

Press, Reform and Society in Travancore 1885-1910: An Enquiry into the 'Political Newspapers'

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled Press, Reform and Society in Travancore 1885-1910: An Enquiry into the 'Political Newspapers' submitted by ANISH R in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY has not been previously submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other university and is his original work.

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Anish R

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Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| CDS | Centre for Development Studies |
| Dis. | Dispatch |
| DPP | Doctor Palpu Papers |
| EPW | Economic and Political Weekly |
| FN | File Number |
| GPP | G P Pillai Papers |
| IESHR | Indian Economic and Social History Review |
| JNU | Jawaharlal Nehru University |
| MAS | Modern Asian Studies |
| ME | Malayalam Era |
| NAI | National Archives of India |
| NMML | Nehru Memorial Museum and Library |
| NNR | Native Newspaper Reports |
| Pol. | Political |
| RO | Resident Office |
| SIH | Studies in History |
| SMPA | Sri Mulam Popular Assembly |
| Spl. | Special |
| Sub. | Subject |
| TAR | Travancore Administration Report |
| TCR | Travancore and Cochin Residency |
| WP | Working Paper |

Chapter I

Introduction

Printing developed in India in the interests of the missionaries¹. In the South Western coast of India too, printing and newspaper production had its genesis in the hands of the missionaries.² However, a shift in the organisation and orientation of the Malayalam press is obvious by the 1890s. As argued by Thara³, if the initial phase of the Malayalam press was determined by missionary interests, social and economic variables determined its course in the later decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This study is an attempt to understand this emergence and growth of Malayalam press in the princely state of Travancore in the closing decades of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century; the decades between the emergence of political movements and the First World War. It was in this period that the economic development of the region got strengthened with the introduction of the Company's Act, and a case for development was strongly made by editors like Varghese Mappila and reform leaders like Dr. Palpu. As Chartier and Roche have argued in the case of 'book', as an object which is produced, exchanged, and sold to conjunctural economic forces, this study of newspapers also focus on the conditions that made possible the emergence of a 'different' political press in the late nineteenth century Travancore.⁴ We find that this political nature of the press was argued and advanced by the newspaper editors of this period. Writing about his 1886 newspaper, *Kerala Patrika*, C.Kunjurama Menon claimed that his was the "first Malayalam newspaper in British Malabar,"⁵ ignoring the initial

¹ The Portuguese set up the first printing press on the subcontinent in Goa in the 16th century. For an understanding of this story, see, Stuart Blackburn, *Print, Folklore and Nationalism in Colonial South India*, Delhi, 2003, Chapter 1.

² Puthuppally Raghavan, *Kerala Pathrapravarthana Charithram*, Kottayam, 1985, p.24-5.

³ Thara S Nair, 'Jeffrey's Reading of Malayalam Press: A Blind fold Stab?', *EPW*, XXXII, 35,1997.

⁴ Roger Chartier and Daniel Roche, 'New Approaches to the History of the Book' in Aymard M and Herbans Mukhia (eds), *French Studies in History, Vol.II*, Delhi, 1990.

⁵ K Ramakrishna Pillai, *Vrithantha Pathrapravarthanam*, Cochin, 1984,p. XXXV.

missionary endeavours which began as early as in 1847⁶. In the first issue of *Malayala Manorama* in 1890, its editor, Kandathil Varghese Mappila had noted that though there were three newspapers in Travancore, these were owned by religious heads, as if he was looking for newspapers of a 'different kind'. It is clear from both Menon and Mappila that their understanding of newspapers was equated with politics of the region than religion. This understanding develops further in the decades of the twentieth century, when newspapers began to define their role and functioning in the society. More importantly, the colonial state intervened to define the 'political' press when they asked the colonial administrators in 1911 to pay special attention to the newspapers dealing with politics and send immediate reports of any changes in them to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Criminal Investigation Department and Madras Railway.⁷ Among the newspapers classified for this purpose include *Kerala Kaumudi*, *Malayala Manorama*, *Malayali*, *Nasrani Deepika*, *Sri Parasurama*, *Subhashini* and *Travancore Times* published in Travancore.⁸

1.1. Contours of the study: The geography and society of Travancore

Travancore having an area of 7,091 square miles and a population of 1,461,991 in 1901 occupied the southern part of the present day Indian state of Kerala.⁹ Travancore became a princely state in the late 18th century, by the treaty signed between the Maharaja of Travancore and the British East India

⁶ Hermen Gundert, a Basel Missionary brought out the first newspaper, *Rajyasamacharam* in Malayalam in 1847. More details on the 'missionary press' is given in the second chapter.

⁷ NNR, 3 June 1911.

⁸ Ibid. *Travancore Times* was the only English newspaper published from Kerala, classified as political in this report.

⁹ The present Indian state of Kerala, in the 19th and up to mid twentieth centuries consisted of Malabar District of Madras Presidency in the north, princely state of Cochin in the middle and princely state of Travancore in the south. Though these regions were politically different, regarding the social life of the people they shared many commonalities. Apart from the prevalence of castes/community with similar practices, in the development of institutions like schools, printing, banking too there was a simultaneous development. One may assume that a novel like *Indulekha* written in 1889 was enjoyed similarly in the whole Kerala. However, some of the developments like reform movements were stronger in Travancore than in Malabar. The dispensation under the British was more egalitarian in Malabar than in a 'Hindu' state like Travancore. The major political movements of the period like Malayali memorial brought out these disparities. This study posits the difference and similarity of these regions and makes the arguments in that fashion.

Company.¹⁰ In the dominant literature on princely states in India, they have been considered as breakwaters in British India.¹¹ The 'allegation' against the princely states was that 'non interference policy of the British encouraged princely misgovernment and allowed administrative standards in these states to stagnate or deteriorate'.¹²

However, this idea has been challenged by recent scholarship.¹³ By 1867, Travancore was commented on by the Secretary of State for India as 'something like a model Native State'.¹⁴ In the Administrative Report of Travancore for 1899-1900, G T Mackenzie, Resident in Travancore and Cochin wrote that, "(i)n conclusion I beg to submit that again in this year, the report shows a marvelous prosperity and a very high standard of administration in the territories of His Highness, the Maharaja of Travancore."¹⁵ In fact, indirectly ruled princely states were credited with more 'development' than the directly ruled provinces in the Census reports.¹⁶ Legislative institutions like the councils/assemblies were first introduced in the princely states and as a result, a native political leadership emerged in the princely states, who became the torch bearers of notions of 'public' and 'development'. However, our concern in this study is not a comparison of development of these ideas and institutions British India and Indian princely states, which requires a tremendous scholarship, and instead to emphasize the internal dynamics of the princely states through the study of press as an institution.

¹⁰ See, 'The Treaty between the East India Company and the Rajah of Travancore of 1795', in *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol. I*, Trivandrum, 2000. pp. 143-7.

¹¹ SR Ashton, *British Policy towards the Indian States: 1905-1939*, London, 1985, p.1.

¹² *Ibid.*, Preface, p. IX.

¹³ See, Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India*, Delhi, 2003. His study of the Baroda state and Mysore talks about an alternative 'princely modernity' developing in these states as free of and counter to colonialism. For an understanding of Travancore, see, Manali Desai, 'Indirect British Rule, State Formation, and Welfarism in Kerala, India, 1860-1957', *Social Science History*, XIX,3,2005.

¹⁴ Velu Pillai, TK, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol.I, Trivandrum, 1940, p. 27. Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and politics In Travancore, 1847-1908*, Delhi, 1976, p. 90.

¹⁵ For., Intl., FN. 71, Part B, 1901. NAI.

¹⁶ According to the 1901 Census Report of Travancore, one in every 8 persons in Travancore was literate while the corresponding figure for Baroda, the next most educated state was 1/12 literates and among the provinces, Bombay had only 1 out of 14 literates. Census of Travancore, 1901, Vol. XXVI, Part I, Report.

Two significant developments in Travancore that have greatly influenced its policies and programs were the intervention of missionaries from the 1820's¹⁷ and the integration of Travancore with the world economy in the 1850's¹⁸. These two developments altered the existing social and economic conditions in Travancore. As an aftermath of the missionary ventures in schooling and education, there emerged a native leadership in Travancore by the 1880's and as a result of the integration process of the economy, new cash crops were introduced in Travancore and the introduction of these cash crops, firstly coffee and later on tea and rubber transformed the cropping pattern of the economy.¹⁹ Though in the initial stages these plantations were dominated by Europeans who exerted considerable pressure on the durbar officials,²⁰ it is noticed that, by the late nineteenth century the European influence diminished and there emerged a 'native' class of planters, with notions of development. These notions were to charter the development of economy and institutions in Travancore in the later decades. Travancore Census of 1901 was quick to respond to these developments:

Here in Travancore, the people are pious, law abiding, industrious and loyal. The country is rich in undeveloped resources. A rising generation of young men is growing in intelligence and enterprise under the fostering care of the state, and the ruler of the land, who is revered with all the devotion which is accorded to an ancient and royal lineage, is striving diligently for progress and freedom. ²¹

It is in this phase of the native enterprise that one can place the development of a 'new' political press in the late nineteenth century. The press became one of the institutions of 19th century Travancore sharing more things in common with the developments in other fields. This is clear from the Census Reports of 1911. If in 1901 there were less than 20 newspapers published in Travancore, it rose to 45

¹⁷ For a recent work on the missionary intervention of Travancore, See, Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1938*, New Delhi, 2000. Also see, Desai, 'Indirect British Rule', p.465.

¹⁸ See, Raman Mahadevan, 'Industrial Entrepreneurship in Princely Travancore: 1930-47', in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya(ed.), *The South Indian Economy: Agrarian Change, Industrial Structure and State Policy 1914-1947*, New Delhi, 1991, p.160.

¹⁹ See, Paul E Baak, *Plantation Production and Political Power: Plantation Development in South west India, 1743-1963*, Delhi, 1997.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.13.

²¹ Census of Travancore, 1911, Part I, Report, pp.7-8.

by 1911 including weeklies, bi weeklies and tri weeklies.²² The Report added that journalistic enterprise has made great progress during the last decades and further found that:

Its [newspaper's] growth in a country is significant as showing the literary appetite of its population and the capacity for responding to it. It may also be taken as evidence of the extent to which the people have benefited by the advance of education; of the increasing interest they take in *public matters* and of the desire to acquire general information. ²³
[Emphasised]

The newspapers introduced new ideas of reforms and development in Travancore. The emerging leadership both from the dominant and subaltern groups became the carriers of these new ideas. As argued by Arunima, the writers, reformers or intellectuals of not only in Travancore but in the whole of Kerala was intimately connected one another by the bonds of intellectual or professional interests during this period.²⁴ But different from the intellectuals of Western India as argued by Veena Naregal, ²⁵ in Travancore the intelligentsia emerged from both the dominant and subaltern social groups and unlike in the case of Baroda, as argued by Manu Bhagavan,²⁶ in Travancore, the Maharaja had a limited role to play.²⁷

1.2. Review of Literature

A review of existing historical literature on the Malayalam newspapers of the period, mostly done by non specialists offers a survey of the newspapers published in the mid nineteenth century to the twentieth century. The important work is that of Puthuppally Raghavan.²⁸ He gives a detailed survey of the newspapers published in Malayalam and says that, though there were attempts

²² Ibid., p.9.

²³ Ibid., p 9.

²⁴ G. Arunima, 'Glimpses from a Writers World: O. Chandu Menon, His Contemporaries and Their Times', *SIH*, XX, 2, 2004, p. 213.

²⁵ Veena Naregal, 'Language and Power in pre colonial Western India: Textual hierarchies, literate audiences and colonial philology', *IESHR*, XXXVII, 3, 2000.

²⁶ Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*. Bhagavan delineates the crucial role played by the Maharaja Gaekwad of Baroda in making the country a progressive princely state.

²⁷ The Maharaja of Travancore of this period, Rama Varma played a crucial role as a facilitator of reforms and change but not a lead role that of Gaekwad of Baroda.

²⁸ Puthuppally Raghavan, *Kerala Pathrapravarthanacharithram*, Kottayam, 1985.

to project secular matters in the printed world right from the mid nineteenth century, *Kerala Mitram* published from Cochin in 1881 was the first newspaper (*Vrithantha Pathram*) in Malayalam.²⁹ However Raghavan do not offer a detailed understanding of any of the themes discussed in the newspapers.

Priyadarsanan has authored a good number of books on the Malayalam press. In his various writings, he gives primacy to the individual editors and writers who were instrumental in starting newspapers in Kerala.³⁰ Priyadarsanan also has compiled a volume on the editorial writings of Varghese Mappila, the editor of *Malayala Manorama*.³¹ Writings by Chummar Choondal, Sam etc also give historical understanding and chronology of newspapers published in Malayalam.³²

The research studies on various aspects of the Malayalam press include the studies done by Robin Jeffrey, Thara S Nair, Ram Mohan etc. Robin Jeffrey's works looks into the colonial period for the history of the Malayalam Press. Jeffrey argues that the Malayalam newspapers, namely *Malayala Manorama* had a sustained and continuing relationship with the capitalist enterprises taking place in Kerala in the colonial period. He further says that there is a connection between trade, information dissemination and newspaper publishing in the Indian context and the *Malayala Manorama* daily founded in 1889 belonged to a Syrian Christian Family with a variety of interests in agriculture and commerce.³³

Thara in her studies, as found earlier, traces two distinct trajectories of the Malayalam press, up to the 1950's and there after. If the social and political variables explain the first phase of Malayalam press, the second phase is determined by factors like market, technology and consumerism.³⁴ For the

²⁹ Ibid., p.69.

³⁰ G. Priyadarsanan, *Manmaranja Masikakal*, Kottayam, 1971.

³¹G. Priyadarsanan(ed.), *Kerala Navodhanam: Kandathil Varghese Mappilayude Mukhaprasangal*, Kottayam, 1997.

³² See, Chummar Choondal, *The Missionaries and Malayalam Journalism*, Thrissur, 1975 and N.Sam, *Malayala Pathrapravarthanam Pathonpatham Noottandil*, Kottayam,2003.

³³ Robin Jeffrey, 'Communication and Capitalism in India: 1750-2010', *South Asia*, XXV, 2, 2002. Also see his, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*,New Delhi, 1976.

³⁴ Thara S Nair, 'Jeffrey's Reading'.

dynamic growth of the Indian press after the First World War, she finds reasons in the general public awakening and political activism in the 1920's as well as the emergence of an indigenous capitalist class.³⁵ Thara hints on the possibility of plantation profit being diverted to the setting up of the newspapers publishing companies like *Malayala Manorama*.

In his doctoral thesis³⁶, Rammohan talks about how, the nineteenth-twentieth century press in Kerala set out development agenda for Travancore and Kerala. His reading of *Malayala Manorama* and *Nasrani Deepika* offering a critique of 'indifference' of the natives in working for the development of the country (Travancore/Kerala) is interesting. Restricted to tracing the material processes and development of Travancore, his accounts too fall short of giving an account of the concerns of the native press on various themes discussed in the newspapers.

Limitation of these studies is that there is so far no attempt to understand the Malayalam press of this period in terms of the social, economic and intellectual conditions in which they were produced. Rather than finding the development of the press as the logical conclusion of developments taking place elsewhere in British India and the native states, the present study sets out on an ambitious plan to understand the experience of the newspapers in Travancore and the kind of reforms developing in Travancore. Studies have so far ignored the categories like nation/ region constituted in the Malayalam newspapers of the period and their understanding of colonialism. Studies also have ignored the advertisements and the meanings that constructed in a caste ridden society.

Scholarly literature on printing and publishing offers a framework to study the Malayalam newspapers. Benedict Anderson's influential study on nationalism³⁷ opened the possibilities of enquiry on the impact of print on the modern societies. Though his assumptions on nationalism have been questioned,

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ KT Rammohan, 'Material Processes and Developmentalism: Interpreting Economic Change in Colonial Thiruvithamkur', 1800-1945, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1996.

³⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1991.

his ideas on the role of print in the making of modern political communities, particularly his arguments on novels and newspapers as the technical means for representing the 'imagined communities' of nation states are held valid. Therefore in the recent decades terms like 'print', 'print culture', 'print revolution' etc attained significance in the academic discussions. Anderson further says that the books were the first modern style mass produced industrial commodity and news papers were an extreme form of the book.³⁸ For him print and newspapers provided a platform for people and ideas to converge who were connected in no other way to each other.

Veena Naregal in her study³⁹ argues that print was not simply a communicative technology but it also signified a shift from the prevailing assumptions of the distribution of cultural and political power among various social groups in western India.⁴⁰ She finds vernacularisation of print as a deliberate attempt by the elites to rearticulate their authority in localised idioms⁴¹ and established the role of commercial net works and new rulers in these attempts. By making a nuanced reading of her arguments, it can be argued in the case of Travancore that it was not only the pre-colonial elites but the subalterns of the colonial period too appropriated the medium of print in articulating their authority in Travancore.

Francesca Orsini in her study on the 19th century Benares⁴² explains how the interventions made by print made one variant of the vernacular language, the print language, and later on how it acquired fixity and predominance over others in due course of time. She further notes that the commercial aspects of the print have been largely overlooked in the studies on the print in India.⁴³

³⁸ Ibid., p.34.

³⁹ Veena Naregal, *Language Politics, Elites and the Public Sphere in Western India*, Delhi, 2001 .

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4-7.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.15.

⁴² Francesca Orsini, 'Pandits, Printers and Others: Publishing in Nineteenth -Century Benares', in Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty (eds.), *Print Areas: Book History in India*, Delhi, 2004.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 104-5.

⁴³ Anindita Ghosh, 'Cheap Books, 'Bad' Books: Contesting Print Culture in Colonial Bengal' in Gupta and Chakravorty, *Print Areas*.

Anindita Ghosh in her study says that as a medium of communication, print and literature signified struggles for power among social groups, and this has not been adequately explored in the Indian context.⁴⁴ She talks about the Bengal experience, when the scribal population from Brahmins and Kayasthas made their entry into commercial publishing and the conditions in the 1850's and 1860's, when the lower castes came into prominence in publishing.⁴⁵ In the case of Travancore, with an apparent absence of a scribal population, the missionaries and later on enterprisers in plantations gave the lead and plantations, printing and publishing flourished simultaneously in Travancore. Stuart Blackburn⁴⁶ attempts to link printing, nationalism and folklore in the Madras province and argue how the curious blend of these three factors determined the nationalist literature for quite some time in the Madras province.

Most studies on print culture in Travancore/Kerala were on novels and journals. A recent work on the writings of Malayali women on gender enquires the way in which a gendered subjectivity was constituted in Kerala in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴⁷ The recent study by Arunima⁴⁸ seeks to link the questions of ethnicity, territoriality and history with the advent of print in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, focusing on religious tracts and literary journals, she has not consulted newspapers of the period.

1.3. Approach in this study

An area of study, referred to as 'Book history', talks about the way in which the historian traces the history of documents and narrate their history. In the words of the editors of the journal *Book History*, the journal was for a new kind of history to look in to "the history of documents themselves."⁴⁹ In their attempts, the historians of book history, trace the history of not only of books but also newspapers, periodicals, manuscripts etc and raises a whole lot of questions,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Blackburn, *Print, Folklore and Nationalism*.

⁴⁷ J Devika, *Gender and Early Writings of Malayali Women 1898-1938*, Kolkata, 2005.

⁴⁸ G Arunima, 'Imagining Communities-differently; print language and the public sphere in colonial Kerala.', *IESHR*, XXXXIII, 1, 2006.

⁴⁹ Editors, 'An Introduction to Book history', *Book History*, 1,1,1998,p.1.

including the authorship, publishing, printing, copy right etc of these documents⁵⁰ In India, sharing the concerns of the methodology of 'Book History' Venkatachalapathy⁵¹ has traced the history of Tamil book publishing from the mid nineteenth to the mid twentieth century.

In this study, some of the questions of 'book history' are used to interrogate, the nature of newspapers in Travancore; their origins, how they looked, what they talked about, who were the editors of these newspapers, who were the contributors and readers of these newspaper etc. As an initiation in to this enquiry, the conditions that made possible the production of newspapers; the social, economic and intellectual moorings of newspapers are traced. In order to argue the case of a stable development of certain newspapers, the writings and activities of one editor and a reform leader is traced at the end to emphasize how the ideological questions dominant in the society are indispensable for the growth of newspapers.

1.4. Research Questions

Placed with in a social history of Travancore, the study mainly raises three broad questions.

1. What were the changes that were taking place in the society and economy of the mid nineteenth century Travancore, which led to the development of a new press and what oriented them towards new questions and possibilities?
2. How would one read the newspapers of this period, bearing in mind the changes that were taking place and the social conditions before and during this period? More crucially, what was there to be advertised to the 'public'?
3. How did the intellectuals of the period; the writers, editors, reform leaders etc articulated their concerns and expressed their opinions, and how they were intermeshed with the dominant themes discussed in the newspapers of the period?

⁵⁰ Ibid..

⁵¹ AR Venkatachalapathy, 'A Social History of Tamil Book-Publishing, c.1850-1938, Unpublished PhD thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1994.

1.5. Chapters of the Study

Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter discusses the policy of Travancore Government from the mid nineteenth century to the late nineteenth century. The idea is to understand the changes brought in Travancore in the mid nineteenth century after the appointment of Madhav Row as Dewan. The changes in land holdings, the abolition of slavery and the creation of 'free' labourers, organisation on the basis of castes/ communities, the era of memorials etc are traced and also the emergence of an English educated intelligentsia oriented in Western liberal thoughts are analysed in this chapter.

The third chapter is an attempt to read Malayalam newspapers of the period to understand the concerns and culture of the period. This chapter begins with a description of newspapers of the period. Newspaper being a new cultural artifact it's 'lay out' is described. For instance, *Nasrani Deepika*, literally meaning the 'lamp of the Christians' had sub title, a Biblical saying so as to appeal to a wider Christian population. *Malayala Manorama* 'borrowed' the insignia of the royal family of Travancore and *Svadesabhimani* declared that it was the 'only Muhammedan organ of Travancore and Cochin'. Almost all the newspapers had the Malayalam calendar given in its front page. Apart from these, the subscription rates of the newspaper as well as the advertisement rates were given. According to Native Newspapers reports of the period, the circulation of these newspapers ranged from 150 to 1500. The leading articles/editorials, reports etc are studied to understand the orientation of the press and their understanding of colonialism and nationalism. Further, the advertisements are also studied, bearing in mind the social conditions of the period.

The fourth chapter situates the writings of two intellectuals of the period, editorial writings of Varghese Mappilai and the unpublished writings and diaries of Dr. Palpu, to understand how the ideas expressed in the newspapers and the ideas dominant in the society were mutually interlinked. This is to argue that some of the newspapers which were more successful in the period than

others were catering to the dominant ideas of the period; hence ensured a wider circulation.

1.6. Sources of the Study

Sources of the study include the newspapers of the period viz. news reports, leading articles/editorials, letters to the editor, advertisements etc appeared in them. However, the available newspapers are scanty and their precarious condition did not offer a picture of how they looked like in terms of structure, composition of news stories, pages etc. Apart from these, Native Newspaper Reports are used to understand the circulation of these newspapers and also to get an idea about the 'lost' newspapers of the period. These newspapers are read along with the archival materials: Travancore Administrative Reports, Travancore and Cochin Residency Records, Foreign Department Files, Census Reports for Travancore for the years 1891, 1901 and 1911, other published documents like Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, Documents of the Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, Travancore State Manuals etc. The primary sources include memoirs of reform leaders, their writings, their private and official correspondences, biographies, literary creations of the period, Petitions and representations submitted etc. Published books, articles, unpublished Dissertations, Theses are used as secondary sources.

Chapter II

At the Threshold of Education and Reform

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter the attempt is to trace the socio-economic and intellectual changes in Travancore from the mid nineteenth century to the late nineteenth century, which largely contributed to the emergence, reception and growth of newspapers in the later decades. The aim is to find the social base of the newspapers of the late nineteenth century. However, the study refrains from making a comprehensive socio-economic or intellectual history of the period or to establish a cause and effect framework for studying society and newspaper but to pinpoint the conditions that made the emergence of a different set of newspapers possible in the nineteenth century. The indicators of capitalist development such as plantations, reclamations, banking, Companies Act etc and the institutions of intellectual development viz. educational institutions, libraries etc are studied in this attempt.

2.2. Travancore in the Early Nineteenth Century

English East India Company's engagement with Travancore State began at least by the mid seventeenth century, when they set up in 1644, a factory for trade at Vizhinjam (Brinjohn) in southern Travancore¹. The construction of a fort at Anjengo in 1695, the place which the East India Company had obtained in 1684 from the Rani of Attingal, gave the Company a prominent position in terms of trading activities.² However, the Company's engagement with the political and administrative affairs of the state began only in the late eighteenth century. Tipu Sultan's campaign in Malabar indirectly resulted in the consolidation of British power in the West Coast of India. Fearing an imminent attack by powerful Tipu, the Raja of Travancore entered into a treaty with the East India Company, and

¹ See, *The History of the Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol. I, Trivandrum, 2000, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p.3.

after the treaty of Srirangapatam, which heralded the fall of Tipu, Travancore became an ally of the British East India Company. In the treaty signed in 1795, between the Company and the Maharaja of Travancore, the following important provisions were made:

1. The three border talooks of Paroor, Alumgar and Koonatnaar were made part of Travancore state, which were lost to Tipu Sultan in his raid and there by became the possession of the East India Company.
2. The East India Company accepted its obligation to protect Travancore State from any external aggression.
3. For the protection offered by the Company, the Raja of Travancore had to bear the expense of three battalions of Company sepoy, a Company of European artillery and two Companies of lascars stationed in Travancore.³

As a follow up of the treaty signed, Colonel Macaulay was appointed the Resident of Travancore with supervisory powers over Cochin, which by that time entered in to treaties with the Company.⁴ Colonel Monroe followed Macaulay as the Resident of Travancore in 1810, in whose period tremendous innovations were introduced in the Travancore administration.⁵ The Company expected Monroe 'to offer yeoman service to the cause of the consolidation of British power in Travancore',⁶ and he succeeded in it. His invitation to Church Missionary Society and London Missionary Society and they setting up mission centres in Travancore had far reaching consequences in the society. In a way Monroe laid the stone for 'modernising' Travancore administration and society. The coming of Church Missionary Society based at Kottayam, a central Travancore town in the 1820's and London Missionary Society at Nagercoil, a southern Travancore town, changed the intellectual climate of Travancore. However, a definitive change in Travancore administration was effected in the

³ Ibid., pp.143-7.

⁴ The provisions of the treaty signed between Raja of Cochin and the East India Company, include paying an annual tribute to the Company. See, Ibid, pp.131-4.

⁵ For an understanding of these developments, see, R. N, Yesudas, *Colonel John Monroe in Travancore, Trivandrum, 1977.*

⁶ Ibid.,p.9.

1850's, after the appointment of Madhav Row as Dewan in 1858⁷, with far reaching changes sweeping the economy and society.

2.3. Mid Eighteenth Century Travancore: An Appraisal

The appointment of Sir Madhav Row, English educated and previously British India employed, as Dewan of Travancore in 1858 brought in changes in the administration of Travancore. This period is also coincides with the integration of Travancore economy with the international commodity market in the modern period and also the rise of plantations.⁸ Madhav Rao's administration from 1858 to 1872 ushered in a new era for Travancore by bringing about new regulations, new institutions etc. Many of these administrative measures influenced the people in orienting their aspirations for reform and development of the society and economy. These aspirations reflected in the emergence of less powerful groups like Syrian Christians and the Ezhavas and the 'declining dominance' of the land owning caste groups like Nayers, as argued by a prominent historian of Travancore.⁹ The Dewans who followed Madhav Row also pursued these administrative measures in a big way, which by that time became a norm for good governance. Understanding these changes, movements and aspirations of the people and their fall out in the larger society is the content of this chapter.

2.3.1. The Abolition of Slavery

Slavery was abolished in Travancore as a result of the efforts and litigations by the missionaries and also as a follow up of abolition of slavery in British India. Though, as early as in 1812, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Travancore had issued a

⁷ Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1908*, New Delhi, 1976, p.70. Madhav Row was first appointed Acting Dewan after the death of Dewan Krishna Row, and later on he became the Dewan at the age of thirty. Nagam Aiya, *Manual*, Trivandrum, 1940, p.523.

⁸ For this argument, see, Raman Mahadevan, 'Industrial Entrepreneurship in Princely Travancore: 1930-47', in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya et al (ed.), *The South Indian Economy: Agrarian Change, Industrial Structure and State Policy, 1914-1947*, New Delhi, 1991, p.160. For a comprehensive understanding of the economic developments in this period, see, KT Ram Mohan, *Material Processes and Developmentalism: Interpreting Economic Change in Colonial Thiruvithamkur, 1800-1945*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Kerala University, Trivandrum, 1996.

⁹ Jeffrey, *Nayar Dominance*.

proclamation during the period of Colonel Monroe,¹⁰ prohibiting the purchase and sale of slaves other than those attached to the soil, the demand for the abolition of agrestic slavery¹¹ in Travancore began with a petition submitted to the Maharaja by thirteen missionaries through the British Resident in March 1847¹². As a result of continuous litigations and as a follow up of the abolition of slavery in British India, slavery was finally abolished in Travancore, thereby setting free the scores of people of the slave castes Pulayas.¹³ However, our concern in this part of this study is to see how the abolition of slavery reflected in changing the aspirations and living conditions of these ex-slave castes in the coming decades. Though the life of Pulayas continued to be grim even after the abolition of slavery, principally because of lack of land holdings and the continuance of their existence with the land lords as 'free' labourers, there were qualitative improvements in their lives after they were freed. When the plantations developed, some of them could become plantation labourers¹⁴. However, what is significant is the emergence of a leadership from these slave castes who could engage with the project of 'modernity' in a different way other than articulated by the missionaries. Many 'rebel' leaders emerged from these castes during this period, who challenged even the authority of Bible and the missionary teachings and challenged the missionary teachings with own interpretations of salvation. They began to create an ideological world of their own and demanded modern education and sought an independent path from the missionaries. The struggles waged by Ayyankali,¹⁵ who later on become the member of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly and the story of Poikayil Johannan, who jumped churches to form his 'own' church for 'his own' people, are legends

¹⁰ Velu Pillai, *Manual*, p.526.

¹¹ Scholars working on slavery in Kerala differentiate between slavery in the Atlantic slavery system and that of agrestic slavery attached to land, existed in Kerala. See, K Saradamoni, *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala*, New Delhi, 1970. The missionary accounts of the period referred to the Dalit Christians as Slave Christians or peasant Christians. See, Sanal Mohan, 'Dalit Discourse and the Evolving New Self', *Review of Development and Change*, IV, 1, 1999, p.7.

¹² Saradamoni, *Emergence*, p.80.

¹³ In 1853, by a Royal Proclamation all the sarkar slaves were freed. By another proclamation in 1855 all slaves irrespective of their ownership were freed. see, Saradamoni, *Emergence*, pp.86-92.

¹⁴ Raviraman, 'Bondage in Freedom: Colonial Plantations in Southern India 1797-1947', WP 327, CDS, Trivandrum.

¹⁵ See, THP Chentharassery, *Ayyankali*, Trivandrum, 1989. Also see NK Jose, *Ayyankali Oru Padanam: Samagra Padanam*, Kottayam, 2002.

among their followers. Johannan, the Pulaya leader had this to offer to his followers:

In the New Testament are certain Epistles by St. Paul and others. To whom did St. Paul write these Epistles? To the Romans, Corinthians etc. There was not one written to the Pulayas of Travancore. Therefore, there is no revelation in those epistles for you, but only for the Romans, Corinthians etc. The revelation to you Pulayas of Travancore is through me.¹⁶

The author of this gospel was trying to create a space for his people in a caste ridden church and caste ridden society.¹⁷ His understanding of revelation and programme of action was deeply rooted in the socio-economic realities of his time. One of the significant aspects of the lower caste reform movements of the period was the constitution of new self under colonialism and engagement with modernity¹⁸. These kinds of lower caste reform movements created a space for reform and modernity that came to reflect in the movements for equality in the later period.

2.3.2. The Breast Cloth 'Disturbances'

The breast cloth 'disturbances' in southern Travancore have attracted the attention of the scholars.¹⁹ In nineteenth century Travancore, clothing, hairstyle, ornaments, naming etc were markers of social standing, prestige and power. Even in the early twentieth century the change of attires was a point of contention in Travancore.²⁰ In Travancore the lower castes like Shannars, Ezhavas and Pulayas were not allowed to cover the upper part of their

¹⁶ Quoted in Sanal Mohan, 'Dalit Discourse and the Evolving New Self', *Review of Development and Change*, IV, 1, 1999, p.14.

¹⁷ Till 1834, the Church Missionary Society in Travancore tried to convert only the Jacobite Christians among the native Christians. When the Jacobites severed their connection with the CMS, they began concentrating on the slave castes. However, the schism between those converted earlier and the later converts remained for a long time. The Syrian Christian origin myth of being Brahmin converts always created problems with in the church. For more, see, Joseph Tharamangalam, 'Caste Among Christians in India', in MN Srinivas(ed.), *Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar*, New Delhi, 2000. For a recent English novel on the caste issue among Syrian Christians see, Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, New Delhi, 1997.

¹⁸ Sanal Mohan, 'Dalit Discourse', p.2.

¹⁹ Robert Hardgrave, *The Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political Culture of a Community in Change*, Berkely, 1969; Bernard S Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge*, Delhi, 1996.

²⁰ In the twentieth century, Pulaya reformer Ayyankali urged Pulaya woman to discard some of their ornaments like *Kallumala*, which according to him was a source of enslavement. This created tension among the caste Hindus.

bodies.²¹ Following some disturbances over upper clothing in 1829, the Rani of Travancore allowed the Shanar women to wear an upper cloth called *kuppayam*, like the Christian and Muslim women.²² The working of the London Missionary Society among the Nadars and their teaching of modesty was one of the chief reasons for the disturbances. The Shanar women taking liberty of appearing in public places wearing upper clothes other than *kuppayam*; scarves or other clothes were resented by the upper castes and when they did so, disturbances broke out in many places in Travancore in 1858 between Nadars and Sudras.²³ Following pressure from the Madras government, Dewan of Travancore issued a proclamation abolishing all rules prohibiting the covering of the upper parts of the body of Shanar women with a condition that these women should not imitate the upper class mode of dressing.²⁴ The permission was extended to other caste groups in the notification issued in 1865. The draft notification of 1865 read:

Where as it has been felt desirable to extend the benefit of the proclamation dated 12th Karkadagam 1034/26th July 1859 to women of the Eloova and other subordinated castes who are not at present considered to be at liberty to cover the upper parts of the bosom, it is hereby notified, that from and after the date of this notification all females of the subordinate classes of his Highness Subjects, without exception, shall be at liberty to cover the upper parts of the body in the manner as Shanar Women...²⁵

What is becoming clear from these efforts of 'imitating of upper caste attires' is the attempt by the people to evolve an alternative to the established *jati* -based orderings that existed Kerala.²⁶ An interesting but less noticed fact about the debate was that the mode of dressing of high castes too undergone change during this period. Therefore, the question was not one that of 'imitation' but

²¹ Kawashima, *Missionaries*, p.60.

²² Aiya, *Manual*, pp, 525-6.

²³ Kawashima, *Missionaries*, p.61.

²⁴ Aiya, *Manual*, p. 531.

²⁵ TCR, RO (Special Files), Dis. 18 of 1869, NAI.

²⁶ Since the dress or attire of people reflected their social origin, people, especially subaltern castes tried to overcome the social ordering on the basis of it. The upper castes resented the uniform style of dressing because of the fear of losing their status if 'all' the people were following the same mode of dressing and believed that it may erase hierarchy. Devika argues that in the nineteenth century Kerala society, there were attempts to alter the *jati* based ordering of human relations with that of reforming of castes and to become modern communities. J Devika, 'The Aesthetic Women: Re-forming Female Bodies and Minds in Early Twentieth -Century Keralam', *MAS*, XXXIX, 2, 2005, p.461.

that of denial of uniform dressing. The effort of the agitating groups was to demand 'freedom' common to all, by rejecting the very differences that distinguished between them and make them subordinated to the superior castes, and in this way they tried to erase the social hierarchies. This project was carried on even after the disturbances of the mid 18th century,²⁷ and curiously some particular form of dressing came to be accepted as Malayali identity in the later period. We find in the 20th century newspapers advertisements appearing for clothes and attires 'for all'. The naming of individuals also followed *jati* norms in Travancore that Sanskrit names were not allowed for lower castes.²⁸

2.3.3. The Beginning of Public Works Department

There was no distinct agency for the execution of public work in Travancore and it was only in 1833 that a separate *Marahmat* department was started at the Huzur Cutchery(secretariat) for this purpose.²⁹ It was constituted primarily to cater to the needs of palace buildings.³⁰ It was in only in 1860's that a Public Works Department started in Travancore which began to 'open up the country' engaging in more public constructions and widening the scope of labourers and forcing up their wages.³¹ From there on, the work of Public Works Department remained under two heads; the *Marahmat*, looking after palace construction, maintenance and other small works under a native superintendent and Public Works Department looking after larger constructions, especially roads under an European superintendent.³² Jeffrey argues that the

²⁷ The first letter in the correspondence column of *Paschima Taraka* and *Kerala Pataka*, while commenting on the benefit of coffee plantations says that coffee works is very beneficial to the country, because it gives employment to a great number of women and children who have no particular occupation, but complains that the Tiyya coolie females grow very loose in their habits, and when walking on public roads, or in a company they express themselves so indecently as to shock the modesty of the sex and urges their employers or the people of their own caste to take measures to keep up delicacy. See, *NNR*, 15 May 1875.

²⁸ When higher castes had names like Raman, Krishnan, Parameswaran, Thathri, Nangeli or Nangema, lower caste names ran as Karumaban, Kandam, Kali, Koitha etc. In some cases when Govindan was used by higher castes, the lower castes had its corrupted form of Konnan. See, Samuel Nellimukal, *Keralathile Samuhika Parivarthanam: Samuhika Charithra Padanam*, Kottayam, 2003, pp.49-50.

²⁹ *TAR*, 1872-73, pp 3-4.

³⁰ *Ibid*.

³¹ Jeffrey, *Decline*, p.91.

³² The expenditure of public works completed by the Chief-Engineers and *Marahmat* departments together constituted 16.18 of the total revenue in 1890-91. In 1042 the expenditure was only Rs. 4,43,345, and from there it rose to 10,81,000 in 1066(1890-91). *TAR*, 1890-91, pp.141-2. The PWD, more over encouraged contractors and entrepreneurs and the workers were paid better wages, which improved their lot in the society. See, Jeffrey, *Decline*, p.92.

creation of laborers for the Public Works Department offered mobility for the lower castes, since *ulliyam*³³ or free labour fall in to disuse by this time. The rise in expenditure of Public works department talks not only about changing modes of public expenditure or of communication, especially roads that connected the various places in Travancore; Western Ghats plantations with the port cities but also that of the substantial growth in terms of the mobility and income of the labouring castes. The labourers received higher wages than usually paid under slavery.³⁴ The communication by T. Rama Row to the Civil Engineer of Travancore speaks much about the government concern for the coolie labourers not only in their material conditions but also in their 'decency'. Rama Row urged the civil Engineer to urge the coolie women under his jurisdiction to conform to the norms of decency of covering the upper parts of the body as desired by the sircar. He added that there was nothing to prevent the sircar from making decent dressing a condition of employing the coolie women and in the long time the coolies may be induced in to decency.³⁵ In this respect a 'class' of laborers emerged under colonialism in Travancore, from the lower castes such as Ezhavas and Pulayas and contributed significantly to their mobility. Therefore, it is found that the institutions like, Public Works Department not only enhanced communication facilities but also widened the horizon of mobility of the lower castes.

2.3.4. Plantations, Reclamations and Development

The forests were valuable, the soil was good, the seasons were favourable, and labour was cheap. With all these advantages, it was very discouraging that the bulks of the people were poor and were struggling for existence.³⁶

-----A.Harihara Iyer

³³ Ulliyam service rendered by low classes were of two fold, one that of forced manual labour and the second that of supply of vegetables and provisions. A different kind of service known as viruthi or feudal service existed along side. Suresh Kumar, *Political Evolution in Kerala: Travancore 1859-1938*, New Delhi, p.14. While Jeffrey maintains that Ulliyam fall into disuse after some time, Suresh Kumar maintains that it was abolished in 1865. See, Jeffrey, *Decline*, p. 97 and Suresh Kumar, *Political Evolution*, p.14.

³⁴ Jeffrey, *Decline*, p.98.

³⁵ TCR, (Resident Office Special Files), Dis. 18 of 1869, NAI.

³⁶ A Harihara Iyer, speaking at the 1911 Proceedings of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. See, *SMPA*, 1911, p. 15.

Here is a fine field for cooperation in which the agricultural, industrial and trading interests and the representatives of different sections and religions can combine and act in union for the promotion of the common good. In the very act of combining with people of different castes and creeds, all prejudices and sectional differences which are so injurious to social efficiency will disappear.³⁷

-----Dewan of Travancore

Tracing the economic development of Travancore opens up two possibilities. One is that of emphasizing the interests of colonial capital and the other is that of tracing the emergence of native capital emulating and some times opposing the advent and dominance of colonial capital. For this study, the emergence of native capital is traced in order give an overview of the developments taking place and its impacts on the society and economy rather than looking into the issues of native capital versus colonial capital. In fact the colonial capital, especially in plantations, was emulated by the natives in a way that they could eventually resist the lobby of the colonial planters. The interrogation into native capital also helps us to understand in the mobility attained by various castes/communities in Travancore. More over our interest in tracing the economic development in this period is to see, how they helped in the emergence of newspapers in the later period, and how they determined the agenda of the press in the later period.

The *Pattom* proclamation of 1865,³⁸ declaring the *Pattom* lands held by the sircar as private, heritable and saleable property of the tenants was an important land tenurial measure of the period.³⁹ The sircar declared in the *Pattom* proclamation that henceforth the wet lands, garden lands or dry lands held under *Ven Pattom*, *Vettolivoo Pattom*, *Maraya Pattom*, *Olavoo Pattom* and *Mara Pattom*⁴⁰ will be available to the tenants as 'private, heritable, saleable and other wise transferable property.'⁴¹ According to the fifth provision of the

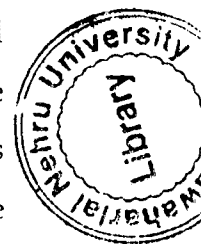
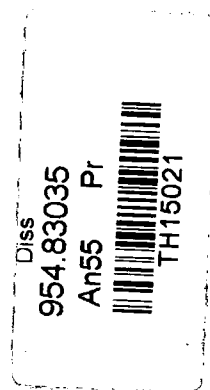
³⁷ Dewan of Travancore, speaking at the first meeting of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, Ibid, p.3

³⁸ The *Pattom* proclamation was issued on 2 June 1865 by the Maharaja of Travancore. *Pattom* literally means the rent on land.

³⁹ Nagam Aiya, *Manual II*, p. 544-6.

⁴⁰ These are various kinds of land tenures in Travancore of the period.

⁴¹ See, '*Pattom* Proclamation' reproduced in *The Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, Vol. I, 1010-1086 ME (1835-1911)*, Trivandrum, 1948, pp.34 -9



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proclamation, the tenants were given the authority "to lay out labour and capital on their lands of the aforesaid description to any extent they please, being sure of continued and secure possession".⁴² The result of this important proclamation was that the tenants became owners of the lands they were cultivating and a market for lands was thus created, since it became a saleable commodity which could be owned, sold, transferred or even be mortgaged. The Syrian Christians and Ezhavas, along with the Nayars were the major tenants of *Pattom* lands and they came to own a large tracts of land as a result of the proclamation.⁴³ However, because of partition of joint family (taravad property) Nayars didnt make much benefit out of the pattom proclamation because the received lands had to be partitioned among the members of the divided taravad. This measure did not alter the material condition of slave castes like Pulayas and Parayas too. However, the ascendance of Syrian Christians and Ezhavas threatened the dominance enjoyed by Nayars in land holding.⁴⁴The opening of the high ranges of Western Ghats for plantations, first for coffee and later for cardamom, tea and rubber and the Public Works Department constructing roads to these plantation districts etc constituted in a large measure in inculcating a capitalist farming among the natives. The Dewan of Travancore noted in 1904 that the yield of tea in 1903 was 6 million pounds and that "there has been a demand for land during the years for cultivation of new products, namely rubber and superior varieties of cotton."⁴⁵ Among the natives, it was the Syrian Christians who were first drawn to the plantation sector. Paul E. Baak notes the lobby of European planters exerting high pressure on the Travancore Durbar⁴⁶ and how the coming of rubber plantations in the interest of the native Syrian Christians⁴⁷ slowly loosening the hold of the European planters by the 1890's. The clout of the European planters over Travancore sircar becomes clear when we analyse the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jeffrey, *Decline*, p.150

⁴⁴ Ibid, Jeffrey calls it the 'decline Nayar dominance'.

⁴⁵ Dewan's address in the SMPA of 1904. See, SMPA, 1904, p.3.

⁴⁶ Paul E Baak, 'Plantation Lobby in the Nineteenth Century: Implications for Travancore', *EPW*, Vol.27, No. 33, 1992.

⁴⁷ Paul E Baak, *Plantation Production and Political Power: Plantation Development in South-west India in a Long-Term Historical Perspective, 1743-1963*, Delhi, 1997. pp.138-207

Coffee Regulations passed in Travancore, which were conceived to be more stringent than in the British ruled states. The Regulation of II of 1054(1878-1879) was meant for protecting the interests of the coffee growers in Travancore. The stringent provisions of the Regulation included the strict registering of coffee sold, bartered, exchanged or received, in a record book, with out which the transaction was held punishable. It was also stipulated that coffee shall not be gathered, moved, loaded or unloaded on any coffee estate between sun set and sun rise.⁴⁸ Though the Act was on the lines of the one existing in British India, the provisions in the Travancore Regulation include, the possession of coffee in the coffee region (estates), by others other than planters as illegal possession, unless it was proved to be for home consumption. Unlike in British India, the planters wanted the Act to be operational in the low country too, though this demand was not met.⁴⁹ Elaborating on plantations and newspapers, Jeffrey makes an interesting connection between the commercial interests of the Kandathil family who owned the Malayala Manorama Company and the setting up of the *Malayala Manorama*, to show the links between communication and capitalism in Travancore.⁵⁰

Reclaiming of lands from the water bodies for agricultural operations had a long history in Travancore and especially in Kuttanad, popularly known as the 'rice bowl of Kerala'. However by the mid nineteenth century land reclamation found a new momentum mainly to meet shortages in the supply of paddy.⁵¹ Though there was governmental pressure on land reclamation, unlike in other parts of the world, private entrepreneurs carried out land reclamation in Kuttanad⁵². Madhav Row, the Dewan of Travancore wrote enthusiastically in 1865 that "the native is reclaiming wastes in the plains, and the European is utilizing the forests on the mountains-the two classes thus working apart and

⁴⁸ Coffee Act reproduced in 'Acts and proclamations' of Travancore, pp 52-4

⁴⁹ TAR, 1878-79, pp.1and 2.

⁵⁰ Robin Jeffrey, 'Communication and Capitalism in India: 1750-2010', *South Asia*, XXV, 2,2002.

⁵¹ In the 1850s there was a shortage in supply of paddy, the staple food of the region, and paddy had to be imported from places such as Bengal, Burma and Thailand.

⁵²VR Pillai and PGK Panikkar, *Land Reclamation in Kerala*, Bombay, 1965, pp.13and 21

peaceably'.⁵³ Land reclamation in Travancore can be divided into phases according to the area of land reclaimed and the kind of technology used; manual, oil, electricity etc. The 'Grow more food' campaign during the world war years proved to be a period of pace reclamations.⁵⁴ A group of land lords, mainly from the Nayar and Syrian Christian communities emerged during this period and they had representatives in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, who raised concerns related to reclamations. Speaking in the first meeting of SMPA, a member, C J Kurien of Kottayam asked for the permission to reclaim the Vembanadu Lake⁵⁵ for the paddy cultivation and felt that expert opinion has so far not condemned such reclamation. In the same meeting Kavalam Neelakanda Pillai, another member and a pioneer in land reclamation has claimed that himself had reclaimed 10000 acres (4000hectares) of land and the prohibitory order on reclamation⁵⁶ in lieu of the silting of the Cochin Harbour may be withdrawn, since it was not a "sound one" (argument).⁵⁷ The reclamation efforts were often quoted in the Administrative Reports of Travancore worthy to be emulated.⁵⁸

2.3.5. Regulations of the Companies Act

Regulation I of 1063⁵⁹ (of Travancore) was issued to provide for the incorporation, management and winding up of trading companies and other association to encourage the formation of Joint Stock Companies in Travancore.⁶⁰ This Regulation was adapted from Indian Companies Act No. VI of 1882 as amended by Act No. VI of 1887.⁶¹ The first Company to be registered⁶² in

⁵³Velu Pillai, *Manual II*, p.545.

⁵⁴ Pillai, *Reclamation*, p.19

⁵⁵ Vambanad Lake is the largest estuarine system and a transitional eco zone between the land and sea on the west coast of India. Vembanadu Lake is the most reclaimed region in Travancore.

⁵⁶ In 1903 conceding to the request from the Madras Government to save the Cochin harbour from silting, Travancore government issued orders to stop reclamations, though it was vacated in 1912. See, Pillai, *Reclamations*, 18-9

⁵⁷ *SMPA Proceedings*, 1904, p.22

⁵⁸ TAR,1063(1887-88).pp.1and 182

⁵⁹ 1888

⁶⁰ TAR, 1887-88,p.1

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.182

⁶² The company was registered on 14 April 1888 with 600 shares of Rs 500 each with a gross capital of Rs 300000. See, TAR , (1893-94),p.81

Travancore was 'The Travancore Paper Mills Company', at Punaloor, a southern Travancore town on the Quilon -Shencottah Road, "for which raw materials were readily available in the vicinity".⁶³ It was a European venture with some native Syrian Christian entrepreneurs taking share in it and was promoted by the Cameroon Company.⁶⁴ The Travancore sircar lent an amount of Rs.3 lakhs on an interest of 4% per annum for 15 years and took 50 shares in the undertaking.⁶⁵ The Punaloor Paper Mills was followed by many Companies in Travancore, including 'The Malayala Manorama Company' and 'The Malayali Vyaparee Sangham'(Malayali Merchant Association) in 1889⁶⁶. According to the Travancore Administrative Report of 1901-02, there were 29 companies working in Travancore with an aggregate capital of Rs. 12, 52,425.⁶⁷There were 32 factories were in operation in Travancore during this period with 3478 hands been employed including 743 females.⁶⁸ According to the Census Reports of 1911 there were 12 tea plantations, 10 rubber plantations, 25 factories, including 8 brick and tiles factories constituting a total of 108 under the title 'industries', employing 10482 males and 4459 females were functioning in Travancore.⁶⁹ Travancore stood first in the number of registered companies among native states with 447 companies followed by Mysore with 185 companies during 1939-40.⁷⁰

The coming of institutions like banking also accrues greater significance in this regard. The early Banks in Kerala were founded mostly by Christians and there was concentration of banking institutions at Tiruvalla in Central Travancore and Trichur in Cochin State.⁷¹In Travancore, the early banks were

⁶³ TAR,1887-88, p.182

⁶⁴ Eapen Varghese, father of Kandathil Varghese Mappilai who floated the Malayala Manorama Company, had share in the Punaloor Paper Mill Company.

⁶⁵ TAR, 1887-88.p.182. However, the Company needed more capital than anticipated and had to be wounded up in 1893, and was later on reopened with Nattukkottai Chettiyars buying the Company from Cameroon Company. The company ran successfully till recently.

⁶⁶ TAR 1093-94, p. 81. The Malayala Manorama Company was registered on 4 March 1889 and the Sangham on 13 July 1889. The former was for publishing newspaper and the latter was a trading company.

⁶⁷ TAR,1901-02, p.17

⁶⁸ Ibid, p 10.

⁶⁹ Census of Travancore, 1911, Part IV, Report, p.295

⁷⁰ *Report on the Joint Stock Companies in British India and in the States of Hyderabad, Baroda, Mysore, Travancore and Cochin, 1939-40*, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, p.3

⁷¹ MA Ommmen, p. 24. Incidentally both these places are centres of Syrian Christian population

concentrated in rural villages and often were attached to the local parishes. The parishes had developed a system of lending to and borrowing from its laity in order to look after the economic well being of the latter, and over a period these institutions turned out to be commercial banks.⁷² Travancore Bank Started in Tiruvalla in 1893 can be understood as the first of such an institution in Kerala.⁷³ These banking Institutions coming with the other Joint Stock Companies had chartered the economic expansion in Travancore.

2.4. Social and Intellectual Changes in Travancore

Educational institutions imparting 'modern' ideals in Travancore have a history beginning from the early decades of the nineteenth century. It was in 1834 that the first English School was opened in Travancore by the Mr.J Robrts.⁷⁴ The school was a 'private' school and the government paid the fees of 80 pupils for its running and later on the government took over it and made it a government school. Hence forth it was known as the Maharajas' Free School at Trivandrum.⁷⁵ By 1880s the instruction was imparted through English Schools, Anglo-Vernacular Schools and the Vernacular Schools owned either by government, private agencies and those working with the aid of Government or Grant in aid Schools.⁷⁶ In the English and the Anglo-Vernacular Schools teaching was mainly in English and in the Vernacular schools in native tongue, Malayalam or Tamil. In 1880, English or Anglo-vernacular schools consist of a State College at Trivandrum, under the management of a European Principal, 22 state District Schools and 5 aided schools under the control of a Superintendent, Government English Schools at Trivandrum and the Zenana Mission Schools in the Fort of Trivandrum.⁷⁷

Though before 1850s the educational institutions were run by either the government or the missionaries, by the end of the century native agencies also began to run schools and educational institutions. In 1886-87 of the 675 aided

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid. p.27

⁷⁴TAR,1872-73,p.118

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ TAR, 1889-90, p. 148.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 148-9.

schools in Travancore, 14 were owned by the Travancore *Malayali Sabha* and 245 were owned by other native managements and the rest 416 were owned by the missionaries.⁷⁸

As part of these efforts in the field of education in Kerala in general and Travancore in particular, there emerged reading clubs and debating centres by the late nineteenth century, including the National Club at Trivandrum.⁷⁹ The club at Maharajas College Trivandrum is noteworthy for the reason that it was the only one of its kind (College club) in the presidency in 1890⁸⁰. Apart from these the Travancore sircar also constituted a committee to conduct public lectures. In 1887-88, of the thirteen lectures delivered under the public lecture committee, six were in English, four were in Malayalam and three were in Tamil. Seven lectures were on scientific topics, four were literary and one each on sanitation and agriculture.⁸¹ In 1901-02, ten lectures were delivered. Of these eight were in English and two were in Malayalam. The total cost for the conducting of lectures in that year was Rs. 500. The topics ranged from sanitation to science to literature and art.⁸²

Two topics recurring in these lectures were science and hygiene. In the school textbooks of the period also contain lessons on hygiene and sanitation. The syllabus for the IIIrd class in 1883-84 include among others writing, arithmetic, Geography, hygiene-the principles of health etc For the IVth class principles of sanitation and composition was included. ⁸³

⁷⁸ TAR,1886-87,p.128

⁷⁹ Jeffrey, *Decline*. p. 241.

⁸⁰ TAR, 1889-90,p. 123

⁸¹ TAR,1887-88, p.156

⁸² In 1887-88, as stated earlier, of the 13 lectures one was on sanitation and there were lectures on domestic science, general scope of science, the motions of earth according to Hindu astronomy etc were given. In that year the government proposed to undertake apportion of the cost of printing and publishing of those lectures. In 1889-90, the topics of lectures delivered include, books and how to read them, familiar facts in physiology, female education, the brain, health and wealth etc in the 1901-02 period, the lectures were assisted by slide show.

⁸³ TAR, 1883-84.

2.4.1. Literacy and Printing in Travancore

Printing of newspapers and journals in Kerala had its beginning in the interests of the missionaries. *Rajyasamacharam*, literally meaning the 'news of the kingdom', published by Basel Mission Missionary Herman Gundert is the first newspaper published in Kerala,⁸⁴ though some studies show that *Malayala Panchangam* (Malayalam Almanac) published by Gundert himself was the first newspaper of Kerala.⁸⁵ *Rajyasamacharam* was a newspaper meant for proselytizing, emphasizing the *Rajyam* (kingdom) as the *Rajyam* of God. *Pachimodayam* published in October 1847 by the same publishers was somewhat different from the first one, trying to discuss some 'secular' matters like western thought.⁸⁶ The idea of this newspaper was to transfer the new sciences to the people of the East.⁸⁷ Its contents include *jyotisham* (astronomy), Geography, *Keralamahatmyam* (Kerala history told in legends) and travelogues.⁸⁸ *Jnananikshepam* or 'Treasury of Knowledge' published in 1848 from Kottayam was the first newspaper published in Travancore.⁸⁹ *Jnananikshepam* primarily catered to the teaching of Bible and preaching of Christianity though essays and stories also appeared in it.⁹⁰ In the first volume, there was an essay titled 'Man'. *Jnananikshepam* contained regional news, foreign news etc.⁹¹ *Vidyasamgraham* published in 1864 as the college magazine of CMS college Cottayam (Kottayam) also contained many secular topics.⁹² A number of newspapers started in many parts of Malabar and Cochin bearing the name Kerala during this time, viz. *Keralam* (1866), *Kerala Pathaka* (1870), *Keralopakari* (1874), *Kerala Deepakam* and *Malayala Mitram* (1878), *Kerala Chandrika* (1879), *Kerala Mitram* (1881), *Kerala Patrika* (1884), *Kerala Sanchari* (1886) *Keraliyasugunabodhini* (1886) etc. However, many consider that a change in Malayalam newspaper publishing in Kerala

⁸⁴ Puthuppally Raghavan, *Kerala Pathrapravarthanacharitham*, Kottayam, 1985. p.26

⁸⁵ N.Sam, *Malayala Pathrapravarthanam Pathonpatham Nottandil*, Kottayam, 2003. p.20

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 23-4

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.24.

⁸⁹ Raghvan, *Kerala*.39

⁹⁰ N. Sam, *Malayalathrapravarthanam*. p.32

⁹¹ Ibid., p.32

⁹² Ibid.

began with the publishing of *Kerala Mitram* from Cochin in 1881 by Devji Bhimji, a Gujarati Merchant, with Kandathil Varghese Mappila as its editor.⁹³ In Travancore *Malayali Sabha* owned *Malayali* started a kind of political journalism that was carried forward by newspapers including *Nasrani Deepika*, *Malayala Manorama*, *Svadesabhimani* etc. The development of gender consciousness is reflected in the Women's journals published during this period. Journals like *Keraliya Sugunabodhini*, *Sarada*, *Mahila* etc debated issues ranging from 'female education', 'modern women' womanliness', 'the place of women in society' etc. Devika traces the emergence of such journals which discussed various gender issues with the constitution of a gendered social space in Keralam/ Travancore during this period.⁹⁴

2.4.2. Legislature

A Legislative Council was established in Travancore in 1888. Regulation II of 1063 (of Travancore) provided for the establishment of a council for the purpose of making Laws and Regulations.⁹⁵ The measure was aimed to guarantee the welfare of the native people and to give due consideration to things they demanded.⁹⁶ The council was composed of 8 members in which at least two were ex-officio members and the council has to be presided over by the Dewan. All bills have to be first introduced in the council and has to be passed, after that the bill was sent the Maharaja for ratification.⁹⁷ The council became operational in 1064(1888-89) and five bills were introduced in that year. They included a bill relating to the better management of state run postal service (*anchal*), on constituting a High Court, bills to revise and reenact laws relating to Civil Procedure and Criminal Procedure and a bill for collecting arrears due to the state. In the next year, bills for determining the rights of *Jemmi* (landlord) and tenants were introduced and another bill for taking Census in 1891 was also

⁹³ AD Hari Sama, *Kandathil Varghese Mappila*, Kottayam, 1953. p.15-6. Also ,see, Puthuppally Raghavan, *Kerala*,p.68

⁹⁴ Devika, *Imagining Women's Social Space In Keralam*, WP, Trivandrum,2002

⁹⁵ TAR 1887-88, pp.1-3

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

contemplated.⁹⁸ However, the legislative council remained less powerful in terms of its powers.

2.5. Memorials: The Beginning of Political Movements

The late nineteenth century is considered as the period of the genesis of political consciousness among the people of Travancore.⁹⁹ The three political movements in the late nineteenth century, which gave political expression to the 'native Malayalis' were the Malayali memorial and Counter memorial of 1891,¹⁰⁰ followed by Ezhava Memorial of 1896¹⁰¹. Apart from understanding the submitting of these memorials as a handi work of the English educated elites and land lords¹⁰² and that of Census operations¹⁰³, it is argued that the submitting of these memorials or petitions raised questions of nativity, 'nationality' or a sense of region, at least among the dominant groups of Travancore. A close reading of the memorial makes clear the attempt to create a Malayali Hindu identity and raises questions on the excluded groups. Before moving on to the Memorials, let us examine the emergence of caste/community associations which were pre runner to the Memorials in Travancore and also the composition official in Travancore administration.

By 1880s community associations began to emerge in Travancore. James Chiriyankandathu locates¹⁰⁴ the communal associations as bodies built up on shared religious practices or common religious identities among the English educated non Brahmin public servants. However, recent scholarships understands these communal bodies as the means with which caste groups of

⁹⁸ TAR,1888-89,p.1

⁹⁹ Suresh Kumar, *Political Evolution in Kerala*,p.2

¹⁰⁰ TCRO, Dis. 239 of 1891, NAI. All reference /quotation are from this file, unless/other wise specified.

¹⁰¹ Ezhava Memorial was submitted on 3 September 1896, to the Maharaja of Travancore by Dr. Palpu and others. For a full length memorial, see, Koshy M J, *Genesis Of Political Consciousness in Kerala*, Trivandru,1972,pp.190-200. Every reference/quotation of Ezhava Memorial is from it, unless otherwise specified.

¹⁰² In the Malayali Memorial, it was stated that the signatories of the Memorial included, many officials belonging to the Revenue, Judicial, Magisterial, Educational, Engineering, Police etc and about fifty graduates and land lords. K P Sankara Menon, an advocate at the High Court of Madras forwarded the Memorial to the Maharaja.

¹⁰³ Dick Koolman, 'The Strength of Numbers: Enumerating Communities in India's Princely States', *South Asia*, XX, 1, 1997.

¹⁰⁴ James Chiriyankandathu, 'Communities at the Polls: Electoral Politics and the Mobilization of Communal Groups in Travancore', *MAS*,XXVII,3,1993

similar status standardised their religious practices and engaged with modernity¹⁰⁵. Syrian Christian Jathkya Sangham and Malayali Sabha were the first communal associations in Travancore. Both these bodies owned newspapers; *Nasrani Deepika* of Sangham and *Malayali* of Sabha. These associations may be understood as the fore runner to other community associations coming in the twentieth century including, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam(1903), Sadhujanapripalanayogam (1907), Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha(1909), Christiya Sadhu Jana Sangham(1912)Nair Service Society(1914), Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha(1936) etc. it is in this context that one should look at the 'memorials' of the 1890's as an important document expressing political and cultural identity of a group of people; 'Malayalis'. Before getting in to these we need to examine the conditions in the Travancore Durbar of the period.

Ever since the establishment of Travancore state in the 1730's by Martanda Varma, the higher posts in the Travancore Durbar was occupied by the Brahmins from out side Travancore or their descendants; the Tamil Brahmins. Dewans of Travancore were sarcastically called 'Dewan Swami', Swami being an honorific title of the Tamil Brahmins. The Tamil Brahmins held that it was because of their superior intellectual competence and of high education that make them enjoy such administrative positions. A letter appeared in a Malayalam newspaper brings out the 'rivalry', more closely between the Tamil Brahmins and the 'natives', especially the Nairs, the dominant castes of the period.

A second letter says that if the report be true that Gopala Rau, of the Kumbhakonam college, has sworn that he will cut off his moustache should a Malayali ever pass the Master of Arts Examination, the time for the fulfillment of the oath has providentially arrived, since one Thanu Pillai from Travancore succeeded in the last MA Examination of the Madras University. The writer adds that the contemptuous remarks of the opponents of the soil, that he latter, however qualified cannot to rise above the rank of a Sub Magistrate or a Magistrate at the utmost, have already been falsified by the fact of a *Malayali lady having given birth to a Diwan*, and this fact ought to have put an end to such disparaging

¹⁰⁵ Devika, *Aesthetic Women*.p.461

remarks, the continuance of which is really scandalous.¹⁰⁶ (Emphasised).

It is in this context that we are reading the memorials of the period, for which the census operations were very influential. The counting of population in Travancore began with surveyors Ward and Conner, who during their survey estimated the population at 906,587 in the 1820s. The next counting after 20 years put the number at 1,280,668. All these were rough estimates.

A regular enumeration on well devised methods was undertaken for the first time in the year 1875. The population of Travancore in 1875 was put at 2,311,379¹⁰⁷. The population rose to 2,401,158 in 1881 and 2,557,736 in 1891.¹⁰⁸ Kooiman says that census reports gave people the right to lay claim on public resources like sircar jobs, admission into schools etc. However one cannot hold a position that Census Reports exclusively stimulating collective political actions. The school textbooks, college text books etc gave lessons in European political philosophy and the leaders who pioneered these movements were English educated elites and reformers.¹⁰⁹ Therefore these were the results of a long term process of political ideals being imparted through schools and textbooks.

As stated earlier, Malayali Memorial was submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore in 1891 by a group of people including 'Nambudiris, Nairs, Tiers (Tiyas) Syrian Christians and East Indians'. Their contention was that they were 'denied a fair share in the Government of their country and was systematically excluded from the higher grades of its service'. The memorialists claimed that the *pardesi*(foreign) Brahmins had cornered the higher positions in the Travancore government and was denying the due to the 'Malayalis'. The petition began with the statement that the, 'Malayali Sudras in Travancore under their own government ruled over by members of their own nationality, are in a far worse position at present than their brethren in Malabar under an alien government'. The differences between the appointment of 'natives' in

¹⁰⁶ *Paschima Taraka and Kerala Pataka*, March 1880, NNR

¹⁰⁷ *Aiya, Manual I*, p.389

¹⁰⁸ *Census, 1891, Vol. II, Appendix*, p.4-5

¹⁰⁹ *Jeffrey, Decline*. p. 212

Travancore and British ruled Malabar was made to show the 'injustice' meted out to the natives of Travancore by their own Government. The memorialists wanted the Maharaja to define the term 'native of Travncore' and wanted to restrict the appointments as much as possible to none but 'natives' of Travancore, irrespective of class, caste or creed.' A total of 10038 'men' signed the memorial of which the name and designation of 250 men and their designations were given at the end of the memorial.

The Counter memorial submitted by Tamil Brahmins and others began as a reply to the Malayali memorial, showing their 'surprise and regret over the submitting of the Malayali memorial and to 'remove a stigma which has been unjustly and unnecessarily cast upon the administration of Travancore'. The counter memorial assured the His Highness that they 'do not at all share in the complaints, animadversions and criticisms expressed in the Malayali memorial'. First of all they questioned the calculation of Hindus in Travancore in the Malayali memorial by excluding many Hindus, including the non-Malayali Brahmins, and Pandi Sudras, Vellalars, the artisan classes, Shannars, Pariahs etc who are really natives of the country. The counter memorial identified these groups as people who were descendants of migrants and argued for a similar migrant past for the Malayali Sudras. The counter memorial further questioned the exclusion of groups like Shannars and the Pariahs and argued that the 'cry of foreigners raised against people of same nationality, nay, even of the same classes, who have long settled in the country is a meaningless cry'. The counter memorial found the coming of foreigners at the special invitation by the Maharajas and their trusted advisers. They credited with Dewan Madhav Row, one among them for making Travancore 'The Model Native State in India'. At the end, the counter memorial warned that the departure from the principle of selecting the best and fittest men irrespective of considerations of caste or creed, native or foreigner will bring evil consequences to the state and to the people. The counter memorial argued that they were patriotic and were serving Travancore with devotion and it was because of the lack of education among the

memorialists which stands in the way of their progress and positions in administration.

The third in the sequence, known as Ezhava memorial was submitted by the Ezhavas under their leader Palpu to the Maharaja¹¹⁰ of Travancore on 3 September 1896. It was in reply to a 'cool reply' that was given to the Malayali memorial by the Travancore durbar. The Government discounted the questions of 'natives' versus 'foreigners' in Travancore durbar and regarding Ezhavas, the Durbar held that the social inferiority of the former would only lead to failure.¹¹¹ The Ezhava memorial sought to draw the attention to the disabilities of the Ezhavas, especially the denial of educational and employment opportunities for them in the schools and Travancore administration¹¹² and an instance of discrimination showed how qualified Ezhavas were denied jobs in Travancore administration.¹¹³ Demanding an equal treatment of Ezhavas along with other caste groups in Travancore, the memorial raised the case of Ezhavas of Travancore and argued that they were treated in a much better way in the British Malabar under British rule.¹¹⁴

What is interesting to a researcher in history about these memorials is the role they played by in Travancore politics and society. Undoubtedly, as many historians have argued, it was the first modern political expression of people in Travancore¹¹⁵. It was also the first time that an identity of the 'natives' sought to be created, as against the others. At the last pages of Malayali memorial the demand was made to define the term "Native of Travancore" to include social groups of the memorial and to exclude foreign Brahmins. For them, asking for a definition of 'nativity' was linked with the questions of nationality. In the Malayali memorial, a complaint was made that the condition of natives in Malabar was far better than that of Travancore, where the people are governed

¹¹⁰ In fact the memorial was addressed to Dewan of Travancore, S Sankara Soobier. See, Koshy, *Genesis*, p.190

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p, 35

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 190-193

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 192

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 192-99

¹¹⁵ Koshy, *Genesis of Political*, p 30.

by people of their own nationality. If we take out the concept of nation as a loose usage and given category of the period, we may more arguably make a case for a kind of political region' coming through these movements. As we are going to examine, in many a ways the idea of native state as region is carried over in the newspapers of the time. This leads us to raise the question of native states as understood in the memorial and its relation with the empire.

Malayali memorial stated that the "Englishmen who are practically the conquerors of India" have shown themselves to be "extremely solicitous of the welfare of the natives". The measures of British Government in appointing natives in administrative positions are to be understood as an "extreme solicitude of the British Government". But the continuing sentence warns the foreign Brahmins "not to play Englishman in this state" (Travancore) since they are not conquerors. This makes us to think about the relation of native Travancore with that of British. It is argued that even when they were availing of the conditions of British rule in India in terms of governance, education etc they preferred to keep a distance from the 'conquerors' and to imagine a nationality/ region for themselves where they can enjoy autonomy even if it is limited.

The opening paragraph of the Malayali memorial stated the Malayali Hindus as those "who follow the Marumakkathayam (matriliny) system of inheritance or a mixed system of Makkathayam (patriliny) and Marumakkathayam and whose *kudumi* or tuft of hair is in the front". This is evidently an attempt to define the identity of the Malayali Hindus in lieu of their bodily practices and inheritance practices. We argue that till the submitting of the Malayali memorial Malayali was a puzzling category referring only to a certain section of the castes, the Malayali Sudras or Nayars and this makes a turn with the submitting of Malayali memorial. The constitution of the Malayali Sabha and the constituting of the term 'Malayali' are very interesting in many accounts. 'Malayali' as is known today has not achieved a meaning connoting a linguistic community in the 1870's. Arunima argues that in the late 19th century

'Malayali' was referred to Nayers.¹¹⁶ She notes the particular editorial published in *Malayala Manorama*, on 'Syrian Christians and Malayalis'¹¹⁷, the latter term referring to Nayers. While agreeing with her argument one can argue that Malayali was a term invented by the Nayers for specific political reasons and its meaning never confined only to the Nayers. In 1883 Samuel Mateer, the LMS missionary in Travancore wrote that, "the *Malayalam Sudras*, of whom the better class are called NAYARS (or lords), are the bulk of the respectable population"¹¹⁸ in Travancore(Emphasized). According to the 1891 census there were 75 recorded subdivisions for Nayers, totaling 483,725 of the total population of Kerala.¹¹⁹ One could argue that it was the amalgamation of 75 castes that constituted the Nayar community, than a community having 75 subdivisions. However, except in the Census Reports, the annual Administration Reports of Travancore refer to Malayali Sudras and Pandya Sudras, the former referring to the Nayar castes and the latter to Tamil speaking Vellalas and other groups. In the Malayali Memorial, the chief architects of which were Nayers themselves, the Nayers called themselves as Malayala Sudras. It is argued that the colonial classification stipulated the four fold varna classification in their understanding of native Indian society and many castes were identified as Sudras.¹²⁰ Sudras being a less honorific term may have been resented by the landed castes like Nayers and may have opted for 'Malayali' especially after the constitution of Malayali Sabha. However, the question over Malayali has been made clear by the Census Reports of 1901:

The Nayers form the bulk of the Sudra population of Malabar and hold a position in respect of caste next only to the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and higher classes of the Ambalvasis. The term Malayali is sometimes used, especially by Pandi or east coast Sudras in contradistinction to

¹¹⁶ G.Arunima, *Imagining Communities –differently: Print, Language and the 'public sphere' in Colonial Kerala*, IESHR, XXXXIII, 1, 2006, p.74.

¹¹⁷ *Malayala Manorama* 16 September 1899.

¹¹⁸ S. Mateer, 'Nepotism in Travancore', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, XI, 1883, p.29.

¹¹⁹ Census of Travancore, 1891, Vol.II, p.194.

¹²⁰ The question of a Vaisya trading varna in Kerala has not answered. It is in fact easy to reflect that the groups like Jews, Arabs, Syrian Christians and Muslims along with some Hindu castes may have performed the role of the Vaisyas. Looking for varnas exactly as in the law books may not answer their question. Nayers were in the militia and that they often claimed Kshatriya status in Kerala.

themselves. But being territorial in connotation it cannot rightly apply to any particular caste.¹²¹

However, despite the rhetoric of claiming to represent the Malayalis, the memorialists failed to acknowledge the support of Muslims and the subaltern castes like Pulayas in their questions of nationality or nativity. These groups were avoided citing their low levels of educational attainment. But interestingly, at one point the memorial sought the support of His highness Government by pleading that “even if the Malayali Sudras are comparatively backward in education to others” Among the name and designation of the two fifty signatories of the Malayali memorial available to us, there was not even a single women graduate or land lady. Even when the memorial cried foul on discrimination meted out to them by the ‘foreigners’ there was no mention of discrimination meted out among themselves and with the subaltern ex-slave castes and Muslims. And by the end of the Memorial, as Jeffrey has observed, it became a Nayar memorial citing only the Nayar problems and seeking remedy for them¹²². The memorialists failed to acknowledge the support of foreign Brahmins; many of them were ‘born and brought up’ in Travancore and the narrow definition of nativity played down the claims foreign Brahmins. One may also find that the memorial was a non Brahmin political movement in Travancore because except in the opening paragraph where the Native Brahmins appeared, there was no mention of them in any where in the text.

However, as argued elsewhere the memorial was the first of its kind in Travancore inspired and led by western ideals of enlightenment and democracy. Many of the signatories and all the brains behind the memorial were either trained in or exposed to western philosophy.¹²³ In the memorial, education was understood as a source of Government employment and lamented that the “society has not advanced far enough to make the people value education for its own sake”. However, this picture changed in the following decades, as we understand from the newspapers.

¹²¹ Census Travancore, 1901, Part I, Report, p.318.

¹²² Jeffrey, *Decline*, p.170

¹²³ Ibid.

A significant development during this decade is the creation of 'public' bodies and conducting of public meetings for and on behalf of Malayali Memorial. Though the memorial was ready for submission by July 1890, it was submitted only after 10 January 1891. Jeffrey talks about the kind of consultations and discussions held by leaders of Malayali Sabha, the body of Nayaras with leaders of Ezhavas and Syrian Christians.¹²⁴ In 1891, after submission of memorial, public meetings were held at places like Paroor, Kottayam, Alleppey, Quilon, Nagerkoil and Trivandrum etc¹²⁵. It can be argued that these 'public meetings' were the first of its kind discussing political matters. In these meetings at various places people from social groups such as Nayars, Syrian Christians, Tiyas, Nambudiris an even Eurasians and Muslims were participated. At the Kottayam meeting, the claim of the Nayars (Malayali Sudras) in the memorial as 'the most loyal potion of the His Highness' was questioned by other groups.¹²⁶ About 2000 people including Muslims, who were not represented in the memorial and in fact supported the counter memorial, were also present in the Alleppey Meeting. N Raman Pillai, a Nayar, speaking at the occasion recalled that Muslims were also included in the memorial and the reason why they were omitted from the category of natives was because of the "low standard of education among them". But seemingly, in order to conciliate them he said that "there were persons among them (Muslims) qualified to hold higher appointments in the state", and they "should also be given their legitimate share in the state appointments". He added that if the term native is properly defined, those who were excluded from it would also figure in it. Understandably these were the first of these kind of public meetings were open discussing and debates were held. We find a demand for a Park and Town Hall in Kottayam in the *Malayala Manorama*¹²⁷, which was originally made in the editorial of *Kerala Tharaka*.

¹²⁴ Jeffrey, *Decline*, p. 167-8

¹²⁵ GPP, Sub. File 1, NMML. Parur meeting was held on 23 May , meeting at Kottayam was on 3 June , meeting at Alleppey was on 8 June , Quilon meeting was on 12 June , Nagerkoil meeting on 24th June and at Trivandrum on 3rd July.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ *Malayala Manorama*, 13 July 1901.

The major achievement, if one would say, of the memorials was the constitution of Sri Mulam Legislative Council in 1888 to ensure that "[l]egislative measures so nearly affect the welfare of the people have thus the guarantee of the mature consideration and due deliberation which their importance demands".¹²⁸

2.6. Conclusion

How would one piece together the ideas and institutions of education, reform and development in Travancore and will establish their link with a 'native' press developing as an intellectual and political product of an educated class. As a result of the initiatives in educational activities and with the emergence of a literate population in Travancore, there arose an educated section of people as subscribers for the newspapers along with a group of young men steeped in modern skills and intellect to make a career in journalism. These educational activities and reform measures were to determine the trajectory of the Malayalam press in the late 19th century and the early twentieth century. It is this history that is delineated in the next chapter on the newspapers of the nineteenth -twentieth century Travancore.

¹²⁸ TAR,1887-1888, p.1.

Chapter III

Newspapers and Society in Travancore: 1890-1910

3.1. Introduction

In the first section of this chapter, the ambivalent reception of newspapers in the late nineteenth century Kerala and Travancore is traced. Following it, the 'news papers' as a tangible physical object, its design etc is looked at. In the second section, the attempt is to see how the Malayalam newspapers gained legitimacy among English and Sanskrit newspapers by defining their role in the society and gained popularity and circulation among the readers. This further explains how these newspapers developed arguments around various themes such as education, reform, development, region etc. In the third section, advertisements as reflecting the changing material conditions of the period is traced by reading it along with the conditions and movements of the past decades.

The attempts by the natives of Kerala/Travancore in newspaper publishing led to a proliferation of newspapers in the early twentieth century¹. However, the difficulties faced by the publishers and editors of nineteenth century Travancore/ Kerala were such that the editors found it difficult to acquire a readership among the literate population; the 'reading public'. In his experiences of publishing a newspaper in Malabar, C.Kunjurama Menon, the editor of *Kerala Patrika*², wrote:

¹ In the first issue of *Malayala Manorama* in 1890 it was stated that there were 12 newspapers in Malayalam (Kerala) and 3 newspapers in Travancore. See, CK Kareem, *Malayalathinte Mahavriksham: Malayala Manoramayude Chatithram*, Kochi, 2001, p. 46. In 1901, if the total number of newspapers printed and published in Travancore were less than 20, the number more than doubled to 45 by the 1911 Census. See, Travancore Census, Part I, Report, p. 165.

² *Kerala Patrika* began publishing from Calicut (Kozhikode) in Malabar district on 19 October 1884, by C. Kunjurama Menon is considered to be the first Malayalam newspaper in Malabar. It is interesting to note that Menon got the particular term *Patrika* from that of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. According to NNR, *Kerala Patrika* had a circulation of 800 copies in January 1885. Menon maintains his to be the first Malayalam newspaper in Malabar, choosing to forget the earlier missionary ventures.

My *Kerala Patrika* is the first Malayalam newspaper in Malabar. Though there were one or two Malayalam newspapers in Cochin and Travancore, they were not available in Malabar. Therefore very few people took interest in reading newspapers. Only a few English educated, having some tastes for English newspapers retained their tastes for Malayalam too. The Malayalam speaking natives and those who were proficient in Sanskrit had least interest in Malayalam newspapers. Therefore myself and those associated with the newspaper found it difficult to manage our business. It is only because of some of my gentlemen friends that I could ensure a good circulation for my newspaper³. The most difficult thing was to collect news and information from the rural areas since there was none to send news. The English educated found it worthless to subscribe to and contribute to the Malayalam newspapers. And some of them were not proficient in Malayalam. Many of those writings I had received were (in) poetry and often had to be translated into Malayalam or had to publish it as such in *Kerala Patrika*⁴

Three aspects of the newspapers emerge out of it. Firstly, the newspapers of this period had only a limited circulation⁵, secondly, the readership of newspapers especially that of Malayalam newspapers was limited and thirdly, a lack of 'readable' writings to be published in the newspapers. Though *Kerala Patrika* was a Malabar based newspaper, the situation seems to be the same in Travancore too. We may assume that the situation in the 1880's changed considerably over the years, which is reflected in the growing number of newspapers over the decades even though the complaints over meting out a step motherly attitude towards Malayalam newspapers continued in the twentieth century too.⁶ Apart from it, the Malayalam newspapers still had many more 'problems' to face. The lack of 'publishable' writings continued to be a major problem in the early twentieth century. At least some of the writings carried the trash

³ Despite his concerns of circulation, it is found from Native Newspaper Reports that *Kerala Patrika* always enjoyed a good, stable circulation of 800 copies or more.

⁴ Kunjiramamenon in the preface to Ramakrishna Pillai's *Vrithantha Pathrapravarthanam*, Kerala Press Academy, 1984, Cochin. (Translation mine). The book was originally published in 1912. *Kerala Patrika* began publishing three years before *Indulekha*, the first 'modern' Malayalam novel was published. d the details and circulation of all newspapers. There fore, it is difficult to get at least a near accurate picture of all newspapers. But it seems that the circulation of some of the newspapers fall to 150 or below. For example the circulation of *Kerala Mitram* published from Cochin had only 150 copies of circulation in 1881, in its year of publishing.

⁶ *Malayala Manorama*, 2 February 1901.

language for which the editors found a place, nowhere else but in the waste bin. A celebrated editor of a twentieth century newspaper wrote that, "Our Agasthan who is famous for highly Sanskritic and stylistic language has, this time too, reached the waste bin."⁷ Adding to the woes of the editors was the laziness of the reporters or *lekhakanmar* who often failed to send reports periodically and had to urge them to report the public or *pothu* matters of importance, in brief language.⁸ Despite these short comings it is argued that writing in newspapers brought name and fame, for which, there were attempts at plagiarising articles. A letter published in the *Svadesabhimani* of 2 July 1906 warns editors of a known plagiarist who writes in the name of KG Sankaran Nayar or Narayanan Nayar. Among the other difficulties faced by the newspapers include the non remittance of subscription money either by the readers or by the advertisers, which directly affected the running of newspapers. The journalists of *Svadesabhimani* had to appeal to its readers to remit the dues to the newspaper office as early as possible or within one month.⁹ The 15 May 1907 issue of *Svadesabhimani* published the story of the premature closing of the office of five year old *Malabar Mail*, because of the defaulting subscribers including the Dewan Peishkar of Travancore and author of *Travancore State Manual*, V. Nagam Aiya. We find a large number of newspapers stopping publication after a period of few months or years. Even if one cannot attribute the fall of these newspapers to that of defaulters; either subscribers or advertisers, one could assume that it may be one among the problems faced by the newspapers. The circulation of some of the newspapers fell far below the average, mainly because of the nascent readership of the period.¹⁰

However, with these problems of reception by the readers there were attempts by the newspapers to consolidate a stable readership for them. *Svadesabhimani* of 15 January 1908 talks about a gift coupon or

⁷ 'Editors Waste bin' in *Svadesabhimani*, 2 July 1906.

⁸ *Svadesabhimani*, 30 June 1909

⁹ *Svadesabhimani*, 31 July 1907. In 21 July 1909 *Svadesabhimani* demanded subscription and postage money in advance.

¹⁰ The circulation of *Kerala Mitram* in 1881 was only 150 copies, very low compared to other newspapers.

Sammanavakasa Patrika sending along with one of the issues of the newspaper. It was promised that if the subscriber returns the coupon along with the annual subscription money or if he might have already paid it, he would receive a gift worth between Rupees one and two. *Malayala Manorama* too devised methods to keep a good readership and both these newspaper seemed to have succeeded in their attempt too.¹¹

Many of the editors of the newspapers were poets, writers or public speakers.¹² Jobs were offered to the educated as reporters and clerks in newspaper offices and by 1910 reporters were sought from regions of Travancore, Cochin, Malabar etc. This could be the period when a 'professionals'¹³ in newspaper publishing were emerging.

3.2. The 'Face Value' of the Newspapers

Before going into the news reports and editorials, that largely explained the 'agenda' of the newspaper, let us see how a newspaper 'looked' during this period. Newspapers of this period had four to six pages. The top portion contained the title and subtitle of the newspaper. The sub title usually declared its ideological origins or social background of the owner/s or the newspaper. *Nasrani Deepika*, a newspaper began as the 'voice' of Syrian Christians had a Bible saying as its sub title. *Malayala Manorama* seeking a 'secular constituency' had adopted the insignia of the Travancore state and its slogan. *Svadesabhimani* had declared that it was the 'only Muhammadan Organ in Travancore and Cochin'.

The first page of all the newspapers were often devoted to advertisements featuring artifacts ranging from roof tiles, medicine; western medicine and indigenous medicine including Ayurveda, Sidha etc, books, clothing, wine, liquor etc.¹⁴ Calendar/ Almanac of the Malayalam month appeared in the second page. The Malayalam calendar was of more use to the native population

¹¹ *Svadesabhimani* and *Malayala Manorama* had the highest circulation in 1910.

¹² Varghese Mappila of *Manorama* and Ramakrishna Pillai were few among them.

¹³ Earlier graduates of school teachers were appointed as editors or for other functions in the newspapers.

¹⁴ A detailed study of advertisements is made in the last part of this chapter.

because it was according to the Malayalam calendar that agricultural operation, domestic ceremonies such as marriages, other auspicious household ceremonies, or omens etc were decided. The publishing of calendar in newspapers is interesting when we analyse the theoretical literature on newspaper where it is argued that newspaper gave a sense of homogenous time in the modern period.¹⁵ Before the introduction of printed Almanacs or calendars, people relied on astrologers for the calculation of auspicious time and agricultural seasons. Kanippayyur Sankaran Nambudiripad had this to say about the abilities of his paternal uncle who lived in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

But before that, when no published calendar was available at home, my uncle used to calculate each month's calendar in advance and carry it in his head. This was not surprising at a time when paper had not come into use for writing. Having worked out the month's calendar in advance uncle could reply on the spot when people came to him as they did for dates and times and astrologically related calculations concerning our households and lands, and even for the neighboring Namputiri households.¹⁶

In fact almanacs were the only printed material published regularly during this period.¹⁷ Below the calendar were editorials or leading articles. These were either in Malayalam or in English or in both the languages. In the same page news reports were published, classified according to their medium of communication, example telegraphic news¹⁸ or abstractions from other newspapers especially from other regions.¹⁹

The news reports were classified according to foreign news or telegraphic news, news from Kerala and news from Travancore. Among the telegraphic news the British intervention in Africa and the Bower war were few of the news reports appeared regularly in *Nasrani Deepika* and *Malayala*

¹⁵ Anderson, *Imagined*,

¹⁶ Memories quoted in Ananda Wood, *Knowledge Before Printing and After: The Indian Tradition in Changing Kerala*, Delhi, 1985, p.54.

¹⁷ The TAR of 1872-3 notes that though a press was established about 40 years before the scope of its operation was limited for a long time, for printing Almanac and the requirements of the Engineering School and some departments. TAR, p. 154.

¹⁸ Telegraphic news on places and events outside India.

¹⁹ Such gathering of news was necessary since most of the newspapers in Travancore found it difficult to gather news from Cochin or Malabar.

Manorama. Among the reports appearing in, the opening of *anchal* offices or Travancore postal service was given prominence, showing their concerns for development of communication. It was through *anchal* or Travancore postal offices that the newspapers were sent to different places.

3.3. Carving a niche for Malayalam Newspapers

This was also the period when, as a result of the growing literacy and other public institutions in Travancore, the native press was in a position to assert their role in the society by saying that it was imperative to have newspapers in Malayalam, though there are newspapers in Sanskrit and English.²⁰ The reason cited was that there are many things that the Sanskrit or English newspapers cannot provide and can only be done by the Malayalam newspapers. Curiously this was the time when many of the newspapers were writing editorials in English²¹. *Manorama* was hinting at the role of Malayalam newspapers in developing a culture, which is different from that of English and Sanskrit newspapers. The claim of the Malayalam newspapers could be justified on the ground that the majority of the natives were Malayalam speaking people and there were only a few English speaking and hardly any Sanskrit speaking population.²² Interestingly, this was when *Malayala Manorama* was writing editorials, mainly aimed at the higher officials of the Travancore administration, in English.²³ The reply goes on to explain that there is a difference felt between one who reads newspapers and one who did not, because there will be considerable difference between them in knowledge, *parishkaram* (reformed) and the broadening of the mind. Here the newspaper wanted to qualify the people on the basis of his/her access to newspapers as newspapers bring *parishkaram* to

²⁰ *Malayala Manorama* 26 January 1901.

²¹ *Manorama*, *Deepika* and *Svadesabhimani* wrote editorials in English

²² As per the Census Reports of 1901, of the total population of 2,952,157 only 14,869 persons were literate in English including 1452 Europeans and Eurasians. See, *Census of Travancore*, 1901, Part I, Report, pp. 12 and 208.

²³ English editorials began to appear in *Malayala Manorama* from 23rd January 1895 onwards. The first editorial was 'Oppression in Travancore Revenue Department'. Kannukuzhiyil Kuruvilla engineer, a shareholder in the Malayala Manorama Company and a former irrigation engineer in Travancore government wrote this editorial. But by 1905 English editorials appeared only occasionally.

the people. *Nasrani Deepika*, too made a similar argument on the need for native newspapers.²⁴

In the newspaper writings of the period, the word *parishkaram* appear as a recurring idea around which various themes are developed and the one that binds together the scattered newspaper articles, editorials and reports. This prompts us to look at *parishkaram* that the newspapers were talking about to see how they developed this notion around the various themes that they discussed Gundert's²⁵ *Nikhandu*, one of the first of Malayalam-English dictionaries compiled in the 1870's defines *parishkaram*, the adjective as 'decoration, finishing the appearance or cleansing form' and *Parishkarikkuka*, the verb as 'to embellish'. If we proceed from the literary meaning of *parishkaram* to that of a set of meanings that the newspapers created through their reports, editorials and writings we would be able to understand the meaning of newspapers as well as the ideology of these newspapers. The question would be whether should we understand this *parishkaram* as a change that the native intelligentsia sought to be created or should we read this *parishkaram* as an imitation of western styles and practices? This takes us to the question of what the native mind understood by calling for *parishkaram*.

Understanding *parishkaram* as different from mere change was echoed in the editorial in *Malayala Manorama* in 1908. Writing on the *parishkaram* among police men *Manorama* wrote that, "by *parishkaram*, we mean change in accordance with the time. *Parishkaram* not in relative to time can be called change rather than *parishkaram*". Now appears the question of imitating the west. An address by the Inspector of Schools was clear on this question:

When a foreign civilisation, that is, a civilisation that has grown under different climate, social and political conditions is introduced to a country, it is likely to bring in it's train a good many undesirable things, which are apt to be mistaken for it's inseparable adjuncts, but which in reality, are only morbid outgrowth or adventurous tradition... There is a tendency, a very strong one in our young men, to label everything that comes from the west as civilization and swallow such things with

²⁴ *Nasrani Deepika*, August 7, 1901.

²⁵ Hermen Gundert, *English-Malayalam Dictionary*, London, 1870.

avidity. Imitation, no doubt cost as little thought and little labour and there is in addition the pleasure arising from the gratification of some longing passion or sentiment. Let us stand on our own ground, cherish our national virtues, retain our national simplicity and prepare our national interest and yet, receive with an open mind, the wholesome practical lessons and the valuable blessings of western civilisation, the achievements of science, the triumphs of industry, the fruits of research, the productions of genius and the ministrations of commerce.²⁶

The argument was that the climatic conditions, social conditions and political conditions are different for the east and the west and therefore aping the west would be counter productive. More sarcastic was the criticism by a *parishkari* (modernist): "Shirt, collar, neck tie, coat, moustache, cigarette... who says these people are not modern? They are interested in speaking English... Let the number of these group decrease and instead the number of whose minds have reformed may increase. Only then our country would attain *abhivridhi* (progress) and *parishkaram*.²⁷ The difference between us and them was clear for Moorkkothu Kumaran, the writer and social reformer, when he said, "just as we have certain styles they²⁸ also do have certain styles. What they feel justice may be injustice for us and vice versa"²⁹

These writings show that *parishkaram* was neither change nor imitating the west. Here we wish to understand *parishkaram* as reform/modernity that was being spread through the newspapers. As Baily understands modernity as "an aspiration to be up with the times"³⁰, this aspiration is clearly evident in the newspapers of the period and in the Travancore society. However, the problems come up when we analyse the modernity that is developing in a self-proclaimed 'Hindu state' of Travancore. Here we wish to engage with the scholarly understanding of modernity.

²⁶ *Malayala Manorama*, November 21, 1908.

²⁷ By 'a modernist' in *Nasrani Deepika*, May 30, 1906.

²⁸ Europeans.

²⁹ *Malayala Manorama*, 8 December 1908.

³⁰ The Dewan addressed the first meeting of SMPA with the following words: "Among the Native States of India, Travancore holds a unique position. This is the only *Hindu State* which has not come under Mahomedan domination and which retains unimpaired its ancient Hindu type and character" See, Proceedings of the first meeting of SMPA, p.3.

Historians of modern world history have theorised modernity as a set of 'global uniformities in the state, religion, political ideologies and economic life' most evidently developed through the nineteenth century³¹. It is forcefully argued by many scholars that modernity experienced in the colonies was different from the metropolitan modernity. Therefore, there are regional and local variations in the appropriation and reproduction of the ideals of modern. Timothy Mitchell³² advances the idea of modernity outside the geography of the western world. Partha Chatterjee³³ rejects modernity as an import to the colonies and prefers to call the modernity that emerged in the colonies as colonial modernity. Rejecting the transplanting of modernity in the colonies, he talks about the development of colonial modernity in the colonies under conditions created by colonialism; acceding to its dominance and resisting to its colonising powers. In a recent work, Manu Bhagavan has coined an interesting term of 'princely modernity' as the form of modernity nurtured and experienced in the princely states of Baroda and Mysore.³⁴ Bhagavan finds the progressiveness, development and the advancement of these princely states, along with an offering of a resistance to colonialism, as a distinct feature of 'princely modernity' in Baroda and Mysore. Bhagavan extends his argument of princely modernity and argues that Baroda and Mysore defined modernity for other princely states, though we can challenge this argument or showing the experience of other native states like Travancore. The term 'model state' or 'progressive state' were used by many princely states including Travancore³⁵ and this in itself can be understood as a quest for defining modernity for them selves. If we borrow Bhagavan's argument of development and progressiveness as

³¹ Bayly, CA, *The Birth of the Modern World: 1780-1914*, Oxford, 2004, p. 1.

³² Timothy Mitchell, 'Introduction' in Timothy Mitchell ed., *Questions of Modernity*, London, 2000.

³³ Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity*, SEPHIS/ CODERSIA, 1996.

³⁴ Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres*.

³⁵ Jeffrey finds that Travancore was hailed as 'something like Model Native State' in 1867 by the Secretary of State for India. This celebratory tag of model/progressive state has been carried over by the native leadership and Dewan well in to the later decades in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Travancore statesman GP Pillai while talking about late Dewan Raja Kesava Das recalled the role of some illustrious men of Travancore who were chiefly instrumental in making it a 'Model State'. See, GPP, III, Speeches/Writings by him. Addressing the first meeting of the SMPA, Dewan described Travancore as one of the most progressive native states in India. See, SMPA, 1904, p.3.

modernity, it is found that the Travancore Administration Report and Census Reports always made comparison with states like Baroda and Mysore and provinces like Bombay and Madras, and tried to define progressiveness for Travancore. Given the role of the natives in compiling these documents, this process can be seen as an attempt to define modernity for themselves.

Now we may turn to the modernity as theorised in the works done on Kerala and Travancore. There were attempts to read the emergence of modernity among Malayalées, the linguistic group and in Kerala, the geographical entity.³⁶ Dilip Menon in his reading of Malayalam novel written by a lower caste reformer finds that there were discontents in the appropriation of colonial modernity by different social groups. He also shows how English education, conversion etc were seen as means for mobility and appropriating modernity for the lower castes.³⁷ There were also attempts to see how the subaltern social groups responded to the project of modernity³⁸ and how the bodily fashions of social groups were reoriented under colonialism and modernity³⁹ The readings were made on the literary works and missionary records of the period. However, there has been hardly any attempt to read modernity in Malayalam newspapers of the period.

3.4. *Parishkaram* as Modernity in Travancore

Here, we revert to the question of *parishkaram* recurring in the newspapers of the period and will argue that *parishkaram* constituted reform/modernity in newspaper reports. Therefore, we would explore the themes on which these *parishkaram* was manifested.

³⁶ See, 'Writing Culture: Of Modernity and Malayalam Novel', and Dilip M Menon, 'Caste and Colonial Modernity: Reading *Saraswativijayam*', both in *Studies in History*, XIII, 2, 1997. Also see, Dilip M Menon, 'No, Not the nation: Lower Caste Malayalam Novels of the Nineteenth Century', and Udaya Kumar, 'Seeing and Reading: The Early Malayalam Novels and Some questions Of Visibility', in Meenakshi Mukherjee (ed.), *Early Novels in India*, New Delhi, 2002.

³⁷ Dilip Menon, "Caste and Colonial Modernity".

³⁸ See, Sanal Mohan, 'Dalit Discourse.'

³⁹ See, Udaya Kumar, 'Self, body and inner sense: Some reflections on Sree Narayana Guru and Kumaran Asan', *SIH*, XIII,2,1997 and J. Devika, 'Aesthetic Women'.

One of the themes around which newspapers continuously articulated their views was education, the contentious issue on which most of the confrontations between upper castes and the Dalits occurred in Travancore⁴⁰ Though the concerns of the newspapers did not confine to educating the lower castes and Dalits, it is important to note that they were also included in this project of reform/*parishkaram*. It was in effect a change in the attitude for education, which was understood earlier as the means to secure jobs for the 'dominant groups' in Travancore administration.⁴¹ This was in a period when every caste groups in Travancore were vying for representation of their 'men' in administration.⁴² It is in this context that one may read the first editorial of *Malayala Manorama* on 'Pulaya education in Travancore'. The editorial ran as follows:

Pulayas are considered as the lowest, degraded caste in Kerala, who are treated like animals by others. Government is now showing interest in educating the Pulayas. However, some people who find Pulayas as a cheap source of labour objecting to it, fearing that the educated labourer may demand more wages. But it is fascinating to see those objecting the move do not understand that demanding more wages over a time is a usual thing and a more educated, capable and satisfied labourer would bring more profit. Those who are spending more on bulls for more profit need not have to fear about giving more wages to labourers. If these draught animals were educated the owners may have paid them much more attention. There fore, since the educated, informed labourers may be much useful, the owners of them may think about it.⁴³

But by the early years of the 20th century, the concern for education grew out of its mere role of fetching government jobs. The emphasis of education was

⁴⁰ The other issue was the entry of Dalits in to the public spaces. See, Mohan, 'Religion', p. 51.

⁴¹ Michael Tharakan argues that one of the major factors behind the shift in policy of Travancore government in imparting education to its subjects was the need for educated persons to run the 'modern' administrative system that was developing in the state. See, P K Michael Tharakan, 'Socio-Economic Factors in Educational Development: Case of Nineteenth Century Travancore', *EPW*, Vol. XXIX, 45, 1984. We emphasize the case of dominant groups because even in the Malayali memorial which raised the 'native' question, the case of Dalit education or their role in administration, did not appear.

⁴² Dr. Palpu, leader of the Ezhavas lamented in the 1890's that there was not a single Ezhava in the Travancore Administration in 1891 who was drawing a salary of more than Rs. 5 an year. He found reason for this in the attitude of the administration and lack of education among the Ezhavas. See, 'The condition of Ezhavas as mentioned in the Malayali Memorial', DPP, Sub. FN 8.

⁴³ *Malayala Manorama*, 22 March 1890.

shifted from government jobs to universal education.⁴⁴ Bright candidates were criticized for waiting for the government jobs than going for higher studies. They were told to enhance the knowledge production in the society, there by serving the Travancore State better.⁴⁵ The arguments for knowledge creation and technical education for progress and development of the state was coupled with a need to impart scientific education. It was argued that technical education was one of the ways in which the state could be made a modern state. *Nasrani Deepika* wrote in 1901:⁴⁶

For the progress of any country industries or agriculture, commerce, handicrafts etc...are essential. Well-developed European and American countries and Japan in Asia have attained development only through industrialisation. For this kind of development what is required is wealth, trust and cooperation between partners, training etc... There fore, the government must take interest in sending the lazy, disinterested and selfish to abroad to get trained in these kinds of things. Later on others would also follow them.

The proposed Tata Research Institute in Mysore was one of the favourite news items of the newspapers.⁴⁷ Reports and editorials on technical education kept on coming throughout this period.⁴⁸ Some times technical education was given more emphasis than the liberal arts since the former is more productive. *Nasrani Deepika* wrote forcefully in 1907:

A country with out lazy fellows will be prosperous... People may be interested in engaging in profitable occupations. But one who wishes to make profit should be educated in this art of profit making... Some times people may refuse to give even a glass of water to someone who has mastered logic, grammar or Shakespeare. However, one who has mastery over medicine would be respected everywhere. There fore, it is profitable to gain knowledge in some kind of technical training...now we have to think about the number of technical institutions in our country and how these are useful to our country men. Though we have a good number of educational institutions, we have very few technical

⁴⁴ *Malayala Manorama* wrote on 1st April 1911 that as in developed modern countries education should be made compulsory in our country. Parents must be made responsible for sending their wards to school and for a law must be made for that. Japan in the Asian continent has already introduced it and Baroda state in India will follow it soon.

⁴⁵ *Nasrani Deepika*, 3, March 1901.

⁴⁶ *Nasrani Deepika*, 20 February 1901.

⁴⁷ *Malayala Manorama*, 8 March 1905.

⁴⁸ On March 3rd 1906 *Malayala Manorama* wrote on Travancore government and technical students. Commenting on an educational exhibition, *Nasrani Deepika* wrote on August 27, 1907 that students should acquire science education for the welfare of the country.

institutions. Though there are few technical institutions in Trivandrum and Nagerkoil, these are not of much use to our country men...we hope that one technical institution may be started in Kottayam, which is one among the centres of education along with Nagerkoil and Trivandrum.⁴⁹

The shifting emphasis from Pulaya education to that of technical education, education was designed to meet certain goals. The logic of educated, capable and satisfied labourers bringing more profit was to gain the confidence of the employers to make education desirable for development. The material advancement of the European countries and Japan were found worthy to be emulated to attain the kind of development/ modernity that Travancore was trying for. The thrust area of education turning to knowledge creation and later on to technical education and development is remarkable for the reason that for these newspapers progressiveness and development assured a right place in modernity.

Newspapers of the period, ever since its inception took interest in the reforming of castes and communities in Travancore. In the early twentieth century, castes became modern communities in Kerala through homogenising beliefs and practices.⁵⁰ This was the period after the legal abolition of slavery, the time of flourishing plantations and of plantation labour. The plantations opened new possibilities of creating labours than the one attached to agricultural labours. We do find a connection between castes/communities and newspapers of the period. *Nasrani Deepika* was a product of Christian *Jathyakaya Sangham*, a body of different Syrian Christian sects in Travancore and Cochin excluding the Protestants and was designed as a response to the Protestant missionary journalism of the period. Varghese Mappila, the first editor of *Malayala Manorama* had an earlier stint with *Nasrani Deepika*, Ramakrishnapillai was groomed by in the anti-Tamil Brahmin *Malayali* during 1903-04. For reforming

⁴⁹ *Nasrani Deepika*, May, 25,1907.

⁵⁰ For example during this period, castes like Ezhavas, Shanrnars and Tiyas in Malabar homogenised under SNDP to become a homogenized community of caste groups. Here in one-way solidarity on the basis of occupation greatly helped the homogenisation process and also a shared past of Buddhism. In the case of Nairs the hold over land holdings and shared past of being in the militia helped in the homogenisation process. See, Devika, 'Aesthetic Women'.

these castes, they attacked old institutions, practices and conventions. Writing on the lower castes in Kerala *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 1892:

A lot of lower castes are there in Kerala. But they are different from lower castes in other places like Madras. Untouchability⁵¹ is practiced everywhere in India but unapproachability⁵² is practiced only in Malayalam (Kerala). Even after a Pulaya knows that he need not have to clear the way for a Brahmin he don't dare to do it... But this is because of difference in body cleanliness between them and Brahmins. A Pulaya becoming a Christian or Muslim need not have to think about these kinds of purity and pollution. The reason is that if there is body purity it would result in his mobility... They can also attain mobility through earning high wages from coffee plantations and engineering department.

On the mobility of the lower castes *Malayala Manorama* wrote:⁵³

There are 30 crores of low caste people in India... if some one accuses the people of this land of maintaining such pathetic conditions as that of the lower castes in India, it may be argued that such conditions exist in other parts of the world too. But in other countries people of lower origins can rise in the social ladder, which is not possible in India... But now some changes are happening in India that is heartening to see.

The writings did not confine only to the lower castes. The condition of Christians, Muslims and Ezhavas also figured prominently. On the Meeting of the leaders of Travancore-Cochin Christian *Jatyakya Sangham* with the India Viceroy, *Nasrani Deepika* wrote that the former gave a representation to the latter depicting the denial of government jobs to Christians under Travancore and Cochin Government. It was also said that in Travancore jobs are given not only on the basis of efficiency, skills or education but also considering some other local conventions. *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 1908:⁵⁴

Since the Christians cannot be given admissions in revenue department, the suggestion to induct more of them in other departments is a welcome one. Of the two vacant positions that are due in High Court, one should be given to a Christian. Mr. John is an eligible candidate and belonged to a famous Christian family. Mr. Iype will be an ideal candidate for the post of excise commissioner when that position fall

⁵¹ Pollution by the touching by a lower caste.

⁵² Pollution by the presence of a lower caste.

⁵³ *Malayala Manorama*, July 15, 1911. In many days similar writings appeared. On October 24, 1908 *Malayala Manorama* wrote on Travncore State and *jati* differences.

⁵⁴ *Malayala Manorama*, 14 March, 1908.

vacant...if some Europeans are appointed to these posts, owing to lack of understanding of native affairs, there will be a loss in revenue generation. Like this, Ezhavas should also be given appointments. The two appointments of Ezhavas lastly made are really commendable... Malayala Brahmins may also be considered for appointment.

The encouragement given to trade, commerce and crafts production are very interesting. Rubber plantations and joint stock companies were one the means with which development was visualized to be attained in Travancore. It was in this period that companies began to emerge in Travancore as result of the Companies Regulation introduced in Travancore in 1888.⁵⁵ By 1910 natives began to establish rubber plantations in Travancore. Though it may be argued that till the end of the First World War there were not much capitalist development per se in Travancore, the Travancore newspapers were in many ways successful in imparting these ideals to the people. On 24 April 1901 *Nasrani Deepika* wrote that in the development of trade and handicrafts, as in western countries, government initiative was necessary. In 1906 *Nasrani Deepika* wrote that for the progress of any country industries was necessary and without agriculture, trade and crafts production the life of the people would be difficult.⁵⁶ In May 1907 *Nasrani Deepika* wrote on the need for handicrafts exhibition: "craft exhibitions are now held in every parts of India...in Kerala too such exhibitions are held in many places...the exhibition held under Sree narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam(SNDP) and one connected with the Sree Moolam Praja Sabha was noteworthy in this direction."⁵⁷

More frequent was the popularisation of the idea of forming Joint Stock Companies in the name of *Koottukachavada Companikal* and rubber plantations in Travancore. Writing on the formation of companies *Nasrani Deepika* wrote in 1907:

⁵⁵ The Regulation has been dealt in the previous chapter.

⁵⁶ *Nasrani Deepika*, 10 January, 1906.

⁵⁷ *Nasrani Deepika*, 7 May 1907. On many days the need for such exhibitions was made. On 10 January 1906 *Nasrani Deepika* wrote that the real welfare of the people depend on agriculture, trade and crafts production. When the British came to India it was a land famed for craft production. In order to capture the old glory craft exhibition should be held in our country.

Companies are formed when shares are sold to individuals to run business which cannot be done by individual initiative alone. However those who are running companies must be honest, punctual and capable enough to make it profitable. It may be remembered that all of those who invest in companies want profit.”⁵⁸

On the title *Koottukachacada Companikal* or Joint Stock companies *Malayala Manorama* wrote that, “the increase in the number of joint stock companies reflects the growth of the country. But for the successful running of these companies experience, knowledge, loyalty, honesty and punctuality are required.”⁵⁹ Writing on joint stock companies, *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 23, August 1911. “Agriculture, industries, commerce etc are indispensable to a state to exist as food, digestion and blood circulation is indispensable for human body. For agriculture and industries capital is required. Capital can best be acquired through the constitution of joint stock companies.”⁶⁰ Development of plantations was another area for which the newspapers constantly wrote for.⁶¹ They took active interest in bringing rubber plantation on a large scale in Travancore.⁶²

3.5. Nation, Region and Colonialism

Malayali Sudras in Travancore under their own government ruled over by members of their own nationality are in a far worse position at present than their brethren in Malabar under an alien government⁶³

--Malayali Memorial of 1891

Cry of foreigners raised against people of same nationality, nay, even of the same classes, who have long settled in the country is a meaningless cry⁶⁴

-Counter Memorial of 1891

⁵⁸ *Nasrani Deepika*, 19 March 1907.

⁵⁹ *Malayala Manorama*, 12 October 1910.

⁶⁰ *Malayala Manorama*, 23 August 1911.

⁶¹ Though plantation development in Travancore was initiated by the Europeans in the late 1850's it became gradually dominated by a 'local' planting elite, the Syrian Christians planters. For more details see, Paul E Baak, *Plantation Production and Political Power: Plantation Development in Southwest India, 1743-1963*, Delhi, 1997.

⁶² Rubber plantations were largely popularised through the Malayalam newspapers of the early 20th century. Writing on August 14, 1909 *Malayala Manorama* said: Malaya is making huge profit from rubber plantations. All soils are not suitable for rubber plantations. Travancore is suited for it because of the abundant rain fall that it is receiving...since demand of rubber is rising every year it is a profitable occupation for Travancore people...But we wonder looking at the insensitivity of Travancore people about rubber plantations.

⁶³ *Ibid.* p.6

⁶⁴ Counter Memorial, TCRO, Dis. 239 of 1891, NAI.

Kerala, as was mentioned earlier, is one of the four nationalities of South India⁶⁵

---EMS Nambudiripad

A prominent historical study on nationalism in princely India traces the beginning of politicisation in the Native States to the “the run away terrorists from British India seeking shelter in the States”⁶⁶acting as agents of politicisation in those states. It is also argued that it was only in the 1930’s that the native States were introduced to the ideas of nationalism prevalent in British India.⁶⁷ If we repeat the question raised by Partha Chatterjee, albeit with a small alteration, if nationalism was imported to the natives states only in the 1930’s, what was there for the people of the native states to ‘imagine’ in beginning of the twentieth century. This prompts us to look at how colonialism and nationalism was treated in the Malayalam press of the period.

Apart from writing for development through education, reforming castes, plantations etc the newspapers also raised significant questions on the emerging political communities. The Malayali memorial discussed in the last chapter was the first political movement in Travancore that sought to create an identity for the people (Malayalis) and region. The Sri Mulam Council established in 1888 and the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly of 1904 gave a fillip to the aspirations of the people to imagine a ‘region’ of their own. Prominent Malayalam newspapers of the period, which had their origin during this period, also wrote extensively on the creation of such a region. While discussing on the memorials submitted in Travancore, we found that a different kind of politics other than nationalism emerging in Travancore during this period. The nation in the imagination of the people was Travancore and not India. Even at the height of nationalist sentiment in 1911, Travancore did not seem to have ‘stirred by the nationalist consciousness’ as one may expect. The discussion in Travancore was centered on regional identity popularly contained in the phrase ‘Travancore for

⁶⁵ EMS Nambudiripad, *The National Question in Kerala*, Peoples Publishing House Private Limited, Bombay, 1952. p.2.

⁶⁶ Bipan Chandra et al, *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, New Delhi, 1989, p.357.

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp.356-60.

Travancorians'. This defining of Travancorians was crucial in the defining of regional identity.

Looking at nationalism, *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 1906 that the struggle against Bengal partition began with Surendranatah Bannerjee in the lead. Mourning the death of WC Bannerjee *Malayala Manorama* wrote that though he was a Bengali, he lived as the leader of all Indians. Apart from these the sessions of the Indian National Congress was reported by newspapers.⁶⁸ However, the trenchant criticisms that were meted out to the nationalists are also noticeable, and the newspapers had an unambiguous understanding on the 'boons' of British rule and the in appropriate positioning of the nationalists. Writing on the lead article, 'British domination of India' *Malayala Manorama* wrote:

We do not have any sympathy towards those who criticise the British government and simultaneously fail to recognize the favours received from the government. We believe that these protesters are happy with the gifts that they have received from the government. Now these people too have begun to talk patriotism. But if they knew these things earlier, things would have been much better...We wish that henceforth there may not be such troubles and *let the British rule may continue for ever.*⁶⁹ (Italicised)

Criticising the Indian newspapers for their attitude towards British rule *Malayala Manorama* wrote:⁷⁰

One of the results of British granting of freedom to the Indian press is that they are trying to attack the British rule every way possible. Only during sepoy mutiny and from 1878 to 1881, during Vernacular Press Act that the British sought to control the Indian press. When someone argues against the British rule saying that the British are foreigners and their selfishness and cruelty would ruin the country and that it is because of them that famines are occurring, newspapers should make it known to the people that these all are baseless things. But most of the newspapers keep silence over these accusations. The role of newspapers is to convince the people about the falsity of these arguments. Thinking on these lines nobody would doubt the need for a Press law as Sir Herbert Risley has suggested.

⁶⁸ For instance see, *Malayala Manorama*, 5 January 1907 and 2 February 1907.

⁶⁹ *Malayala Manorama*, 27 May 1906. However, it was not only *Manorama* which praised British rule. *Nasrani Deepika* reported on 30 July 1907 that Moorkothu Kumaran, a prominent Malabar leader, has decided to speak in favour of British rule in all towns of Malabar.

⁷⁰ *Malayala Manorama*, 16 February 1910.

“Is it possible to find out anywhere in history, where a vanquished country is being treated with so much equality and justice as British treating India?” was the question raised by *Malayala Manorama* in 1909.⁷¹ By the close of 1912 their positions were becoming clearer.⁷²

British never thought that they had ever-conquered India or they wanted to keep Indians as their slaves. They have never done anything except for the welfare and progress of India. We did not mean that they did every thing only for the sake of India. However, it could be said that there is no other country in the world that has shown so much concern and favours to the subordinated country as British. There was a sense of justice and kindness and that forced people like A. O Hume to start Indian National Congress. But for the last few years some people are talking in a different tone. Many people, including Tilak is talking about boycotting the British and it has created some problems too.

Travancore for Travancorians was the title of two leading articles published in *Malayala Manorama* in 1891, referring to the contents of the Malayali Memorial of 1891⁷³. The idea conveyed in both the articles was the ‘natural’ claim of Travancore people in administration including that of Dewanship. It is interesting to see that the European planters who influenced greater pressure on the Travancore administration⁷⁴ and the Tamil Brahmins were looked with same suspicion and was accused of encroaching upon the legitimate rights of the natives.

3.6. Models for Development: Japan as an Asian Model

CA Bayly observes the rise of Japan as a powerful country by 1914 able to challenge the lead of Europeans in empire building.⁷⁵ Newspapers in Travancore also by this time found Japan as a model for development and progress along with the native states of Baroda and Mysore. On the Japan-Russo war of 1905, *Nasrani Deepika* wrote:⁷⁶

We feel proud about the Japanese who defeated the Baltic fleet of the Russians...The Russians who ridiculed the Asians as old timers,

⁷¹ *Malayala Manorama*, 24 February 1909.

⁷² *Malayala Manorama*, 17 August 1912.

⁷³ *Malayala Manorama* published two leading articles on the same title in 16 May 1891 and 4 June 1891.

⁷⁴ Paul Baak, “Planter’s Lobby in the 19th Century: Implications for Travancore, *EPW*, XXVII, 33, 1997.

⁷⁵ Baily, *Birth of the Modern World*, p.3.

⁷⁶ *Nasrani Deepika*, 7 June 1905.

uncivilized and yellow monkeys have been defeated in a humiliating manner by the Japanese and have stunned the war experts...We would like to congratulate the Japanese for raising the esteem of the eastern world

Commenting on the national Council of Education in Bengal *Nasrani Deepika* wrote in 1906:⁷⁷ "...It is better to teach science in native languages so that the people can easily attain *parishkaram*...For this we can follow the example set by the Japanese. In Japan education is imparted in Japanese language and for this purpose they are translating books into Japanese language." *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 1910

Readers of *Malayala Manorama* may have heard of Japan, a cluster of islands lying in the eastern end of Asian continent. It resembles Madras State in terms of population and area...Till 1868 Japan was in an undeveloped stage. Others looked at them with contempt...however, as a result of trading contacts with English and America, Japanese began to attain *parishkaram*. In 1868 the condition of industries in Japan resembled that of ours...but the government took interest in the spreading of agriculture, trade, and crafts production among the people. They established a huge iron and steel company. Grants were given for ship building industries. Laws were enacted for compulsory education of boys and girls from six to twelve years of age. Government sent students to Europe and America to get educated in technology ...A few years back they won the war against China and Russia and people wondered about their stunning victory. Japan's victory in these fields is a lesson for us to follow. Since we are under the suzerainty of the British, we do not have to think about war efforts but certainly have to think about following Japan in developing our industries.⁷⁸

Comparing the agriculturists in Japan and native agriculturists *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 1912:⁷⁹ on the progressiveness of Japan in agriculture and industries. The reasons cited include:

[a] First of all they have unity in all spheres. For the betterment of the country the people and the government is always ready.

[b] In finding out the farmlands they are very careful and they don't cultivate in forestland. But they do not keep any stretch of land as wasteland. They go for two or three farming every year.

⁷⁷ *Nasrani Deepika*, 2 May 1906.

⁷⁸ *Malayala Manorama*, 5 January 1910.

⁷⁹ *Malayala Manorama*, 8 May 1912.

[c] They are taking loans for cultivation but they are taking loans from the cooperative societies so that the interest levied is low and the societies oversee the working of the farmers.

On the subject 'industries', KCK, a columnist wrote: "The progress of Japan envies every one. They under perform in none of the spheres. There is no subject that the Japan had not laid her hands on. Their attempts for trade are too exemplary." Throughout this period a lot of writings followed on Japan and its achievements.⁸⁰

Having a closer look at the affairs of other native states, we wonder whether in the twentieth century Japan had developed as a model for Indian states. Addressing after opening a bank in 1908, Maharaja Gaekwad of Baroda said:

The obvious moral is, that India, after the noble example of Japan, must set herself diligently to the mastery of western science and western methods in all that concerns finance and industries...No reactionary sentiment or mere respect for the past will save India from the unrelenting pressure of foreign competition; no amount of emotional patriotism will drag us out of the slough of economic dependence.⁸¹

For Visvesvaraya, the Dewan and engineer -sociologist of Mysore, Japan was an exemplar for his vision of state -capitalist development of Mysore.⁸² For him Japan, the United States and Sweden appear as the developmental exemplars for India.⁸³

Japan may have attracted the attention of Travancore because both Japan and Travancore state were modernised during the same period, thus sharing commonalities. Japan became modernized after 1865 and it was during the same period that modern institutions like Public Works Department, hospitals etc came to existence in Travancore. Both Japan and Travancore had a coastal area to exploit and Travancore was a small geographical entity compared to the

⁸⁰ On 15 February 1911 *Malayala Manorama* wrote on the Japanese efforts on paddy cultivation. On 8 March and 11 March 1911 *Malayala Manorama* wrote on the agricultural training institutions in Japan. Writing on primary education on 1 April 1911 *Malayala Manorama* wrote on Japanese initiative in this direction.

⁸¹ Quoted in Manu Bhagavan, 'Demystifying the Ideal Progressive: Resistance through Mimicked modernity in Princely Baroda', 1900-1913, MAS, XXXV, 2 (2001). p.393.

⁸² Dhruv Raina, *Visvesvaraya as Engineer-Sociologist and the Evolution of his Techno-Economic Vision*, Bangalore. 2001, p.8. Raina describes him as an engineer-sociologist.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 9

provinces and native states like Hyderabad, where as Japan was a small state among Asian countries and modern European countries.

Travancore press keenly watched the developments taking place in Baroda and Mysore and often wrote about bringing similar developments in Travancore. Writing on Baroda state, *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 1908:

Baroda state which lies north to the Bombay town, ruled by Maharaja Gaekwad is known to be a most modern princely state in India...Once the Maharaja had openly declared that the British government need not do anything special to develop princely states except not to disrupt their progress. Now that he has taken certain measures to develop his state on modern lines. First of all he has decided to go for a survey of the finances of the state. In order to understand the volume of trade, occupations in different parts of the state and the new requirements in these spheres, enquiries are to be made by officials and non-officials. For this purpose a questionnaire consisting questions on population, landholding, agriculture, crafts production and other occupations, trade, technical training, transportation, taxes, mode of monetary transactions in the state are made. In order to control famine an effort is being made to study two or three chronically famine affected villages. Baroda has accomplished many such things that the British government could not take into consideration. Opening a bank is a recent decision of the Maharaja.⁸⁴

Writing on *parishkaram* in Mysore, *Malayala Manorama* wrote in 1911:

Some of the princely states are now bringing *parishkaram* that even the British government was not interested in doing. Compulsory primary education, government aid in industrialization, ending of jati differences, stopping of early marriages etc have already been introduced in Baroda... It was in Mysore that Praja Sabha(legislative council) was first introduced among the native states...Apart from that a body has been constituted in helping the government in the fields of education, agriculture reform, industrial development, health care etc.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *Malayala Manorama*, 25 January 1908.

⁸⁵ Among the princely states Baroda and Mysore attracted more attention of the newspapers. Though Hyderabad and Puthukkotta were occasionally referred to it was the *parishkaram* in Baroda and Mysore that seem to have captured the Travancore imagination. Writing on Maharaja Gaekwad of Baroda in 1907, *Malayala Manorama* wrote that there was no other Raja in India like Gaekwad, who was deeply interested in *parishkaram*. The Raja knew many languages including English, French and German and he also patronised our artist Prince of Travancore. (Raja RaviVarma). Writing on Maharaja of Baroda in June 6, 1908 *Malayala Manorama* wrote: "Maharaja Gaekwad has introduced many social reforms in Baroda including stopping child marriage and ending caste differences. He has also given jobs to candidates irrespective of their caste." *Nasrani Deepika* also wrote articles on Mysore on October 18 1905.

3.7. Readers of Newspapers

An article appeared in *Nasrani Deepika* of 14 January 1908 express of Travancore. Among the newspapers published from Travancore, *Malayala Manorama* had a circulation of 1509 copies in the week ending January 1911. *Nasrani Deepika* had a circulation of 500 copies in various months. *Malayali* had a circulation of 1009 copies in the week ending 6th April. For a quite long time *Malayali* had the highest circulation of more than 1500 among the newspapers published in the entire 'state' of Kerala.⁸⁶ In 1901 Cochin and Travancore had the highest literacy, both among the provinces and native states in India. Cochin had 133 literate persons per 1000 population and Travancore had 124 literate persons per 1000 population. Among the native states and provinces Baroda came third with 88 literate persons per 1000 population. In male literacy, 224 and 215 men per 1000 men were literate in Cochin and Travancore and Baroda came third with 163. In the case of women, 45 and 31 women per 1000 women were literate in Cochin and Travancore and Madras, Bombay and Ajmer-Merwara stood third with 9 literate women per 1000 women.⁸⁷

In 1901 Travancore had a population of about 30 lakhs and 3,64,810 were literates (12.36%).⁸⁸ It may be said that 1500 copies of newspaper circulated by two or three newspapers may not have a reach to entire population. However, it did not mean that the newspapers were confined to isolated pockets, as the instances given below attest. A poignant letter from a Pulaya Christian from Ceylon reads:⁸⁹

...Now almost 20 years have passed since I left my homeland and mother tongue. In my childhood I was literate, able to read and write *pathiri*⁹⁰ Malayalam. I do not read much newspapers and magazines now, but a regular reader of *Malayala Manorama* for the last eighteen years. I believe that if I had not read *Malayala Manorama*, I may not have attained Malayala *parishkaram* and may not have dared to send a letter

⁸⁶ NNR for 1901, NAI.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Michael Tharakan, 'Socio-Economic Factors in Educational Development'. p.1914

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 1914.

⁸⁹ *Malayala Manorama*, 9 March, 1910.

⁹⁰ Pathiri Malayalam is the language used by Pathiris or missionaries who worked among the people, especially Christian converts.

like this and have already forgotten Malayalam. *Manorama* reading has greatly benefited me...

A letter from A. S. Retnam, a student, in English is more interesting:⁹¹

I am a student learning in the fifth form of the Scott Christian College, Nagerkovil. My second language is Malayalam and I am sorry to say that I am very poor in it. My friends advised me to carefully go through every issues of Malayala Manorama. Because they say that it is the best Malayalam newspaper and contains more goodness and it is written in the best language possible. They say that, if I do so it will greatly improve my Malayalam. So I would like to subscribe to your newspaper. Please be kind enough to let me know, if you will send me the newspaper at half rate, since I am a student studying in the High School department. I am waiting for an early reply”.

The two instances suggest that the newspapers were not confined to pockets of planters; both Europeans and natives, or educated elites and officials. It has a reach to the lower levels of the society though majority of people may not have read them. The use of the word Malayala *parishkaram* by the Pulaya Christian is very significant in this context.

3.8. Advertisements: Reflecting Social Change

As shown earlier, advertisements often occupied the first page of the newspapers of the period. We do not find a middle class, either as an ‘economic class’ or as a class of ‘cultural entrepreneurs’⁹² as consumers of these artifacts during this period.⁹³ Therefore, the advertisements of artifacts are to be understood as a historical development rather than as a ‘consumerism’ of the period or the nostalgia of middle class.⁹⁴ Therefore, apart from looking at the language of the advertisements that created ‘a desire for the product’, in this section we deal more closely with the question of how the forbidden artifacts of the mid nineteenth century, like upper clothes or roof tiles were becoming

⁹¹ A letter published in *Malayala Manorama*, 19 February 1910.

⁹² In a recent study on the emergence of middle class in colonial north India, Sanjay Joshi has defined middle class as a group of ‘cultural entrepreneurs’ in the society with a project of self-fashioning. See, Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India*, New Delhi, 2001, p.2.

⁹³ J. Devika, ‘The Malayali Sexual Revolution’, *Contribution to Indian Sociology*, 3, 2005, p 3. Devika argues that by 1930s we find a middleclass appearing in Kerala.

⁹⁴ Dulali Nag in her study on the advertisements of hand-woven saris in Calcutta shows how the advertisement is woven around the nostalgia of middle class in the Calcutta city. For more, see, Dulali Nag, ‘Fashion, Gender and the Bengali Middle Class’, *Public Culture*, III, 2, 1991.

accessible to a large groups of people and there fore constituted *parishkaram* in their material life signifying their mobility.

An advertisement carried in the June 1909 issue of *Svadesabhimani* reads:

Clothes including veils/shawl, *kavani*,⁹⁵ *putaka*,⁹⁶ *mundu*,⁹⁷ and clothes with embroidery works ingrained on it are available for all castes; Brahmins, Nayars, Syrian Christians, Muslims, Tiyas etc. All these clothes will be sent through Value Payable (post) within fifteen months of order received⁹⁸

Of these clothes advertised, veils/shawls and *kavani* are upper clothes and the embroidered clothes denote experiments with clothing items. What is becoming clear from this advertisement is the demand and supply of clothes especially upper clothes for various social groups in the early twentieth century. This demand and supply was made possible because of the printing or newspapers of the period. An interrogation into the social history of the region will take us to the 'disturbances' that took place as a result of the wearing of upper clothes.⁹⁹ We also come across the 'progressive' sircar declaring the wearing of upper clothes mandatory for coolie women of PWD in Travancore¹⁰⁰. Therefore we can read these advertisements as a metaphor for *parishkaram* entering into the 'bodily practices' of people.

Coming on to the advertisements of roof tiles, we find tiles as not only a construction material in the nineteenth century but a strong signifier of caste status too. Only the high castes were allowed to tile their houses in the nineteenth century Kerala. A study conducted in Malabar district as late as in 1918 noted that, "up till 1916 no man other than the two jenmis (high-caste land lords) was allowed to tile his house, to build an upstairs building, or a gateway; even now it is rash..."¹⁰¹ The Malabar experience could be exceptional because by

⁹⁵ A thin piece of cloth with borderlines, often used as an upper cloth or shawl.

⁹⁶ A double cloth worn by women, wedding cloth or saree.

⁹⁷ A loin cloth worn by Malayalis, dhoti.

⁹⁸ *Svadesabhimani*, 19 June 1907. Also see, *Malayala Manorama*, 10 January 1906. This advertisement appeared on many days.

⁹⁹ The Shannar revolt has been discussed in the earlier chapter.

¹⁰⁰ TCR (Resident office special files) Dis 18 of 1869, NAI.

¹⁰¹ Gilbert Slater (ed.), *Some South Indian Villages*, London. OUP, p. 168 quoted in Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well-Being: How Kerala Became 'A Model'*, New Delhi, 2001, p.2.

early twentieth century, things had undergone a change. Tile factories were established in Travancore by the early twentieth century. Going by the TAR of 1900-01, we find Messrs. Chisholm & Co. based at Quilon engaged in tile works, saw mills and timber works employing 400 workers including 351 males and 49 females.¹⁰² However, the advertisements in the newspapers suggest quality tiles coming from Mangalore especially from the tile factories of the Basel Missions¹⁰³. In fact the Basel Mission was responsible for setting up the first weaving and tile factories in Malabar, to give employment to its converts. The tiles were advertised as pay for it. Therefore the setting up of tile factories and the availability of tiles as far as from Mangalore suggests a case of the breaking of caste status and hierarchy built up on privileged access to artifacts like tiles and their universal use denoting modernity entering the material living conditions of the people.

Advertisements on watches and clocks also appeared in this period. However, the concern in Travancore over these artifacts in this period seems to be more with artifacts signifying nobility than ordering of human lives as in nineteenth century sircar offices.¹⁰⁴ It is found that one of the valuable items of even the 'old timer' Suri Nambudiripad in *Indulekha* include 'a gold watch which can be worn as a necklace with a gold chain.'¹⁰⁵

3.9 Conclusion

The Malayalam newspapers of Travancore in the early twentieth century wrote extensively for reforming society and economy of Travancore. The *parishkaram* of society and economy was equated with *abhiyudhi* or progress of Travancore. *Parishkaram* became a dominant project in different spheres of social life during this period. It was argued that even those among the lower strata of society also can attain *parishkaram* through education and also engaging in profitable enterprises. It was this search for *parishkaram* that contributed to the reforming

¹⁰² TAR, 1900-01, Appendix, p. XV.

¹⁰³ The Basel Missionaries took lead in the tile manufacturing in the western coast. More than a century old CMS College at Kottayam used tiles made in Basel Mission factories.

¹⁰⁴ Sarkar, *Beyond Nationalist Frames; Re-locating Post Modernism Hindutva and History*, Delhi, 2002.

¹⁰⁵ O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, Kottayam, 1995.

of castes to become communities. Among the lower castes, the urge for *parishkaram* through economic activities was strong among the Ezhavas because of the presence of an economically powerful group among them. The Syrian Christians were another social group which engaged the economic activities during this period. The next chapter enquires in to the writings of the reform leaders of the period viz. Varghese Mappila , editor of *Malayala Manorama* and a social reform leader, Palpu to see how the ideas of *parishkaram* appear in their writings.

Chapter IV

A Reading of Reform leaders: Varghese Mappilai and Doctor Palpu

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the writings, speeches and activities of Kandathil Varghese Mappila, editor of *Malayala Manorama* and Dr. P.Palpu, a social reformer are traced to understand the nature of reform and interventions that journalists and reformers made in the twentieth century Travancore. As we have seen earlier, economic development through education, particularly technical education and the emergence of capitalist ideology were significant developments in this period. Therefore, this chapter venture into interrogate the published writings of Varghese Mappila and the strategies used by him to initiate reforms in the society. Along with that unpublished private papers, diaries and other writings of Doctor Palpu is studied to understand his activities and the strategies used by him to reform the society. The idea in this chapter is to synchronize the ideas of the leaders and the agenda of the newspapers of the period.

As outlined in the earlier chapter, the period after 1850's witnessed fundamental changes in the society and economy of Travancore. The coming of new institutions and new ideologies transformed the intellectual minds into an arena for reform and development. It was during the same period that an English educated elite began to emerge in areas so far been dominated by either Europeans or caste elites. Leaders and editors like GP Pillai, who was associated with the Malayali memorial of 1891 and later on became the editor of *Madras Standard* from 1901- 1903 and Swadesabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai, who was excommunicated from Travancore for questioning the Travancore administration etc were important personalities of the period. The questioning by these groups of men and women, including writers, reformers, editors etc created an arena for

discussing issues of 'public' importance. These writings helped in defining modernity in Travancore. However, unlike in western India, as Veena Naregal has observed¹, the leadership emerging in Travancore were drawn from different communities, dominant and the subaltern and therefore their definition of existing relations and desire for development acquired a new meaning, reflecting their social origins. As stated earlier, one of the ideologies developed in Travancore, which was reflected in the newspapers of the period was capitalist development. Speaking at the Trivandrum Debating Society in 1874, the Crown Prince of Travancore, Rama Varma spoke on the need for developing the society on 'capitalist' lines:

The hand of the industrious heapeth wealth", is the saying of one of the wisest men, and is as true to-day as when it was said. The happiness, prosperity, power, and glory of a society or nation may always be measured by its well directed, well-conserved, and progressive industry. Natural gifts are undoubtedly very important in the advancement of these, but unutilized by human industry, they are of little service.²

The above quoted paragraph brings in powerfully, the emergence of a capitalist ideology in Travancore. Indigenous capitalist ideology has strengthened in many ways after the address of the crown prince in 1878. However, this ideology too shared the concerns of the particularities of the society and also the social background of those who espoused it.

4.2. Varghese Mappilai as editor and reformer

Varghese Mappilai was born in 1857 in Tiruvalla, a small town in Travancore.³ From childhood he had interest in literary activities. Though he was a good student right through his education, his biographer says that his failure in the FA examination disappointed him and he returned to Tiruvalla from Trivandrum where he was studying.⁴ His first stint as an editor and journalist followed soon when he was appointed the first editor of *Kerala Mitram*,

¹ Veena Naregal, 'Vernacular Culture and Political Formation in Western India', in Abhijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty (eds), *Print Areas: Book History in India*, Delhi, 2004.

² Quoted in S.Raju, 'Developmental Modernity: Man and Nature in the Discourse of Wealth and Labour', *Contemporary India*, II, 1, 2003, p.48-9.

³ C K Kareem, *Malayalathinte Mahavriksham; Manoramayude Charithram*, Cochin, 2001.

⁴ A D Harisarma, *Kandathil Varghese Mappila*, Kottayam, 1987.

a Malayalam newspaper started from Cochin, under the ownership of a Gujarati businessman, Devji Bhimji. *Kerala Mitram* began publishing from 1 January 1881 and had an initial circulation of 150 copies,⁵ was the first registered joint stock publishing company in Kerala. Perhaps, it was his experience in *Kerala Mitram* that gave him the confidence to start a newspaper of his own after 8 years in Travancore. However, Varghese Mappilai left his first job after few years⁶ and associating for a few years with *Nasrani Jatyakya Sangham* (Travancore- Cochin Christian Association) he, along with others, floated the *Malayala Manorama* Company in 1888. *Malayala Manorama Company* was registered in 1889, becoming the second joint stock company in Travancore to be registered and the first one to start functioning.⁷ The first issue of *Malayala Manorama* came out on 22 March 1890. The first editorial was 'Pulaya Education in Travancore'.⁸

Leading articles in *Kerala Mitram* and *Malayala Manorama* by Varghese Mappilai enable us to understand his perception of the native society and the various 'problems' facing it. He intervened to rectify these problems. Therefore, in this chapter we are looking at his ideas on education and development in his writings.

Varghese Mappila's concern for education is evident from his *Kerala Mitram* days. The article on 'English education' published on 30 April 1881 gave prominence to the study of English. Mappilai said that the English language had conferred great many benefits up on the natives of Malabar who having read various English books, began to discover defects and flaws in their habits, proceedings, and evinced an inclination to improve and reform them. English also forced the natives to reform their language in various ways.⁹ In a following issue *Kerala Mitram* advocated the need for female education and suggested reforms in

⁵ NNR for the week ending 15 January 1881.

⁶ There are conflicting versions of his tenure in *Kerala Mitram*. However, his first biographer says that he stayed in *Mitram* for only one year. See, Hari Sarma, *Varghese Mappilai*, p. 19.

⁷ The first company registered in Travancore was Punaloor Paper Mills, an European venture. Varghese Mappilai's family had share in this company. However, the *Malayala Manorama* Company was under native initiative and was the first to start functioning.

⁸ Pulayas were the ex-agrestic slaves in Travancore who were liberated after the abolition of slavery in 1856. However with out education and means of living, their condition remained at penury. For more details, see, K Saradhamoni, *Emergence*.

⁹ *Kerala Mitram*, 30 April 1881, NNR.

the domestic relations and social intercourse of Malayalees.¹⁰ Continuing the advocacy for reforms *Kerala Mitram* published articles on Malayalam education in Travancore. While continuing to urge the necessity of encouraging Malayalam education by the institution of a Malayalam University, a leading article depreciated the current policy by which the education of the lower orders, including the Pulayas and Pariahs, was neglected and the article also emphasized the advantage of 'female enlightenment'.¹¹ His concern for education continued when *Malayala Manorama* was started publishing in 1890. In the first editorial, discussed earlier, was on the desirability of educating the Pulayas, the ex-slave castes of Kerala.

Leading articles on education appeared continuously during his tenure and the project of technical education also acquired prominence. He identified education as a means of acquiring *parishkaram* or modernity for the individual and for the country. Varghese Mappila was started schools for girls in many places in Travancore. In order to raise funds for starting the Balikamadam School in Tiruvalla in Central Travancore, he tried the novel idea of issuing lotteries. When the idea of female education was in itself a novel idea, that novel idea was given shape to by resorting to other novel means. But it is to be noted that the idea of running lotteries, even for educational purposes for which Varghese Mappila used was highly resented by others, particularly *Nasrani Deepika*. A report appeared in *Deepika* equating the practice with dice talked about the stopping of such undesirable practices like running lotteries what ever may be its objectives.¹² However, when he talked about Pulaya education he had of course in his mind ideals of humanitarian consideration and modern life style but a nuanced reading of his argument offers a different perspective. Educating the labourers was linked with increased production and there for more profit to the enterprisers. His argument was that just as spending more on other factors would increase spending on labourers would also be beneficial to the masters. In a way educated

¹⁰ *Kerala Mitram*, 14 May 1881, NNR.

¹¹ *Kerala Mitram*, 24 September 1881, NNR. Many during this period did not share his perceptions especially on female education. There were people even writers and reformers of prominence during this period who looked at these issue very differently.

¹² *Nasrani Deepika*, 20 February 1901 and 27 February 1901.

labourers was required for enhancing production. This opens to multiple factors that had contributed to the making of ideas during this period.¹³ His other writings on profitable business also support such positioning.

Varghese Mappila's idea on the development of the economy visualized on the basis of joint stock companies is interesting. In order to popularize the idea of joint stock companies he popularized the idea of *Koottukachavadayogam* (joint stock companies) through the columns of *Malayala Manorama*. He cited the experience of East India Company, a joint stock company, which could gain control over India and lamented that even before or after the arrival of British the Indians couldn't think on these lines. The companies are able to do many things even the Maharaja was unable to do. The railway companies in India and large shipping services are owned and operated by joint stock companies.¹⁴ Apart from these he wrote on crafts production, technical education etc underlining the discourse of development constituted in Travancore by this time.

Two things starkly stand out in his writings on the economic organisation of the society. He makes the idea comprehensible to the natives through two seemingly contradictory angles. The idea of joint stock companies is translated into *Koottukachavada Yogam*, literally meaning association for the joint business. But the word *koottu* in Malayalam signified friendship and intimacy. This word is more intimate than any other word that can be used for partnership or joint exercise. He seems to be trying to introduce a new idea in an intimate environment of the natives. Conveying ideas through such intimate expressions was his style of writing. On the other side, things were equated with larger 'wonders' that the natives find before them; steam ships and railways. His conviction of wonder getting translated into a desire, dominance and ownership is interesting. However such translations into localized idioms were not new in colonial India.¹⁵

¹³ Most of the writings on this editorial look at it as an efflorescence of humanitarian ideals in Travancore society. However my contention is that when multiple factors are at work these have to taken in to consideration.

¹⁴ *Malayala Manorama*, 19 April 1890.

¹⁵ Raina and Habib in their study of Master Ramchandra talk about how Ramchandra brought in modern science in to localized idioms. See, Dhruv Raina and S Irfan Habib, *Domesticating Modern Science: A social History of Science and Culture in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 2004.

His ideas on the reform of castes and communities are equally interesting. Articles appeared on almost all the castes and communities in Travancore urging them to reform.¹⁶ In many ways the idea of reform caught the imagination of people, especially intellectuals like Varghese Mappila and these forces us to look into other individuals and the constitution of such ideas in them.

4.3. Doctor Palpu : Early Career

Palpu was born on 2 November 1863 in a village near Trivandrum.¹⁷ After formal schooling he appeared for the entrance test of the medical school in Travancore, but was denied admission because of his lower caste origin.¹⁸ Later on, he joined the Madras Medical College.¹⁹ In 1890 after passing the Medical examination he applied for a job in the Travancore administration but was denied a job.²⁰ This forced him to seek job first in Madras and later on in Mysore. In 1890, he became a Deputy Inspector of Vaccination in Madras. In 1892 he joined the Mysore Government and became an Assistant Surgeon in the Mysore Health Department²¹ When he was in the Mysore service, he happened to meet Swami Vivekananda and following his advice took interest in the formation of the community association Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam or SNDP in 1903.²² Palpu had an illustrious career in Mysore and in the princely state of Baroda and won laurels for the services that he rendered in these states.²³ Palpu was sent to Europe by the Mysore Government for higher education in 1900. In London he acquired a Diploma in Public Health from Cambridge and was elected Fellow of the Royal Institute of

¹⁶ As noted the first issue had the leading article on Pulaya education.

¹⁷ DPP, Writings by him, FN.8, NMML.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. It is recorded by his son that there was an exchange of ideas between Swami Vivekananda and Palpu over caste inequalities, at the latter's residence. Vivekananda urged Palpu to seek the help of a sage to work for his people and Palpu found Sri Narayana as the ideal person for that. Palpu narrated the caste inequalities in Travancore to Vivekananda and Vivekananda on his visit to Kerala and witnessing the social inequalities, described Travancore as a 'Lunatic Asylum'. It was in memory of his advice that the magazine of Yogam was given the title 'Vivekodayam' and their printing press was titled Ananda Press. See, DPP, III, Writings by Others, FN 5.

²³ DPP, Speeches Writings by Others, FN 2.

Public Health. He had training in General Bacteriology in the Kings College London and at the Jenner Institute. After that he had training at the Pasteur Institute, Paris too. His stay in London and Paris seem to have invested him with new understanding of reform and development. His ideological orientations and the condition of his caste men at home in Travancore groomed him to develop an understanding of development for social disabilities. In his memoirs and writings the issue of caste discrimination recurs and over these experiences that he developed a theory of economic development for the society and social mobility for the lower castes. But in many of the writings on Palpu, he has been portrayed as a victim of 'casteism' least bothering to enquire in to his writings and private papers. Therefore, our concern is to see how, Palpu demonstrated and explained a capitalist ideology of private participation in the development of the economy and how he responded to the questions of caste and class.

When Palpu was the Superintendent of Central Jail at Bangalore he used the service of the prisoners for 'special work'. The special work included the making of handicrafts and industrial products. In one of the correspondence he made with the Inspector General of Prisons in Mysore, he outlined his objective of doing so, as to make jails "profitable to Government".²⁴ The visitors to the Central jail, including the Maharaja of Cooch Behar and the Dewan appreciated the efforts of Palpu and the Dewan recorded his hope that it would be desirable if Palpu is interested "in industrial work connected with the state". Apart from when it, he was assigned to give lectures on sanitary affairs in the villages he talked also about the economic development of the region. In one such meeting, deviating from the topic that was given for lecture, he spoke on the need to develop Mysore economy with the cultivation of new crops like pine apple, tapioca etc, which were not introduced in Mysore. In this lecture he talked at length on the "regrettable want of interest" of the people in developing labour and industries in Mysore and regretted less significant role of the people of Mysore in developing their society and economy. He attributed the high

²⁴ DPP, Subject File No. 19.

death rate in the region to the laziness of people in agriculture and the lack of cultivation. Though his emphasis on issues that were not assigned to him earned him a warning, he justified himself by harping on a enjoyable lecture. These efforts of Palpu shows the interest he had taken to develop the production of handicrafts and other profitable cultivation for development.

Palpu's ideas on private investment is evident in the Draft Scheme that he had submitted to the Dewan of Mysore, M. Visveswarayya in 1917²⁵, when the latter sought suggestions from Palpu in developing industries in Mysore. In his draft scheme, Palpu gave importance to trade and industries for the development of the Mysore state. He held that unless the markets are secured and goods are sold promptly in the country and abroad, the development of industries will be impossible²⁶. He argued that unless the markets are secured, the benefit of home industries will be drawn by the middlemen because of the lack of trading networks²⁷. Palpu was a strong advocate of inducting private agency in the development of Mysore. He wrote that the "government cannot undertake the items of business that he had proposed earlier in the draft"²⁸ He added that:

[O]fficial undertakings are comparatively less successful often, than private one of a similar nature. In an understanding of the kind proposed, a private agency will have a free hand, which is essential for success. More over the development of trade and industries in any country is more the concern of the private people than of Government whose sphere is to afford the necessary facilities and all possible help."²⁹

These writings offer a first hand understanding of his ideology of private investment and he wanted the government to play only a mediatory role in the development of industries. He further asked for the creation of separate funds for 'charitable purposes,' meaning education in general and industrial education in particular. He wanted to include the places outside Mysore state also as the 'business area' of the proposed Mysore plan. He wrote that, "the geographical

²⁵ The letter addressed to the Private Secretary of Mysore Dewan on 9 July 1917 and further details of the draft submitted. See, DPP, Subject File No.19.

²⁶ II, Subject File No. 19.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

boundaries of the state ought not to be a bar in regard to these or other items, as long as they afford the desired profits and benefit the people..."³⁰ He had the idea that the interaction of less industrious people of Mysore with that of more industrious people outside Mysore and vice versa will bring "about an industrial awakening" and a "spirit of healthy rivalry"³¹ in Mysore.

On the issue of export trade, he held that export trade can be taken on hand, conserved and developed without much difficulty, which is not there still then, but found the export of raw materials from the country "undesirable and unpatriotic."³² His idea was to collect and convert the raw materials into "final products of manufacture" in Mysore itself to benefit the labour force of the country (Mysore). He argued that with the larger profit from the manufactured goods, the development of "side industries" of the manufacturing industry will be benefited and the saving of freight charge incurred in the export of raw materials etc will be beneficial to the country.³³

On the question of imports, he wanted restricted imports and held imports as desirable only in the case of "necessary machinery that cannot be made in the country" and also to "knock down the unfair prices" existing in the native country. He wanted export and import to be managed by an indigenous agency.³⁴

Palpu's objectives of these measures, he has advanced was to conserve, develop and handle the existing resources to the benefit of the country (Mysore) by using even the waste materials. He also stressed on introducing banking, trade and other facilities by an indigenous agency to reap the benefit from it. His ideas were further developed on the intention that such measures will benefit the masses, as these will bring "adequate wages for the masses under suitable and healthy conditions"³⁵. His rationale for the establishment of such companies was to help the "educational, social and industrial advancement of the people,

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

particularly of the working and depressed classes, who contribute to the backbone of the country."³⁶

4.4. Malabar Economic Union and activities in Kerala

In the early twentieth century among the Ezhavas emerged a group of people interested in industrial activities and craft production.³⁷ Palpu along with some of his caste men started the Travancore Weaving and Trading Company with a capital investment of Rs 100,000 in 1906. Many other companies followed this weaving company, the major one being the Malabar Economic Union of 1916³⁸ with the chief members of SNDP as its members of the Director Board.³⁹ The Head Office of the Union was British Cochin.⁴⁰ The Company was engaged in export business and Cochin and Alleppey, two major port towns in Travancore were its centres of operation.⁴¹ Writing to the Agent to the Governor General in Cochin in 1924 Palpu conveyed the aim of the constitution of the Union as to find labour for the masses and their attempt is generally beneficial and less disadvantageous to the society.⁴²

In January 1905 an exhibition of handicrafts was held in the southern Travancore town of Quilon.⁴³ It was organised by SNDP Yogam and admission was restricted to the Ezhavas.⁴⁴ The exhibition was a success, for it was the first time that such an exhibition conducted, involving handicrafts and participants from as far as Malabar region. It left vivid memories to those who participated or visited it. C Kesavan, who later on became the chief minister of Travancore-Cochin, visited the exhibition as a school student.⁴⁵ He has recorded that it was the first time that he found Ezhavas wearing coat, a signifier of status and power

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ P. Chandramohan, 'Social and Political Protest in Travancore: A Study of the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalanayogam 1900-1938', Unpublished Mphil Dissertation, CHS, JNU, 1981, p. 74

³⁸ Malabar Economic Union was registered on 22 January 1916.

³⁹ Chandramohan notice the presence of a section rich men in the Ezhava Community of the period. The membership fee of the SNDP Yogam in its initial phase was Rs 100 and the membership remained at that level of quite some time, Chandra.125.

⁴⁰ DPP, Subject File No.21.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Letter to the Agent to the Governor General dated 31 May 1924, DPP, Sub FN 21.

⁴³ Jeffrey, *Decline*, p.228.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See, C.Kesavan, *Jeevitha Samaram*, Kottayam, 2002, p.153.

in those days. Newspapers like *Malayala Manorama* commented on this exhibition.⁴⁶ As a result of the spirited speeches made by the speakers in the meeting, the Ezhavas of the region felt a sense of mobility and equality with the caste elites of the locality. Caste elites felt that they were not duly respected by the low caste Ezhavas after the exhibition and therefore after a gap of ten days, there broke out skirmishes between the Nayars and the Ezhavas in northern Quilon over propriety in public places. However, these were quelled after the intervention of the leaders from both the castes.

After the successful experience of the Quilon exhibition, another exhibition was held in 1907 in Cannanore⁴⁷. Unlike the Quilon exhibition, the Cannanore exhibition was opened to all caste groups. Castle Stuart Stuart, a member of the Board of Revenue of Madras inaugurated the exhibition and there were separate sections for Agricultural machinery, industrial machinery, mechanical contrivances, Medicines and Chemical industries, textile yarns and fabrics etc were included. There was a separate section for Ladies showcasing many embroidery works.⁴⁸ Many European firms in Malabar also participated in it and won prizes.

A significant thing about these exhibitions was that it was a novel idea, although there were earlier attempts by the Government years back in conducting agricultural exhibitions in Calicut and Palghat.⁴⁹ However, it was for the first time that an exhibition under a community association was held. The choosing of places was very important. As it has been made earlier, in the twentieth century Kerala homogenization of caste practices took place among castes of similar status and in this case, The Ezhavas of Quilon and Tiyas of Malabar, having occupational solidarity got chances to mingle and form Ezhava community in the later period. Here apart from the occupational solidarity of different groups the notion of a shared past also helped them in this endeavour. The community leaders and the

⁴⁶ 21 January 1905.

⁴⁷ Commenting on the need for exhibitions, *Nasrani Deepika* appreciated the Cannanore exhibition. See, *Deepika* of 7 May 1907.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ DPP, Speeches/Writings by Others, File No.1.

guests who speak in the meetings make the contribution of these groups in the past and there by help in the constitution of identities among them. Palpu was one of the organizers behind these exhibitions and has utilized these situations. His incomplete note on education, society and history has a section on Private exhibitions:

In order to demonstrate that the industrial masses here, who had world wide fame in the past have managed to survive still more or less in spite of their long and persistent persecution and the possibilities of development if they were correctly handled and encouraged, I had arranged two exhibitions, one at Quilon in 1905 and the other at Cannanore in 1907 of the numerous kinds of grades of Industrial and Agricultural goods still produced by the masses.

His was a strategy of inculcating a spirit of crafts/industrial production among the people; especially among his caste men. He has also devised means to attract the interest of the lay devotees of the Sri Narayana Guru to influence people. The spiritual leader was the Managing Director of Malabar Economic Union started by Palpu and others. It should be understood as strategy employed by them to attract people to such kind of ventures. In a note on Sri Narayana Guru by NBK (?) makes this point clear:

But it is the position of the Swami in the union as one of its Directors that is of importance from the point of view to the exporter of the Malabar produce. *The masses obey him implicitly and thus a religious and sacred aspect is given to such purely commercial arrangements as the collection of produce for export.* The Bye-laws for branches which will appear with his signature as well as will therefore command special support from the masses so much so that it will be... as a physical impossibility for the interior garden owners to sell this produce to any agency other than that with which the holy personality of the Swami is associated⁵⁰ [Emphasised]

Apart from making Narayana Guru Director of the Madras Economic Union in order to cash in on the charisma of Guru and to attract investment, the leaders including Palpu started banks in the name of Guru. Sri Narayana Vilasom Bank

⁵⁰ DPP, Subject File No.21.

registered on 8 May 1928⁵¹ and Sri Narayan Guru Bank Limited established at Bangalore in 1944⁵²is examples for such endeavours.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the activities of Varghese Mappila and Palpu in imparting ideals of reform among the native population and the strategies they used to convey these ideas to the people. While Varghese Mappila wrote consistently in *Malayala Manorama* on reform and Palpu used the strategy of using the 'charisma' of spiritual leaders in attracting the attention of the people towards reform. A steady development of the economy of Travancore and Kerala began after the First World War and this period also witnessed new reform movements. It is argued that the interventions made by the newspapers and reformers in the early twentieth century were helpful for the acceptance of new ideologies in the mid Twentieth century.

⁵¹ Report on the Joint Stock Companies in India, 1937-8,1938-9,1939-40,1940-1, Delhi, 1948,p.367.

⁵² DPP, Correspondence, F No. 75.

Chapter V

Conclusion

In the foregoing chapters of the study, we have tried to situate the emergence of political newspapers in the princely state of Travancore. An argument was made in the chapters to show that the concerns of the newspapers published in these decades were different from the concerns of the earlier missionary ventures. The missionary newspapers like *Jnananikshepam* were supplied free of cost to the readers since the principal aim of those newspapers was to introduce Christian teachings in the society. But when it comes to the 1890's, newspapers become a mass produced commercial product, which required a fair circulation to sustain its successful publishing. We have also found newspapers stopping publication either because of lack of circulation or of defaulting subscribers. The issues discussed in the political newspapers were directly linked with the state; its administration, economic organisation, social groups etc and they raised the issue of development of the region. We have observed that the agenda of the newspapers were not static and their emphasis shifted over time from education to technical education, from reforming of castes in to reforming of the economy etc. This feature of the Malayalam press takes us to the first part of our enquiry o suggesting a different approach to the native states and their institutions even when we continue to look at the dominant presence of the empire. The princely states were not merely break waters of the empire and they had a dynamics of their own. There fore, our idea was to look at the development of a native press in Travancore in Travancore as a corollary to the developments taking place in Travancore society and economy viz. literacy, political movements, economic changes etc.

In our enquiry we found that certain newspapers like *Malayala Manorama*, *Malyali*, *Svadesabhimani* etc had a higher circulation among the newspapers published in Travancore during this period. The higher circulation of certain newspapers and the premature closing of some newspaper offices raise the

question why only some newspapers are successful and others are not. Our understanding is that newspapers which focus on the dominant ideology in the society is likely to flourish in the society. As we have seen there is a connection between reception of newspapers and dominant ideology in the society. In order to understand this dynamics better we have traced the editorial writings of Varghese Mappila and the private papers and writings of Dr. palpu. We find that an ideology of capitalist development was its making during this period.

It is observed that the orientation of Malayalam press undergoes a change after the First World War. The enhanced communication facilities among the princely states of Travancore and Cochin and British Malabar and the development of Political parties including the Congress of both Malabar and native states and the Congress Socialist party and the kind of movements like temple entry movements and movements against untouchability etc seem to have influenced the press of the period. Therefore the scope of further study of Malayalam press is meaningful only if the researcher concentrates on all three regions in colonial Kerala , simultaneously.

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