CHAPTER-II

THE MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER AND RENAISSANCE IN TRAVANCORE

The conservative community of India passed through a great Renaissance during the last decades of nineteenth century, that it had not experienced before. It was an awakening of the mind, soul and psyche of the nation. The Renaissance coupled with socio-religious reforms paved the way for modern life.

From the Portuguese period itself, the seeds of Renaissance were sown in Travancore by the Catholic missionaries. The Catholic missionaries studied a large number of indigenous languages and contributed to the religious, cultural, literary, educational and linguistic traditions of Kerala. They set up schools and seminaries where, besides spiritual education, western sciences and languages were taught. The printing press was first introduced in India by the Portuguese.

Malayalam printing was first done in Rome by the Carmelites of Varappuzha in the eighteenth century. From the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, a large number of Catholic missionary orders like Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Augustinians and Carmelites came to Kerala. Fr. Mathevus, a Carmelite missionary, wrote many portions of ‘Hortus Malabaricus’. Paulinose Sancta Bartholomeo or Paulinose ‘Patiri’, the author of ‘Siddharoopam’, Ernest Hanxeledern or Arnose ‘Patiri’, the author of ‘Chathuranthyam’ and ‘Puthen Pana’ and Fr. Clement Pianius, the author of ‘Samkshepa Vedartham’ also contributed towards the process of modernizing the land.

But it was the Protestant Missionaries who mainly facilitated the emergence of this awakening and they were earnestly supported and promoted by the British government and Travancore government. The nineteenth century Renaissance and the following socialization, democratization and politicization of

all sections of society including women, intertwined with each other and laid the
foundation of a new earth and a new sky in Travancore. Social transformation of
women is an important factor for the development of a nation. The introduction
of English education and western liberal thought among women by the Christian
missionaries and the consequent efforts of the local rulers and social reformers in
the field of female education went a long way in shaping the modern women of
Kerala. As a result of their efforts, women retained their self-esteem and honour
from a stage of dependency, slavery and insecurity.

Western liberal ideas of nineteenth century such as humanitarianism,
egalitarianism and rationality created awareness in society about the oppressed
condition of women and the need to modify the traditions concerning them. The
agencies which facilitated the emergence of a great awakening during the last
decades of nineteenth century were the British government, the western
missionaries and the English educational system. During the nineteenth century,
the British slowly laid the foundations of a modern state. Education, economic
assistance, telegraph, newspaper, printing press etc. came from British
government.

By the Charter Act of 1813, British government decided to set apart one
lakh rupees annually for the revival and improvement of literature and the
encouragement of learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion
of knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British territories in
India. ‘Macaulay’s Minutes’ and ‘Wood’s Dispatch’ also promoted the modern
education of Indians.

Education in nineteenth century Travancore was imparted through Sabha
Matts under Brahmin Gurus for Brahmins, Ezhuthu palls under Ezhuthachans for

3. Thomas Alex, A History of the First Cross Cultural Mission of the Marthoma Church, 1910-
5. R.C. Majumdar, et.al., An Advanced History of India, Mac Millan India Ltd., Madras, 1990,
p.812.
common people and Kalaris under Kurup or Gurukkal for physical training. Education in schools was denied to women and lowcastes. The Christian missionaries took the first solid step towards the beginning and dispersal of Western knowledge. As the state compromised with them for the purpose of modernization; it provided a large amount of donations and grants to the missionaries.

The missionaries who were enlightened by the scientific thought and Renaissance used education as a weapon against social differences and casteism and moulded the modern history of Kerala. They can be aptly called ‘Militant Missionaries’. The prominent Protestant missions in Travancore were the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.), Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.), Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (C.E.Z.M.S.), Baptist Missionary Society and Evangelical Missionary Society.

Evangelisation for Christ was the only aim of missionary societies and for that they wanted to educate the women also. They believed that the Church of Christ will never appear in its great beauty, unless the foundation of Christian education is laid in the minds of its members by the hands of a Christian mother. Moreover, the missionaries realized that education was a powerful way to raise the womenfolk from their low status in the society. The missionaries co-ordinated evangelization and social work and invested their energy for the upliftment of women and the downtrodden. The missionaries were mainly interested in spreading female education through three types of activities viz., opening of day schools for girls, establishment of boarding schools for girls and domestic instruction in families of middle and higher classes.

9. Malayalam weekly, 23 Dhanu, 1175 M.E.
The effort of the missionaries was to improve the social position of the girls, provide them with knowledge and skills and to Christianize them. Girls’ schools were opened with the aim of giving girls enough general knowledge along with training in piety, etiquette, morals and home management techniques. It can also be argued that it was largely the challenge posed by Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century that provoked the contemporary social reform movement.

The London Missionary Society or L.M.S. was the first Protestant community which sent missionaries to Travancore and the first L.M.S. missionary to reach Travancore was Rev. William Tobias Ringeltaube in 1806. In 1809, he opened the first English school of Trivandrum at Mylady in South Travancore. The seeds of Protestant Christianity sown by the L.M.S. fell on a soil made extremely fertile through the decay of traditional institutions. The seeds of reformation sowed by Ringeltaube germinated and in course of time grew in bulk to give shade and shelter to the unprivileged. Ringeltaube was followed by Rev. Charles Mead, who was an educator, builder, economist and social reformer. He started a commercial school in Nagercoil in 1820, where printing, book binding, leather making, paper making, weaving, silk worm rearing etc. were taught. He also started a bazaar school, an industrial school, and a printing press. He built a Christian village in Nagercoil. He fought against slavery and Oozhiyam and worked for the right to wear upperclothes for avarnas. Rev. Charles Mead was the architect of Nagercoil Seminary of the L.M.S. It was Mrs. Johanna Mead who helped Rev. Charles Mead to implement his scheme of a Seminary for boys in Nagercoil. With her missionary habits and knowledge of language, she was of tremendous help to her husband.

Swati Thirunal Maharaja, the then king of Travancore, after visiting the Nagercoil Seminary of the L.M.S., invited John Roberts, the Head Master of the Seminary, to start an English School at Trivandrum\textsuperscript{16}. It later came to be known as ‘Raja’s Free School’\textsuperscript{17}. This school developed into a college and V. Nagam Aiya, the historian, civil servant and chronicler of Travancore, was the first graduate from this college\textsuperscript{18}.

Mrs. Johanna Mead was the pioneer lady teacher of L.M.S. in South Travancore. Martha Mault, wife of Rev. Charles Mault, co-operated with Mrs. Johanna Mead and assisted her ably. Mrs. Johanna Mead launched the most courageous plan of offering education to girls in Travancore\textsuperscript{19}.

The main goals of the missionary women were to improve social position of girls, to offer them knowledge and skills, to help them to lead a happy family life, to help them to bring up their children with good culture, to provide them moral values for building a home and to help them work for the progress of society. Mrs. Johanna Mead started the first girl’s boarding school of Travancore at Nagercoil in 1819 and many other lady missionaries joined her\textsuperscript{20}. Stitching, weaving, embroidery etc. were taught there. All the teachers were women. This is the first vocational school for girls in Travancore\textsuperscript{21}.

By the great interest taken by missionaries and their wives, the women were taught to wear respectable dress, to sing, to sew, to embroider and to work fine pillow lace. It is to be noted that the lace industry played a vital role in the social and economic life of the people. It provided employment to many and made the girls self-supporting. At times of scarcity, it provided means of livelihood to many women in south Travancore. Mrs. Marsden was in charge of lace industry. The south Travancore lace work had won many prizes in

\textsuperscript{18} Koji Kawashima, \textit{op.cit.}, p.84.
\textsuperscript{19} R.J. Hepzi Joy, \textit{op.cit.} p.82.
\textsuperscript{20} Koji Kawashima, \textit{op.cit.}, p.98.
\textsuperscript{21} N.Sam, \textit{Keralathile Samoohya Navothanavum Sahityavum}, (Mal.), N.Sam, Trivandrum, 1988, p.90.
exhibitions including those held at Madras, London, Paris and Chicago. Embroidery industry also flourished during these years. Mrs. Mateer, Mrs. Knowles, Mrs. Newport and Mrs. Emlyn Jones were closely associated with embroidery industry. Mrs. Lefever managed to conduct a cross stitch industry at Attingal.

There was marked difference in manners and speeches of girls educated there. Visitors passing through Nagercoil were greatly impressed by their intelligence and accuracy in answering. Mrs. Mabbs, Mrs. Whitehouse, Mrs. Lewis, Miss. Annie Leah Duthie, Mrs. Allan, Miss. Gladys Harries, Miss. Beatrice Duthie and Miss. Olive Morton were the pioneering among the missionary wives who worked in Nagercoil Girls’ School. To avoid dropouts, the missionaries provided free food, clothing and accommodation to the girls. The girls’ boarding school at the head station of every Mission District was one of the best means for influencing the lives of the future Christian women of the district.

The missionaries conducted the female education programme at three levels viz., Primary, Secondary and Teacher education. The educational institutions of the L.M.S. included Seminaries, Boarding schools, Anglo-Vernacul ar Day schools, Village schools and Night Schools. Usually these Schools opened and closed with a prayer and one hour during the regular school hours was devoted to Scripture education. Kathaleen Janet Mac Ilroy, a graduate of London University came to Neyyoor and devoted her service among women for fifty years, in managing girls’ schools, superintendenting embroidery and lace industry and supervising the work of Bible women. The Neyyoor School opened in 1872 by Mrs. Thompson was the first Day School for high caste Hindu girls. It employed ‘telling method’ and ‘discussion method’ in teaching. This helped much in the education of high caste Hindu girls.

The missionaries published several articles in order to change public opinion in favour of female education and compelled the parents to allow their daughters to remain unmarried at least until the age of fourteen. One such pamphlet was in Tamil entitled “On the advantages of Female Education”\textsuperscript{26}.

A new era of progress in the realm of female education started with the arrival of Charles Mead with five more missionaries viz., John Cox, J.S Pattisan, J.Abbs, James Russel and Ramsay, with their wives\textsuperscript{27}. Girl’s Schools were established at Nedumangad, Parassala, Marthandam, Kuzhithurai, Kanjirapuram, Tittuvilai, Erenipuram, Santhipuram and Jamestown. John Cox was appointed in the Trivandrum Mission in 1838. In the same year Mrs. Cox opened a boarding school at the haunted hill at Kannammoola. This was the first girl’s school of the L.M.S. missionaries in Trivandrum\textsuperscript{28}. The leading missionaries during the period were Duthie and Allan in Nagercoil, James Emlyn, Knowles and Foster in Parassala, Hacker in Neyyoor and Samuel Mateer in Trivandrum.

Among the second generation of missionary ladies who laboured in the cause of female education in Travancore, Mrs. Abbs, who founded a school at Parassala, Mrs. Lewis at Santhapuram, Mrs. Cox at Kannammoola, Mrs. Thompson at Kollam, Mrs. Pitt at Mavelikkara and Mrs. Baker Junior at Pallom are noteworthy\textsuperscript{29}. Mrs. Abbs went so far as to maintain a Greek class for girls for sometime\textsuperscript{30}. The teaching and mission work of the missionaries served as outlets which helped women to socialize, to collectivise, to organize and to lead. Besides school masters, school mistresses also were employed, which was a novel sight to the people. Miss. Kate Derry, Miss Mc Donnel, Mrs. Knowles, Mrs. Blackman and others were some other important women missionaries of L.M.S. in South Travancore. The following table shows the growth of L.M.S. schools through years:

\textsuperscript{26} C.M.Agur, \textit{Church History of Travancore}, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1990, p.761.
\textsuperscript{27} R. N. Yesudas, \textit{The History of the London Missionary Society in Travancore (1806-1908)}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.68.
\textsuperscript{29} C.M. Agur, \textit{op.cit}., p.769.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, pp.768-769.
### 2.1 Number of Schools under L.M.S. between 1870 and 1890  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No.of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1870-71</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1875-76</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1880-81</td>
<td>453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1885-86</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1890-91</td>
<td>1225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The missionaries opened a large number of vocational schools for slave children. Girls were taught reading and writing in the morning session while training in spinning, knitting, sewing and embroidery work were taught in the afternoon. The different skills they taught gradually developed into various industries. The missionaries passed a resolution that each girl, by her own industry, should obtain her freedom before she left the school. But sometimes the slave master refused to accept money and wanted to retain their slaves. The missionaries encouraged the teachers who brought slave girls to the schools and, in addition to their monthly pay, gave them one and a half *panam*, for every slave girl\(^{32}\). Thus the active interest taken by the missionaries contributed a lot towards the spread of girl’s education among the slaves. Several union Christian colleges like Women’s Christian College of Madras and the Missionary Medical College, Vellore were opened. These colleges were great blessing for the women of Kerala and it improved the status of women in society.

Sunday school was started by the L.M.S. missionaries in 1883. This education included religious education and various lessons on history, geography, psychology etc. and instructions regarding cleanliness, nutrition, manners, girl’s education, widow remarriage etc.

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L.M.S. missionaries also started printing presses and publishing houses and it became a powerful means of disseminating knowledge to the people. ‘Desopakari’, ‘The Children’s Lamp’, ‘The Mission School Magazine’, ‘Vadhyar Vilakku’, ‘Matrubodhini’ etc. were some of the periodicals published by them. They contained articles on a variety of subjects like religion, science, morals etc.

The South Travancore Medical Mission trained native women in the field of midwifery, nursing etc. Mrs. Mc Donnel was a fully qualified nurse sent by the L.M.S. to Travancore as a missionary. She raised funds, trained helpers and opened a maternity ward in Neyyoor. Ida Scudder, daughter of Dr. Scudder, completed her medical studies in America but returned to Vellore and became a fullfledged lady doctor there. Dr. Joan Thomson was the first qualified missionary doctor of South Travancore Medical Mission. After her arrival, the number of women patients who came for treatment and consultation increased considerably. She spent many months for language study before she began her work at Neyyoor.

It was the ‘Bible Women’ who served as a link between the Medical Mission and the high caste Hindu women. They taught them about the necessity of going outside of the house to seek medicine for ailments and childbirth. The Bible Women visited the houses of the higher class, read to the women and taught them as occasion offers. As some of them had a good knowledge of medicine and midwifery, they were helpful to the native women many times.

L.M.S. Missionaries introduced library system in Travancore. In the Trivandrum reading room, public lectures were arranged, on various subjects, for the benefit of the people. The missionaries usually visited the houses of their followers and gave instructions regarding health, hygiene and moral life. The lessons of moral life taught by the missionaries helped them to improve their lives. The Missionary Churches also educated the people in an indirect way. It was through

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34. *Malayalam* weekly, 23 Dhanu, 1175 M.E.
the sermons that the preachers gave a sense of assurance and acceptance to the depressed classes, for whose progress, was essential. Through the Church, people received instruction in music also.

The Trivandrum branch of ‘Young Men Christian Association’ (Y.M.C.A.) was founded in 1873. Later on many village branches were established in various parts of South Travancore. The women’s wing of Y.M.C.A. called ‘Young Women Christian Association’ (Y.W.C.A.) was also started. Through the Y.W.C.A., the missionaries were able to instruct the people regarding village economy and cottage industries such as bee keeping, poultry farming etc39.

The lady missionaries of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (C.E.Z.M.S.) did a commendable work in the education programme of Travancore. In 1864, Miss.Augusta Blandford, a member of this society, opened a girl’s school within the Fort of Trivandrum, exclusively for the education of caste Hindu girls. This school made great progress under her supervision40. Rani Gowri Lakshmi Bai, the senior Rani of Travancore and Kalliani Ammachi of Kollam were some of the women who got educated in the Fort School41. The first Nair woman to pass Matriculation in Travancore was from this school42.

Mrs. Askwith, Mrs.Richards, Miss.Bertha, Miss.Elsy Colman and others were active workers of C.E.Z.M.S. The Mavelikkara School was opened in 1893 under the leadership of Miss. Mary May, Miss Waiet and Miss. Edith. The Olessa Mission started by Mrs. Clara Baker in 1895 was the strongest centre of Zenana Mission in Central Tarvancore43. In 1897, the Cantonment School, run by the missionaries was elevated to a second grade college and came to be known as Maharajas Women’s College. It was the first women’s college of Kerala44. In 1894, the Travancore government undertook the responsibility of providing

40. Cover Files 15983/1867 Bundle No. 46, Directorate of State Archives, Trivandrum.
41. V. Nagam Aiya, op.cit., p.475.
43. Suma Rose, op.cit., p.119.
education to all sections of people in the land. The Government Girls’ School at Palayam was elevated to High School in 1890. In 1895, it became H.H. Maharajas High School for Girls and in 1897, it became a college called Government Women’s College. Its Principals were Miss. Sara B. Williams, Miss. D.H. Watts, Miss. E.C. Carapett, Miss. F.E. Gross and Miss. L.C.N. Ouwerkerk. Its first native Principal was Miss. Anna Nidhiri who served from 1937 to 1952.45

Among the missionaries who came to Kerala, it was the C.M.S. missionaries who had a deep educational vision and policy. The ‘Church Missionary Society’ happened to work in Travancore due to the interest of Colonel Munro, the British Resident of Travancore.46

Like the other missionary societies, C.M.S. missionaries too came here for evangelization but later they concentrated in the field of education. The main aims of C.M.S. were to provide education to women, to enable them to become good wives, mothers and hostesses, to provide women equal status with men, to free women from exploitation and to help them to earn jobs and to help their family. Girls were also taught sewing, knitting and spinning, besides book learning, so that they could do something towards earning their living, once they left school.

It was the C.M.S. missionaries who gave an educational infrastructure to Kerala through their primary and secondary schools. Unlike the L.M.S., they concentrated their work in inland areas of Cochin and Travancore. Benjamin Bailey, Henry Baker and Joseph Fenn were the three missionaries of Kottayam who gave profound contributions to the educational and cultural arenas of Kerala.

In 1817 Thomas Norton started his first school at Aleppey with forty students. He was encouraged and supported by Rani Gowri Parvathi Bai.48 Mrs. Norton was one of the pioneers of women education in Kerala. Norton’s School was opened to students of all castes and communities. English, Malayalam,

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47. *Malayalam* weekly, 23 Dhanu, 1175 M.E.
Tamil, Arithmetic and Scripture were taught there. In the girls’ school started by Mrs. Norton, stitching, knitting, lace work etc. were taught. Teachers were paid Rs.five per month. Planned curriculum and correct accurate salary were the peculiar features of Norton’s schools. She also started a ‘Bazaar School’ outside the mission compound.

Henry Baker started parish schools along with the Syrian churches. Amelia Baker, wife of Henry Baker, was also a pioneer of girl’s education in North Travancore\(^49\). Henry Baker Junior did his work in the High Ranges from Mundakkayam to Melukavu. Miss.Mary Baker, daughter of Henry Baker Junior was the first C.M.S. missionary woman to Travancore from England\(^50\).

Elizabeth Ella Bailey, wife of Benjamin Bailey, started a girl’s school at Kottayam in 1818 which was the first girls’ school in Kerala\(^51\). She was known as a ‘wise woman’ and ‘the right hand of Bailey’\(^52\). When more missionaries arrived, Mrs. Bailey and Mrs. Norton started similar schools at Kottayam, Alleppey and other places. Bailey’s sister Sara Archer and her husband Thomas Dawson did commendable services in the field of education in Cochin State\(^53\). To promote school going, the missionaries met all expenses at school and sometimes promised to pay dowry for their students, at the time of their marriage.

The C.M.S. missionaries opened boarding schools for girls to separate them from the influences outside. Also they understood that if the children were boarded and clothed, they could retain them and avoid drop outs to some extent. Mrs.Norton, Mrs.Bailey, Mrs.Baker, Mrs. Ridsdale and Mrs. Harley were in charge of girls boarding schools in their respective areas. Total percentage of boy students under instruction in 1901-02 periods was 76.7 where girls constituted 23.3 percent\(^54\). Modern higher education in Kerala was started by the CMS missionaries. They started a college at Kottayam which was one of the oldest.

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\(^{53}\) K.S. Mathew and T.K. Sebastian, (eds.), op.cit., p.3.

\(^{54}\) *Travancore Administration Report for the year 1077 M.E.*
colleges in India itself. The students of this college were well known for their
good behaviour, service mentality, gentleness, politeness etc. Thereafter gentle
and polite students came to be known as ‘Kottayam type students’. In 1921, the
Union Christian College was inaugurated at Alwaye. The nucleus of the college
staff was a ‘Fellowship’ of Christians. In 1924, Canon W.E.S. Holland, a C.M.S.
missionary, also joined the ‘Fellowship’.

Henry Baker Senior and Henry Baker Junior started many mission
churches, mission schools and vernacular schools in the High Ranges. In 1839
Joseph Pitt founded an English School at Mavelikkara which is now known as
‘Bishop Hodges School’. Mrs. Chapman, wife of John Chapman, the Principal of
C.M.S. College also established a girl’s school at Kottayam. When she left for
England, Mrs. Collins managed this school under the name ‘Mrs. Collins Girls’
School’.

Mrs. Painter opened a girl’s school at Pallom. Mrs. Henry Baker Junior
opened girl’s schools at Pallom and Mundakkayam. Mrs. Joseph Pitt started two
girl’s Schools at Mavelikkara. Rev. E.N. Hodges opened Pallom Buchanan School
for higher education of women. The Missionaries underwent education and
evangelization side by side. The important missionary schools intended for higher
education of women, at that time were the Baker Memorial High School for
Girls, Kottayam, the High School for Girls, Nagercoil, and Nicholson Syrian
Girls’ High School at Thiruvalla.

The state of Travancore achieved great progress in the field of female
education during nineteenth century when compared with the University of
London, which opened its gates to women in 1818 and the traditional universities
of Oxford and Cambridge which invited admission of women only after the First
World War in 1914. Mrs. Johnson, daughter of Henry Baker Senior started a
Teacher’s Training School called Normal School in Kottayam in 1848 and in
1857, three women of this school entered the job of teaching.

56. Hester Smith, My Years at Alwaye, Christhava Mahilalayam, Alwaye, 1976, p.38.
The schools run by Mrs. Baker Senior at Kottayam, Mrs. Baker Junior at Pallom, Mrs. Johnson at Kottayam, Miss. Baker at Thirunakkara, Annie Baker at Peerumede and Mundakkayam were some important girls’ schools of Central Travancore at that time\(^{58}\). Annie Baker lived in Kerala until her death at the age of sixty six. Besides the school for children of labourers in plantations at Peerumede, she also led Bible classes for low caste women in the verandah of her house on every Sunday afternoon.

The girls Schools at Kottayam run by Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Fenn, Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. Chapman and Mrs. Johnson unified and formed the Baker Memorial Girl’s High School at Kottayam. This school got generous grants from the government\(^{59}\). Visakhom Thirunal Rama Varma, the Maharaja of Travancore visited the school in 1880. He was very much satisfied with its work and sent fifty rupees as a gift to the students later\(^{60}\).

In 1859 Cambridge Nicholson Institute was founded at Kottayam for training teachers and missionaries. Its first Principal was Rev. Hawksworth. This institution also received educational grant from the government\(^{61}\). In 1872, Miss. Eliza Usborne donated two thousand pounds to C.M.S. to start a female Teacher’s Training Institute and such an institution was started at Baker School, Kottayam\(^{62}\).

With Miss.Isabel Baker’s generous help, a school, hospital and coir factory were established under the title ‘Karappuram Mission’ in the Cherthala area\(^{63}\). Elizabeth Ann Egar, wife of Rev.J.H.Bishop, Principal of C.M.S. College, started a girls’ school for Tamil Brahmin girls in 1871. Next year she started two Konkini Brahmin girl schools at Thazhathangadi and Karappuzha\(^{64}\). Mrs.Askwith, wife of Rev.F.N.Askwith, Principal of C.M.S. College, also

\(^{58}\) Ibid., pp.340-341.  
\(^{59}\) Cover Files 1362/1893 Bundle No. 182, Directorate of State Archives, Trivandrum.  
\(^{61}\) Cover Files 949/1889-90 Bundle No. 137, Directorate of State Archives, Trivandrum  
\(^{64}\) Ibid., p.347.
worked among native women. She started a Nair primary school and Ezhava primary school at Kottayam. Mrs. Jain Neeve, wife of Rev.C.A.Neeve, Principal of C.M.S. College, worked among Christian women. In 1930 a pre-primary school called ‘Little School’ was started at Kottayam by Miss. East. She also started Kintergarten Teachers Training School at Kottayam for training pre-primary teachers.

Achievement of C.M.S. in the field of women education between 1857 and 1900 can be understood from the table illustrated below.

### 2.2 Achievement of C.M.S. in the field of women education between 1857 and 1900.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of girls</th>
<th>Total strength</th>
<th>No. of lady teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>2045</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>1187</td>
<td>4665</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>3831</td>
<td>11902</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A ‘Vanitha Mandiram’ under the leadership of missionary women like Miss. Kellaway and a Training Home were started at Thiruvalla to train women in parish work, social service and evangelistic work. Here lectures were given in Bible study, child training, evangelism, needle work, housework, nursing etc. The ‘Bethel Asram’ provided Home Science training classes for older girls. Its pioneer workers were Miss. Neeve and Miss. Rachel Joseph.

The missionaries held a ‘Christian Home Week’ in every parish to improve the condition of Christian homes. ‘Bethel Band’ moved from one place to another and taught girls and women reading, writing and arithmetic and practical household activities. ‘Sevika Sangham’ was another organization for

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66. Ibid., pp.142-143.
outcaste Christian women to serve among themselves. Girls meetings, Grannies meetings, Cottage meetings, rallies etc. were also held. In 1926, a Community School was started for depressed classes. Bishop M.A.Corefield started a ‘Sisterhood of Women’ in C.M.S. Church.

In the field of medical work, hospitals and dispensaries were started. A floating dispensary was started for the use of people of Western Travancore. Miss. Knights had a small dispensary at Koothattukulam and Mrs. Brown ran a dispensary at Kannammoola. A Maternity Welfare Centre was started at Melukavu and women hostels were started at many places.

‘Christhava Mahilalayam’, Alwaye, was another famous girls’ school in North Travancore. It was started in 1927 by a group of educated native Christians at C.M.S. Bungalow, Alwaye. Its first Principal was Miss E.T.Stevens. Some of the peculiar activities of this school included ‘Training for Future Life’, ‘Pocket Money Scheme’, ‘Girl Guides and Blue Birds Programme’ etc. A great event in their guiding programme was a journey to Trivandrum on the occasion of the investiture ceremony of Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, to attend the ‘State Rally of Guides and Scouts’. Eminent teachers like Miss. Hester Smith, Miss. Sara Chacko and Miss. Sally Coey were included in the teaching staff. Miss. Sally Coey participated in the A.I.W.C. meeting held at Trivandrum in 1935. The curriculum of the school included History, Geography, Natural Science, needle work and embroidery. The girls learnt to make their own jackets, underclothes and children’s dresses and embroidering cushion covers and table clothes. Miss. J.G.Chapman taught subjects like hygiene, home nursing, first aid etc. in the Home Science class and also started a dispensary. The women missionaries followed a fixed time table for the working of their boarding schools. The children woke up at day break and retired to bed at nine. They were

69. Ibid., p.99.
70. Ibid., pp.138-144.
74. Ibid.
75. Hester Smith, op.cit., p.68.
employed at their needles till noon and at their books in the afternoons. On Saturday they practiced musical tunes.

The Bible was translated to Malayalam due to the encouragement of Protestant missionaries. In 1806, Claudius Buchanan visited Marthoma VI, the head of the Syrian church and he shared his desire to translate the Bible into Malayalam. He gave him a manuscript of the Bible, written in ‘Estrangelo Syriac’ script, which was the oldest of the Syriac scripts\(^{76}\). The British government and missionaries offered their help to this venture. In 1807, the four gospels were translated to Malayalam by Kayamkulam Philipose Remban\(^{77}\).

The C.M.S. press at Kottayam founded by Benjamin Bailey in 1821 has the unique honour of being the first Malayalam press in Kerala\(^{78}\). Books became cheap and within the reach of common people. The missionary contribution to the language and literature of Travancore consists of translation, compilation of grammar and dictionaries, journals and publication of books.

Miss. Collins wrote a novel entitled ‘the Slayer’s Slain’ in 1859 and it was published in 1877. Davis produced a series of literature for the benefit of Travancore women. Some of her companions wrote very useful papers on marriage, child care, nutrition and religious education at home. The missionaries also started many libraries and reading rooms in different places. Natives like Arch Deacon Koshy wrote ‘Pullelikkunchu’ against caste distinctions and Nidhirikkal Manikkathanar wrote ‘Sobharaja Vijayam’ and ‘Kripavathi’ in favour of women education.

When the C.M.S. missionaries got Munroe Island with hundred slaves in 1835, they freed those slaves. In 1847, missionarie s presented a memorandum to Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Varma to abolish slavery\(^{79}\). In 1850, Rev. George Mathan started a school for the slaves. Depressed classes were greatly assisted by

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\(^{76}\) learnaramaic.blogspot.com/2012/05/estrangelo-syriac_script.html


\(^{78}\) R.J.Hepzi Joy, *op.cit.*., p.133.

\(^{79}\) Samuel Nellimukal, *Keralathile Samoohya Parivarthanam*, (Mal.), *op.cit.*., p.256.
Thus the missionaries helped to erode old Kerala and created new attitudes and mind set.

Three ideas which influenced 19th century Kerala society were social equality, social freedom and social justice which were basically Christian points of view, presented by Christian missionaries. It was the missionaries who first raised their voice against slavery and it was they who drew the attention of the public as well as the authorities to this evil.

As a result of English education and permeation of Western values, social customs like joint family, matrilineal, Sambandham systems, polygamy, polyandry, child marriage etc. disappeared and widow remarriage and intercaste marriage were encouraged.

Education created desire for employment, both in men and women. Many women were engaged as teachers in schools run by the missionaries and by the government. Some were engaged in the public department and some in the political life of the country. The lace industry, the embroidery industry, the weaving industry, the tile industry and the community school started by the missionaries provided employment facilities, economic stability and financial security to many women. Also, the missionaries implanted a new cultured life in Kerala like a disciplined church, systematic Sunday worship, small prayer groups, family prayer in morning and evening, Bible reading, cleanliness in houses, polish in manners, etiquette, culture, art, dressing etc.

The missionaries and missionary wives worked hand in hand and established a number of girls’ schools, boarding schools, bazaar schools, day schools, evening schools, vernacular schools, anglo-vernacular schools, caste girl’s schools, village schools, teacher’s training schools, slave schools, vocational schools, Sunday schools, kindergarten schools, nursing schools, seminaries and colleges. Besides, they made house visits, bazaar preaching, lantern lectures, circulated pamphlets and conducted moral classes in schools. From Kottayam, girl’s education spread to the nook and corner of Kerala. The

missionary schools produced eminent leaders who in course of time took an active part in the struggle for responsible government.

Education also helped the women of Kerala to organize and participate in various political organizations. Hepzibah, one of the women teachers of the L.M.S. and the first woman graduate from Nagercoil was nominated to the Sree Moolam Legislative Assembly. In 1933, Sree Moolam Assembly consisted of seventy male members and two women, of whom Hepzibah was one.\(^{81}\)

Besides L.M.S. and C.M.S., other small Protestant missions like ‘the Salvation Army’, ‘the Brother Mission’, ‘the Lutheran Mission’ etc. worked in Travancore.\(^{82}\) The combined efforts of Mrs. Mary Chapman and Pastor Robert F. Cook inaugurated the beginning of Pentecostal churches in Travancore.\(^{83}\) Pastor Robert F. Cook started sixty three mission stations and had forty three missionaries in Travancore.\(^{84}\) His important mission fields were Kottarakkara and Adoor.

Apart from Protestant missionaries, Catholic monks and nuns, both foreigners and natives, worked for the social and cultural rejuvenation. The Kerala church did not approve the equality of women even in religious matters. Their role in the church was only a passive one. But the missionaries created an atmosphere which supported women’s entry into the religious liberty. Fr. Augustine Buttlopp, Msgr. Marsilinos Sancta Tresia, Fr. Candidus Korde Marie, Msgr. Bernardine Baccinelli O.C.D., Msgr. Leonard Mellano O.C.D., Fr. Louis Vaippissery, Fr. Zacharias, Fr. Ourelian, Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara and many others laid the foundations of modern secular education in the Catholic Church.\(^{85}\) Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Fr. Leopold Beccaro established the first indigenous religious congregation of women in India at Koonammavu, which is now known as C.M.C.\(^{86}\) They also instituted a school, a boarding house,
and an orphanage for girls. Through the convent schools, the sisters came into contact with the girls of Christian and Hindu families and transmitted a positive energy in them. The main aim of the C.M.C. was the education of girls. The sisters trained young girls in catechism, prayers, devotion and handicrafts. Boarding houses for young women for residential study were attached to the convents. Women who had been capable only of holding washing pots became efficient through education.

The role and contribution of Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara, as a pioneer in establishing a religious congregation for women is highly remarkable. It was he who first visualized a social set up where women would be powerful instruments in transforming not only the Church but also the society in the Kerala context. In 1872, the first formal school for girls was started by C.M.C. in the convent premises at Koonammavu. By the end of nineteenth century, C.M.C. convent schools spread in various parts of Travancore-Cochin. For opening schools, he started mass mobilization methods. Each housewife of the parish was instructed to put aside one handful of rice per day and to surrender the savings to the local church once in a month. His dream of integral development of women and society through convent schools and boardings thus became a reality. He also started a Sanskrit school at Mannanam and a Pulaya school at Arppookkara. Establishing schools attached to each parish became part of his education policy.

The St. Joseph’s Girl’s High School at Changanassery under the management of C.M.C. sisters was the first English medium school for girls in the Syro-Malabar Church. During the initial stage, an Anglican woman from Alleppey taught English language and literature in this school while Malayalam and needle work were handled by a couple from Pallom. Educating women in order to ensure their participation in various walks of life was a major aim

behind the founding of a number of religious congregations for women. Prominent among them were Congregation of the Mother of Carmel or C.M.C., Congregation of Carmelite Religious of Trivandrum or C.C.R., Franciscan Clarist Congregation or F.C.C. and Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary or S.V.M. Sr. Mariam Tresia of Thrissur also started a congregation called ‘Congregation of the Holy Family’.

The newly erected convents became the centres of learning, benevolence and asceticism which radiated the genuine spirit of love and compassion beyond the barriers of caste, community, religious variations etc. Convent, school and family were strung together in harmony. Through education which consisted of learning, employment and piety, they tried to enhance the position of women in society.

The educational efforts of these congregations were partly instrumental in the elimination of social evils such as child marriage, female infanticide, denial of girl’s education, polyandry and ban on widow remarriage. They have a significant share in the advancement of women in the Kerala society.

The Syriacs started Balikamatom School at Thiruvalla in 1904 and raised it to an English middle school in 1920 with the help of Mother Edith Neeve, a C.M.S. missionary, and Miss. Holmes and Miss. Brookesmith from England.

The influence of modern education upon the political life of Kerala was very significant. The benefits of development were received by the emerging middle class, constituting the lower section of the higher castes and higher section of the lower castes. Without the missionary interference, the place of women in Kerala would be different. The newly educated women shed aspects of the matrilineal culture and patriarchal monogamy. Women may have lost sexual freedom and the security of a matrilineal joint family but in exchange they often acquired earning power in respectable salaried employment.

If the French Revolution emerged from Voltaire and Rousseau, and if the Russian Revolution emerged from Marx and Engels, the nineteenth century socio-religious revolutions of Travancore emerged from the missionaries. It was the Christian missionaries who provided the *avar纳斯* “the help from outside” to demolish caste system\(^{93}\).

A significant development of the late nineteenth century was the emergence of an English educated class and a reading public, increasing circulation of newspapers and magazines and functioning of reading clubs and debating societies\(^{94}\). In such an atmosphere, O.Chandu Menon’s famous work ‘Indulekha’ appeared the scene of Kerala history in the year 1889. It presented the ardent desire of new generation to reconcile with the newly formed social set up. Through ‘Indulekha’, he advocated a nuclear family which matched to new colonial set up\(^{95}\).

Chandu Menon, too, thought in the way of Ram Mohan Roy. This novel served as an inducing force for socio-religious reform movements. The picture of Suri Namboothiri was so strong and influential which led to the emergence of Namboothiri reform movements like ‘Yogakshema Sabha’. There is a reference in the novel about the newly started spinning mill in Kozhikode which shows the emergence of factory system and industrial capitalism in our country which finally became another cause for Renaissance. Through ‘Indulekha’, Chandu Menon also describes the changes which English education brings to Kerala women’s life\(^{96}\). Raja Ravi Varma’s paintings ‘There Comes Papa’, ‘Malabar Beauty’, ‘Veena Player’ etc. depicted heroines who boldly faced the world. They are pictured as those who stand in the threshold of secular and democratic public sphere which was developing at that time. Close assessments of these pictures show the alteration of women’s lives from inactive onlookers of social life to owners of active citizenship.

\(^{93}\) P.S. Velayudhan, *S.N.D.P. Yoga Charithram*, (Mal.), S.N.D.P. Yogam, Quilon, 1978, p.11.


\(^{95}\) K.N. Ganesh, *op.cit.*, p.310.

The painting ‘There Comes Papa’, which came out in 1893, shows a young Malayali woman, with a plump baby on her hip, pointing towards an approaching figure who is out of the frame. The father is outside the framework of the picture. The absent, yet approaching Papa signifies the crisis in Nair matriliny in the late nineteenth century. The fact that Ravi Varma chose to celebrate conjugal domesticity and the nuclear family at a time when these were comparatively unknown amongst large sections of the matrilineal population reveals his growing patrilineal sensibilities. ‘There Comes Papa’ becomes akin to a clarion call for the end of matriliny. In that period of transition from Marumakkathayam to Makkathayam, the mother points her son towards the transforming society outside.

Old Kerala was a place of borders and limitations - borders on where particular people might go and limitations on what they might do. Their costumes, shape of hair, style of ornaments and their names had to publicize who they were and functioned as caste symbols of their bodies. During the period from 1905 to 1915, Ezhava women began to add the suffix ‘Amma’ with their names. But the Nair Headmasters decided not to give admission to Ezhava girls who come with ‘Amma’ name and this ended in several disputes called ‘Amma vazhakku’.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the privilege of women to cover their bodies with an upper cloth became an impulsive issue in Kerala. The social revolution in Kerala began with the Channar Revolt, the first organized agitation for human rights in Kerala.

Lower caste women were not allowed to wear anything above the waist or below the knees. An uncovered torso was a sign of respect to upper castes.

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98. Ibid.
Brahmin women wore blouses and upper clothes. Nair women had to keep bare torso before Brahmins and royal family members. During the ‘Aratt’ festival of Sri Padmanabha temple, when the Maharaja went to the beach to perform certain religious rites twice a year, hundreds of Nair girls with bare breasts went in procession for a distance of nearly three kilometers carrying lighted lamps\textsuperscript{102}. Syrian Christians and Muslims wore long sleeved blouses called \textit{kuppayam}. Fisher women used coarse clothes covering breasts but leaving the shoulders bare.

The missionary women such as Mrs. Martha Mault and Mrs. Johanna Mead stitched a special type of jacket with short hands and urged the converted women to wear it and a new style of dress code spread among the Christian converted women, who, hitherto had no right to cover their breasts\textsuperscript{103}. Students of Nagercoil boarding schools made five hundred jackets and freely supplied some of them\textsuperscript{104}. Channar Riot started in 1822 at Kallkulam when the converted Channar women began to wear jackets and \textit{melmundu} in the fashion of savarna women\textsuperscript{105}. Thereafter, non-converted Channar women also began to wear jackets and \textit{melmundu} and this led to severe riots between Nairs and Channars. The second phase of Channar Riot started in 1828 when two Channar women, Yesu Adiyal and Neethi Adiyal came to Kallkulam market wearing upper cloth\textsuperscript{106}. The \textit{savarnas} tore their jackets and attacked Christian schools.

The court order of 1829 allowed wearing of jackets but prohibited the wearing of \textit{melmundu}. In 1858, another riot occurred when one Poothathankutty and his wife Eshakee became converts and provoked their master Madom Pillay by wearing costumes similar to that of Madom Pillay’s wife and by calling them sinners\textsuperscript{107}. Many churches were set to fire at Parassala. In 1859, L.M.S.

\textsuperscript{102}. Joy Gnanadasan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.35.
\textsuperscript{103}. Paul Manavalan, \textit{Kerala Samskaravum Christhava Missionarymarum}, (Mal.), D.C.Books, Kottayam, 1990, p.120.
\textsuperscript{104}. Robin Jeffrey, \textit{op.cit.}, p.156.
\textsuperscript{105}. S.Thulaseedharan Assary, \textit{op.cit.}.
\textsuperscript{107}. P. Shungoonny Menon, \textit{A History of Travancore from the Earliest Times}, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1985, p.507.
missionaries gave a petition to Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Varma Maharaja but got no reply. They petitioned to British government and Madras Governor Sir. Charles Trevelyan asked explanation to Resident Cullen. The Resident informed this to Travancore Diwan Madhava Rao and soon the Maharaja issued a proclamation on 26 July 1859, allowing the wearing of jackets and melmundu to all Channar women whether a convert or nonconvert. It was under the pressure of social reformers and L.M.S. missionaries, that this royal proclamation was issued abolishing all restrictions in regard to the covering of the upper part by the Channar women. It was issued with a stipulation that they should not imitate the dress of upper caste women.

For the first time in the history of Kerala, a community fought bitterly and earnestly, and succeeded after shedding sweat and blood, in winning the right of women to dress decently. The upper cloth controversy which continued for thirty seven years was really only the tip of the iceberg.


For never before or since then had there been the advent of so many great men in such a short time as during those decades. It was truly like the coming of

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spring, the season of regeneration, joy and hope, in the withered garden of India, filling the land with fine and fragrant flowers. In Travancore, social reform movements were started by castes and communities. Social equality was the precondition for political freedom. Social justice was necessary to enter into the main stream of political power. The revolutionary centre of Renaissance was Travancore itself. The fight against Savarna supremacy, casteism, untouchability, unapproachability, and fight for temple entry centred in Travancore, eventhough their vibrations were heard in Cochin and Malabar. The protest movements in Travancore were termed as social reform movements. All the socio-religious reform movements originated in Kerala functioned within the operational structure of caste.

The period also stormed the princely state of Travancore with a large number of agitations such as Channar Riot in 1822-1859, Mukkuthi Riot in 1852, Malayali Memorial in 1891, Ezhava Memorial in 1896, Bible Dahanam in 1899, Agrarian riots under Ayyankali in 1907, Kallumala Rebellion in 1912, Misrabhojanam in 1912, Jati Rakshasa Dahanam in 1917, Vaikom Satyagraha in 1924-1925 and Nivarthana Agitation in 1932. While the Ezhava women fought to cover their breasts, Namboothiri women fought to uncover their faces.

Ayya Vaikunta Swamikal from South Travancore organized eighteen lower castes and made an agitation for temple entry. He appointed priests from lower castes, established temples for lower castes, urged slaves to use turbans and women to cover their breasts in the fashion of savarnas. He also agitated against the king and was imprisoned by Swati Thirunal. The organization founded by Ayya Vaikunta Swamikal was ‘Samatwa Samajam’, where people lived a community life without any caste distinctions. He can be called ‘the first

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traveller in the path of Renaissance'. Thykkad Ayyaswamikal or Subbarayar was a follower of Ayya Vaikunta Swamikal and Guru of Chattampi Swamikal and Sree Narayana Guru. He organized panthi bhojanam in which several castes participated.

Kerala Renaissance originally started from the Ezhava caste. Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker was a forerunner of Sree Narayana Guru. He established a temple in his wife’s house Varanappallil at Puthuppally, which later drew the attention of Sree Narayana Guru who stayed at Varanappallil for his education, three years after the death of Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker.

Arattupuzha Velayudha Panicker also established a Kathakali club, consecrated a number of temples and forcibly entered Vaikom temple. Two legends were often associated with him i.e., when an Ezhava girl was attacked at Kayamkulam for dressing in savarna attire, he went to Kayamkulam market with a vessel full of neriyathu and persuaded all low caste women presented there to wear it and when an Ezhava girl was attacked for wearing gold mukkuthi at Pandalam, he went to Pandalam market with a vessel full of mukkuthis and persuaded all low caste women presented there to wear it.

But the deliverance of the untouchables of Travancore was to come from one of their own member, a man whose life and work are one of the glories of Travancore history, Sree Narayana Guru. It was Sree Narayana Guru’s ‘Aruvippuram Prathishta’ which brought a fundamental change in Kerala’s caste ridden social set up. As Gangotri originates from Himalayas and becomes Ganga River, social tremulation of Kerala began from Aruvippuram.

Sree Narayana Guru advised to give the most important place in the home, to the wife. To him, virtuous wife brings virtue to the home and the most

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valuable thing possessed by a householder is a virtuous wife. The society must create a genuine environment in which women will be able to enjoy genuine freedom and equality of opportunity. He called upon mothers to develop such mental and behavioural traits which are helpful to a healthy and happy life. The mother is the sole responsible person for intellectual development of the child until the age of five. He also asked the mothers to realize their roles in families and pay more attention in bringing up their children. The responsibility for the intellectual development of the child rests entirely with the mother. She has to shoulder this responsibility successfully. The mother has to be dutiful and responsible. Sree Narayana Guru also asked his followers to educate their womenfolk.

Sree Narayana Guru absorbed the rationalistic and practical outlook of the missionaries. He preferred English rather than Sanskrit, rationalism than blind faith, schools than temples and simple customs than complex ceremonies. In 1903, he founded ‘Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam’ with the assistance of Dr. Palpu and Kumaran Asan in the model of ‘missions’. He started Sunday worship in the model of missionaries. Just as missionaries used the Bible, he used ‘Adwaitha philosophy’ as an instrument of social change. In the model of missionary activities, Ezhava community came forward to acquire ‘knowledge through education and strength through organisation’. The Sree Narayana Movement created self reliance in all low caste communities. His battle cry was ‘One Caste, One Religion and One God for Man’. He also supported anti-caste struggles like Vaikom Satyagraha and donated thousand rupees to Vaikom Satyagraha fund.

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120. Ibid.
Dr. Palpu was a social revolutionary from the Ezhava caste. He was one of the signatories of the Malayali Memorial of 1891. He was the brain behind the Ezhava Memorial of 1896 which requested the Maharaja to confer on the Ezhavas the same rights and privileges enjoyed by Ezhava converts to Christianity. He published at his own cost, the book ‘Treatment of Thiyyas in Travancore’. He organized agricultural and industrial exhibition in Kollam. He also suggested a woman’s meeting should be held at every annual conference of S.N.D.P. The first woman’s meeting was held in 1904 itself under the presidency of Dr. Palpu’s mother Mathapperumal and in that meeting, Palpu’s wife P.K.Bhagawathi made a speech. Dr. Palpu organized three institutions for the upliftment of women viz., ‘Dharma Sodaree Madam’, ‘Dharma Deepa Madam’ and ‘Dharma Nidhi’. Among them ‘Dharma Sodaree Madam’ was meant for women education. But his ideas remained unfulfilled.

Another leader of the S.N.D.P. was Kumaran Asan, its first General Secretary and the well known poet. He was the editor of ‘Vivekodayam’, the mouthpiece of S.N.D.P. The magazine represented the interests of Ezhava community and earned the sobriquet ‘Ezhava Gazette’. Asan also spread his ideas of social equality through his poems like ‘Veenapoovu’, ‘Nalini’, ‘Leela’, ‘Prarodanam’, ‘Duravastha’ etc.

It was Sahodaran Ayyappan who developed a secular ideology “No caste, no religion, no God, no class” which combined aspects of Buddhism, the achievements of science and socialism. He was against caste system and organized ‘Sahodara Sangham’, which arranged programmes like Misrabhajanam and ‘Jati Rakshasa Dahanam’ and he was often called ‘Pulayan Ayyappan’.

Along with the ‘Sahodara Sangham’, a women’s wing called ‘Stree Samajam’ was also organized, at a time when Malayalis had not even thought

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about an organization for women\textsuperscript{129}. He also organized ‘Adi Vypin Thozhilali Sangham’, one of the earliest Trade Unions in Kerala.

Sahodaran Ayyappan propagated egalitarian and rationalist ideology and his wife Parvathi Ayyappan set up institutions like ‘Sree Narayana Sevika Samajam’ to help destitute women or orphans\textsuperscript{130}. ‘Sree Narayana Vidyarthi Sadanam’, a hostel for girls from the isolated and shunned classes, but later thrown open to all, was also started by the time.

Muloor S. Padmanabha Panicker of Elavumthitta challenged the monopoly of savarnas in literature. His poem ‘Pulavrithangal’ reveals that he was a silent fighter against caste\textsuperscript{131}. Satyavrata Swamikal or Ayyappan Pillai of Vezhapra, Changanassery, also became a disciple of Sree Narayana Guru. C. Kesavan, C.V. Kunjuraman and T.K. Madhavan were other progressive leaders of the Ezhavas.

The role of Ezhavas was quite central in the social emancipation movement. Undoubtedly, the most widespread mass movement that Travancore had known was the social reform movement among the Ezhavas\textsuperscript{132}. S.N.D.P. worked for women education, and against social evils, casteism and untouchability. ‘Atmavidya Sangham’, under the leadership of Aryabhata Swami, a disciple of Vagbhatananda can be called ‘Avarna Bhakti Movement’\textsuperscript{133}. It attracted many women like K. Devayani, Muthukulam Parvathi Amma and Gomati Dev. Many women social workers like Mannanthara Parvathi Amma, Sister Thapaswini, Kartyayani Amma and many others came forward to work in distant places. The Renaissance among the Ezhavas slowly penetrated among the lower classes and their most important leader was Ayyankali. Ayyankali

\textsuperscript{129}. \url{http://www.cherai.com}  
organized Pulaya revolts for attaining civic rights like right to walk and right to education. In 1893, he travelled through a Villuvandi through the streets wearing white clothes and asserted his right to travel like the *savarnas*\textsuperscript{134}. When the *savarnas* set fire to a Pulaya school at Venganoor in 1907, Ayyankali organized agricultural strike. In 1914, when he sought admission for a Pulaya girl Panchami in Uroottambalam School near Neyyattinkara, the *savarnas* set fire to the school\textsuperscript{135}. This resulted in a revolt called ‘Thonnooramandu Lahala’ as it happened in 1090 M.E. Pulaya women wore bunches and strings of beads around their neck and hanging on the breast\textsuperscript{136}. As per Ayyankali’s advice, Pulaya women abandoned their traditional *kallumalas* and soiled clothes and began to wear hygienic clothes and modern ornaments. Whenever the *savarnas* attacked them, the women counter attacked with sickles and other weapons. In 1905 under Ayyankali’s leadership, a combined meeting of Pulayas and Nairs was organized at Kollam.Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai presided over the meeting and thousands of Pulaya women threw away their *kallumalas*\textsuperscript{137}. Kumaran Asan wrote about ‘Kallumala Rebellion’ in Vivekodayam that “riot itself is a social reformer”\textsuperscript{138}.

Poikayil Sri Kumara Gurudevan or Poikayil Yohannan was another social reformer of the period. He was born as the son of a converted Christian at Eraviperoor. Yohannan understood the cruelty of casteism in churches. The church existed as a whitewashed tomb inclusive of all evils in the society\textsuperscript{139}. In 1899, he burnt the Bible on the banks of river Pampa as a protest against casteism which was prevailing in Christian community and this event was known as ‘Bible Dahanam’. At Vakathanam also, Poikayil Yohannan burned the Bible and a violent revolt followed. This was called ‘Vakathanam Lahala’.

\textsuperscript{135} *Vivekodayam* magazine, Book- 11, Issue 8, Vrischikam, 1090 M.E.
\textsuperscript{136} Samuel Mateer, *op.cit.*, p.40.
\textsuperscript{138} P. Bhaskaranunni, *Kollathinte Charithram*, (Mal.), Kollam Public Library and Research Centre, Kollam, 1994, p.145.
\textsuperscript{139} *Adiyardeepam* magazine, Vol.1, No.9, 1986.
Anjilimoottil Martha and Mukkalil Anna counter attacked the goondas. They dressed Poikayil Yohannan in a woman’s attire and rescued him. In an encounter between Poikayil Yohannan and savarnas at Vettiyad in 1908, a depressed class woman called Aley sacrificed her life as a martyr for a noble cause.

Poikayil Yohannan left the church and formed a separate organization called ‘Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha’ or P.R.D.S. and he came to be known as Poikayil Sri Kumara Gurudevan. At a time when equality, liberty and political life of women were not matters of issue, P.R.D.S. took the issue of gender equality as an important topic of discussion. Poikayil Yohannan gave importance to equality for women. He gave importance to women’s issues in his speeches and songs. After his death, his wife Janamma became the leader of P.R.D.S. and was known as Ammachi.

Paravoor Kesavanasan used the columns of his newspaper ‘Sujana nandini’ to bring to light, the pitiable condition of the Dalits. Kumaran Asan wrote his early poems in this paper under the pen name ‘Kayikkara N.Kumaran’. Chakola Daivatha was the General Secretary of ‘Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham’ and was a member of Sree Moolam Praja Sabha. Pampady John Joseph organized ‘Cheramar Mahajana Sabha’ and a magazine ‘Sadhujana Dootan’ to fight for the privileges of pulayas.

147. Ibid., *op.cit.*, pp.115-116.
Subhananda Gurudevan of Chengannur was a Paraya and he founded ‘Atma Bodhodaya Sangham’\(^{149}\). In 1926, with the help of some upper caste men, he made arrangements for English education of depressed class girls at Kollam\(^{150}\). In 1943, he started ‘Dharma Pradayini Weaving School’ at Kottarkkavu and gave free training to girls\(^{151}\). Tegadi Kesava Sastri from Aranmula was one of the founder members of ‘Pulaya Maha Sabha’. He passed ‘Sanskrit Sastri’ examination from Alwaye Sanskrit School established by Sree Narayana Guru. He started a weekly called ‘Karya Darshi’ and wrote a collection of poems called ‘Bhagawat Doot’. He started several night schools and constructed housing colonies for Dalits at Trivandrum\(^{152}\).

Karumban Daivathan of Edayaranmula organized ‘Hindu Pulaya Samajam’ and also put forward the idea of Dalit colony\(^{153}\). Other lowcaste leaders of the period included Vellikkara Chothi, Charathan Solomon, Visakhan Thevan, Kombadi Aninchan, Thomas Vadhyar, Gopaladasan, Thiruvvarppu Kuttan and Seethankan\(^{154}\). Pandit K.P. Karuppan founded many organizations for the upliftment of Arayas in Cochin.

Infact the fight against caste inequalities and untouchability acquired a wider dimension with the Vaikom Satyagraha from 1924 to 1925. It was with the Vaikom Satyagraha that the aspects of social reform movement and the national movement joined, ushering a new phase in women’s participation in struggles.

Large scale participation of women was witnessed for the first time during the Vaikom Satyagraha. Women kept apart pidiyari every day. Once in a month they gathered rice from all houses and sent to Vaikom Satyagraha Camp\(^{155}\). When


\(^{150}\) Ibid., p. 180.

\(^{151}\) Ibid., p. 181.


the Akalis came and took charge of the kitchen, the rice was sold and the cash was given to Satyagraha Committee Treasurer Alumoottil Govindan Channar.\textsuperscript{156} Panavalli Krishnan Vaidyan wrote certain Vaikom Satyagraha songs and women of Puthupally area used to sing these songs as \textit{njattupattu}\textsuperscript{157}.

The Suchindram Satyagraha immediately followed the Vaikom Satyagraha. The temple roads were used by \textit{savarnas} only. There was a girls’ school near the temple and it was unreachable to \textit{avarna} girls. A Satyagraha was started under the guidance of reformers like Dr. M. E. Naidu\textsuperscript{158}. Volunteers suffered the trouble of brutal measures. The temple was finally opened to all with the historic Temple Entry Proclamation of 12 November, 1936.

In the Namboothiri community, ‘Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha’ was formed in 1908 at Alwaye under the leadership of Kuroor Unni Namboothirippad\textsuperscript{159}. The motto of the Sabha was “Make Namboothiri a Human Being”\textsuperscript{160}. V.T.Bhattachirippad, the Namboothiri reformer, earnestly worked all through his life for English education, \textit{swajathee vivaham}, industrialization etc. and against untouchability, \textit{Jenmi} system, \textit{Sambandham}, \textit{ghosha} system, polygamy etc. In 1933, he made a proclamation, “set fire to temples”\textsuperscript{161}. Greater was the crash made on the Namboothiris especially womenfolk by V.T. Bhattachirippad through his drama ‘Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku’ i.e., ‘From kitchen to stage’. Marriage reform among Namboothiris was the central theme of the drama and it was the first social drama in Kerala\textsuperscript{162}. The drama provided an opportunity to Namboothiris to realize the cruelty of social evils like aged marriage, illiteracy etc. It also created a strong hatred for child and aged marriage and instilled self-confidence among women to affirm their right in

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., pp.56-57.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{161} Velayudhan Panickassery, \textit{Ayyankali Mathal V.T.Vare}, (Mal.), Current Books, Kottayam, 2003, pp.105-106.
marriage. The impact of the drama on the Namboothiri community especially on their womenfolk was immeasurable. The transformation that this distinct drama brought about in the minds of the Namboothiri women in so short a period was exciting. V.T. Bhattathirippad started a newspaper called ‘Pasupatham’ and started a centre for community life, by name, ‘Udbuddha Keralam’.

For propagating widow remarriage and intercaste marriage also, V.T. Bhattathirippad took the initiative. He gave his sister-in-law, Uma Antarjanam, a widow, to M.R. Bhattathirippad. This was the first known widow remarriage in the Namboothiri community. He also gave his sister Parvathi to a Nair, Raghavappanicker. He and his friends publicly conducted ‘Poonoo Dahanam’ i.e., burning the sacred thread. Picketing against ‘Adivedanam’ i.e., old man marrying young girls, was conducted at different places under the leadership of V.T. Bhattathirippad. The condition of Namboothiri women was more dreadful. English education was prohibited to them. After getting puberty, when they had to go outside, they were concealed from the public gaze by marakkuda and ghosha and were made outcastes for silly matters. Namboothiri households were filled with age-old virgins, orphaned widows and co-wives.

Many Namboothiri women such as Arya Pallom, Parvathi Nenminimangalam, Devaki Warrier, Devaki Nilayangode, Sridevi, Priyadatta Kallatt, Mrs.Manazhi, Olappamanna Uma Antaranjam, Devaki Narikkattiri, Lalitambika Antaranjam and many others actively worked for reforming Namboothiri society. They worked for creating job opportunities and economic self reliance to Namboothiri women. Parvathi Nenminimangalam, Devaki Nilayangode and Olappamanna Uma Antaranjam conducted a ‘Bodhavalkkarana Yatra’ from Malappuram to Kottayam.

164. Ibid., pp.102-103.
166. Velayudhan Panickassery, op.cit., p.95.
Lalitambika Antarjanam was amongst the earliest to break the shackles of orthodoxy among the Namboothiris. She convened the first meeting of the Namboothiri women in her house, before she came out on the public platform to campaign. She wrote a drama called ‘Punarjanmanam’ which was renamed ‘Savitrikkutty’ on the theme of Namboothiri widow remarriage and it was staged on the annual meeting of ‘Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha’ at Harippad.

Efforts were also made to change the mode of dress and ornaments of the Namboothiri females. The old system of enlarged ear bores changed slowly. Instead, young girls began to use studs. They also started wearing blouses. Formerly, everybody, whether married or unmarried, young or old, would be only half clad. Another progressive step taken by the community was discarding the age long ghosha by women.

Mrs. Manazhi was the first antarjanam who discarded ghosha. The example was followed by Arya Pallom, Mrs. V.T. Bhattathirippad and others. While the twenty second annual meeting of the Sabha witnessed only one Namboothiri woman discarding ghosha, its silver jubilee celebration saw the presence of more than seventy five women in modern dress. When ‘Nair sammelanam’ at Mavelikkara gave a great welcome to those antarjanams who discarded ghosha and marakkuda, a number of Namboothiri women boldly attended this meeting and they were received and were seated on the stage. The meeting was presided over by Kottoor Bhageerathi Amma and a large crowd assembled there to see the daring antarjanams.

As a result of the efforts of the reformers, Namboothiri girls began to seek admission in the ‘Namboothiri Vidyalayam’ in 1930. The government also gave permission to open a ‘Balika Vidyalayam’ at Thalappilli. Many Namboothiri girls volunteered to go to schools. Some antarjanams put forward the idea of starting

‘Antarjana Samajam’ in a meeting held in the house of Parvathi Nenminimangalam.\textsuperscript{171}

‘Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha’, ‘Antarjana Samajam’ etc. discussed important issues like women education, women employment, widow remarriage, abolition of polygamy etc. which led to many positive results. The daily routine of women within Illams was traditionally a highly regimented series of ritualistic observances. This was partially or fully replaced by a new routine that stressed domestic management, child care, entertainment of guests etc. Reformers had the insight that women resurgence is possible only through economic freedom and this resulted in the establishment of a ‘Thozhil kendra’ at Lakkidi. A drama called ‘Thozhil Kendrathilekku’ was also enacted by ‘Antarjana Samajam’ in 1948. This was the first Malayalam drama written, directed and enacted by women.\textsuperscript{172}

Chattampi Swamikal was a Nair Sanyasin and reformer. He raised his voice against caste system and observance of irrational social practices among Nairs.\textsuperscript{173} He established a good rapport with Sree Narayana Guru and together they worked for Hindu religious reform. He created an atmosphere of spiritual renaissance and social resurgence in Nair community. He wrote a large number of books, attacked caste system and discarded the superiority of Brahmans.

Mannathu Padmanabhan, Pattom Thanu Pillai, C.V.Raman Pillai, ‘Samudayothejakan’ C.Krishna Pillai, Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai, E.V. Krishna Pillai and many others gave leadership to Nair reform movements.

‘Samooihika Parishkarana Sangham’ was formed in 1899, ‘Keraaleeya Nair Samajam’ was formed in 1907, ‘Nair Bhrito Jana Sangham’ was formed in 1914, and ‘Nair Service Society’ was formed in 1915. The ‘Nair Service Society’ worked against casteism inside the Nair Society, Marumakkathayam, social customs like Kettukalyanam, Thirandukuli, Pulikudi, luxurious festivals, untouchability etc.

\textsuperscript{171} Unni Namboothiri weekly, Book No.1, Issue 2, Edavam, 1122 M.E.
\textsuperscript{172} Devaki Nilayangode, op.cit., p.62.
\textsuperscript{173} A.Sreedhara Menon, Kerala and Freedom Struggle, op.cit., p.62.
Mannathu Padmanabhan was a powerful Nair crusader who became almost a legendary figure. He worked for the legal recognition of Patriliny and abolition of sub-caste distinction among the Nairs\textsuperscript{174}. He established schools at Perunnai, Karukachal, Prakkulam, Karuvatta etc. Kainikkara Govindappilla, another Nair reformer started a ‘Vidya sala’ at Perunnai and its first girl student was his daughter Panki Amma\textsuperscript{175}. She then joined St.Joseph’s convent, Changanassery and became the first woman in Changanassery who got English education\textsuperscript{176}.

Chittedathu Sankuppillai was a propagandist of Gandhian ideology in Central Travancore. He lived in Sabarmati \textit{asram} for three months. He conducted \textit{panthibhojanam} in his house. While participating in the Vaikom Satyagraha, he was brutally tortured by the \textit{goondas}, and died after a few months. He was the first political martyr of Kerala\textsuperscript{177}. Agamanandaji or Krishnan Nambiathiri of Chavara established ‘Adwaitasram’, Kalady and worked for Harijan uplift and eradication of caste barriers\textsuperscript{178}. Brahmananda Sivayogi or Karatt Govinda Menon was the author of ‘Stree Vidya Poshini’ in 1899 which advocated women education\textsuperscript{179}.

The Muslims of Travancore were a relatively small and backward community, their women were in \textit{purdah}, their standard of education was low, but they too began to work for social reform and promotion of English education. Their great reformer was Vakkom Abdul Khadir Maulavi who founded the ‘Travancore Muslim Mahajana Sabha’, on the same model as S.N.D.P. Yogam and the Nair Service society\textsuperscript{180}. He spread the message of social development among his brethren through their own language and also contributed to the cause

\textsuperscript{175} Vellankulathu Karunakaran Nair, \textit{Mannathu Padmanabhan Jeevacharitham}, (Mal.), Vellankulathu Karunakaran Nair, Kottayam, 1992, p.25.
\textsuperscript{178} A.Sreedhara Menon, \textit{Kerala and Freedom Struggle, op.cit.}, p.57.
of women. He edited a journal ‘Muslim’ and started a newspaper ‘Swadeshabhimani’. Sayed Sana Ulla Makthi Thangal, Chalilakathu Kunjahammad Haji, Sheik Muhammad Hamadani Thangal and many others worked for equality of women, women education etc. and against blind belief among Muslims.

Christian social reformers like Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara and Palakkunath Abraham Malpan also contributed to the development of education, enrichment of literature and upliftment of the marginalized. Fr. Kuriakose Elias Chavara started a Sanskrit school and a printing press at Mannanam in 1846, a destitute home at Kainakary in 1869 and spread gospel to the dalits. He was the founder of C.M.I. order and was also the author of a large number of books.

Palakkunnathu Abraham Malpan also fought against the age-old social and ritualistic evils inside the Syrian church. He broke the image of ‘muthappan’ in Maramon church and abolished the festival to destroy idolatrous veneration. He also conducted *Holy Qurbana* for the first time in Malayalam in Maramon church. With the help of Colonel Munro, Pulikkottil Ittoop Remban started a *Padithaveedu*, also known as ‘Kottayam College’ on the banks of river Meenachil at Kottayam in 1812 which later developed into the C.M.S. College. Syriac, Theology and English were taught in this college. Kayamkulam Philipose Remban enriched Malayalam literature through his ‘Remban Bible’. Pulikkottil Joseph Mar Dionysius II was also a reformer guided by humanistic principles.

Mar Gregorios of Parumala gave importance for the freedom of dalits, need of English education, and the significance of spiritual revival. He asked his people to create belief in God among the lower castes, to give knowledge to them, to spread Gospel among them, to baptize them and welcome them to the

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181. Ibid., pp.20-32.  
community, to construct separate churches and schools to the lower castes, to start English schools etc.

After his return from Jerusalem, he made a historical speech in the Parumala church. In this speech he shared a number of revolutionary ideas such as Harijan uplift, English education etc. to his people. Dalit students were admitted in the schools opened by him. Many churches were built for dalits in Chennithala, Puthupally, Mallappally and Kallunkathara. He was the founder of many English schools viz., St.Thomas School, Mulamthuruthy, Mar Ignatius School and St.Mary’s School, Kunnamkulam, M.G.High School, Thumpamonnand M.G.M. School, Thiruvalla. He tried to start an English school at Kottarakkara but could not complete his work. He also served as treasurer of building committee of Government Girls’High School, Thiruvalla.

Bishop Patrose Mar Osthathios was a social reformer and supporter of freedom movement. He was a native of Thrippoonithura and his early name was Mookkancheril M.P.Peter B.A.L.T. He passed matriculation with rank and served as a teacher in various schools. He had great sympathy towards lower castes, and in 17 March 1923, published an article “Theendalum Thodeelum” in Malayala Manorama, attacking the caste system.

On 31 July 1924, an open letter was published in Manorama to the Diwan of Cochin favouring the education of the lowcastes and he requested the Diwan not to collect fees from the Pulayas who were studying in different schools of Cochin. During the Vaikom Satyagraha of 1924, he published many articles in newspapers favouring the Satyagraha. He made a speech at Vaikom ‘Manalppuram’ and this event was reported in ‘Swarajya’ newspaper from Madras, on 30 April 1924, under the heading, ‘Rev.Peter’s Message’.

187. Ibid., p.269.
In 1930, Diwan Sir T.Vijaya Raghavachari appointed deacon M.P.Peter as the special officer for the uplift of the Harijans. He supported admission of low caste children to government schools. For the uplift of the lower castes, he started an organization called “Sleeba Dasa Samooham” i.e., Servants of the Cross, a native missionary society in 1924\textsuperscript{189}. They visited Pulaya homes with the New Testament, lantern, \textit{kaithalam} and \textit{chitrachurul} donated by the American Mission and explained the biography and message of Christ.

They taught them the greatness of education and hygiene and the bad effects of drunkenness. They attracted them towards the Church and Sunday school, baptized them, admitted them in schools, and gave medicine whenever necessary. Even if there were rain or wind, they didn’t retire from their work. This movement still exists in the church and continues the work of complete liberation of the dalits.


Other organizations were ‘Chraisthava Mahajana Sabha’ organized by Kandathil Varghese Mappilai, Kunnukuzhiyil Kuruvilla Engineer and others and ‘Nasrani Jathyaikya Sangham’ organized by Kandathil Varghese Mappilai and Nidheerickal Manikkathanar.

Kandathil Varghese Mappilai organized ‘Bhashaposhini Sabha’ and ‘Malayala Manorama Company’ in 1888 and also started a magazine

\textsuperscript{189} Ibid., pp.27-28.
‘Bhashaposhini’ for promoting literary activities in Malayalam. ‘Malayala Manorama’ newspaper started its publication in 1890.\textsuperscript{190}

Many other social reformers such as Vedabandhu, Vagbhatananda, Agamananda Swami and Sadananda Swami and rationalists like Rama Varma Thampan, M.C.Joseph, Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai and ‘Swatantrasamudayam’ Madhavan also worked for the uplift of society as a whole.

Renaissance Movement didn’t fail but it was not completed. The factors which led to the social change in Kerala during the Renaissance period can be summed up as:

- Missionaries planted right consciousness among \textit{avarnas}.
- Science and rationalism developed against blind faith, customs and traditions.
- Educational elite emerged in every community from top to bottom. The religious and communal basis of education came to an end. The ideas of individual liberty, equal opportunities, human fraternity etc. began to be circulated throughout the Kerala society.
- Rulers understood the winds of changes.
- Social reformers and movements gave force to social change.
- Popular revolts precipitated social change.
- Agricultural revolts created the idea “farm lands for farmers”.
- Due to the emergence of industries, trade, plantations etc., the jati-based-occupational divisions came to an end. Economic supremacy inspite of caste supremacy began to develop in society. Coinage system came into being in both the fields of labour and production.
- Education created social change and social mobility and increased women participation in social life. From 1930 onwards women began to

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., pp.94-95.
participate freely in political activities, Freedom Movement and Trade Union movements.

- Nineteenth century Renaissance was also the starting point of Indian women’s liberation struggles. The age-old concepts of ideal woman began to change in all communities. Status of women came to be considered integral to measure the culture of every community.