.Gopalan, Shri. N.E.Balaram, Shri. K.R.Narayanan, Shri. P.K.Koru, Shri. T.K.Krishnan, Shri. M.A Antony, Shri. P.Gopalan, Shri. N.Rajagopalan Nair, and Shri.Joseph Mundassery, Minister for Education (Chairman)\textsuperscript{88}

The Committee held 11 sittings, of which three were at Aluva and rest at Trivandrum. The sittings were devoted to the taking of evidence from representative of educational institutions and interested individuals.\textsuperscript{89} The committee considered the bill section by section and submitted its report on August 24, 1957. It modifies 19 sections, added 5 and omitted 2. Many of the provisions restricting the power of the manager were whittled down to widen the sphere of his activity and scope of his freedom.

In the meantime huge demonstrations were held in the State Capital and shouting slogans against the KEB. In 26\textsuperscript{th} August 1957, 3000 blue uniformed ‘Christophers’ (bearers of Christ) paraded through the city and at last convened a public meeting, at which resolutions were passed, demanding the withdrawal of the KEB and urging the Government of India to take strong and effective steps to prevent


\textsuperscript{89} \textit{The Kerala Education Bill 1957,} Report of the Select Committee, KLAL, Trivandrum, p.1.
the deterioration of law and order situation in the State.\textsuperscript{90} Another demonstration which was organized by the Education Bill Protest Demonstration Committee which consisted of Congressmen, members of PSP and IUML. They were shouting slogans like “withdraw Education Bill and end Lawlessness”.\textsuperscript{91} Shri.P.T.Chacko, the leader of the Congress and some other Congress members of the Assembly walking in front of the procession.

The pro-bill demonstration was organized by the Trivandrum District Committee of the Communist Party on 28\textsuperscript{th} August 1957 was attended by large number of woman, workers from factories and State Transport, middle and low class people, teachers and students. The demonstrators shouted slogans like “pass the Education Bill, Communist party zindabad and Mundassery is not alone”\textsuperscript{92}. At the end of the procession they convened a public meeting which was attended by Shri.S.Eswara Iyer, pro-communist independent Member of Parliament and the leaders like the general secretary of the State Communist Party Shri.M.N.Govindan Nair, Shri T.C.Narayanan Nambiar MLA and Shri.K.Damodaran. Addressing the meeting, Shri.M.N.Govindan Nair declared that “the KEB was not against the interest of any section of the people and it was intended only to safeguard the interests of teachers”\textsuperscript{93}

The Select Committee in its report reduced the penalties on the manager for violation of the provisions of the bill dealing with the furnishing of requisite information from fine or imprisonment or to withdrawal of grant or aid to the

\textsuperscript{90} Report of the Press Trust of India, dated 27\textsuperscript{th} August 1957, KSA, Trivandrum.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Indian Express, dated 29\textsuperscript{th} August 1957, Published by PRD, Government of Kerala. Trivandrum.
It had restored the discretion of the manager to close down his school, provided he gives one year’s prior notice to the government. The manager’s power of appointment was retained by the committee. He was given power to appoint any person of his choice from a district-wise list of qualifies candidates prepared by the Public Service Commission (PSP). The Committee had accepted the system of communal reservation for backward classes and scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, in the appointment of teachers in government and private schools as contemplated by Article 16(4) of the Indian Constitution.

The Constitution and functions of Local Educational Authorities were clearly laid down. Each educational authority shall consists of seven members, five officials and two nominated who have experience in education. Its functions were to assess the educational needs of the local area and prepare each year schemes for the development of education and submit it to the government, to supervise the implementation of the scheme of mid-day feeding of the school children, to arrange conferences, exhibitions on the measures intended to create among the public an interest in education and to carry out such other functions as may be prescribed.

A time limit, ten years after the commencement of the Act was fixed for the introduction of free and compulsory education of all children below 14 years of age. Introduction of Direct payment of salary to the non-teaching staff of aided schools by the government was proposed by the committee. The rights of the minorities under

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94 *The Kerala Education Bill 1957, Report of the Select Committee*, KLAL, Trivandrum, section 5(ii) and 6(iv).

95 *Ibid*, section II(ii)

96 *The Kerala Education Bill 1957, Report of the Select Committee*, Section 17(i) and (ii) and 18, KLAL, Trivandrum
Article 30 and rights of the Anglo-Indian community under Article 337 of the Constitution of India were put outside the purview of the Act. The Christian churches alleged that the bill was a planned attempt to break the private managements and that as such it was contrary to the rights of the minorities as guaranteed by Article 30 of the Constitution.

Nevertheless, four dissenting notes were also added to the report, the first by the IUML member C.H. Mohammed Koya, the second jointly by the five congress party members, Leela Damodara Menon, E.P. Paulose, M.A. Antony, K.R. Narayanan and P.T. Chacko, the third by the PSP leader Pattom A. Thanupillai and the fourth by P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar of the same party. The Congress members in the select committee have alleged that “the bill really aims at making education a monopoly of the State. The Communist government of Kerala wanted to eliminate the private effort in the spread of education in the State and curtailed the freedom of the private management through a Local Educational Authorities”. The members of select committee concluded with a suggestion that the bill has to be circulated for eliciting public opinion.

The second reading of the bill started on August 27, 1957 and lasted for over three days. Out of the 310 amendments moved during the stage, 196 related to the rights of religious minorities and rights of managements. One of the most important amendments was moved by the Congress leader of the opposition, P.T. Chacko specified that “for the purpose of giving representation to communities,

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97 Ibid, section 23.
appointments in private schools shall be deemed to be appointments in government schools. He justified the principle involved for granting reservation in private schools as well, since the entire salary of teachers is paid by government. Hence communal reservation should be made applicable in making appointment to all these vacancies”. The government welcomed this amendment by one of the most outstanding spokesmen of the Syrian Christians on one of the most sensitive issue, namely ‘reservation’. One of the amendments was moved by Shri.E.P.Paulose in clause 3 sub-clauses (1) of the KEB, says that,” the word ‘regulate’ may be deleted and in its place the words ‘take steps to organize and develop’ may be substituted.” Another one of the important amendment was moved by Shri.Thomas John in clauses 5 sub-clauses (1) and (2) of the Bill substituted as,”The Manager of every aided school shall within three months of the commencement of this Act keep a register containing a list of all movable and immovable properties of the school with such particulars as may be prescribed by the Government. The register shall be open to inspection by any Officer of the Education Department. If the Manager commits default in keeping the register under sub-section (1) or keeps a register which is false or incorrect, the Director of Public Instruction may appoint a new manager in consultation with the Educational Agency, if any.” The maximum opportunities given to the members particularly belonging to the opposition was to express their

103 Ibid, p.557.
opinion freely and fully. They were unanimously passed the bill except one moved by
the leader of the Congress Legislative Party to section (9) which was rejected by the
House by 61 votes to 50. The bill was finally passed unanimously by the Assembly on
2nd September, 1957.104

The Kerala Governor referred the bill for the consideration of the
President of India under Article 200 of the Indian Constitution. By exercising the
power vested with him by Article 143(1) of the Constitution, the President referred it
to the Supreme Court to ascertain the constitutionality of the bill. This was the first
time since independence that the President of India had sought the advisory opinion of
the Supreme Court on a matter of legislation. The Central Law Ministry and
Education Ministry had expressed their opinion that the bill violated Article 30(i) of
the Constitution which guaranteed minorities, the right to establish and maintain
educational institutions of their choice and as such there was a sure possibility of
avoidable litigation.105 Also efforts were made by the private school Managers and
Congress leaders from Kerala not to ratify the approved bill. Indeed the KEB made
history not only because of its reference to the Supreme Court but also by the way it
was argued for and against it before the nation’s highest tribunal.106107

The Supreme Court in its opinion given on 17th May 1958, classified the
disputed clauses in three; that were totally destructive of Article 30(i) of the
Constitution, that were reasonable regulations and hence fully permissible and those

104 Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, Second Session, Vol.II, No.9, 1957,
KLAL, Trivandrum, p.921.
105 The Deepika dated 30th October, 1957, Kottayam.
106 C.N.Somarajan, Pressure Group Politics in Kerala during the First Communist Regime of
were permissible under the circumstances but appeared ‘perilously near violating’ the right of administration.\textsuperscript{108} After the opinion of the Supreme Court, the President returned the bill to the State Governor on 8\textsuperscript{th} July, 1958 under Article 201 of the Constitution with the directive that, “the bill be returned to the House of the Legislature of the State of Kerala with a message requesting that the House will reconsider the provisions of the bill and make suitable and necessary amendments there in the light of the opinion of the Supreme Court of India”.\textsuperscript{109} One specific point is that the President had not suggested any specific amendments to the bill.

The reconsideration of the bill by the Assembly started on 24\textsuperscript{th} November 1958 and lasted for about 15 hours spread over five days. The opposition members attacked Mundassery in a merciless manner and completely rejected their conciliatory approach towards him. In the ground of such opposition the government was able to get the revised legislation passed on 28\textsuperscript{th} November 1958,\textsuperscript{110} exactly the one year after the bill in its original version had been passed.

The opposition political parties were motivated from the very beginning by a single aim to bring down the CPI-led government. The Congress party leaders like Shri.P.T.Chacko and Cherian Kapan, Member of Parliament were under the strong influence of the churches opposed the bill. Before the shaping of the KEB the Catholic hierarchy launched a campaign of propaganda intended to mould and control the opinion of the laity in its favor. A Conference of Bishops and Arch Bishop’s met at Changanasseri on May 19\textsuperscript{th} 1957 and decided to chalk out detailed programme of

\textsuperscript{108} Jose Chander, \textit{Op.sit}, p.84.
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{Ibid}, p.68.
‘educational agitation’ and to raise a fund of rupees two lakhs for financing the agitation against the Communist Government.\textsuperscript{111} In June 1957, well in advance of the tabling of KEB in the assembly, the church promoted the formation of a Private School Rights Defense Committee (PSRDC) as a weapon against the bill. Subsequent to the publication of the bill, two committees - one composed of clergies and other composed of laymen were constituted with the purpose of stimulating popular opposition in the form of hartals and public demonstration.\textsuperscript{112} The Catholic Churches mobilized it well by using the powerful press ‘Deepika’ to wage a ceaseless campaign against the government.

Even before the debates in the Assembly did start, Father Vadakkan, an anti-Communist Catholic priest in a circular to the religious heads, called for a crusade against the Communist regime, proposing the parish priests to “form 2000 small units of youths, well informed and active against the communists”.\textsuperscript{113} These volunteers were known as ‘Christophers’ drawn from the poorest sections of the Christian community, were intended to act as catalyst in generating grassroots opposition to the government policies. He freely admitted in an interview in 1976 that his campaign against the government was financed by the church and a number of planters. The Bishops were ready to ponder to the crude fundamentalism of Vadakkan’s volunteers by raising the cry of “Religion in Danger”.

The Managers of private educational institutions projected the entire bill as an attack on their ownership rights. The Christian Church, the NSS and many other caste and communal organizations unleashed a false propaganda that the bill was an

\textsuperscript{111} The Janayugam, dated 20\textsuperscript{th} June 1957, p.2.
attack on the right to property, minority rights and a measure to nationalize educational institutions. The propaganda of the Christian church was that, if the bill were adopted, the institutions would be used for Communist propaganda rather than preaching religion.\textsuperscript{114} Actually the claim of Christians that they should be allowed to establish and maintain minority schools is not correct because the Christians are not a minority community in the State because they are among the three largest communities of Kerala.

As regarding the attitude of the Private management and Churches E.M.S.Namboodiribad stated, “Both the authorities who controlled educational institutions were not ready to tolerate the introduction of moderate reforms. They propagated that the Communists had started attack against Christianity and the Church property would be confiscated soon. So the Church authorities now engaged in collecting their people against the Communist government”\textsuperscript{115}

The NSS executive council also welcomed the Kerala Education Bill as “a necessary step towards streamlining the administration of private schools in the State”.\textsuperscript{116} After careful scrutiny of its provisions the council remarked that the Local Educational Authorities and for imposing restrictions on the power of the judiciary, alone were objected by the NSS as unnecessary and avoidable.\textsuperscript{117} In one of the speeches after the bill was amended by the select committee, Shri.Mannath Padmanabhan, the leader of the NSS congratulated the government for making amendments in such a way as to be acceptable to all also expressed, “This agitation is

\textsuperscript{114} S.Ramachandran Pillai, \textit{EMS.Namboodiripad and the Communist Government in Kerala, the Marxist, XXV}, September 2009.

\textsuperscript{115} E.M.S.Namboodiribad (Mal), \textit{Communist Party Keralathil}, Trivandrum, 1986, p.115.

\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Malayala Manorama}, dated 20\textsuperscript{th} August 1957, P.5.
originated by the Churches, Bishops and priests constitute the heart and soul of the movement. The bill earned popular support that the government will definitely succeed in implementing it”. 118

The attitude of the NSS and its leader Mannam towards the KEB was thus one of the unlimited support as it was passed by the Assembly in September 1957. But immediately after the publication of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill on December 1957, which seems to hit the Nairs basic economic interest, the NSS changed its attitude and gradually following an anti-government stance. Mannath Padmanabhan reacted sharply against the government and vowed that he would not rest until the Communist government was overthrown. 119

Regarding the opposition of the KEB, in a statement the Communist party said, “This campaign clearly shows that those who were organizing it have no respect for democratic practices and they do not hesitate to challenge all norms of democracy to attain their selfish ends.” 120 Jawaharlal Nehru replied to the letter of E.M.S dated 29th July 1957 that, some provisions of the Bill had struck him as unhappy and likely to lead to trouble, but he had not wished to interfere. 121 But unfortunately the Governments Education Bill was merged by the dismissal of the Communist government on 31st July 1959. The method of intervention chosen by the Central government to save the counterpart in the State of Kerala went against the grain of bourgeois parliamentary democracy assured by the Indian Constitution.

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Malayala Manorama, dated 27th November 1958, p.5.
120 The New Age dated 6th October 1957, Ajoy Bhavan, New Delhi, p.5.
121 S.Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography, New Delhi, 1984, p.56.
The educational system in Kerala had provided the State with the highest literacy rate in the country. The Communist government conceded that private schools “had rendered commendable services in the matter of promoting education whether for profit or for self-rewarding social service”. But the private managers looked upon their schools only as profit making concerns and avoided the social service completely. The important features regarding schools in many progressive countries are that the schools in general have a special relationship to the localities in which they serve. So that the people of each locality could say that the schools are theirs. They are proud of the school and they strive to see that the school is efficient with good building and equipment and efficient teachers, because it is the school for their children. This relationship is very important for the healthy development of a school system. It is difficult to find this type of relationship in the school system in Kerala and perhaps in other parts of India. The communal groups and other agencies which maintain schools may have special attachment to their own schools but these schools have yet to develop the proper relationship to the localities and which make them the schools of the respective localities.

The different governments which came to power time to time appointed several commissions and passed several Acts to strengthen the elementary system in our nation. In 2002 through the 86th Constitutional Amendment declared the elementary education as fundamental right. In the context of the Right to free and compulsory education, the Kerala’s basic concern focuses on strengthening the quality of government and aided schools. The quality concerns cover teacher-pupil ratio,

infrastructure, curricular material support, learning process employed, teacher learning and development, resource support for nurturing learner’s talent, data based planning and related aspects. The quality in the field of education depends on the status and purpose of the institution and the environment in which it functions. Thus the purpose of education varied according to the needs of the society. The needs of the European society were entirely different from the needs of the Indian society. The quality is the degree to which the institution is successful in achieving its object to the satisfaction of itself, the students and the society.

In course of time all the religious and caste organizations in Kerala developed into pressure groups. In fact new political parties have been formed largely to protect the interests of some of these communities. The correlation between caste, rank and party support raises the question of ‘Casteism’ in Kerala politics. All parties in their efforts to control more seats for influence with one or other Communal associations like NSS, SNDP, IUML and Catholic Churches. The whole politics of Kerala thus came to be dominated by these organizations, which had developed vested interests in the issue of ownership and control of educational institutions and not on the education of the deprived. Some of the trends in the 1990’s and afterwards, however, are threatening to undermine the educational developments of Kerala society.

In the context of globalization and privatization process which started after 1990 the educational system in Kerala also became fully Commercialized and Communalized. The governments did not consider the education field seriously and the Private managements still run schools mainly for profit. The policy of the Central government and the present rules and regulations permits the money spinners to invest money in the field of education. They considered that it was the safest way to invest money in the field of education than industry in order to earn more profit without any burden. In these circumstances it was the duty of the government to strengthen the public educational institutions especially the government and aided schools. To overcome these problems in the field of education and make it accessible to all, both Central and State governments must spend a major share of the general revenue for education, and it should be made compulsory and free, and economic assistance is to be given to the weaker sections of the society.