

**SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROTEST IN TRAVANCORE :
A STUDY OF THE SREE NARAYANA DHARMA
PARIPALANA YOGAM (1900-1938)**

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P R E F A C E

The changes in the social and economic organizations and the emergence of modern ideas during the course of the 19th century brought about a critical attitude towards the traditional institutions, social relations and belief system. Almost all communities were subjected to these influences, though at different points of time and with different degree of emphasis and intensity. As a result, several movements of reform, protest and dissent emerged in Kerala, the most important of them being the S. N. D. P. Yogam of the Ezhavas, the N. S. S. of the Noyars, the Yogakshema Sabha of the Namboodiris, the Sadhu Paripalana Sangam of the Pulayars and the Christian Mahajana Sabha of the Christians. The S. N. D. P. Yogam which drew inspiration from Sree Narayana Guru was the first and one of the most powerful of these movements.

Though, the S. N. D. P. Yogam has played an important role in the social and political life of Kerala, during the last eighty years, it has not received adequate academic attention. Apart from a few general works on Kerala which inter alia discusses the S. N. D. P. Yogam, detailed work on the movements itself has not been undertaken so far. This thesis is a primary effort to analyse the role of Sree Narayana Guru and the social movement initiated by him.

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The existing literature on Sree Narayana Guru and the S.N.D.P. Yogam are either biographies of the Guru or general studies on social and political movements in Travancore. The Works of Nataraja Guru (The World of the Guru) and V.T. Samuel (One Caste, One Religion and One God) in English and those of P. Parameswaran (Narayana Guru Navathanathinte Pravachakan) and M.K. Sanoo (Narayana Guru) in Malayalam are primarily biographical in nature. Though they are quite informative they have not attempted to place the ideas of the Guru and the movement initiated by him in their proper historical context. One of the important studies on the S.N.D.P. Yogam is The Social Change and Social Transformation by M. S. Rao. It is a comparative study of two backward classes, the S.N.D.P. movement in Kerala and the Yadava movement in North India. Rao has viewed the S.N.D.P. movement as a social mobility movement. Therefore, his analysis highlights the impact of the movement on the status mobility of the Ezhavas. Though the author has made use of historical data, he has not seen the movement in the light of the general developments in Travancore. Nevertheless it is a very useful work since it provides several interesting insights to understand the movement. The general works like T.K. Ravindran's Mass and Social Revolution, Vaikkom Satyagraha and Gandhi, K.L. Kusuman's Abstention Movement etc., refer to Sree Narayana Guru and the S.N.D.P. movement. These studies

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are mainly concerned with the question of caste disabilities and therefore, their usefulness is very limited for a proper appreciation of the importance of the ideas of the Guru or of the movement.

Apart from the limitations of the studies in examining the historical evolution of the Yogam and its significance in the socio-political context of Travancore in the twentieth century, the sources used for these studies are also inadequate. The present study has tried to avoid these pitfalls and has used most of the available sources for the study of this subject.

In the absence of materials on the Yogam either in the office of the S. N. D. P. Yogam or in the general libraries in Kerala, I had to gather informations from personal collections of political and social activists. The search was, indeed, very fruitful. I have mainly based this study on newspapers, journals, the records of the Travancore Government and private papers of prominent leaders.

Using the above mentioned primary sources, this study attempts to examine the socio-economic changes in Travancore society during the second half of the 19th century the emergence of the Ezhava middle class, the socio-religious ideas of Sree Narayana Guru, the formation of the Yogam, its class character and fight against social religious, political and administrative deprivation of the Ezhavas. An attempt

has also been made to examine the attitude of the S. N. D. P. Yogam to the ideas of Sree Narayana Guru.

The first chapter discusses the social structure of Travancore society in the second half of the 19th century. The second chapter deals with the origin of the Ezhavas, the emergence of Ezhava middle class, the ideas of Sree Narayana Guru and the genesis of the S. N. D. P. Yogam. The third chapter examines the formation of the Yogam, its class character, expansion and its struggle against the deprivation in the field of education and employment, in the government service and their activities for industrial advancement. Chapter IV attempts to examine the socio-religious reform activities of Sree Narayana Guru on the background of all India social reform movements. The fifth chapter discusses the activities and the achievements of Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam for annihilating untouchability and unapproachability. Chapter VI examines the political protest of the Yogam along with the Christians and the Muslims and its success in the sphere of employment, politics and religion. The final chapter by way of conclusion not only summarises the important points in the various chapters but also draws certain conclusions regarding the aims, objectives and character of the Yogam.

In the preparations of this thesis I have received help and assistance from several people. My thanks must go first of all to my supervisor Dr. K. N. Panikkar who guided me through the various stages in the making of this work. I

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CHAPTER-I

THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

The erstwhile Princely State of Travancore was situated at the south-west extremity of the Indian peninsula between $8^{\circ} 4'$ and $10^{\circ} 22'$ north latitude and $76^{\circ} 12'$ east longitude.¹ It extended from north to south 174 miles and from east to west 75 miles.² It was bounded on the north by the erstwhile Princely State of Cochin and the district of Coimbatore; its eastern boundary was constituted by the districts of Ramnad and Tinnevely and its western and southern boundaries were covered by the Arabian sea and the Indian ocean respectively.³ The approximate area of the State was 7,091 square miles⁴ and it occupied seventh place in size among the Indian states.⁵

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1. Census of Travancore, Vol. I, 1891, p.182.
See also, Administrative Report of Travancore, 1905-06, p.1.
 2. Loc.cit.
 3. V. Nagan Niyar, The Travancore State Manual, Vol. I, Trivandrum 1905, p.1.
 4. The area of the State is given differently by different sources. The Census of 1891 has recorded it as 6,730 square miles.
Census of India Travancore, Vol. I, 1891, p.217.
But the Census of 1901 has fixed it at 7,091 square miles.
Census of India Travancore, Vol. XXVI, Part I, 1901, p.11.
The estimate of Lieutenant Ward and Conner was 6,731 square miles.
Ward and Conner, Memoirs of the Survey of Travancore and Cochin state, Trivandrum 1863, reprinted 1893.
The Census of 1921 estimated an area of 7624.84 square miles.
Census of India Travancore, Vol. XXV, Part I, 1921, p.136.
 5. Travancore: The Present Political Problem by the All Travancore Joint Political Congress, Travancore 1934, p.1.

The thickly populated¹ Travancore was a multi-religious State. Out of the total population of 2,952,192 in 1901, the Hindus constituted 2,035,615 (69.9 per cent), the Christians 697,387 (23.6 per cent), the Muslims 190,566 (6.5 per cent) and others² 28,584.³

Table-1⁴

Proportion of Various Religions in Every Ten Thousand of the Population during 1875-1901

Religion	Year			
	1875	1881	1891	1901
Hindus	7364.2	7311	7318	6990.8
Christians	2029.2	2076.3	2060.1	2362
Muslims	605.9	611.6	621.0	645.5
Animists	-	-	-	95.5
Others	-	0.4	0.5	1.4

As evident from the above table numerically the Hindus formed the dominant community in Travancore. They were divided into several hierarchically ordained castes based on ritual status, purity and pollution.

1. According to the Census of 1891 the population of Travancore was 2,557,736 with an average density of 380.5 persons to one square miles against 356.7 in previous Census and 343.4 in the Census of 1875.
Census of Travancore, Part I, 1891, p.21.
 But both population and density of population increased respectively to 29, 52, 152 and 416 in 1901.
Census of India, Travancore, Part I, 1901, p.63.

2. The others means Animists, Buddhists, Jews, Jains etc.

3. Census of India, Travancore, 1901, p.63.

4. Ibid., p.63.

Table-2¹The Caste Break-up of the Hindu Community in 1891

Name of the Caste	No. of persons	% of Hindu population	% to the total population
Malayali Brahmins	6,980	0.34	0.27
Non-Malayali Brahmins	24,428	1.36	1.00
Ambalavasis	7,469	0.40	0.29
Nairs	483,725	25.84	18.92
Ezhavas	414,217	22.13	16.20
Parayas	71,736	3.83	2.36
Pulayas	202,616	10.82	7.92

Caste Hierarchy

At the top of the caste hierarchy were the Brahmins, who were divided into two broad categories viz., Malayali Brahmins and non-Malayali Brahmins. The Malayali Brahmins are generally known as Namboodiris.² Though the Namboodiris were very small in number most of the temples and considerable portion of the non-Governmental lands were under their control.³ They enjoyed certain preferential treatment in

1. Census of Travancore 1891, pp. 647-3.

2. According to the Census of 1901 the Malayali Brahmins itself were divided into five main groups such as the Tempurakkal, Adhyas etc.
Census of India Travancore, Part I, 1901, pp.296-7.

3. By the beginning of the 19th century the Government of Travancore had earmarked 60 per cent of the cultivated land under the name of Pandaravake land and the rest of 20 per cent of the land was known as Dhramagwan and these lands were in the possession of a few land lords mainly Brahmins and Brahmin temples.
See, T. C. Verghese, Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences - Land Tenures in Kerala 1800-1960, Calcutta 1970, p.44.

matters of revenue payment and subjection to the power of the secular authority. Well versed in Sanskrit and traditional knowledge but chary of imbibing the elements of change occurring in the 19th century, they remained conservative and educationally backward community.

The other section among the Brahmins, generally described as foreign Brahmins, were immigrants from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Mostly traders, money lenders and priests, initially they were very quick in taking advantage of the modern educational facilities. Out of 162 matriculates in Travancore in 1872, seventy one belonged to this community and out of fourteen Bachelors of Arts, ten were non-Malayali Brahmins.¹ They had a good share in the administration from the time of Marthanda Varma and by 1881 they seem to have cornered a major chunk of Government jobs.² Compared to the Namboodiris, they were more resilient and willing to make use of the opportunities that came in their way. They were more pragmatic and free from the false sense of social prestige.³

1. Robin Jeffroy, The Decline of Nayar Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore 1847-1903, New Delhi, 1976, pp. 73, 290.

2. According to the Census of 1881, of the 8,053 males 2,024 were returned under Government service. Census of Travancore, 1881, p.196.

3. According to the Census of 1881, a number of non-Malayali Brahmins worked as domestic servants, cobblers, temple servants, bread makers etc. While the Namboodiri women spent their time in the gloomy interior of their residence about 6 per cent of the female population of non-Malayali Brahmins are said to follow some occupation contributing to the family income. In 1881, 242 females came under

Ranking ritually below the Brahmins but economically as powerful as the Namboodiris were Kshatriyas and Samantas. No Vaisya caste existed in Kerala. In terms of ritual purity Ambalavasi, a group of castes engaged in temple services, came below the Kshatriyas. The most prominent of them are Varrier, Picharodi, Nambissan, Chakkiyar, Nambiyor, Nambidi etc. They are generally described as Antrala Jatis (intermediate castes) because of their position between the two varnas,¹ but without belonging to either of them.

The Nayar comes next in the caste hierarchy. The term Nayar in its widest sense comprised a large number of sub-castes ranging from washermen and barbers to landed magnates.² The total number of sub-castes among the Nayars would be around 130.³ A substantial section among them were engaged in military service.⁴ The impartible family properties led to the formation of large landed estates

instruction, 153 under trade, 42 were bread makers, 60 hostel keepers, 50 were put down under agriculture, 36 were cooks, 24 were domestic servants, 20 were beggars, 7 in sirkar service, 2 native physicians and 2 were returned as gentle women.

Ibid.

1. The Ambalavasis occupied an intermediate position between the Brahmins and Brahmanical Kshatriyas on the one hand and the Sudras on the other.
Census of India Travancore 1901, p.259.
2. Really the Nayars may be classified as the higher class and lower classes. See
Dr. L.A. Ravi Varma, "Caste in Malabar" published in Kerala Society Papers, Vol.II, Series 9, 1932, p.108.
3. Census of India Travancore, Report 1901, p.325.
Lordar K.M. Panikkar says that the Nayars were not a caste but a race. See
History of Kerala 1498-1801 AD, Annamalai Nagar 1959, p.10.
4. L.A. Ravi Varma, op.cit., p.108.

held by the Taravads or Joint Families. Like Namboodiris, Noyars also exercised great control over land ^{as} the largest body of land holders. Traditionally subjected to the social and ideological dominance of the Namboodiris, the Noyars broke away from these constraints during the course of the 19th century.¹ They took the advantage of the educational opportunities and by the end of the 19th century about 60 per cent of the Government jobs belonged to them.²

About 60 per cent of the population belonged to the untouchable castes consisting of the Ezhavas, Pulayars, Parayars etc. Of the untouchables the Ezhavas were the most numerous and ritually superior. Their principal occupation was cultivation and the manufacture of the palm tree products like toddy, coir, fibre and jaggery. Majority of them worked as wood cutters, farmers, agricultural labourers³ and a few

1. K. N. Panikkar says, "The Nair acceptance of the Namboodiri privileges as a social ideas was the result of the latter's ideological hegemony and control of land." See "Land, Control, Ideology and Reform: A Study of Changes in Family Organizations and Marriage System in Kerala." The Indian Historical Review, Vol. IV, No. 1, July 1977, p. 35. According to Keralolpatti that, "Only through Namboodiri good would kings be born." Therefore, "the women of the royal and noble houses had no need of Brahman property. All that they wanted was 'Namboodiriseed.' It was necessary to get 'good kings.'" Elam Kulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, Studies in Kerala History, Kottayam, 1970, p. 315.
2. Though the Noyars who amounted for 20 per cent of the population held 60 per cent of the Government Service. Census of Travancore 1875, p. 225.
3. According to the Census of 1831, 36,310 males and 26,371 females were general labourers, 27,499 male and 1,237 females agriculturists, 27,331 males were toddy tappers and 99 males and 2,375 females were distillers of arrack, 637 males worked as toddy contractors, 339 males and 2,073 females were rope makers and 3,187 males 434 females returned under trade. See Census of Travancore 1831, p. 219.

on teachers, Ayurvedic physicians, Sanskrit scholars and astrologers.¹ A large number of Brahmins were employed as soldiers along with Kayas by the old rulers of Travancore, the chief of them was the Raja of Malapuzha.² However, the disabilities were several; they were prevented from using most of the public roads, schools and public buildings.

The slave castes Pulayas, Parayas and Kurvas were at the bottom of the caste hierarchy in Kerala. The ~~castes~~ castes Hindus were polluted if a member of any of those castes approached within 50 or 60 yards. Even the Brahmins and Kshatriyas were polluted if a slave caste approached within 3 or 6 yards.³ After the abolition of slavery in 1843 several steps were taken to improve their lot.⁴ In the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the present century, the Government of Travancore had provided very many educational facilities for their improvement. But the importance of this class in the changing social and political pattern was neither realized nor recognized, and therefore, they remained at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. The above description of caste hierarchy brings out the classification within

1. Jackson, A History from 1662 through the Bourgeoisie of Travancore, Malabar and Malabar, London 1870 p.421.

2. L. S. Ananth Krishna Iyer, The People of Travancore and Malabar, Vol. I, Madras, 1909, p.273.

3. John Jeffrey, p. 248, p.23.

4. See Travancore, Social History, Vol. VIII, Part I, 1931, p.421.

the Hindu community based on pollution and purity. The religious solidarity among the Hindus was almost absent and caste exclusion was very strong.¹ The privileges of the caste Hindus were in sharp contrast to the degradation of the untouchables.

The Christians

The Christians occupied a very significant place in the society of Travancore as the most populous non-Hindu community, economically well placed and educationally far advanced. Christianity is said to have been introduced into Kerala in the middle of the first century A. D. by St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ.² Since its introduction in Kerala, the Christian faith, though alien in its origin came to be accepted as an indigenous faith and it made steady progress. It is an interesting feature that Travancore had a larger Christian population than any other state in India.³ From the very beginning

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1. "In Kerala" says Mankekar, "much more than elsewhere in the country - a Hindu is not a Hindu, but a Namboodiri, a Nair, or an Ezhava. No cannot easily visualise the larger concept of Hindu as such or think at that level." The Red Riddle of Kerala, Bombay, 1965, p.46.
 2. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, Anthropology of Syrian Christians, Ernakulam, 1926, p.2. See also, Census of Travancore, Vol.I, 1891, pp. 324-5.
 3. Nagan Ayya says, "No Indian state or province, contain more Christians than Travancore. No where in the world has a state ruled by a non-Christian monarch such a large Christian population as Travancore." Op.cit., p.29.

of its introduction in Travancore to the time of Colonel Munro the Christians had received special privileges and favours from the rulers of Travancore. This friendly attitude of Travancore rulers was influenced by two reasons. First, the Christians in early times came to Kerala as merchants,¹ and, therefore, the rulers of Kerala had thought of making use of this enterprising business community to advance the trade of the state.² Secondly,

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1. Thomas Cano or Kanni Thoma at first visited Kerala as a merchant and later came back as the representative of the Archbishop of Siensia or Tigris, who then governed the eastern church under the Patriarch of Antioch. See, Census of Travancore, Vol.I, 1891, p.335.
 2. To fill the vacuum created by the absence of the Vaigya community in Kerala, its rulers might have thought of promoting this enterprising business community by awarding them honours and privileges. The copper plate grant by King Vira Raghava Chakravarti of Mahodayapuram of Cranganore, making over him the territory of Manigramam i. e., the head of the merchant of the place. See, C.M. Agur, Church History of Travancore, Madras 1903, p. 7. During the second Chera Empire (800-1102 A. D.) Christians were prominent business community in the land. The Tarissapalli copper plate executed in 849 A. D. by Ayyan Atikal Tiruvatikal of Vened during the reign of Emperor Sthanu Ravi (844-855) confers several important rights and privileges on the Christians of Quilon. See, Elankulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, op.cit., pp.224-6. The Thozhakkod Church inscription of Raja Simha (1028-43) refers to two Christian merchants, Chatten Vadukan and Iravi Chatten, who were the members of the Manigramam guild being conferred certain privileges. Ibid., p.243.

the rulers of Travancore believed that the support to the Christians would please the British authorities, particularly the British resident.¹

In 1881 the number of Christians were 498,542 and it increased to 1,172,934 by 1921.² This immense growth of Christian population in Travancore was due to various factors like the religious tolerance of Travancore rulers, the interest of the British Resident to safeguard the 'legitimate' interest of the missionaries and Christians, the incessant work of Christian missionaries among the depressed classes, the deplorable socio-economic conditions of the untouchables and finally the economic status of Christians as traders and merchants and in the later period as estate owners and land holders. Due to the influence of the above mentioned factors, Christianity steadily increased in Travancore. In 1875 while the Christians formed 20 per cent of the population, in 1931 it increased to 31 per cent.³

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1. At the instance of Colonel Munro, the British Resident of Travance, the Maharaja of Travancore gave financial assistance to the cultural activities of the missionaries. In addition to that, due to the intervention of the Resident, Travancore rulers granted several concessions to the Christians. See, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol. I, compiled by the Regional Records Survey Committee, Kerala State, Trivendrum, 1970, p.65. See also, Robin Jeffrey, op.cit., pp. 37-69. Francois Houtart, Genevieve Lemerainier, "Socio-Religious Movement in Kerala: A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production," Social Scientist, Vol.6, No.11, June 1978, pp. 22-23.
 2. Census of Travancore 1881 and Census of India Travancore, 1921.
 3. Ibid., Part I, 1931, p.363.

In Travancore society, Christians were generally divided into three distinct groups such as Protestants, Catholics and Syrians. These three divided themselves into several denominations.¹ Syrians and Roman Catholics occupied first and second place respectively. The divisions and sub-divisions among the Christians, indeed weakened their cause in the political field.² But the Christians in Travancore had an acknowledged and respectable place in the caste Hindu dominated Travancore society.³

The enterprise of the Christians brought the hilly tracts of Travancore under cultivation and the trade and commerce of the country were largely in their hands. They did their best in the field of education. Most of the private educational institutions belonged to the Christians. The Syrian Christians of Travancore are one of the important communities which had the largest holding of land in Travancore. As regards English education, the Christians, having been associated with the English

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1. In 1901, 19 sects were recorded and were grouped into 13 sects such as Anglican, Syrian (Jacobites) Salvationist, Lutheran, Church Mission, London Mission, Baptist etc.
Census of India Travancore 1901, Part I, pp. 114, 124.
 2. Travancore: The Present Political Problem, op.cit., p.14.
 3. C.M. Agur, op.cit., p.7.

missionaries, had obtained greater opportunities. Being related to Anglican missionaries and the British administrators, the emergence of new economic forces, spread of English education and the impact of modern western ideas first influenced Christians. Therefore, the Christians in Kerala was the first community to produce a forward looking educated and profit seeking middle class. This middle class with the help of Christian missionaries and the British capitalists made considerable economic advance. In the beginning of the 20th century, they owned most of the banks, chitties, kuries, printing press and other lucrative business and took the advantage of the economic down fall of the Noyars by purchasing their landed properties.¹ But all these material advantages did not help them to get equal treatment in the field of politics and administration. This naturally made the Christians resent and so they cooperated with the non-Hindus in their social and political struggle against the caste Hindu hegemony.

The Muslims

In Travancore society, the Muslims were a small but industrious community mostly engaged in free labour and

1. Travancore Mierumakkathayan Committee Report of 1903,
"appendix," 11, p.93. See also,
T. C. Verghese, op.cit., p.103.

potty business, excepting a few rich traders, who used to control the market of the important towns in Travancore. Just like the Hindus and Christians the Muslims had also divisions and sub-divisions.¹ The Sunnies constituted about 89 per cent and the Shias about 10 per cent of the total Muslim population in Travancore.² From the economic point of view though the Muslims were not as poor³ as untouchables, socially and educationally they were very backward. Majority of them were converts from low caste Hindus. Most of them were agricultural labourers, fishermen, daily wage earners, petty traders and shop keepers. Though the educated elite among them were free from caste rigidity, they were also treated as inferior to the caste Hindus. The Muslims were inadequately represented either in the public service or in the legislature. The social, political and educational awakening of Travancore society did not affect so seriously the Muslims till the time of abstention movement in Travancore in the beginning of the 1930s.

1. According to the Census of 1901 in Travancore Muslims constituted 6.5 per cent of the population that is 190,556 and they had returned themselves under 47 subdivisions such as Sayyid, Sheikh, Tangal, Wais, Jonakan, Mattan etc.
Census of India Travancore 1901, Part II, pp. 170-74.

2. Census of Travancore 1891, p.137.

3. Travancore Present Political Problems, op.cit., p.13.

Caste Grievances in Travancore

The most important feature of Kerala society during the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was the existence of a deep rooted caste system. The main evil was casteism which corroded the very root of society. In no other part of India casteism was more rigidly or more meticulously observed than in Kerala. That was why when Vivekananda visited Kerala at the turn of the last century he described Malabar as "lunatic" and their homes as "lunatic asylums."¹ Due to overwhelming influence of casteism, several social disabilities beset the life of the lower castes. The most degrading of these disabilities sprang from the evils of untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability of the 'exterior' castes which practiced with fanatical rigour unknown in other parts of India.² The belief was that even the proximity of certain castes would cause pollution to higher castes.³ Due to this the members of low castes were not permitted to approach the members of the upper castes beyond a prescribed distance which as applied to each caste was known as Iyaved.

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1. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.III, pp.294-5.
 2. Mahadev Desai, The Epic of Travancore, Allahabad 1937, p.4.
 3. The fear of pollution and its consequences was ingrained into the ethos of the lower castes.
Louise Guwerkerk, The Untouchables of India, Oxford University Press, London, 1945, p.3.

Cherumanad etc.¹ According to Barbosa, "When they (the high-caste men) go anywhere they shout to the peasants that they may get out of the way where they have to pass and the peasants do so; and if they did not do it, the Nayar kill them without penalty."² TheOston has recorded a case of a Nayar killing a cheruman in 1904 for coming within the polluting distance of him.³ The distance of pollution was observed even among the lower castes.⁴

Apart from the above mentioned tripple evils of casteism, there were a large number of other grievances suffered by the untouchables. The untouchables were not supposed to dress neatly and they were not allowed to cover their breasts. Even the Nayar women, though they could cover breasts with a particular style of cloth were

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1. The limit of distance of pollution for a Brahmin was 64 feet from a Naraya. A Nayar may approach a Namboodiri Brahmin but not touch him. A Tiyan must not come within 12 paces of a Nayar; a Malayon must keep 3 or 4 paces further off and a Pulayan must keep 96 paces from a Nayar as well as Brahmins. See J.H. Hutton, Caste in India; Its Nature, Function and Origin, Bombay 1969, pp.179-80.
 2. Duarte Barbosa, A Description of Caste of East Africa and Malabar, p.129.
 3. E. TheOston, Caste and Tribes of South India, Madras, 1909, Vol.2, p.52.
 4. The Panon may approach but not touch a Tiya, but a Pulayan must not even approach a Panon. The Pulayan, for instance, if polluted by the near approach of a Nayadi or Ulladan were enjoined to take seven baths and shed a few drops of blood from a little finger. Ibid., pp. 79-80; See also, L. S. S. Q. Malley, India Caste Customs, pp.141-2. I.K. Ravindran, "Consequences of Unapproachability in Travancore," Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Culture, July-December 1975, Madras University, p.41.

not permitted to cover their breasts before temples idols and members of superior castes.¹ The caste restrictions also prohibited them from keeping milch cows; from using oil mills, metal vessels and umbrellas; and from wearing shoes and any but coarse cloth and ornaments.² The untouchables were expected to use a particular style of self degrading language when speaking to the high castes. They should not use the language of caste Hindus. He must address a caste Hindu as Thempuran (Lord) and women as Thempuratti (Lady).³ About himself he should not refer as 'I' but only as adiyan. He should cover his mouth with one hand when speaking to a member of a high caste even from the proscribed distance.⁴ He was denied the privilege

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1. For getting permission to cover their breasts untouchables under the leadership of Christian missionaries launched a number of movements in Travancore in the 19th century. Therefore, a number of conflicts took place between Noyars and the unapproachables converted to Christianity. Ultimately they got permission for wearing blouses on condition that it was not of the same pattern as worn by the upper castes. For details see, C.M. Agur, op.cit., pp. 780-82; Robor L. Hardgrave (J.R.), "The Breast Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.5, No.2, June 1968, p.777; Robin Jeffrey, op.cit., pp.57-61; Rev. C. Plead, "A Report of the Noyar Mission," July 1829, dated 30 June 1929, Manuscript (L.M.S.) in Ibid., p.170.
 2. G.A. Ballard, Resident to the Chief Secretary to the Madras Government, 9 March 1870, National Archives of India, Madras Residency Records, Madras Political Proceedings, 13 April 1870, G.O. No.143. See also, Robin Jeffrey, "Social Origins of a Caste Association, 1875-1905: The Founding of the S.M.D.P. Yogan," South Asia, No.4, 1974, p.40.
 3. T.K. Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual, Vol.I, Trivandrum, 1940, p.844.
 4. Dharma Theorthan, The Prophet of Peace, Champazhantni (Kerala), 1931, p.23.

of owning Sanskrit names as Rama, Krishna and Ganeson except in their corrupted forms.¹ He should stand before a caste Hindu in awe and reverence, assuming a humble posture.² Rev. S. Matoer says, "The use of public high ways was forbidden to out castes and any one daring to pass on within polluting distance of a Nayar would be down at once. To secure immediate recognition of such classes they were required to keep themselves uncovered above the waist; shoes, umbrellas, fine cloth and costly ornaments were interdicted to them. The holding of umbrellas on public occasions were prohibited to all castes except Brahmins even in rainy season. The proper salutation from a female to persons of rank was to "uncover the bosom."³

The untouchables were compelled to maintain their inferior status intact even in observing various religious ceremonies. They were not only denied admittance to the temples of the high castes, but also were not allowed to approach even the periphery of their temples. Even though they were permitted to build temples of their own under no circumstances could they instal in their temples deities worshipped by the higher castes. In the pantheon of low caste people their deities were Bhadra Kali, Chamundi, Kuttichathan etc. In most cases their deities were

1. Ibid., p.24.

2. K. Danodaran, Kerala Charitram, Trichur 1962, Part I, p. 162.

3. S. Matoer, Native Life in Travancore, London 1883, p.291.

worshipped with the offerings of toddy and the blood of fowls and animals. Even in the beginning of the 20th century the untouchables were practically subjected to a number of disabilities and oppression. They were not permitted to use the roads open to the members of higher castes. They were not only prevented to enter or approach within a certain distance of courts and public offices but also excluded from the Government schools and public service. The details of these grievances will be discussed in the ensuing chapters.

While these hardships emanating from casteism were at their worst, the Christian missionaries approached them with their philanthropic and humanitarian activities. Though it was with the aim of protecting the economic interests of European planters and merchants and at the same time convert maximum number of depressed classes to Christianity, missionaries did constructive and regenerative work among the untouchables. Whatever may be their economic and religious motives, their activities were indeed a solace to the depressed classes. Conversion took away the stigma of untouchability. The use of public roads and other conveniences were now opened to them. Thus conversion to Christianity appeared to be an escape from their misery. The incentives for conversion was neither their lack of faith in Hindu religion nor the prospect of salvation through Christianity.¹ The redress of social and economic

1. Sahodharan, March-May 1920 (Meehan Medan 1095, M. E.), Vol. 5, No. 8, pp. 31-32.

grievances was the main motive of conversion. With this intention a number of untouchables got converted to Christianity. According to the Census of 1931, the following number of untouchables converted to Christianity from various castes.

Table-3¹
Number of Converts from Different Castes to Christianity

Castes	No. of converts	Castes	No. of converts
Nadar	168,773	Illovan	2,311
Cherumar	157,613	Chackarvan	2,108
Porayan	71,680	Pallen	2,225
Mukkuvan	30,539	Vetan	2,000
Catholic Amazon	22,560	Kerala Muthuli	1,582
Bharathar	8,669	Kavothi	1,403
Kuravan	8,158	Morakkon	1,301
Aiyanoan	6,414	Others	8,764
Vannan	3,620		

Table 3 shows that the converts hailed not from caste Hindus but from untouchables. In 1875 the Christians formed 20 per cent of the total population of Travancore. It increased to 31 per cent in 1931.² At the same time the Puloyas, one of the low castes in Travancore fell from 0.13

1. Census of India Travancore 1931, Part I, p.339.

2. Ibid., p.393.

per cent in 1875 to 4.07 per cent in 1931.¹ The Christians who were converted from the low caste were treated discriminately by the community,² though they got very many privileges, which otherwise were not allowed to them while they were Hindus.

Occupational Structure

One of the important features of traditional caste structure was the relationship of caste with occupation. But in Kerala Chaturvarna or four fold division of Hinduism on the basis of occupation was not strictly applicable. The vaishyas, the third in the caste hierarchy, was almost absent in Kerala and this role was fulfilled by the Christians, Muslims and the Chettiers of Tamil Nadu. In the same way the traditional warriors were not the Kshatriyas but Noyars, who combined in themselves the function of Kshatriyas with those of Vaishyas and Sudras.³ In spite of this, there are certain professions attributed to certain castes. The Nambodiries are considered priests, the Ambalavasis temple servants, the Noyars agriculturists and warriors, the Ezhavas toddy tappers and the Parayans and Pulayans agricultural labourers.⁴

1. Ibid., p.331.

2. R. Velayudhan, Kerala the Red Rain Land, New Delhi, 1950, p.20.

3. E.M. S. Nambodiripad, Kerala Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow (Calcutta, 1960), p.34.

4. Census of Travancore 1881, p.313.



However, the concept of traditional occupation does not seem to be applicable in 19th century Travancore. Among the Nambudiris only 147 per one thousand and among the Ezhavas only 125 per one thousand followed their so called "traditional" occupation. This is true of other castes also. Therefore, in the context of Kerala it is wrong to maintain the common idea that every caste had a hereditary or traditional occupation which all its numbers followed.

Table 4 shows the structure of occupation and a comparison of males who followed various occupations in Travancore in 1876 with 1891 and 1891.

Table-4¹

Males Engaged in the Particular Class of Occupation

Occupational structure	1876		1891		1891	
	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion	Number	Proportion
Government service	14,703	1.27	15,967	1.33	20,184	1.56
Agriculture	232,776	20.27	249,000	20.80	350,765	27.18
Professionals	7,589	0.66	17,674	1.48	15,666	1.21
Commercial class	61,760	5.38	63,432	5.30	51,940	4.03
Industrial class	104,499	9.11	126,496	10.57	141,050	10.93
Others	296,657	25.90	197,630	16.51	230,127	17.83
Total	718,984	62.54	683,759	57.12	628,135	64.18

1. Census of Travancore, 1876, p.253 and 1891, p.578.

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Government Service

The Government service in Travancore was under the monopoly of Caste Hindus especially the Noyars and non-Malayali Brahmins. According to the Census of 1876 there were 14,703 persons, i. e., 1.27 per cent of the total male population¹ employed in Government service. In 1881 it increased to 16,167, i. e., 1.33 per cent of the total male population.² Table 5 shows the representation of various communities and castes and their proportion of the total employment in Travancore in 1876 and 1881.

Table-5³Representation of Various Communities and Castes and Their Proportion in Government Service During 1876-81

Caste and Community	1876		1881	
	No. of people employed	% of total employment	No. of people employed	% of total employment
Malayali Brahmins	158	1.07	239	1.47
Non-Malayali Brahmins	1999	13.59	2031	12.56
Kshatriyas	105	0.71	149	0.92
Noyars	8649	58.82	10654	66.99
Ambalavasi	268	1.82	407	2.51
Ezhavas	92	0.63	131	0.81
Muslims	384	2.61	268	1.65
Christians	798	5.42	1029	6.36
Others	2250	15.3	1159	7.16
Total	14703		16167	

1. Census of Travancore 1876, pp.253-4 and 1881, pp.242-3.
2. Census of Travancore 1881, pp.242-3.
3. Census of Travancore 1876, p.255 and 1881 pp. 242-3.

The table given above shows the predominance of Noyars and non-Malayali Brahmins in Travancore public service. The non-Malayali Brahmins, who constituted about 1.20 per cent of the total population occupied 13.59 per cent of the total Government service in 1876. In other words about 13.83 per cent of the total population of non-Malayali Brahmins were employed in government service. In the same manner the Noyars who constituted about 19.10 per cent of the total population occupied about 58.82 per cent of the total employment in 1876. This indicates that about 4 per cent of the total Nayar population was employed in the government service in 1876.¹ In 1881, percentage of both non-Malayali Brahmins and Noyars employed in the government service increased to 15 and 5 per cent respectively.² At the same time the representations of the Christians, the Muslims and the Ezhavas were very nominal. According to 1876 Census, the above mentioned three communities respectively constituted 20.29 per cent, 6.06 per cent and 16.59 per cent of the total population.³ But their contribution to government service was 0.34, 0.55 and 0.05

1. Census 1876, pp.255-6.

2. Census of Travancore 1881, pp.242-3.

3. Census of Travancore 1876, pp.156-78.

percentages respectively.¹ In 1881 out of 16,167 government employees 14,880 were Hindus, 264 were Muslims and 1,023 were Christians. Of these 16,167 total employees 200 were women. Out of these 200 females of sirkar service 194 Hindus and 6 Christians.² These details clearly indicate that the sirkar service was under the control of caste Hindus especially Nayers and non-Malayali Brahmans.

Agriculture

Travancore was predominantly an agricultural country. Agriculture was not only by far the most important source of livelihood in Travancore. About 60 per cent of the adult population were depended on land for their livelihood.³ Agriculture and allied activities accounted for nearly a half of the State's total income. By the beginning of the second half of the 19th century the land in Travancore had fallen under two distinct classes viz., Pandaravake land and Jerman land.⁴ The Government of Travancore possessed

1. Ibid., p.256.

The Census of 1876 and 1881 respectively indicate that there were 92 and 131 Ezhavas in government service. But this statement creates confusion when compared with the information given in the Malayali Memorial and subsequent Census reports. The Malayali Memorial claimed that there was no Ezhava drawing a salary of Rs.5 and more. Malayali Memorial reproduced in Kerala Archives News Letter, Vol.II, No.II and III, March and June 1976, p.5. The Census of 1901 also maintained the same position. Census of India Travancore, 1901, p.435.

2. Ibid., 1881, pp.242-3.

3. Ibid., 1876, p.262

4. T.K. Velu Pillai, op.cit., Vol.III, p.116.

about 80 per cent of the cultivated land and the whole of the waste land.¹ The sirkar land or Pandaravaka land itself was divided into two viz., Pandaravaka Pattam and Pandaravaka Otti. The latter group had no ownership right or power to transfer. The state demanded from these tenants only the land revenue. At the same time they were not legally recognised as owners of the land, though they enjoyed permanent occupation. Though legally the State was the land lord, in effect its treatment of tenants was as if they were peasant proprietors and it demanded only land revenue in the form of tax or rent which was very light.² The rest of the 20 per cent of the land was in the possession of a few land lords who enjoyed either absolute right or janmam or paid light assessment called Rajaboom. Generally these lands were possessed by Brahmins or Brahmin temples or the descendants of local chieftains. The Government land was also under the control of caste Hindus especially ^{the} Namboodiris and ^{the} Noyars. The Noyars held majority of the State land on tenures like Otti (mortgaging) and cognate tenures which had the characteristics of direct mortgage from the state.³ Thus the land was also under the control of the caste Hindus especially ^{the} Namboodiris and

1. T. C. Verghese, op.cit., p.44.

2. Ibid., p.45.

3. Ibid.

and ^{the} Noyars. While the Namboodiris exercised the greater control over land as biggest land lords, the Noyars enjoyed the privileges as the largest land holders of the state. In 1904, in Travancore, the persons who were giving more than Rs.100 as rent per year were only 361 and of whom 154 were Noyars and 34 were Namboodiri Brahmins. Table 6 shows the number of big land lords of various communities and castes who paid Rs.100 or more as land tax per year.

Table-6¹

Number of Persons Paying Rs.100 or More as Land Tax Per Year from Different Castes and Communities in 1904

Community	No. of persons
Noyars	154
Christians	98
Malayali Brahmins	34
Non-Malayali Brahmins	18
Muslims	14
Kshatriyas	10
Ezhavas	8
Europeans	5
Ambalavasis	3
Others	17
TOTAL	361

1. According to the Report sent to Dewan Madhavo Rao by Dewan Peshkar on 28.9.1904, Travancore Political Department, File No.113A, 1904.

The table shows that out of 301 big land lords 219 hailed from the upper castes. This shows the predominant influence of Severnas over the landed properties in Travancore.

The real position of the land in the early second half of the 19th century was that the Namboodiri Jemias owned Jannan land, the Kanem holders (generally Noyars) paid rent, the Verumpattakar cultivated in lieu of fixed patton and the pathivaram cultivator equally shared the produce with the landlords.¹ The number of non-cultivating land holders, cultivating land holders, non-cultivating tenants, cultivating tenants and agricultural labourers recorded in the Census of 1891 is given in Table 7.

Table-7²

Number of Cultivating/Non-Cultivating Land Holders/
Tenants and Labourers

Class	Number
Non-Cultivating Land Holders	1,697
Cultivating Land Holders	37
Non-Cultivating Tenants	48
Cultivating Tenants	3,610
Labourers	10,46,071

In 1901 the land lords and tenants formed about 37.1 per cent of the entire population in Travancore.³ The

1. Census of Travancore, Part I, 1891, p.567.

2. Ibid., 1891, Report, pp. 732-4.

3. Ibid., 1901, Part I, p.394.

category of rent receivers included the owners of land and the rent free tenants. The rent receivers were a small minority of 181 and the rent payers aggregated 10,94,992.¹ But in 1921 the number of rent receivers considerably increased. Table 8 shows the number of rent receivers from various castes and communities.

Table-8²

Number of Rent Receivers from Various Castes and Communities

<u>Caste and Community</u>	<u>No. of Rent Receivers</u>
Brahmins	177
Nayars	1,281
Ezhavas	245
Depressed Hindu	46
Other Hindus	225
Syrian Christians	343
Other Christians	79
Muslims	106

According to the Census of 1876, about 19 per cent of the Hindus, 21 per cent of the Muslims and 23 per cent of the Christians returned under cultivation. The Nayars who contributed about 45 per cent of their total population for agriculture, were preeminently a farming class. The

1. Ibid., p.395

2. Ibid., 1921, p.492.

farmers among the Ezhavas, Malayali Brahmins and non-Malayali Brahmins were 14 per cent, 9 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.¹ The lower stratum of the agriculture was the labourers. The labourers consisted of two classes viz., farm servants and field labourers. The maximum number of males and females were largely employed in labour connected with agriculture. Table 9 shows the representation of labourers from various communities.

Table-9²

Representation of Labourers from Various Communities in 1876

<u>Caste</u>	<u>No. of persons</u>
Pulayas	55,041
Ezhavas	40,405
Parayas	16,240
Noyars	12,491
Christians	29,573
Muslims	6,582

In 1876, 17.79 per cent of the total population was agricultural labourers. But in 1901 it had, considerably, been reduced to 5.2 per cent. This decrease was not real but apparent and was due to the inclusion under the head of tenants and occupants.³

1. Ibid., 1876, pp.261-2.

2. Ibid., p.266.

3. Ibid., 1901, p.396.

Professionals

The professional class in Travancore society was mainly concerned with religion, education, law, medicine, engineering and fine arts. In 1876 the total number of persons who were returned under the government service¹ was 7,589 or 0.66 per cent of the total population.² While in 1876 the total number of male professional was 7,589 or 0.66 per cent of the population, in 1881 it increased to 17,674 or 1.48 per cent of the total population. Table 10 shows the details of learned profession in Travancore in 1891.

We have already seen in the Table 4 of this chapter that the number of males returned under professional was 15,666. But the Table 10 shows that the number of professional was 43,513. This large difference is due to two reasons. First reason is that a large number of persons who belonged to professional class have been entered under the government service. Secondly the Table 4 only stands for male professionals. The Table 10 shows the number of both males and females.

Due to increase in education and changes in social set up in Travancore, the number of learned professionals

1. In some cases those who followed some of the learned professions had been included under the government service. Therefore, due to these overlapping some differences may be seen in different tables which were related to the learned profession and government service.

2. Census of India Travancore 1876, pp.256-57

Table-10¹Learned Profession in Travancore in 1891

Profession	No. of profes- sional	Proportion to total order
1. Religion		
(a) Priests and other top jobs	10,101	
(b) Subsidiary religious works	13,701	54.70
2. Education and Literature	2,076	4.78
3. Law	4,573	10.51
4. Medicine		
(a) Doctors and Other Medical Practitioners	5,582	
(b) Subsidiary Medical service	156	13.19
5. Engineering		
(a) Engineers and Surveyors	81	
(b) Subsidiary Staff	464	1.25
6. Fine Arts	2,992	6.87
7. Minor Services	3,787	8.70
TOTAL	43,513	100.0

considerably increased by the beginning of the 20th century. Table 11 shows the growth of learned professions in Travancore in 1911 and 1921.

1. Ibid., 1891, pp.603-17.

Table-11¹Growth of Learned Profession in Travancore in 1911
and 1921

Selected profession	1911		1921	
	Strength employed	% to total population	Strength employed	% to total population
Professions and Liberal arts	97,729	2.9	142,398	3.6
Law	8,543	0.2	11,575	0.3
Medicine	10,209	0.3	25,738	0.7
Instruction	26,365	0.8	35,779	0.9
Letters, arts and science	18,896	0.6	24,113	0.6

Majority of the learned professions were under the monopoly of the caste Hindus. In 1876 out of 7589 male professionals 6073 were Hindus, 459 Muslims and 1057 Christians.² The proportion of Hindus under this order to their male population was 0.72 per cent of the Muslims, 0.65 per cent of the Christians, 0.45 per cent.³ Among the Hindus the Malayali Brahmins were the most numerous. Most of the religious works were their monopoly. The number of the Nayars was 1127 (0.52 per cent) the non-Malayali Brahmins 503 (0.04 per cent) and the Ezhavas 233 (0.13 per cent).

1. Ibid., 1921, Part I, pp.132-5. See also, Robin Jeffrey, "Temple Entry Movement in Travancore 1860-1940," Social Scientist, Vol.4, No.8, March 1976, p.10.

2. Ibid., 1876, pp. 256-7.

3. Ibid.

The rigid practice of caste rules considerably restricted the opportunities of non-caste Hindus. Most of the educational institutions especially professional colleges like Ayurveda colleges, Sanskrit college etc., were closed to the untouchables till the end of the second decade of the 20th century. The economic backwardness was also not conducive to the untouchables to receive good education in professional subjects.

Trade and Commerce

From time immemorial Kerala has the credit of being one of the regions which had trade contact with many overseas countries. Therefore, trade and related activities was one of the important means of livelihood in Kerala. In 1876 there were about 61,760 or 5.38 per cent of male population engaged in trade and commerce.¹ The number of persons who were engaged in trade and commerce increased decade after decade. In 1876 the percentage of people who followed trade as their career was 5.38 per cent, it was increased to 6.42, 8.3 and 8.5 per cent in 1891, 1911 and 1921² respectively. Among the Hindus the number of traders was 25,407 (3.01 per cent), among the Muslims 13,919 (19.73 per cent) and among the Christians 22,413 (9.55 per cent).³

1. Ibid., pp.259-60.

2. Census Reports 1891, p.559, 1911.

3. Census 1876, pp.259-60.

The largest number of Hindu community belonged to the Ezhava caste as they aggregated 7,311 (3.88 per cent) of the total male population. The Nayers who followed trade as their livelihood was 2,300 or 1.05 per cent of male population and the non-Malayali Brahmins numbered 1,010 or 6.8 per cent of their male population.¹ In the port towns like Alleppy and Quilon the Muslims, non-Malayali Brahmins, Chotties and Konkani merchants were the important traders. At the same time in the interior villages of north and central Travancore the shop keeping trade was largely under the control of Syrian Christians and the Muslims.² But during the course of the century Hindus also seem to have taken to trade. In 1921 the number of Nayers involved in trade increased to 15,449 and that of the Ezhavas to 42,438.³

Generally the commercial community was divided into various sections as money lenders, general merchants, middle men, brokers etc. (Table 12).

Table-12⁴

The Strength of Various Sections of Commercial Community in Travancore in 1891

<u>Commercial Community</u>	<u>No. of people</u>	<u>Proportion to total commercial population</u>
Money Lenders and Securities	470	0.31
General Merchants	120,792	78.20
Unspecified	31,805	20.77
Middle men, brokers, agents etc.	334	0.22
TOTAL	153,481	100.00

1. Ibid.

2. Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.32.

3. Census of India Travancore, 1921, Part II, pp.102-3.

4. Ibid., 1891, p.602.

Industry

The development of industries was limited in Travancore as the other parts of India under British imperialism. The main industrial activities were limited to the manufacture of textile, wood, ceramics and chemical products. According to 1876 Census the total number of people engaged in industries was 9.11 per cent of the total male population. But in 1881 and 1891 the percentages respectively increased to 10.57 per cent and 10.97 per cent. (Table-13).

Table-13¹

Number of Persons Supported by Industries from 1901 to 1931

Year	Population supported	% to total population
1901	519,325	17.5
1911	588,410	17.1
1921	720,837	17.9
1931	771,312	15.1

By the end of the 19th century a number of coir and cashew-nut factories came into being. According to 1911 Census, the total number of factories were 108. Of these 108 factories, five owned by government, 61 by European and Anglo Indians and 42 factories owned by Indians.² Of those

1. T.K. Velu Pillai, op.cit., Vol.III, p.41.

2. Census of India Travancore, 1911, p.295.

European factories, fifty belonged to Companies and eleven to individuals. And the corresponding figures for Indians being fifteen and twenty seven respectively.¹ Table 14 shows the ownership and management of the 28 private factories and managers of all the factories excluding the government ones.

Table-14²

The Ownership and Management of Factories by Different Communities

Caste and Race	Number of Factories	
	Owned by	Managed by
Europeans and Anglo Indians	11	61
Indian	27	42
Christians	7	10
Muslims	4	8
Dravids	5	5
Ezhavas	2	2
Other Hindus	4	4
Chetti	1	1
Noyars	2	2

According to 1901 Census, the industrial activities were mainly done by non-Hindus and non-caste Hindus. The largest percentage of industrial workers among the Hindus

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

belonged to the Ezhavas so they aggregated 49.7 per cent of the actual workers. The Muslims and Christians respectively occupied second and third position.¹

Labourers

According to 1875 Census 18 per cent of the population were labourers.² Though the agricultural labourers in Travancore mainly came from Pulaya and Paraya castes,³ 6 per cent, 13 per cent and 21 per cent of the Nayers, Christians and Ezhavas were respectively labourers. Generally the conditions of agricultural labourers were very pathetic and miserable. In 1850 wages of cooly labourers were one anna and one meal. But by 1870s it was worth 4 annas a day.⁴ The conditions and salaries of plantation labourers, artisans and factory labourers were better than agricultural labourers. The wages of the non-agricultural labourers like employees in plantations the public works department, coir industry had risen by 167 per cent and those of artisans by 140 per cent.⁵ Among the artisans the highest daily wage was obtained by gold smith, which was 18½ chakram.⁶

1. Census of India Travancore 1901, Report, p.435.

2. Census of Travancore, 1875, p.266.

3. Nagan Niyar, op.cit., Vol.III, p.171.

According to 1911 Census out of 1,000 Pulaya workers 615 were field labourers and 109 were agricultural labourers and the same way out of 1,000 workers from Parayas 919 were field labourers.

Census of India Travancore 1911, p.313.

4. Ibid., p.63.

5. Census Report of Cochin 1891, Vol.I, p.144.

6. One chakram means 7 pies.

The above descriptions of the occupational structure indicates the predominance of upper caste Hindus in government service and profession as well as the control of land. The Muslims had a lions share of trade, a substantial section of industrial workers and agricultural labourers were Ezhavas and Christians were openly interested in all occupations except the government service.

Socio-Economic Changes and the Emergence of New Class

From the second half of the 19th century Travancore was in a state of transition, though it was very slow and tardy. The various factors like the land reforms, growth of cash economy due to the development of plantation industries, public works department and small scale industries, and the introduction of English education were responsible for major changes in the society. These changes both in social and economic field were paving the way for the emergence of new classes in Travancore.

Land Reforms and Changes in Land Control

It has already been observed that only a small part of land was owned by Jemias and the rest belonged to the State. In order to motivate the tenants to bring more lands under cultivation and to bridge the gap in tenuresal rights between the private jemias and the State tenants,¹ the Travancore Government issued the Patton Proclamation on

1. T. C. Verghose, op.cit., p.64.

2nd June 1865 (21st Edeyam 1040 ME), which has rightly been called as the Magna Carta of Travancore ryots.¹ In addition to that some more factors were responsible for the introduction of land reforms. The sirkar could not sell the land for non-payment of rent and because tenants were reluctant to take on such land any way, the Government experienced great difficulties in collecting its dues. Tenants on the other hand saw such land having no value beyond the rice it produced. To avoid such a stagnant situation Madhava Rao issued this proclamation granting full ownership rights to the holders of the 2,00,000 acres of sirkar Patton land.² He estimated that Rs.1.5 crores of land value were thus created.³ Whatever may be the agreement, this proclamation enfranchised the sirkar Patton lands and declared that the "ryots holding these lands may regard them fully as private heritable, saleable and otherwise transferable property."⁴ Thus this proclamation put an end to state land lordism and created peasant proprietorship. This proclamation very seriously affected the feudal set up of joint families in Travancore.

1. Administrative Report of Travancore 1866-67, p.37.

2. Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, pp. 98-99.

3. Ibid.

4. Notification of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore on 21st June, 1865 quoted in Travancore Land Revenue Manual, Vol.4, p.375. See also, Madhava Rao to Newill, 19 April 1865, Travancore Government English Records, Cover No.228.

This proclamation made the partition of joint families possible since the Karanavan could not now maintain that the sirkar Potton lands were inalienable.¹ Therefore, it was a severe jolt to the traditional family system.

The reform of 1865 only benefitted the cultivators of the Pandaravaka lands and the conditions of tenants of Jemnom lands and non-Pandaravaka lands were miserable and pathetic. They had no security of tenure. Jemios harassed their tenants in many ways. Their assessment of land revenue was higher than sirkar lands. In order to improve their condition and to stabilise the agricultural property of the State² Government issued another proclamation in 1867 by which the sirkar considerably curtailed the power of Jemios over their tenants. Now eviction was not easily possible and the tenants became permanent tenants; but the tenants were required to give rent to Jemios as usual.³ The draw

1. According to this proclamation "the sales, mortgages etc. of these lands will hence forward be valid. /therefore/ The lands may be sold for avaras of tax in execution of decree of courts and such other legitimate purposes and may also be accepted as security by the sirkar as well as by private individuals."

Notification of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore on 2nd June 1865. Quoted in Travancore Land Revenue Manual, Vol.4, p.135.

2. According to a letter to the British Resident from Madhava Rao, the Dewan of Travancore, he very clearly mentioned that the Jemios were not the improvers of the landed property and that if they were permitted to eject tenants, the agricultural prosperity of the state would adversely affected, apart from the hardships caused to the tenants." T. Madhava Rao's Letter to the British Resident dated 9th October 1866 quoted in T. C. Varghese, op.cit., p.67.

3. Ibid., p.66.

back of this proclamation was partly reduced by the proclamation of "Jemmi-Kudiyan Act" of 1896. This ensured permanent occupancy rights and fixed the rent of the kanam kudiyan.¹ In spite of the good intention of the state, the tenants could not get the benefit as they expected. The Jemmis were given the right to increase the rent at the time of periodical renewal of kangattam.² This also did not give much protection to the tenants at will holding land either under those kanam tenants or directly from the Jemmis. Another problem of the tenants was that incidence of revenue assessment generally fell unequally on different tenurial categories and some times on different cultivators under the same tenure.³

But a tremendous and fundamental change had taken place in the tenurial system of Travancore in 1933 by the proclamation of "Jemmi Kudiyan (Amendment) Regulation" of 1108 ME (1932 A.D.). In regard to Jemmi-Kudiyan relationship this amendment was a turning point. This regulation converted all tenants into proprietors (to be known hereafter as Kudiyan) with the only obligation that they pay rent to the Jemmis through the state and remitted the rent to the respective Jemmis. The payments need also be made only in money.⁴ Thus the Kudiyan was declared the full owner of the lands with all the rights of ownership

1. Ibid., p.67

2. See the Appendix I, the "Jemmi-Kudiyan Act of 1896" reproduced in Ibid., p.220.

3. Ibid., p.133.

4. See Appendix I, "The Jemmi-Kudiyan (Amendment) Act of 1932" quoted in Ibid., pp.220-22.

The system of settlement obtaining in Travancore was the Ryotwari system according to which the ryots enjoyed private ownership and as such were made individually responsible to the state for payment of rent due from their holdings. The land tax was fixed and levied on the basis of (1) the accurate measurement of land, (2) the ascertainment of its agricultural capacity and (3) the determination of individual or individuals entitled and bound to pay the revenue.¹

The new land system caused a revolution in the agrarian set up as well as the joint family system. These land reforms not only started peasant proprietorship but also broke the thread of joint family set up. The pattem proclamation of 1865 and subsequent land reforms made the partition of families possible since the Karanavan could not now maintain that the sirkar Pattem lands were inalienable as this proclamation made the sales, mortgages etc., of these lands valid. Dissatisfied members of the Nayar Taravada under the autocracy of karanavan demanded partition and hence, a number of Nayar Taravada underwent partition in Travancore.² Thus the land lordism of Travancore, which was tied up with the joint family system

1. S. Ramanatha Aiyar, A Brief Sketch of Travancore - The Model State of India, Trivandrum, 1903, pp.103, 173.

2. According to Travancore Marumakkathayan Committee Report of 1908, the agreed partitions had risen from 301 in 1896 to 516 in 1906-1907. See the Report of 1903, 'Appendix' II, p.93.

had been broken and all communities or castes, those who were having liquid cash earned through trade, commerce and other lucrative business purchased land. Table 15 shows the various communities selling and purchasing the landed property for a period of 18 months in 1906-1908.¹

The table shows that the hold of Nayers over land has been loosening and those who were not had much control over the land began to occupy more land by purchasing the properties of the Nayers. The Christians and the Ezhavas took advantage of this. Thus the land reform in Travancore actually put an end to Nayar dominance and other communities who kept aloof so far from land got better opportunities to enter the land.

These land reforms to a large extent reduced the control of land lords over tenants. The Ryotwari system of land tenure reduced considerably the over assessment of land. Increase of agricultural produce and the growth of export further reduced the miseries of ryots. In short, these factors, no doubt, not only relieved the peasantry of Travancore of their sufferings resulting from a long continued depression and exploitation during the first half and early second half of 19th century but also helped to produce a new middle class due to the existence of an economy of small peasant proprietors and tenants with

1. Ibid.

Table-15

Statement Showing the Various Communities Selling and Purchasing the Landed Property for a Period of 18 Months During 1906-1908

Community	Whether Claimant/ Executed	Nature, Number and Values of Documents							
		Sale		Mortgages with possession		Mortgages without possession		Total	
		Number	Value	Number	Value	Number	Value	Number	Value
Nair	Claimants	6074	1220264	17820	3663942	20903	3776862	44797	8861068
	Executed	7145	1739607	23532	4800734	21205	4197729	51882	10738070
Samanthas	Claimants	34	11829	181	28818	233	34605	448	75252
	Executed	37	17298	264	27303	446	67309	747	1111910
Christians	Claimants	10142	2244641	14474	2346000	25346	5261137	49962	9851778
	Executed	9442	1982647	10076	1719473	22216	4918651	41534	8680771
Chamars	Claimants	2133	308643	6232	772698	3999	476593	12364	1557934
	Executed	2129	303261	5396	662597	4725	509097	12250	1474925
Ezhavas	Claimants	4171	1171197	9666	1914758	12553	2306907	26390	5392862
	Executed	3966	1053763	8207	1622790	13394	2421923	25567	5098476

Source: Travancore Marumakkathayam Committee Report of 1908, p. 93

substantial economic independence and sustained interest in land.

Growth of Cash Economy

The growth of cash economy in Travancore was due to the development of public works department penetration of British capital which led to the plantation industries, the development of small scale industries and the shift from food crops to cash crops.

Though the British Government did not induce industrial development of the state, it showed keen interest to modernise the system of communication for the better exploitation of the state resources. The Lieutenant General William Cullen, the Resident of Travancore from 1840 to 1860, initiated a scheme for the construction of a net-work of roads. Madhava Rao, the Dewan of Travancore from 1857 to 1872, also took practical steps in this direction. He organised the public works departments in 1860. As a consequence of the setting up of the public works department the job opportunities¹ and wages increased.²

During the second half of the 19th century the plantation industries developed in Travancore. Some of the factors which helped this process were the state ownership

1. In 1865-66 nearly 10,000 people were on daily wages appointed in Travancore public service department. See, Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.91.

2. The wages from one anna or an anna and half and one meal for day's work to four annas and one meal. Census of Travancore 1876, p.266.

of land, improvement of transport facilities, rise in prices, increased credit facilities¹ and availability of cheap labour due to the abolition of slavery. Actually the abolition of slavery was to generate a work force for the newly established plantation industries of British capitalists.² Though Malabar was directly under British domain, the British capitalists were more enthusiastic to invest their money in Travancore princely state. This was mainly because of the structural differentiation of land system in Travancore and Malabar. In Travancore the state being the land lord, it was possible for planters to lease lands on favourable terms directly from the state. At the same time, in Malabar they would have had to take the lands from private land lords which was relatively costlier than the direct leases from the state.³ The British entrepreneurs convinced the Travancore rulers the economic significance of plantation industries and

1. T. C. Verghese, op.cit., p.116.

2. The abolition of slavery, in its fullfledged manner, took place in 1835, when the Maharaja of Travancore announced a proclamation on 12 Mithunam 1030 ME (June 1835). See, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol. I, pp.57-59. The plantation industries began to develop only after 1860. See, Sir Percival Griffiths, The History of the Indian Tea Industry, London, 1967, p.157.

3. In 1879 Kannan Devan Company obtained a concession from the Pooniate Raja of 227 square miles in Kannan Devan Hills for Rs.5,000 together with a promise to pay an annual sum of Rs.3,000. See, Sir Percival Griffiths, op.cit., p.158.

The sorcer felt satisfied that the country would largely benefit by the introduction of capital, skill and enterprise of Europeans in utilizing the tracts of land which for the most part would otherwise be untouched for generation.

In central Travancore, the first coffee plantation was abolished in 1862 by J. D. Munro on Hope Estate and his example was also soon followed by Stevenson, Baber and Richardson.² In 1864 tea plantation also started in the government gardens in Peerumade.³ The most important and largest plantation companies were the British Kannan Devan Hill Produce Company and the Anglo American Direct Tea Trading Company. The first company was registered in 1878 and the second in 1897.

The Government assessment on these lands was very nominal when compared to the income from the plantation crops. *Even after the amendment (in 1944) of an earlier agreement, the state demand on the plantations of the Kannan Devan Hill produce was $\frac{1}{2}$ about 5 annas per acre $\frac{1}{2}$." The assessment rate for coffee and tea cultivation was fixed at Rs.1.00 per acre and for rubber and cardamon the rates were respectively fixed as Rs.2.00 and 3.00 per acre.⁵

1. T.K. Velu Pillai, Travancore State Manual, Vol.III, p.18.
2. Sir Percival Griffiths, op.cit., p.157.
3. Ibid.
4. T.C. Varghese, op.cit., p.117.
See, P. Paramegwaran Pillai, Report on the Scheme for the Introduction of Basic Land Tax and the Revision of Agricultural Income Tax, Government of Travancore, 1946, para 65.
5. Ibid., para 70.

The low rate of assessment, the cheap labour and good transportation facilities naturally increased the flow of foreign capital into plantations and hence by 1896, six thousand acres of land in the Kannan Devan Hills were under plantation crops of which tea, cinchona and coffee occupied 3,135, 1,391 and 1,357 acres respectively.¹ This penetration of foreign capital into plantation industries, indeed, opened up new opportunities for agricultural and non-agricultural expansion. In addition to that, as a result of consistent persuasion by the British authorities, the Government of Travancore abolished the state monopoly in commodities like pepper in 1860 and tobacco in 1863. Thus "the commercial resources of the country received an impetus unknown before."² As a consequence of the abolition of monopoly of pepper trade, the local traders were now free to buy pepper from inland ryots and sell in the best market. For a period of 9 years between 1872-80 the pepper market was stabilised and the pepper trade averaged Rs.2.81 lakhs.³ In 1863 tobacco monopoly was also abolished. Before its abolition, the Government had been the sole supplier of tobacco. Due to the abolition of tobacco monopoly the petty traders could acquire their tobacco cheaply for themselves. With the removal of Government from the duty of

1. Sir Percival Griffiths, op.cit., p.159.

2. V. Nagan Aiyah, op.cit., Vol.III, p.184.

3. Robin Joffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p. 96.

supplying tobacco as a middle man,¹ the tobacco trade became more profitable.

Apart from the development of public works department, the growth of plantation industries, abolition of state monopoly in commodities like pepper and tobacco, the tapioca cultivation in the plain lands and back water reclamation for rice in the coastal belt,² the demand for labour "both skilled and unskilled in British Indian provinces and the overseas British territories like Ceylon and Mauritius"³ also helped the growth of cash economy in Travancore. In addition to that the expansion of area under cultivation⁴ coupled with the development of industries like coir, cashewnut, spinning and weaving and leather industry also caused rapid economic change in the last quarter of the 19th century. The trade and commerce, particularly overseas trade, developed in an unprecedented manner. The demand for coconut products in America and Europe increased considerably. Between 1870 to 1890 the value of export of coconut products from Travancore increased

1. Ibid., pp.96-97

2. P. R. Gopinathan Nair, "Education and Socio-Economic Change in Kerala 1793-1947," Social Scientist, March 1976, Vol.4, No.8, pp.30-31.

3. Quoted in Ibid., p.30.

4. In 1920-21 the net area sown for various crops was 20,08,960 acres and in 1931 it increased to 22,01,295 acres. See Census of India Travancore 1931, p.22.

more than double. The value of coconut products like copra and other fibre articles rose from Rs. 30.43 lakhs in 1871 to 68.99 lakhs in 1891.¹

These economic changes affected not only the caste Hindus and non-caste Hindus but also affected untouchables like Ezhavas. Therefore, the emergence of middleclass in Travancore, unlike other parts of South India, where, "the new middle class so far as Hindus were concerned was almost wholly a single caste class, the Brahmins, and consisted mainly of the white collar profession,² was from multicaste and multi-occupational groups.

Education and the Emergence of a New Class

Travancore was the second most literate state in India, the first being the State of Cochin.³ The main reasons for the growth of education were the activities of Christian missionaries and the enthusiasm shown by Travancore Government to

defray the entire cost of education of its people in order that there might be no backwardness in the spread of enlightenment among them, but by diffusion of education that they might become better subjects and public servants that the reputation of the state might be advanced thereby.⁴

1. See, Travancore Administrative Reports 1870-71 to 1891-92.
2. B.M. Bhatia, "Growth and Composition of Middle Class in South India in Nineteenth Century," Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. II, No. 4, October 1965, p. 341.
3. Proceedings of the Seventeenth Session of the Sree Mulam People's Assembly of Travancore 1921, p. 11.
4. The State's direct activities in the field of education was started in 1817, when the then ruler Gouri Parvati

In 1834 Travancore Government started its English schools and in order to attract more and more students to these schools Government provided not only free education but also gave an amount of Rs.2.00 as scholarship for studying English.¹ In addition to that the small peasant proprietors and tenants who had substantial economic independence acted as a stimulant for educational growth.² Due to the influence of the above mentioned factors Travancore had in 1870 one vernacular school per 1.9 square miles and for 792 inhabitants.³ There were 364,810 literate persons in 1901, out of which 14,869 were literate in English.⁴ In 1904-05 the total number of schools were 3,630 and total number of scholars were 195,999 as against 2,337 schools and 193,780 scholars in 1903-04.⁵

The higher education at college level upto graduation also made tremendous progress. In 1911 there were six colleges out of which 4 were arts colleges and one a training

Bhai issued a receipt which resolved to defray the entire cost of the education. Quoted in Administrative Report of Travancore 1936-37, p.197.

1. Kerala Karmudi, 23rd November 1924, pp.1 and 4.
2. P. R. Gopinathan Nair, "Education and Socio-Economic Change in Kerala," Social Scientist, Vol.4, No.8, March 1975, p.29.
3. Nagan Aiyar, op.cit., Vol.II, p.459.
4. Census of India Travancore 1901, Report, pp.201-3.
5. From the Presidential address of Dewan at the second meeting of the Sri Mula Popular Assembly which was held in Trivandrum on 21st October 1903. Proceedings of the Second Meeting of Sri Mula Popular Assembly 1903, p.17.

college and one a Sanskrit college.¹ In 1903 Travancore Government spent 9.56 per cent of the total revenue for education.³ The level of female education was also far in advance to that of other states. Altogether the province had in 1905 a total number of 19,59,999 students out of which 45,570 were women. It was 13.2 per cent of the school going girl population between the ages of 5 and 15.³

But all these educational facilities were obtainable only to upper class Hindus and the Christians. Rigid pollution regulations did not allow the low caste people to enter the sirkar schools. Therefore, till the end of the 19th century, the scheduled caste and other untouchable castes could not get much opportunities for education. Table 16 shows the details of educational status of various castes and communities.

Table-16⁴

Educational Status of Various Castes/Communities in Travancore

<u>Name of the Castes</u>	<u>No. of educated males</u>	<u>% to total males</u>	<u>No. of educated females</u>	<u>% to total females</u>
Brahmins	10,188	50.18	241	1.33
Kshatriyas	645	52.02	116	9.56
Ambolevadi	1,315	31.67	65	1.52
Nayars	46,373	21.27	2,656	1.19
Ezhavas	5,928	3.15	93	0.05
Parayas	192	0.60	-	-
Pulayan	183	0.19	-	-
Muslims	6,524	9.27	86	0.12
Christians	29,057	12.42	1,593	0.63
Europeans	131	87.33	83	79.23
Eurasians	320	45.97	157	22.65

1. Census of India Travancore 1911, Vol. XXV, Part I, p. 85.

2. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1905, p. 17.

3. Ibid., p. 18.

4. Census of Travancore 1876, p. 245.

In 1895 for the first time Travancore Government provided grant-in-aid for the establishment of schools for backward communities.¹ In 1904 Government of Travancore accepted the responsibility of imparting free primary education to all the people irrespective of castes, creed or race.² It was indeed a stimulant for the education of backward classes. In 1905, 5,591 backward class students studied in 221 schools, which were constructed for them, and in the next year both students and schools increased respectively to 5,907 and 276.³ (Table 17).

Table-17^A

Number of Backward Class Pupils Under Instruction in Travancore

Caste	Year	
	1080 ME (1905 A. D.)	1081 ME (1906 A. D.)
Pulayas	2,266	2,513
Parayas	2,252	2,464
Velans	457	294
Kuzovos	340	276
Kanies	220	194
Vedars	66	166

1. Census of India Travancore, Vol. XXVIII, Part I, Report, p.433.
2. Nagan Aiya, op.cit., Vol. II, p.482.
3. Administrative Report of Travancore 1905-1906, p.53.
See also the Proceedings of Sri Mula Popular Assembly 1905, p.7.
4. Administrative Report of Travancore 1905-1906, p.54.

In 1911 the restrictions on the admission of Pulaya and other backward class children to departmental schools for backward classes were removed¹ and by 1928-29 all special schools for backward classes were converted into general category.²

Even though the educational expansion affected all strata of Travancore society, it was not uniform among the various sections of the society. The Christians and the caste Hindus generally took greater advantage of educational facilities than the avarnas and the Muslims. These educational advancement of Christians and caste Hindus was due to preferential facilities and economic capacity. The Christians had the support of Christian missionaries who managed 416 schools out of 1901 schools in 1886-87 period.³ Whereas the caste Hindus got very good support from the Government. Table 19 shows the occupation of the parents or guardians of pupils for 1897 and 1899.

1. T.K. Velu Pillai, op.cit., Vol. III, pp. 735-6.

2. Ibid., p. 737.

3. The following table shows the number of schools under government and private administration for the year 1886-87:

Table-18

Description of Schools	No. of schools	
	1886	1887
Government	226	226
Mission	398	416
Native	247	901
Total	871	1543

(Administration Report of Travancore 1886-87, p.251)

Table-19¹Occupation of Parents/Guardians of Pupils for the
Years 1897 and 1899

<u>Occupation of the Guardian</u>	<u>No. of pupils under instru- ction</u>	<u>% to total</u>	<u>No. of pupils under instru- ction</u>	<u>% to total</u>
Government Servants	9,823	6.1	11,619	6.5
Teacher	2,174	1.4	2,349	1.3
Landlords and agri- culturists	78,007	48.4	87,765	48.2
Vakils	1,285	0.8	1,750	0.9
Labourers and Coolies	38,127	23.8	40,178	22.6
Traders and Merchants	14,262	8.9	17,193	9.6
Artisans	8,557	5.4	8,891	5.3
Other unspecified	8,133	5.2	9,954	5.6

Table 19 shows that in 1897, pupils whose parents had white collar jobs like Government service teaching and law accounted for 8.3 per cent of the total students in Travancore and slightly increased to 8.7 per cent during 1899. But at the colleges their percentages steadily increased.² The children of land lords and agricultural classes accounted for 48.4 per cent of the total students. Same way the enrolment rates of children of traders and merchants was 8.9 in 1897 and 9.6 in 1899. These three sections together occupied

1. Administration Report of Travancore 1896-97, para 667, 1899, p.105.

2. P.K. Gopinathan Nair, op.cit., p.36.

about 65 per cent of the total student population. At the same time the children of labourers, coolies, artisans etc., together accounted for 34 per cent of the students who studied at different stages.

In the sphere of education the caste Hindus and the Christians enjoyed an overwhelming superiority over non-caste Hindus and Muslims. Table 20 shows the number of educated males and females in each community of Travancore with percentage and also gives a comparison with 1875.

Table-20¹

Number of Educated Males and Females in Each Communities at Travancore

Caste	Literate	Proportion of literate to the total male in 1891	Proportion in 1875	Literate	Proportion of literate to the total female in 1891	Proportion in 1875
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Brahmins	11,925	51.72	50.18	1,469	7.15	1.33
Kshatriyas	499	32.37	52.02	252	20.13	9.55
Ambalavasi	1,097	28.20	31.67	183	5.11	1.52
Noir	90,542	37.47	21.27	16,673	6.89	1.19
Ezhavan	24,996	12.10	3.15	1,089	-	0.05
Paraya	838	2.35	0.60	91	0.25	-
Pulaya	4,031	0.39	0.19	630	-	-
Muslim	11,709	1.36	9.27	91,230	1.65	0.12
Christians	56,537	21.29	12.42	8,454	3.27	0.63

This table shows the upper caste lower caste disparity in the field by education. The caste Hindus and Christians were far ahead of non-caste Hindus and the Muslims.

1. Census of Travancore 1891, p.401.

In the field of English education also the caste Hindus and Christians dominated non-caste Hindus and the Muslims. According to 1891 Census there was in Travancore 3,421 English literates - that was 13 in every 10,000 were educated in English language. Taking the first in order of the number the Brahmins had 881 English educated people. The second and third places respectively occupied by Noyars and Christians with 614 and 600. At the same time the Ezhavas, the Muslims and the Parayans together constituted only 126.¹ The facilities were not accessible to the low castes. But a few Ezhavas coming from land holding families² had a little opportunity to enter the English education. In the early part of the 20th century this community had achieved surprising growth in the field of English education while the number of English educated Ezhavas in 1891 was only 30,³ in 1931 it increased to 5,202 (Table 21).

Table-21⁴

Development of English Education Among Various Communities

Communities	Literates in English 1911 to 1931		
	1911	1921	1931
Brahmins	3,007	4,221	8,226
Noyars	5,446	14,169	18,606
Christians	10,129	24,059	27,296
Muslims	299	1,159	1,608
Ezhavas	1,441	4,529	5,202

1. Ibid., pp.504-5.

2. Robin Jeffrey, "The Temple Entry Movement in Travancore 1830-1940," op.cit., p.8.

3. Census of Travancore 1891, pp.104-5.

4. See, Census Reports of 1911, 1921 and 1931.

The above mentioned factors led to the emergence of a middle class drawn from various religions and castes in Travancore.

CHAPTER II

THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE SREE NARAYANA DHARMA PARIPALANA YOGAM

The relatively low position of the Ezhavas in the caste structure of Travancore has been highlighted in the last chapter. The focus of this chapter is on the origin of the Ezhava community, their socio-economic condition, the emergence of a middle class within the Ezhavas, the advent of Sree Narayana Guru, his socio-religious reforms and the contribution of both the Ezhava middle class and Sree Narayana Guru to the formation of the S. N. D. P. Yogam.

The first recorded reference about the Ezhavas is in the Tharisappally inscription belonging to the 5th year of King Sthanu Ravi (848-49 A. D.) of Kerala.¹ Though Elankulam Kunjan Pillai is of the opinion that till 12th century A. D. the word Ezhavas indicated not a caste but the name of an occupation,² the Tanjore inscription of Raja Raja Chola (985-1013 A. D.) related it to caste and occupation.³ In all probability the formation of the Ezhavas as a caste took place by the end of the 10th century.⁴

1. In this inscription, Ayyanadigal Thiruvadi, the then ruler of Vond, granted his "Vidupam" to the Tharisappally built by Ego da Tapir at Kurakkeri Kolan. In this area had lived four families of Ezhavas in which there were eight toddy tappers and one family of washermen. They were exempted from several taxes. Elankulam Kunjan Pillai, Studies in Kerala History, Kottayam, N. S. S., 1970, pp. 371-3.
2. Idem. Kerala Charitra Prasnanal (Malayalam), Kottayam, 1963, p. 119 (foot note).
3. M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies or Essays on the History of the Tamil People, Language, Religion and Literature, Madras, 1914, p. 66.
4. P. K. Gopalakrishnan, "Ezhavar" in Kerala Charitram, Vol. I, Ernakulam-Cochin, 1973 p. 965

There is no unanimity of opinion among scholars, both ethnologists and historians, regarding the origin of the Ezhava community. There are two main views on their genesis. One is based on the theory of migration from Ceylon and the other on the process of evolution within the society. A good number of scholars have generally accepted that the Ezhavas were not the aborigines of Kerala and that they migrated from Ceylon between the first and fifth century A. D.¹ The origin of the word Thiyya² is said to be a corruption of the Sanskrit word dwipa (island) indicating that they originally came from an island and the word Ezhava is derived from Ezham a corruption of Sinhalem, which referred to Ceylon for several centuries.³ The word Chova is said to be a corruption of sevake which means one who

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1. William Logan, Malabar Manual, Madras, 1951 (3d edition), Vol. I, p. 143.
Edgar Thurston, op.cit., Vol. VII, p. 137.
L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, op.cit., p. 227.
C.A. Innes, Madras District Gazetteer, Malabar, 1904, Vol. I, p. 124.
Nagam Aiyar, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 298-9.
C. Chutha Menon, Cochin State Manual, Ernakulam, 1911, p. 203.
Francis Day, The Land of Perumals, Madras, 1863, p. 319.
Vischer Jacob Center, Letters from Malabar, Madras, 1802, pp. 127-8.
 2. Ezhavas of Kerala are known by different names in different parts of the country: In Southern Travancore and a part of the Central Travancore Ezhavas, in Northern Travancore and a part of Central Travancore Chovans, in South Travancore Chonors, in Malabar Thiyyas and in south Canara Silvas. Census of India Travancore 1901, Vol. XXVI, Part I, Report, p. 278. See also, Vivekodayam, February-March 1916 (Kumbham 1091 ME), pp. 344-51.
 3. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, History of Kerala, Vol. III, Ernakulam 1933 p. 424.

works or serve, a description of the position they hold in the country of their adoption.¹ Dr. Caldwell observes in his "Essays on the Tinneveli Shanars" that "It is tolerably certain that the Ezhavas and Tiyas who cultivate the coconut palm of Travancore are descendants ^{of} shanar colonies from Ceylon." There are traces of a common origin among the Travancore Ezhavas.² Dr. Palpu, the founder of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, was also of the view that the Ezhavas came from Ceylon and that they brought from Ceylon coconut and Palmyra trees to India.³ Several scholars continue to hold the migration theory. K. Demodaran, the author of Ezhava Charitram, provides several similarities between the Ezhavas of Travancore and the Sinhales of Ceylon, is one of them. The similarities in the name of Ezhava and Ezhavar, marumakkathayam, law of inheritance, absence of priesthood stature and complexion of the body are pointed out by Demodaran.⁴ To justify the migration theory, Demodaran asserts that the Ezhavas of

1. Ibid.

Thurston says, "Chava is supposed to be a corruption of sevaka or servant caste." Op.cit., Vol. II, p. 392.

2. Quoted in Census of India Travancore 1901, Part I, p. 278. See also, B. H. Baden-Powell, The Land Systems of British India, Delhi 1974, Vol. III, p. 157.

3. See Dr. Palpu's presidential address in connection with the industrial exhibition held at Quilon in 1904. See Vivekodayam, 5th February 1905 (30 Makarand 1080 ME), p. 97. See also, Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No. 19 which enclosed his address (N. L. M. 8L), New Delhi. See also the letter written to Mahatma Gandhi on 12 April 1925. Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No. I.

4. K. Demodaran, Ezhava Charitram, Vol. I, Trivandrum 1110 ME (1935-36), p. 306.

Travancore were, as the Sinhalese of Ceylon, Buddhists earlier. His only argument to prove this is that like the Buddhists, the Ezhavas also were free from the influence of priests.¹ This argument of Buddhist tradition was advanced by C. V. Kunjuraman and Palpu (junior), even before Damodaran. C. V. Kunjuraman's interpretation of the word "Chevan" was derived from the Tamil word chuyake which means a mendicant or a Bikchu (Buddhist).² According to Palpu (junior):

Assuming them as well as established that the Ezhavas came from Ceylon, the question is what was their religion when they immigrated into Kerala. That it was Buddhism is clear from the following circumstances: (1) In the early centuries of the Christian era when the community in all probability settled in Kerala, the prevailing religion of Ceylon was Buddhism; (2) In several parts of Travancore "Chithar" is still worshipped as a domestic deity, who can this "Chithar" be excepted Siva or Sidhartha, one of the Sanskrit synonyms of Lord Buddha. In Peravur, Quilon, there is still a sacred grave called "Chithan Kavu" and tank called, "Chithan Kulam." (3) In Manu's system of castes there is no mention of either "Cheva" or Thiyya as a caste. This omission is significant as a tendency to confirm the view that the Ezhava community did not form a Hindu caste.³

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1. It is generally attributed that the Vattis were the priests of Ezhavas. But Damodaran says that the Vattis were not their priests and they were only a parikarmi or assistant. Ibid., pp. 321-2.
 2. C. V. Kunjuraman, "The Thiyyas," in Mitavadi, March 1916, p. 24.
 3. Presidential Address of Dr. Palpu (junior) on the 13th Annual meeting held at Quilon on 11th and 12th May 1916. Vivekodayam, June-July 1916 (Mithunam 1091 ME), No. 3, Vol. XIII, p. 51.

As the migration theory is based on various scattered etimological, literary and traditional assumptions, the arrival of the Ezhaveas from Ceylon remains a subject of controversy among scholars. The scholars who renounce the migration theory are of the opinion that the process of the evolution of Ezhaveas took place within the society. Elankulam Kunjan Pillai, a very meticulous scholar of Kerala history, states that all communities in Kerala except the Brahmins are indigenous.¹ K. Danodaran opines that all castes including the Namboodiris emerged out of the changes in the mode of production.² But E.M. S. Namboodiripad says that all communities in Kerala belong to the same race of the Nayars and the Namboodiris and became divided as a result of caste system based on land holding.³ To Krishnan the migration story is a fictitious creation of the Namboodiri Brahmins.⁴ Based on the culture, law of inheritance, style of life etc., T.K. Madhavan observed that the Nayars and the Ezhaveas originally belonged to the same varna.⁵ According to C.V. Kunjuranen the Ezhaveas

1. Elankulam Kunjan Pillai, Kerala Charitra Pragnanam, Kottayam, 1963, Part I, pp. 111-2.
The strength of the Thiyya community in south India is more than that of the total population of Ceylon.
Idem, Kerala Charitralaile Iruladanja Edukal, Kottayam, 1963 (3d edition), p.196.
2. K. Danodaran, Kerala Charitram, Trichur, 1962, p. 137
3. E.M. S. Namboodiripad, National Questions in Kerala, Bombay, 1952, p. 40. But he himself admitted that a group of people migrated to Kerala.
Idem, Kerala Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, Calcutta, 1968 p.25
4. N.R. Krishnan, Ezhavar Annam Innam, Trichur, 1969, p. 73
5. T.K. Madhavan, Doctor Palpu (A Life History of Dr. Palpu), fully revised by Pallipattu Kunjukrishnan, Cheppad, Alleppy, 1969, p. 8.

Sri Marikot Kunhappa also held the same view in his article, "Thiyyarude Charitram Oru Vihaga Veekchanam", "S. N. D. P."

were the natives of Kerala and they lived along with the Noyars as a sister group and were separated from them afterwards. When a party of Buddhists came to Kerala to save Buddhists from Brahmin hegemony the Noyars supported the Brahmins and the Ezhavas supported the Buddhists. When Buddhism declined the Ezhavas lost status to Nairs and became an inferior caste.¹

Among the modern scholars P.C. Alexander subscribes to the view that the Ezhavas descended from the Buddhist community in Kerala which included both Ceylonese immigrants and Malayali converts and when Buddhism fell on evil days, the Buddhists were relegated to an inferior status.¹ To Murkot Kunhappa, the Ezhavas were Buddhist and "When the Tiya reverted to pre-Buddhist religion, he preferred pre-Aryan deities like Shiva and Kali for worship. He was, therefore, an undesirable and an out caste, slipping down into an untouchable and an unapproachable because even the Namboodiri families who practiced Ayurveda system of medicine are considered as belonging to a lower rung of the Brahmins and

Platinum Jubilee Souvenir (Malayalam), Quilon 1973,
pp.65-69. See also,
Kambil Anandhan, "Thiyyar," S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Quilon, 1953, pp.97-100.

1. Dr. P.C. Alexander, Buddhism in Kerala, Annamalai Nagar, 1949, p.123.
To substantiate the argument of Alexander Dr. A. Ayyappan points out that a similar thing happened to the Buddhists in Bengal during the time of Hindu revivalism. Ayyappan states that when Hindu revivalism took place in Bengal the Buddhists were absorbed into Hinduism, they were considered to be low caste Hindus.
A. Ayyappan, Social Revolution in a Kerala Village: A Study in Culture Change, Bombay, 1965, p.120.

are known as Musads.¹ In short, when Buddhism completely disappeared from Kerala due to the revivalism of Hinduism and the increasing influence of Brahmins,² the Buddhists were absorbed into Hinduism as an inferior caste.

The Emergence of a Middle Class Among the Ezhavas

Though in social status the Ezhavas were considered untouchables, economically and educationally they were not so poor as the other polluting communities. That was why among the untouchables of Kerala only Ezhavas could produce a middle class.

Agriculture, formed the major occupation of the Ezhavas, who were also active in industry and trade.³ There seems to be some inscription about traditional occupation of the Ezhavas. Almost all historical accounts on Kerala describes the Ezhavas as tappers and tenders of the coconut palm and distillers of liquor. Though the tapping of toddy and distilling of arrack and the sales of these articles were only done by the Ezhavas, it was only an occupation of a minority of Ezhavas,⁴ it is, therefore, erroneous to

1. Musket Kunhappa, "Thiyyas of Kerala," Souvenir Indian History Congress 1976, p.48.

Dr. Palpu (Junior) says, "If then our people /Ezhavas/ were Buddhist when we settled in this land of Perumals, the religious antipathy of the Hindu caste will explain our exclusion from Hindu temples, when we reverted to the old Hindu faith such as the inequality of the distinction shown when they went to worship in the Hindu temples that self respect must have led them to resent the treatment and to establish temples of their own." Vivekodayam, June-July, 1916, p.51.

2. Dr. Palpu Papers, File No. I (NWBL).

3. See for details Chapter I.

4. Census Report 1921, p.125. See also, T.K. Velu Pillai, op.cit., Vol.III, p.12.

attribute this occupation to the community as a whole. The sarcastic comment of Murkoth Kunhappa that, "There is not enough coconut trees to go round if entire community of over half a crore were to clamber up these palms in search of toddy"¹ is quite relevant. By the end of the 19th century only 38 in a thousand followed this so called traditional occupation.² In fact it was the occupation of the poorest section of the community.³

Agriculture was, indeed, the prominent occupation of the Ezhavas.⁴ In the matter of ownership of the land the Ezhavas of Travancore possessed third position just below the Nayers and Christians.⁵ In Northern Travancore in 1904 out of 261 big land lords, who were paying Rs.100 or more as land tax per annum, eight were Ezhavas and in central Travancore at least four 'great' Ezhava families which rivalled those of local Nayers.⁶ According to 1870 Census the total number of Ezhavas engaged in the cultivation of land in Travancore was 26,891 or 14.28 per cent of the total male population.⁷ Among the propertied classes in Travancore

1. Murkot Kunhappa, Murkot Kumaran (Biography Malayalam), Kottayam, 1975, p.27. See also, Idem, "Thiyyas of Kerala," op.cit., p.47.

2. T. S. Velu Pillai, op.cit., Vol.III, p.47.

3. TheGaston, op.cit., Vol.II, p.395.

4. William Logan, Malabar Manual, Vol.I, p.117.

5. Vivekodayan, January-February 1909 (Makaram 1084), p.5.

6. Dewan Peshkar, Kottayam to the Dewan, 28 September 1904, Travancore Pol Department File No.1134 of 1904.

7. Census of Travancore 1876, p.261.

Ezhavas occupied third position to the Noyars and Christians. Out of 56,775 persons belonging to the propertied classes in Travancore Ezhavas numbered 7,393.¹ But majority of the Ezhavas were sub-tenants and landless labourers, but none of them was homeless.² Generally the Namboodiries, the biggest landlords and Noyars, the largest body of land holders or tenants used to lease out their kanam tenants to Ezhavas and others as verumpattan. Thus most of the Ezhavas were employed either as tenant farmers or as agricultural labourers. According to 1876 Census the total number of agricultural labourers among the Ezhavas was 40,405.³

It has been mentioned that the Ezhavas were the best educated section among the untouchables. Their comparatively better economic conditions has naturally given them more educational facilities. A number of Ezhava families in Kerala were traditionally Ayurvedic physicians and astrologers. There were also a number of Sanskrit scholars among them.⁴ According to some scholars this was made possible due to the influence of Buddhism which relieved them from

1. Ibid., p.267.

2. Murkot Kunhappa, "Thiyyas of Kerala," op.cit., p.49.

3. Census of Travancore 1875, p.261.

4. For details see, C. H. Kosavan Vaidyan, "Ayurvedavum Ezhava Samudhayavum," Kilimnour N. Bhaskaran, "Sanskrita Bashayam Ezhavarum." These two articles published in S.N.D.P. Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, pp. 74-80 and 168-80. and see also, Murkot Kunhappa, "Thiyyas of Kerala," op.cit., p.48.

the prevailing caste restrictions.¹ While the other untouchables and polluting classes lived under obscurity due to their ignorance and illiteracy, the Ezhavas, in spite of being untouchables got better opportunities to acquire knowledge in various fields. According to 1876 Census, out of 7,589 persons who were returned under the learned professions 233 (0.13) were Ezhavas.² Most of them worked as Ayurvedic doctors, Asans in the native schools and a few of them practiced as Vakilis. A number of Ezhavas were engaged in toddy tapping, weaving and coir making and a small section was business men, teachers, astrologers, Ayurvedic doctors and Sanskrit pundits.³ According to the estimate of Vivekodayam, a Malayalam monthly published by ^{the} S. N. D. P. Yogan, out of 1,000 workers, 214 were weavers, 116 field labourers, 163 cultivators and Jemias, 163 labourers, 128 businessmen, 110 toddy tappers, 20 other workers and 8 sirkar servants.⁴ T.K. Velu Pillai says that the great majority of 30 per cent of workers were agriculturists and more than 22 per cent were industrialists among the Ezhavas.⁵ These economic

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1. Dr. A. Ayyappan, Social Revolution in Kerala Villages, op.cit., p.125;
P.K. Gopalakrishnan, "Ezhaveer", Kerala Charitram, Vol.I, p.976.
See also, C.R. Kesavan Vaidyan, "Ayurvedavum Ezhaveer
Samudhayanam," S.N.D.P. Yogan Platinum Jubilee Souvenir,
pp. 74-80
 2. Census of Travancore 1876, p.256.
 3. Census of India Travancore 1901, Report, p.142.
 4. Vivekodayam, November-December 1912 (Vrichikam 1099 ME), p.47.
 5. T.K. Velu Pillai, op.cit., Vol.III, p.13.

advantages and educational improvement helped the emergence of a middle class within the community.

The other factor which brought about change among the Ezhavas was their contact with the Christian missionaries. Though the missionary activities swept all over Travancore by the beginning of the 19th century under the patronage of Colonel Munro,¹ the caste Hindu dominated Travancore society looked down on missionaries as mlotchans and derided their activities. This attitude of caste Hindus naturally urged missionaries to make good relation with the Ezhavas, who were not only the upper caste among the untouchables but also comparatively well educated and economically well placed among the low castes. Ezhavas also had strong reasons to maintain good relations with the Christians. If the first one was related to their caste disabilities, the second one was concerned with humanitarian activities of Christian missionaries. The missionary

1. During the time of Colonel Munro as the Resident of Travancore in 1810-19 he patronised the missionary activities and he secured the title "Father of Christian Mission in Travancore." During the term of office of Munro as the Resident-cum-Dewan of Travancore, Christians obtained a number of privileges. He urged the Maharaja of Travancore to provide financial assistance to the activities of Christian Missionaries.

(Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol. I, p.43).

They were exempted from poll tax and Uzhiyam (obligatory service).

(See Robbin Joffrey, The Decline of Nayar Dominance; pp. 37-39).

And the Christian women were granted the right to cover their breasts as Christians did in other countries.

Ibid.

In addition to that, in 1829, it was again under Colonel Munro that a Royal Proclamation authorising conversion was to be respected was issued.

The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol. I, p.43.

activities of abolishing slavery¹ and their fight for granting the low caste women the privilege of covering their breasts² naturally attracted Ezhavas to Christians. Though these two movements of Christian missionaries were mainly aimed at protecting the economic interest of

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1. As a result of increased agitation of the missionaries the Government of Madras intervened and thus Cullen, the then Resident of Travancore, asked Maharaja of Travancore to issue a Proclamation similar to the Government of India Act of 1943.
(Cullen to the Chief Secretary, No.10, 1834 M.P.P. 3 October 1834, Range 321, Vol.XV, pp.3053-5. See also, Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, pp.44-50). Thus on the 24th June 1834 Ultram Thirunal Maharaja issued a Proclamation by which slavery in Travancore was abolished.
(Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol.I, "Appendix", 26, pp.123-4).
Thus this declaration not only emancipated all sirkar slaves from their bondages, but also withdrew legal recognition to all aspects of slavery.
Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.49.
 2. Till the end of 1830s the untouchables were not permitted to cover their breasts. The missionaries with the support of the British Resident encouraged the untouchables to break away the local customs. Though the Government circular of 1814 allowed the shanar women for wearing cloth on their bosoms as the Nair women.
(Nagan Aiyya, op.cit., Vol.I, p.525). See also, Robert L. Hardgrave (Jr.), "The Breast Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.5, No.2, June 1968, p.177).
When they began to cover their breasts, it infuriated Nayars and as a consequence of this, various conflicts took place between the Nayars and the untouchables converted to Christianity.
(C.M. Agur, op.cit., pp.780-82 and 826).
Nayars began to tear off the blouses of this low caste Christian women which led to riots, arson and even murder.
(Rev. C. Plead, "A Report of the Nayar Mission, July 1829," dated 30 June 1829, manuscript (L.M.S.) in Robert L. Hardgrave, op.cit., p.178).
Christian Missionaries pressured upon Madras Government time and again and ultimately due to the intervention of Madras Government in 1839 a Royal Proclamation decreed that there was no objection to the Shanar, a caste with same function as the Ezhavas women wearing a blouse on

European capitalists in Travancore it certainly had a humanitarian aspect. While these movements were to liberate a work force for the newly established plantation industries of British capitalists they also considerably contributed to the amelioration of the conditions of the depressed classes. The humanitarian aspect was connected with the prevailing liberal ideology and with the pressure exerted by the Protestant missionaries in Travancore and Latin Catholics in Cochin.¹ This had a chain of consequences, leading to several changes from existing feudal relations between castes to new contractual relations. In addition to that the sincerity of missionaries to eradicate the disabilities of converted Christians,² and the activities for spreading

condition that was not of the same pattern as that worn by high castes.

(According to the Royal Proclamation of Travancore State on 26 July 1839: "We hereby proclaim that there is no objection to Shanar women either putting on jacket, like the Christian Shanar women or the Shanar women of all creeds dressing on coarse cloth and tying themselves round with it as the Mukkuvattinal (low caste fisherwomen) do or to cover their bosom in any manner whatever; but not like women of high castes.")

Watoer, The Land of Charity, London, 1871, p. 305.

Nagan Aya, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 531.

1. Francois Mortart and Genlew Lemercinios, "Socio-Religious Movements in Kerala: A Relation to the Capitalist Mode of Production," Part I, Social Scientist, No. 11, June 1973, p. 4.
2. For details see, H. K. Yagudaa, A People's Revolt in Travancore - A Backward Class Movement for Social Freedom, Trivendrum, 1973, p. 61. See also, History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol. I, op.cit., pp. 59-60.
Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, op.cit., pp. 59-60.
C. L. Agur, op.cit., "appendix", p. 1.

education among the low castes were the other factors which attracted the Ezhavas. While the annihilation of various sorts of bondages of the converted low caste people, helped Ezhavas to open their eyes and began to demand in particular the same privileges as those granted to the Christian converts,¹ the spread of education made Ezhavas conscious of their potential power and economic grievances. Thus the contact with Christians really helped to awaken the social consciousness of untouchables, especially the Ezhavas with regard to their rights.² This social awakening was accelerated by the changing economic conditions and spread of education. The impact of cash economy and the role of education are discussed below.

During the second half of the 19th century, the British capitalists established plantation industries in Travancore. The abolition of state monopoly in commodities like pepper and tobacco which provided the commercial resources of the country received an impetus never known before.³ In 1880s Travancore Government had opened a public works department. This attempt of the Travancore

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1. See, Ezava Memorial. See also, Vivekodayam, 15 November 1908 (30 Tulam 1081 ME), Vol.2, No.7, p.3. Mitavadi, August 1917, Vol.5, No.8, pp.31-32.
 2. Gurunadhan describes the impact of Christian Missionaries among the educated Telugu men. He says, "It was Christianity that for the first time in the history of the country brought to a consciousness and degeneration..." Vireesalingam Pantulu: The Founder of Telugu Public Life, Rajahmundry, 1911, p.28.
 3. Nagan Aiya, op.cit., Vol.III, p.18.

Government was helped and encouraged by the British Resident with the aim of constructing a net works of roads and highways for encouraging trade and commerce and entrepreneurship in Travancore to protect the interest of British capitalists who invested money in plantation industries and small scale industries.¹ In between 1866 to 1872 the public works department had opened about 1,000 miles of roads in Travancore.² The betterment of road construction naturally increased the trade and commerce and the increase in trade resulted the growth of cash economy.³ The opening of the public works department by the state and the improvement of road construction provided thousands of low castes in salaried employment as labourers and it widened the scope for labourers and raised their wages.⁴ Apart from these new opportunities within the state, a rise in demand for labourers "both skilled and unskilled in the British Indian provinces and the overseas of the British territories like Ceylon and Mauritius."⁵

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1. When now Resident Malt took the charge of office, Dewan Madhava Rao presented a memorandum outlying "the works required for the improvement of the state." Dewan gave first preference for constructing good road system for the commerce of the state and constructed Trivandrum Nagarcoil Road, Kottayam Mundakkayam Road etc. (See Malt to Madhava Rao, 12 April 1860; Memoranda by F. N. Malt by 4 November 1861 and February 1861. Madras Residency Records, Letter to the Dewan, Vol. XII; Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.94.
 2. Travancore Administrative Report 1866-67, pp. 68 and 1871-72 p. 113.
 3. For details see first chapter.
 4. Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.91.
 5. P. R. Gopinathan Nair, "Education and Socio-Economic Change in Kerala 1793-1947," Social Scientist, Vol. 4, No. 8, March 1975, p. 30.

The opportunities opened up by these enterprises actually helped the Christians and Ezhavas because of their enthusiasm and experience in commercial and menial occupations and their association with the evangelists. Nayers and other upper caste Hindus did not evince much interest in industry, trade and commerce. Due to their lack of experience and interest in these lucrative professions they did not have any share of benefit out of these occupations. Nayers mainly concentrated their attention either on land or on the Government job, as they were traditionally more privileged. At the same time Ezhava leaders had asked their people to give more importance to profitable manual labour and industrial activities than the Government job of rupees six per month.¹ In this field they did not face much competition from the privileged section of society.

At the same time the development of plantation industries, growth of public works department, introduction of post and telegraph and backwater reclamation for rice in the coastal belt etc., demanded labour. In 1865-66 nearly 10,000 Ezhavas and slave caste coolies were on daily wage from public works department.² When the area under cultivation increased, industries like spinning and weaving of cotton and coir developed. Thus wages of labourers also

1. Vivekodayam, June-July 1905 (Mithunam 1000 A. D.), p.2.

2. Hobbin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.91.

increased from one and half anna and one meal for a day's work to 4 annas and one meal through his hours of work¹ and skilled workmen could make up to a rupee a day by the 1880s.² In Travancore the wages of non-agricultural labour in plantation industries had risen by 167 per cent and the artisans by 140 per cent.³ As a consequence of this job opportunities and increase of wages automatically helped to increase the cost of living including women and children at Rs.29.5 a year.⁴

In the meanwhile an unprecedented demand developed for coconut articles abroad especially in America and Europe. The coconut products which were exported for Rs.30.33 lakhs in 1873 increased to 68.59 lakhs in 1891.⁵ Though the Ezhavas were not the actual owners of the coconut trees, as the main exploiters of the coconut product, they certainly got a share of the increased profit. The coir industry developed to a large scale in Travancore due to higher demand for coir articles in America.⁶ Thus, "with

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1. Census of Travancore 1875, p.266.
This recent increment of wage was mainly concerned with the development of P. M. D. in Travancore. The rate stayed roughly at 4 annas until 1890s when new planting boom forced it upto 5 annas.
Madras Mail, 30 January 1897, p.7.
 2. Rev. Samuel Mateer, Native Life of Travancore, London 1883, pp.235-6.
 3. Robbin Jeffrey, "The Social Origins of a Caste Association 1875-1905: The Founding of the S. N. D. P. Yogan" South Asia, No.4, 1974, p.43.
 4. Cochin Census Report, 1891, p.144.
 5. Travancore Administrative Report 1870-71 to 1891-92.
 6. Ibid., 1882-83, pp.67-68.

an expanding market for coir, Irava women as well as men would at least have found full employment, which the traditional aim of the poor Irava - to own or rent a few palm trees - had the advantage of increasing not only his status but also his wealth."¹ The labour in industries was overwhelmingly Ezhava and a larger number of Ezhavas were also entering new vocation.² By 1900 a few Ezhavas owned factories. "Good work is being turned out here by private industry," wrote the Travancore Dewan to an Ezhava coir factory near Quilon in 1900 "and some boys are being trained in the work [...]/ This institution speaks well for the industry and spirit of self help of the Elava (Ezhava) community."³ The other lucrative business of the time was toddy and arrack. The value of toddy and arrack were doubled between 1860-1881.⁴ This also helped Ezhavas to increase their income. In addition to these works, weaving, another traditional occupation of the Ezhavas,⁵ also provided them employment. Some Ezhavas opened small handloom factories by the beginning of the century. Dr. Palpu and others started Travancore weaving and trading company with the capital investment of rupees one lakh.⁶

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1. Robbin Jeffrey, "The Social Origin...." op.cit., p.44.
 2. Idan, "Temple Entry Movement in Travancore 1869-1940," Social Scientist, March 1976, Vol.4, No.3, p.9.
 3. V.P. Madhava Rao, "The Dewan's Tour Inspection Notes," 16 May to 18 January 1904, Kerala Secretariat Cellar, Travancore, Political Department 97/1904.
 4. Motoer, Native Life of Travancore, p.281.
 5. K. Damodaran, Ezhava Charitram, op.cit., p.333.
 6. Vivekodayam, June-August 1906 (Mithunam-Karkkadakan 1081 ME), p.12.

The land reform of Madhava Rao (Pattem Proclamation) in 1865 conferred ownership rights on the holders of the Government Pattem land and imparted cash value to it, which could now be divided, mortgaged, sold or transformed.¹ The law granted ownership rights to those who held land. The state had obliged the relation between the land lord and the kanam tenant. The second proclamation of 1867 legislated the fixity of tenure. The Ezhavas as subtenants also grew conscious of the legal protection against eviction. While these proclamations were counter productive in case of Nayers, it was conducive to both Christians and Ezhavas. As a result of internal feuds and quarrels, the partition of Nayar Teravads increased from 301 in 1896 to 516 in 1906-1907.² The economic changes after 1850 helped Ezhavas to purchase a portion of the partitioned properties of Nayar Teravads.³

When their financial position improved, automatically their standard of living also increased. In keeping pace with economic development, the perspective of life also began to change. Members of the new elite families took interest in sending their children to schools. After the modernization of the administration and practical recognition of English as official language of the state, all communities

1. For details see Chapter I.

2. Report of the Travancore Marumakkathayam Committee 1908, "Appendix II," p. 73.

3. Vivekodayam, January-February 1909 (Makaram 1084 ME), pp. 5-6.
For details see Chapter I.

began sending their children to schools and colleges with a view to qualify them either for state service^{OR}for the British Indian service.

Travancore rulers encouraged education in this state from the beginning of the 19th century, for having an efficient administration and the smooth running of the Government. We have already seen that in 1834 Travancore Government started its first English school and in order to attract more and more students to these schools, Government not only imparted free education, but also gave an amount of Rs.2.00 as an award for studying English. But all these educational facilities were available only to caste Hindus. Ezhavas and other low caste peoples were not admitted to these schools as they were untouchables and unapproachables. With the development of educational facilities in the 19th century, frustration arose among the Ezhavas because of the inaccessibility to the benefits of western education. Though they were kept away from the Government schools, Government could not keep them away from education and knowledge, for in Travancore education was never brought fully under the control of the state.

Table 22 shows that nearly 25 per cent of the educational institutions were under the direct control of the state. Other 75 per cent were run by private management mainly by Christian missionaries. These mission-ry schools were opened to all communities. When fifty "highly

Table-22¹

Number of Schools Run by Government and Private Agencies in Travancore During 1885-87

Description of schools	No. of schools 1885-86	No. of schools 1886-87
Government	226	226
Mission Schools	398	416
Native	247	259
TOTAL	871	901

respectable" Ezhava boys who were refused admission to the Government schools in 1872, the Rev. Samuel Mateer of the London Missionary Society opened a school for them near Anjongo.² Thus in 1870s to mitigate the frustrations of Ezhavas, Christian missionaries started a number of schools for them.³ In addition to that Government also opened a number of schools for backward communities.⁴ This also helped Ezhavas to a great extent to increase their education. Thus, literacy among the Ezhavas increased from 3.15 in 1875 to 12.10 per cent in 1891.⁵ From 1880s onwards Ezhavas began to graduate from the Trivandrum college.⁶ Thus the improved

1. Administrative Report of Travancore, 1862 ME or 1866-67, A. D., p.125.
2. Robbin Jeffrey, "The social Origin/...../," op.cit., p.47.
3. Ibid.
4. Nagan Aiyar, op.cit., Vol. II, p.482.
Proceedings of Sri Moolam Popular Assembly 1905, p.7. And see also, Administrative Report of Travancore, 1900-1901, p.54.
5. Census Report of Travancore 1875, pp.245-6 and 1891, Part I, Report, p.498.
6. Rao Bhadur P. Velayudhan elder brother of Dr. Palpu was the first Ezhava graduate who took B.A. degree from Travancore

economic conditions and their association with Christian missionaries helped them to produce a number of educated people among the Ezhava community. Though Travancore Government did not provide any facility to employ these people in their own state a number of people got employment under British Government and the princely states like Mysore and Baroda. In addition to that a number of educated Ezhavas entered the profession of teaching, law, medicine and journalism.

Their contact with Christian missionaries exposed the weakness and decay of caste ridden Travancore society. Thoughtful Ezhavas began to look for the defects of their society and for ways and means of removing them. Moreover, the new social groups - the newly emerged middle class, the working class and the modern intelligentsia demanded modernisation.¹ They began fighting against the obstacles which were in the way of their development. They became conscious of their basic human rights and began to rise in defence of these rights. They gradually built up a movement against the traditional oppression of higher castes and

University.

M. Govindan, "Leo Bahadur P. Velayudhan," S. N. D. P. Yagam Golden Jubilee Souvenir 1953, p.59.

P. Velayudhan was followed by his younger brother Palpu and a number of Ezhavas graduated from various universities in India.

1. The labour for the industry was overwhelmingly Ezhavas and growing number of Ezhavas were also becoming middle men and petty factory owners. A number of Ezhavas worked in various departments of British India with distinction. The most important of them were Dr. Palpu, P. Velayudhan, Mr. Shanguuni etc.

pressed for their rights and privileges and to remove their disabilities and grievances. Palpu, the champion of Ezhava middle class, devoted his entire life and a good portion of his earnings to fight against the caste tyranny. He had received unstinted support from other Ezhava middle class men like Kumaran Asan, M. Govindan, C. V. Kunjuran, N. Kumaran, Moolur S. Padmanabha Panicker, T. K. Madhavan, Murkoth Kumaran, Shri Ayyakutty, K. Ayyappan, C. Krishnan etc. They became more self assertive and desired the destruction of caste structure which prevented their progress. They understood that the Government and its machinery favoured and protected the interest of caste middle class. The various restrictions imposed upon them like the prevention of the use of public roads and exclusion from Government schools and public services were major point of resentment. They were absolutely aware that they had no political right or power and that virtually nothing was being done for their development. That was why, during the time of Malayali Memorial Ezhava joined together with Nayars and Christians as one of the signatories. Palpu was the third signatory of the Malayali Memorial.¹ In that memorial the conditions of Ezhavas were mentioned in the following way:

There is not a single representative of the Tiya community holding any Government appointment on Rs. 5.00 or upwards a month in the state, whereas

1. P. S. Voloyudhan, S. N. D. P. Yonacharithram, Cullon 1972, p.41.

several of their castemen in Malabar have been advanced to some of the highest offices of the uncovenanted civil service open to natives of India!

In response to Malayali Memorial, Dewan had replied that the memorialists dragged the Ezhavas into Malayali Memorial and the Ezhavas were not sufficiently educated to understand their grievances themselves.² According to Dewan, education was not sufficiently widespread among the Ezhavas to be possible to offer them employment in the administration.³ In 1891 he said only two among the 387176 Ezhavas possessed a university degree.⁴ Government order also cleared that the Government did not want to interfere with public opinion,⁵ which could only create conflict within the society and that would adversely affect the progress of the state.⁶ The Ezhavas were singled out from among the memorialists and the Government stated that any attempt to force their social growth could only end in failure, so they were "confirmed social inferiors."⁷

1. "Malayali Memorial," reproduced in the Kerala Archives News Letter, Vol. II, No. II, and III March and June 1976, p.5.
2. N. Kumaran Asan, "Thiruvithankurinte Rajyabharanagambadhamaya Nila," quoted in P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Yuga Charitram, p.51.
3. Endorsement to the Travancore Memorial, File No. 1699/M 834 English Records, Government Secretariat Trivandrum, pp. 3-4.
4. Ibid., see also P. K. Balakrishnan, Narayana Guru, revised edition, N. D. S., Kottayam, 1969, p.49.
5. Loc.cit.
6. Ibid.
7. Endorsement to the Travancore Memorial, File No. 1699/M 834 English Records, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

This reply actually outraged the Ezhavas. Dr. Palpu and the new elite groups among the Ezhavas decided to organise the Ezhava community for action. In promoting the cause of Ezhavas Palpu submitted two memorials. The first memorial was submitted by Palpu on the 12 May 1895 to Sankara Soobiar, the Dewan to the Maharaja of Travancore. In this memorandum he pleaded for the removal of the discrimination against the Ezhavas in education and employment. When it failed to evoke any response, the second one, a community memorial, generally known as Ezhava Memorial signed by 13,176 Ezhavas was submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore on September 1896.¹ In this petition they asked the Maharaja the same privileges as those granted to the Christian converts and especially demanded rights to enter Government schools and colleges and to seek employment in the service according to eligibility.² In addition to that they recolled in the memorial that the Ezhavas were numerically the second strongest community in the state and that their counterparts in Malabar, the Tiyas, had already acquired the same rights as the other castes in regard to the Government service was concerned.³

The response to this Memorial was utterly disappointing and discouraging. The response of the government was expressed

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1. File No. C-1231, English Records, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum; Madras Mail, 6 October 1896.
 2. See "Ezhava Memorial" reproduced in M. Q. Koscy, Genesis of Political Consciousness in Kerala, Trivandrum, 1972, Appendix No. IV, pp. 190-200.
 3. Ibid.

by the Dewan in the following words:

In this country, as a body there are uneducated preferring their own occupations of agriculture, coir making and toddy drawing, not going for such education as would fit them for the public service. There are only two of their class out of a population of 887173 who have graduated in the university and a very few, indeed, if any who are seeking a high education in the local college. Their special position is such that they can hardly be eligible for public offices where a certain amount of respect is expected to be commanded in a state where Hindus are more conservative and superstitious than their brethren in Malabar.¹

In addition to this, a number of petitions both by individuals and by groups were submitted to the Maharaja. But the government rejected all these petitions on the ground that they exclusively represented the self interest of a particular community.²

In spite of this rebuff Palpu continued his endeavour to work for the uplift of his community. He carried on his fight for social justice through the available means - the press meetings, letters and interviews with authorities. Social justice meant recognition of fundamental human rights. In his efforts to transform a primitive community he accepted help from all quarters. He made arrangements to raise the grievances of Ezhavas in the British Parliament

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1. Endorsement to the Malayali Memorial File No. 1809/LI 884, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.
 2. Robin Jeffrey, "A Note on the Malayali Origins of Anti Brahminism in South India," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. XIV, No. 2, p. 259. (1976)

Through G.P. Parameswaran Pillai.¹ The British Parliament directed the Indian Government to look into the problem and take appropriate measure.² Palpu met Lord Curzon when he visited Mysore, and explained to him the plight of Ezhavas in Travancore and submitted a memorandum to him.³ By this time he wrote a small book in English entitled Treatment of Ezhavas in Travancore to point out the unjust policy of the Government towards Ezhavas.⁴ Thus he not only mobilised public opinion but also captured the attention of the state government, the British Resident, the Viceroy and the British Parliament. As he asked G.P. Pillai, the latter highlighted the problems of Ezhavas at the platform of Indian National Congress in 1895.⁵

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1. G.P. Sekhar (ed.), G.P. Centenary Souvenir 1964: Selected Writings and Speeches of G.P. Pillai, Trivandrum 1964, pp. 117-8. See also, K. Bhanu, "Doctor P. Palpu D.P.H.," S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p.28.
One thousand five hundred rupees had to be spent for sending Mr. Pillai to London to raise the question in British Parliament regarding the treatment of Ezhavas in Travancore. But all the money except Rs.300 which contributed by his fellow men, came from Dr. Palpu's own pocket. See, Madhavan K.G. Komalezhathu, "Doctor Palpu," S.N.D.P. Yogam Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, Quilon 1973, p.376.
 2. G.P. Sekhar, op.cit., pp.117-8.
 3. Madhavan K.G. Komalezhathu, op.cit., p.376.
 4. Ibid. See also, M.K. Sano, Narayana Guru Swami (Biography Malayalam), Irinjalekuda 1976, p.166.
 5. At the Poona Session of the Indian National Congress in 1895 Dr. Palpu sent Mr. G.P. Pillai to raise the question of Ezhavas of Travancore in the Indian National Congress. See, G.P. Centenary Souvenir, pp.111-4.

All these activities were however, in vain. It was mainly due to the indifference shown by the Travancore Government. Palpu and other Ezhava elites realised that the petitions and memoranda would not change the attitude of the Government to countenance the demands of the Ezhavas to enjoy the ordinary civic rights without either forming an organization or the conversion into Christianity, Islam or Buddhism. In 1891, when Swami Vivekananda visited Bangalore, Palpu met this "wonderful soul who had discovered the heart of India" and explained to him the plight of Ezhavas. According to Vivekananda the only remedy for it lay in arousing them from inertia and forming an organisation.¹ Therefore, Palpu took the initiative in forming an organization for the Ezhavas. In 1896 he organised an "Ezheva Mahasabha" to carry on their agitation in a more systematic and planned way for achieving their social rights.² Palpu published the bye-laws of this new organization in the journal Malayali, which was published from Thankkassery.³ Palpu and his friends organised a number of meetings in Mayyened, Parevoor and other places.⁴ But this did not achieve the desired results. Even though Palpu succeeded in organizing the newly emerged ^{middle class} Ezhava, his endeavour

1. P.K. Balakrishnan, Narayana Guru, N. B. S. Kottayam, revised edition, 1969, pp.109-10.

2. N.Kumaran, "S. N. D. P. Yogam Chila Smeranakal", S. N. D. P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p.47.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

thoroughly failed to bring the majority of the illiterate and ignorant masses under the Ezhava Mahasabha. This failure was due to several factors.

The first reason was that there was no unanimity of action, among the Ezhavas to fight against their common grievances. This was mainly because of their division into numerous sub castes and a notion of superiority existing among certain sections. On fifth December 1895, when Palpu approached C. Krishnan of Malabar for getting his help to organise an Ezhava Sabha at Madras, the latter discouraged the attempt of Palpu due to the internal bickerings and a superiority complex the Thiyyas of North Malabar had over the Ezhavas of Travancore and Cochin.¹

This superiority complex was internalised by certain sections of the Ezhavas of Travancore themselves. C. V. Kunjuraman says:

Two sections of people namely the status section and non-status section are seen in all communities. But it is so amongst us (Ezhavas). Ezhavas of one Kara Muri or Pathikkaram belong to a separate sect. A sect of a particular province will not enter into marriage relation with another sect belonging to another province. Travancoreans consider themselves to be superior to Paravoor Ezhavas and vice-versa As these people of a particular locality think that they are superior to the Ezhava inhabitants there Chovans of Travancore are considered not as real Ezhavas but as inferior to them. The weavers, Chaliens and toddy tappers are attributed as "nikkristas" than Urollimr.²

1. K. R. Achutan, C. Krishnan (Biography Malayalam), Kottayam, 1971, pp.47-49.

2. A speech delivered by C. V. Kunjuraman at Muttom reproduced in the Vivekodayam, 15th November 1904 (30th Thulam 1060 ME), Vol. I, No. 4, p. 70.

The Ezhava families of upper class and higher status had no social relation with the rest.¹ This superiority complex and caste feeling within the Ezhavas stood on the way of their unity to fight against their common cause.

The organizational weakness was the second reason which prevented the Ezhava middle class to organize properly and function effectively. The Ezhava elites instead of carrying their message to the villages and secure a mass base for their agitation, concentrated their attention on passing resolutions at public meetings and duly forward them to the authorities. Though it had created a slight change at the governmental level, these method of working had little effect on the common people. Their unnecessary craze for English language actually created a gap between ordinary Ezhavas and the elites. Most of the members of this middle class used to write and speak in English.² An interesting information is that during the early part of 1890s the total number of English educated people among the Ezhavas were only 30.³ In short, their lack of contact

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1. Thurston, op.cit., Vol.II, p.394;
C. Kosovan, op.cit., Vol.I, p.302;
David Arno, Robin Jeffrey and James Menorce, "Caste Associations in South India: A Comparative Analysis," Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.XIII, No.3, p.335. See also,
Miller Eric J., "Caste and Territory in Malabar," American Anthropologist, p.416 and
Murkot Kunhappa, "Thiyyas of Kerala," op.cit., p.49.
 2. Dr. Palpu wrote a book - Treatment of Thiyyas of Travancore - in English not with the aim of awakening the masses but only to inform their grievances to the authorities. /This book was later translated into Malayalam/. The speeches of the Ezhava leaders were also in English.
 3. Census of India Travancore 1891, pp.104-5.

with the ordinary people, indeed, failed to create an awareness that they were representing Ezhavas as a whole. That was why in 1896, during the time of the Ezhava Memorial, when Palpu approached Ezhavas most of them refused to sign the petition.¹

The third reason was that the illiterate and ignorant Ezhavas, most of them agricultural labourers of the caste Hindu land lords, were more obliged to their traditional upper caste land lords than to the members of newly emerging Ezhava middle class. The imbibing of a different consciousness necessitated a vigorous propaganda suited for easy assimilation by the illiterate labourers. No wonder in the absence of such a propaganda many refused to cooperate with the Ezhava elites and continued to have blind faith in tradition.²

Finally the Ezhava middle class did not have a clear cut ideology and perspective to break through the tradition. Their view of the world was still based on caste and they saw only the caste suppression of the upper caste as an obstacle to progress. They failed to see the economic basis of the social stratification. This tended to blur their perspective.

1. M.K. Sano, op.cit., p.100.

2. Loc.cit.

When Palpu met Vivekananda at Bangalore in 1891, Vivekananda advised Palpu that no movement in India could move the hearts of the masses which did not have the sacred halo of spirituality around it.¹ This made Palpu realize two things: (1) the influence of a spiritual leader as a guiding force is very essential for the progress of an educationally backward community; (2) no movement can be successful in India unless it possessed a religious colouring.² It was this advice that brought Narayana Guru and Doctor Palpu together. At that time Narayana Guru was living at Aruvippuram after his famous consecration of Shiva there. By this time he was not much popular in Kerala and his area of work was restricted to Aruvippuram and its suburbs.³ Palpu used to meet him and discuss many things with him. He found a spiritual leader whose halo Vivekananda had advised him was necessary for the success of a movement. In Guru's religious concepts, which is being discussed in the following pages, Palpu found a natural base for a successful reform movement. As a matter of fact, the Ezhava middle class utilised the spiritual and religious

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1. P.K. Balakrishnan, Narayana Guru, op.cit., p.103.
T.K. Madhavan, Doctor Palpu, pp.94-95.
Velayudhan Panikkasseri, Doctor Palpu (Biography),
Trichur 1970, pp.94-95.
N. Parameswaran, Free Narayana Guru Granikal Kavothanathinte
Pravachakan (second edition), Calcutta 1979, p.111.
 2. P.K. Balakrishnan, op.cit., p.108.
M.K. Sano, op.cit., p.170.
 3. P.K. Balakrishnan, op.cit., p.209.

qualities of Sree Narayana Guru to gain support from the cultivating and landless Ezhava peasants.¹ This led to the formation of the S. N. D. P. Yogam. The first generation of leaders who took active part in the S. N. D. P. Yogam were Palpu, M. Govindan, N. Kumaran Asan, N. Kumaran, Moolur Padmanabha Panikkar, Alummoottil Chanar, C. G. Kunjuraman, C. Krishanan and T. K. Madhavan.

Narayana Guru and S. N. D. P. Yogam

Sree Narayana Guru was born in the day of Chatayam (satabis) star in the month of Chingam (August-September) of 1030 ME corresponding to 1854 A. D.,² in a lower middle

1. E. M. S. Nambudiripad, Kerala: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, Calcutta 1968 (2d edition), p.120.
2. There is no unanimity of opinion among the biographers of Sree Narayana Guru about the year of his birth. Nataraja Guru, an important disciple of Sree Narayana Guru, says, he was born on 20th August 1854. See, The Word of the Guru: an Outline of the Life and Teachings of the Guru Narayana, Ernekulam Cochin (2d edition) 1968, pp. 254 and 387. Narayanan Potti of Chagarappalli also agrees with this opinion of Nataraja Guru. See, "Sree Narayanante Prasakthi Innu" (The Relevance of Sree Narayana Guru Today), Vivekodayam, Anthorathra Sree Narayana Guru Varsham Svaraka Pathippu, March 1978, p.122. At the same time Kumaran Asan, the closest associate of Sree Narayana Guru says that he was born in Chatayam Star in the month of Chingam 1032 ME corresponding to August-September 1856 A. D. Vivekodayam, April-May 1915 (Medam 1090 ME), Vol. XIII, No. I, p. 416. But K. K. Panikkar says he was born in 1857 A. D. See, Sree Narayana Paramehsaran, p. 63. It was generally attributed that he was born in 1032 M. E. (1856 A. D.) and hence his followers decided to celebrate his shastipurthi or 60th birth anniversary in 1916 all over Kerala and outside. By this time Swami told some of them that his 60th birth anniversary was over years ago. P. Parameswaran, op.cit., p. iii.

class matrilineal peasant family called Vayalvarath at Cheempazhanti, about seven miles north of Trivandrum as the son of Madan Acan and Kuttiammal.¹ His father was a farmer as well as a teacher in Sanskrit, Astrology and Medicine.² His mother Kuttiammal, generally known as Kutty, was a simple, pious and sensible lady.³ Our knowledge about his early life is very little. Kumeran Acan had mentioned that as a boy he was very "naughty, energetic and playful."⁴

Nanu started his education in traditional "Gurukula"⁵ model schools. He received his education in Malayalam, Sanskrit and Astrology and later on by his own effort and attempt he became a master in Tamil also.⁶ Under Kunmanpelli Ramen Pillai, an eminent scholar, he studied Grammar, logic and vedanta philosophy.⁷ After his advanced studies in

1. Notarajo Curu, op.cit., p.254.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Kumeran Acan, "Brahmachari Narayana Guruganaiyudo Jeeva Cheritra Sangrohan", Vivakodayam, April-July 1915 (Madras 1990), Vol.XII, No.1, p.416.

5. Gurukula means the kula or family of the Guru.

6. Murkoth Kumeran, Shree Narayana Guruganikalute Jeeva-cheritram, Calicut 1971, p.77. See also, P. Parameswaran, op.cit., pp.19-20.

7. Kumeran Acan, op.cit., pp.417-8.

Sanskrit, in 1881 for a short span of time he had worked as an Asan (teacher) in his own village which gained him the name Nanu Asan.¹ Since early in his life he was very much secluded and deeply religious.²

He was also concerned about the deeper problems of human destiny, the relation between God and man and the reality of existence. He was troubled continuously by many temptations, which disturbed his sensitive mind. He sought seriously about release from this world of maya.

His married life was not successful. In agreement with local customs he had married his cousin, but did not live with her.⁴ He told her "Everyman born in this world is to

1. Ibid.

2. Kumaran Asan has written, "The Swami used to sit under shady trees during the midday hours and lose himself in thought, gazing at the blue sky or learning Sanskrit verses by rote." Ibid.

3. Daniel Thomas, Sree Narayana Guru, Bangalore, 1965, p.9.

4. The marriage of Sree Narayana Guru is also a subject of controversy among his biographers. Almost all biographers of Swamy have recorded that he never lived with his wife. See, Swami Charmanondhaji, Sree Narayana Guru, Kottayam 1965, pp. 33-36.

Saroo M.K., op.cit., pp.69-76.

But Nataraja Guru says, "The Guru lived under the same roof off and on. About the degree of intimacy of the conjugal relations, the present writer has not been able to draw out any definite evidence, even inspite of his wilful attack on the subject. All that could be extracted from those who knew the couple was a reported remark from the Guru's lips soon after the marriage. He is purported to have said, "Now the Vaidyan (medical man) is happy that all rooms of his house are occupied. This was in reference to his taking up residence occasionally in the house of the father of his bride."

Nataraja Guru, The Word of the Guru An Outline of the Life and Teachings of the Guru Narayana, Ernakulam Cochin, second edition, 1968, p.261.

But P.K. Dalakrishnan agrees with the opinion of Sahodharan Ayyappan that Narayana Guru lived about two years with his wife. Sahodharan Ayyappan got this information from one

fulfil a certain definite purpose. So I must fulfil my purpose for which I was born; ¹ and left the place in search of truth.

While he was leading a wandering life in search of truth he acquired spiritual knowledge through acquaintance with Shree Chattampi Swamikal, ² a sanyasi from Nayar caste

of the cousins of Narayana Guru and according to Ayyappan this cousin was not a liar. See, P.K. Balakrishnan, Narayana Guru, pp.135-6 and 193-4.

1. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.179.
P. Parameswaran, op.cit., p.33.
2. The relationship between Narayana Guru and Chattampi Swamikal has been a controversial issue among the followers of these two saints. Some Nayar writers say Narayana Guru was the disciple of Chattampi Swamikal, while some Ezhava writers opine that their relations was just friendly. Nataraja Guru says, "Once on being questioned about the Guruhood of the Chattampi Swami, the Guru Narayana said he was no objection in taking Chattampi Swami as Guru." To substantiate this Nataraja Guru gives us another example, "One of the early compositions of the Guru called Navamanjari (Nine Verses) expressly recognises at the beginning how it came to be written at the instance of the "Sigunama Guru," which is the Sanskrit designation for the name of Kunjan Pillai, whom the Guru Narayana at the start of his own career avowedly called a "Guru." This is as good as calling him his own "Guru".
Nataraja Guru, op.cit., p.259. See also, A. Ayyappan, "Swamiyileku Oru Thirinjunttam," in P.K. Krishnan, op.cit., p.204.
But Shri Pozhempalli Achyuthan says that the words "Ladh Guru" and "Sigunama Guru" were not enough to prove that Shree Narayana Guru himself approved that Chattampi Swamikal as his Guru. See, Pozhempalli Achyuthan, Shree Narayana Guru (Smaranakal), Thonnakkal 1960, pp.66-73.

/bala

and Thoikkettu Ayyavu. The latter taught him the mysteries of yoga.¹ Then he left for Marutha Malai, a dense of mountain forest to the east of Nagercoil where he selected a cave called "Pillathadam" for solitude and meditation.² His tapas (yogic practices and meditations) helped him to reach the stage of Jeevamukta, the highest stage one can attain while soul in the body.³

Again he continued his endless yatra all over Kerala and South India and mingled freely with untouchables, non-approachables, Christians and Muslims without any distinction of caste, creed or religion and ate whatever they offered.⁴ It was during this period of "avadhuta" life that Guru got himself enlightened on the problems of contemporary society and studied the severity of casteism and the depth of superstition and miseries of poverty of the down trodden. He carefully analysed the cause of decadence and diagnosed diverse factors which shifted human progress and found among other things that religious rivalries and feudal conflicts as also the caste system were the greatest enemies to the emancipation of mankind. He also realised that unless and until caste was eschewed people will never derive the blessings of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice,

1. Nataraja Guru, op.cit., pp.259-60.

2. M:K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.92.

3. Daniel Thomas, op.cit., p.92.

4. Sanku Dharma Theerthan, Prophet of Peace, p.143.
M:K. Sanoo, op.cit., pp.103-4.

which are the values that should form the foundations of an ideal society.¹ This direct knowledge persuaded him to become the champion of the poor and to fight against their deplorable conditions.

It was during the days of his wandering Swami selected the Aruvippuram hills in the South of Travancore as his abode. The news of his stay at Aruvippuram spread among the people - a monk of great spiritual attainment was living at Aruvippuram. The news of miraculous powers of the Guru was the most important factor which attracted people to him. They approached him for relief from their many woes - for getting relief from incurable diseases, the attack of evil spirits, for having children, for progress in business etc.² All sections of people from near and distant places used to visit with gifts.³ Swami was very keen to know their problems.⁴ This contact with poor low caste people, who used to visit him, afforded him an opportunity to know that life in depth and range. Thus he made direct contact with the material, psychological and spiritual problems that troubled the people of Kerala. By the presence of Swami or not,⁵ without any

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1. M. Prabha, "Sahodharan Ayyappan." M. Govindan (ed.), Sahodharan: Poetry and Renunciation, Kumaran Asan Birth Centenary Volume, Madras 1974, p.228.
 2. Kumaran Asan, "Drahanashree Narayana Curuvinte Jeeva Charitra Sangeham," Vivekodayam, May-July 1915, (Edavam-Nithunam 1090 B. E.), Vol.12, Nos.2-3, p.41.
 3. Loc.cit.
 4. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.112.
 5. Kumaran Asan, op.cit., Vivekodayam, May-July 1915, p.41.

discrimination, people from several quarters flocked to Aruvippuram, as if it was a holy place for pilgrimage. A vast concourse of men and women would reach the spot daily for having a bath in the river and for worshipping with folded hands.¹ Majority of visitors were low caste people who were prevented by caste rules from offering worship at the temples owned by the Government and the higher castes. What they felt at Aruvippuram was the freedom to offer worship with dignity and self respect. The fact that at Aruvippuram no temple in the formal sense existed made no difference to them. This overwhelming enthusiasm of people gave Swami the idea that the centre of worship was an imperative need. Swami felt that the time had come for them to have a place of worship which they could call their own. Guru might have thought that only from such a centre he could direct his constructive activities. Swami told his desire before his devotees. The response to the idea was very enthusiastic.

Sree Narayana Guru knew that the easiest way to raise the untouchables from their moral stupor was to reform their religious worship. This idea of religious reform, as a matter of fact, differentiated Narayana Guru from other religious reformers of the 19th century India. While almost all social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Dayananda Saraswathy and others opposed

1. Ibid.

any form of idolatry,¹ Sree Narayana Guru started his religious reform activities by installing an idol of Shiva at Aruvippuram in 1888. Although Narayana Guru himself did not believe in idols and images, he did not object to the belief of the average people in them if it would result in helping them to live healthy and noble lives.² The ability to know the desire of the unlettered people is one of the reasons for the success of Narayana Guru. At the same time Brahma religion of Rammohan Roy remained for too intellectual and dry creed to be even successful as a popular religion and failed to make any attempt to link up with the popular lower caste monotheistic cult which seem to have been fairly numerous in the 18th century Bengal.³ Therefore, Narayana Guru's consecration was not "to allowing people to remain idle"⁴ but to raise the untouchable

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1. According to Raja Ram Mohan Roy the idol worship was "indicated for the sake of those whose limited understanding rendered them incapable of comprehending and adoring the invisible supreme being, so that such persons might not remain in a brutified state destitute of all religious principles. Kalidas Nag and Debajyoti Burman (ed.), The English Works of Rammohan Roy, Calcutta, 1946, Part II, p.14. For knowing the details of other social reformers attitude to idolatry, see Charles H. Heimsoth, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, Bombay 1964.
 2. One day two or three devotees of Narayana Guru approached him for installing an idol in their temple. Instead of consecrating an idol Swami advised them to hang a lamp at the Sanctum Sanctorum of the temple they refused this advice and compelled Swami for installing an idol. Swami agreed the opinion of devotees that people would not satisfy with a simple lamp, they should have an "Aradhana Moorthy." P.K. Balakrishnan, op.cit., p.154.
 3. David Kopt, "Rammohan Roy and the Bengal Renaissance: An Historiographical Essay," V.C. Joshi (ed.), Rammohan Roy and the Process of Modernization, New Delhi 1975, p.95.
 4. Kalidas Nag and Debajyoti Burman, op.cit., p.197.

from their moral stupor and to provide them freedom to offer worship with dignity and self respect. Sree Narayana Guru's main institution of this consecration was to establish the right of untouchables to worship Gods and Goddesses according to their choice. Therefore, Swami began his first crusade against religious preposterousness and profligacy and decided to fight against traditional religious observances and customs. Swami came forward for having a radical change in the society. As a noble Guru challenged the Brahmanical tradition and their monopoly rights of consecration of temples by consecrating a Shiva temple at Aruvippuram. So far as it has been the privilege of the Brahmans to consecrate a temple and any deviation from this practice was considered sacrilegious, a rebellion against the tradition and custom of the society.¹ In laying a stone of the chape of Shivalinga from the river Neyyar, Narayana Guru questioned the preponderant influence of Brahmins and thus created an epoch making event in the history of Kerala. Till this time the avarnas were prevented from offering worship to the premier deities like Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma etc., of the caste Hindu pantheon. The avarnas were only allowed to worship evil god and goddesses and offerings them were toddy, arrack and the blood of animals. Therefore, this consecration was certainly a silent but strong protest against Brahmanical control. Thus from

1. Daniel Thomas, op.cit., p.12.

this time onwards the lower caste possessed freedom to worship the higher Gods of Hinduism, which was monopolised by Brahmins and it shook the very foundation of social and religious control of the Brahmins.

By this activity Narayana Guru accomplished three things. (1) He questioned the ideological hegemony of the Brahmins in society and thus shook the very foundation of caste ridden Kerala society. (2) He instilled a new spirit of enthusiasm among the avarnas, because from this time onwards the low caste people got the freedom of worship of the higher gods of Hinduism. Thus "he hit upon the idea that by introducing the "civilized" gods of Hindu pantheon into the Ezhava temples."¹ And (3) Guru took away the lower castanic Gods of primitive religion from Ezhavas. Thus this act represented the beginning of a peaceful and creative revolution in Kerala society.² Revolution because it not only questioned the prevailing customs but also sought to change them in action, the consecration of Shivalinga at Aruvippuram in 1838, was one such direct action. It was peaceful in the sense that there was no advocacy of a violent outburst against Brahmins or to "their" temples. Installing a Shivalinga in no way interfered

1. C.P. Sivadas, "Guru Narayana Guru,"
M. Govindan (ed.), op.cit., p.211.

2. V.T. Samuel, "One Caste, One Religion and One God,"
New Delhi 1977, p.54.

directly with the Brahmin's rights. This heralded a wave of enthusiasm especially among the lower castes and they began looking upto Sree Narayana Guru as their "Guru."

At the same time Narayana Guru did not envisage a caste ridden society. In the front of the Aruvippuram temple he inscribed the following verse:

WITHOUT DIFFERENCES OF CASTE
NOR ENMITIES OF CREED
ALL LIVE LIKE BROTHERS AT HEART
HERE IN THIS IDEAL PLACE¹

Sree Narayana Guru intended this temple to symbolise the brotherhood of man and equality of all before God. The idea of Sree Narayana Guru was to put an end to casteism and to bring together the peoples of Kerala irrespective of caste and creed at the feet of the one "Eternal God." Within a short span of time he established about 60 temples² which remained the means of emancipation for lakhs of people who were denied the elementary human rights of worshipping in temples of one's own choice.

The construction of temples by Narayana Guru was viewed as a process of Sanskritization among the Ezhavas.³

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1. Translated from Malayalam Swami Dharmatheerthan, The Prophet of Peace, Chempazhantni, 1931, p.33. Nataraj Guru, op.cit., p.24.
 2. For the list of Temples see, Nataraja Guru, op.cit., pp.387-3.
 3. The term Sanskritization was coined by M.N. Srinivasan to describe the process of cultural mobility in the traditional social structure of India. According to him "Sanskritization is a process by which low caste Hindus or tribal or other groups change its customs, rituals, ideology and the way of life in the direction of a high and frequently 'twice born caste.'" M.N. Srinivasan, Social Change in Modern India, Berkely, 1966, p.6.

Prima facie we feel that the consecration of Savarna Hindu temples and other social reform activities like giving up of consumption of liquor and animal sacrifice were attempts at Sanskritization.¹ In fact, Sree Narayana's construction of temples of temples instead of being a senseless imitation of beliefs, rituals and practices of Brahmins, was more a protest and challenge² to power and the establishment. It was in a social structure that surrendered itself to Brahmin domination with a religious fervour that Swamy not only a non-Brahmin, but also non caste Hindu, came to consecrate an idol. When no code had granted an Ezhava the right to conduct the installation ceremony then how could Nanu, an Ezhava, perform the act in contravention to all the accepted

1. Dr. Ayyappan says, that sociologically considered there was one aspect to his activities was aimed at fully Sanskritizing the Ezhavas by organizing for the Ezhavas just those Hindu institutions to which they were denied access by the higher caste.

Social Revolution in a Kerala Village: A Study in Cultural Change, op.cit., p.147

According to George Woodcock, "Sree Narayana Guru proposed through Sanskritization of their observances and since the temples operated by the Brahmins were close to them, he established a series of parallel temples dedicated to Vishnu and Shiva in which an orthodox ritual would be celebrated but by an Ezhava priest rather than a Brahmin. Kerala A Portrait of the Malabar, London, 1967, p.228-9.

See also, Charles H. Holmsoth, "The Function of Hindu Social Reformers - With Special Reference to Kerala," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.XV, No.I, January-March 1978, p.27.

2. M. S. Rao, Social Movement and social Transformation: A Study of Backward Class Movement in India, New Delhi 1979, p.211.

norms? This not only irritated caste Hindus but also bewildered the conservatives in the Ezhava community itself.¹ All conservative people had doubt about Guru's competence in consecration of a Shiva temple. When a Brahmin who questioned Guru's competence he replied that, "I have consecrated not a Shiva of Brahmins but of Ezhavas."² It was not only a challenge against the hegemony of Brahmins but also against senseless customs that survived through ages as though by divine ordinance. This sense of modernity brought the first ray of light into the life of the untouchables and unapproachables of Kerala, who were for centuries, wallowing in darkness and slavery. Temples were to Narayana Guru a means to an end. Once the end was achieved he was not much bothered about the growth of temples. In 1917 Swami advised his people:

Do not encourage construction of temples any longer if at all any temple is to be constructed it should be a small one /let/ The educational institutions be the chief temples /emphasis added/³

Though Narayana Guru had established more than sixty temples, some of them deserve special mention. In 1912 he established a temple at Varkkola which was dedicated to Saradha, the Goddess of learning and knowledge.⁴ In 1920 he

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1. One of the Ezhavas was Cherunelli Krishnan Vaidyar who seriously doubted whether the Swami had the authority of scriptural sanction for consecrating an idole in a temple. P. Parameswaran, op.cit., pp.57-58.
 2. Vivekodayan, April-May 1917, Vol.XIV, Nos. 1 and 2 (Madam-Edavam 1092 M. E.), p.14.
 3. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, Keralathinte Samkara Charitram, Trivandrum 1974, pp.529-30.
 4. Vivekodayan, back volumes, of 1912.

consecrated a temple at Karamukku in Trichur district. The desire of devotees was to install the idol of Lord Chidenbaranath. But tho at the time of installation, the Guru requested them to bring a lamp and installed it in lieu of idol and pronounced the benediction "Let there be light."¹ The next milestone in the path of his reform was the foundation of temples in Murukkumpuzha near Trivandrum in 1922, where in place of deity a bright light revealing the words, "Truth, duty, kindness and live" was installed.² In 1924, he built another temple at Kalavancode in Shorthalai district with a big mirror instead of deity which symbolically represents the fact that God is present in the self. These innovations in his consecration not only differentiate his concept of temples from Brahmins but also give us an insight that the ideals are more important than idols. As for him true religion and worship is observance of such noble ideals or images and temples must not be a breeding ground of meaningless customs and rituals.

In the first place Narayana Guru's concept of temples was entirely different from that of the Brahmins. The aim of constructing temples was to install honour and dignity in the minds of the human. To him temples must be very neat and clean. He believed that such an atmosphere would produce

1. P. Parameswaran, op.cit., p.122.

2. Ibid., p.122.

in men thoughts about God, cleanliness, moral desires and freedom, mental cares and bodily weariness.¹ According to John Spiers, the purpose of Sree Narayana Guru was to purify the polluted atmosphere and to sublimate idolatry to a purer level of abstract virtue, bending social forces to serve the highest aims. Shiva was thus sanctioned as the symbol of pure beauty and truth. So by these methods he was able to lead the stream of devotion to the boundless ocean of Brahman, changeless and imperishable Iti Iyana Asi.²

He established a set of rituals and priests. His temples were laid open to all castes and communities without any discrimination. He wanted to do away with or dissolve fully the discriminations based on birth and to establish equality between man and man. He was very cautious with regard to the case of temples. He selected priests from lower caste people and trained them. This was actually a challenge to Brahmins who believed that they were the only people to do the priestly duties in the temples of which caste Hindu Gods and Goddess were installed. These temples, therefore, were actually a parallel to those of the upper caste. These temples represented not only a challenge to the Brahmin domination but also showed the non-Brahmin communities a way out of the existing religious observation

1. Ibid., p.91.

2. John Spiers, "A Warrior Right," Gurukula Publication House, 1950, p.7 quoted in Daniel Thomas, op.cit., p.14.

as laid down by the Brahmins. The consecration at K Karcumukku Murukkupuzha and Kalavankoddy were a distinct departure from the orthodox tradition. The meaning of all these consecrations was to lead the human mind from the low symbols to the high.¹ His concept^{of} religion was the religion of humanness, which preached universal brotherhood and maintained that all men belonged to "one caste, one religion and one God."

Sree Narayana Guru was not a proceptor of a new philosophy. His doctrine was derived from that of Sankara's advaita or non-duality. According to advaita philosophy, Brahman (God) and created being one and the same. Narayana Guru says, Brahman is real and the world is maya and the finite individual is none other than Brahman itself.² Though Sree Narayana followed the philosophy of non-duality of Sankara, he could not agree with all opinions of Sankara especially the concept of Chaturvarna.

Caste discrimination for Sree Narayana Guru was irrational and unscientific. That was why in 1920, he propagated his doctrine "One caste, one religion and one God for mankind." This doctrine demonstrate the belief that all men belonged to one race, one caste, one religion and one God. His religion was the religion of humanness and universal

1. Ibid., p.109.

2. Sree Narayana Guru, Darsana Mala with commentary of Swami Vidyananda, Varkala, 1962, p.159.

brotherhood which existed for casteless society. "If the teaching of 'one caste, one religion and one God for man' is viewed from the perspective of an Advaitin," V.T. Samuel says, "it would become clear that man should attempt to attain the ultimate truth not by discriminating between man and man, religion and religion or between God and God, but by discriminating between reality and unreality."¹ Guru advised, "Don't ask, tell or think of caste,"² because he believed in the principles that, "whatever be one's religion it is enough that man become good" and "whatever a man does for his own pleasure shall be of the benefit of others."³ Sree Narayana Guru never wrote down his teachings and never preached his sermon. His influence spread through the example of his life and the efforts of his many disciples.

In 1913 Narayana Guru established the Advaita Ashram at Alwaye, where in February 1924 he organised a "Sarva Mata Sammelan" (Conference of All Religions) for a comparative study of all the principal religions in India. Guru proclaimed that this conference was convened "not to argue and win but to learn and let learn."⁴ And in his message to the

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1. V.T. Samuel, op.cit., pp.152-3.
 2. Narayana Guru, Jati Minnesa (A Critique of Caste). See, the Word of the Guru, op.cit., p.272. See, the Malayalam text in Sree Narayana Gurudeva Kritikal, Varkala, 1967, pp.130-33.
 3. Pazhambally Achyuthan, Sree Narayana Guru (Smaranakal), op.cit., p.123.
 4. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.383.

conference he said, "This religious conference have revealed that the ultimate goal of all religions is the same and that there is no need for followers of different religions to fight among themselves."¹ The main objective of the Swami in holding the Parliament of Religion was to bring home to people the essential unity of all religions.

The ideas of Sree Narayana Guru had very great implications both in social and religious field. The most important achievement of Narayana Guru was that he could bring together various denominations of Thiyyas known in different names in Travancore, Cochin and British Malabar. To a certain extent he had succeeded in putting an end to sub-caste feelings among the Ezhavas and to organize them under one roof for fighting against the common cause of untouchables. This naturally helped Ezhava middle class to organize their movement against feudal class relations. His movements attacked the hegemony of Brahmins and the tradition of priesthood. His reform movement helped to democratic social institutions and remodelled old religious outlook to suit the new social needs. His reform helped to weaken the disruptive institutions as caste which were obstacles to the progress of untouchables. His consecrations of temple sought to establish equal rights to all people, without any discrimination of caste status, to worship Puranic Gods and Goddesses. His movement to a certain extent helped to

1. Ibid., p. 383.

achieve social and economic freedom and cultural advance to the untouchables of Kerala.

The socio-religious reform of Narayana Guru was democratic in character on the principles of individual liberty and human equality. That was why E.M. S. Namboodiripad describes Narayana Guru as "th first inspirer and organizer of the mass democratic movement of the cultivating and landless peasant masses of Kerala."¹ His doctrine of one caste one religion and one God was attempting to build a religious outlook which would build up national unity of all communities and caste to solve day to day problems like the abolition of caste, the establishment of equality between man and man etc. Therefore, there is no wonder if Narayana Guru is called as the pioneer of the nationalist movement in Kerala.²

Sree Narayana Guru was a profound thinker, philosopher, a great seer and a famous poet as well as a good scholar of Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil. In 1897 he composed Atmapadesa Sathakam, a book on original vedanta. The Darshanamala which was composed in about 1916 represents very standard of mystical literature. All his poems (numbering 47) have been published. Some important works of Sree Narayana Guru are Subramanya Kirthanam, Advaita Dipika, Doiva Dargakam, Nava Manjari, Jatinirayan etc. In addition to that he

1. E.M. S. Namboodiripad, Kerala: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, op.cit., p.120.

2. Ibid.

translated Thirukural and Ozhuvilotukkam from Tamil and Isavegyopanishad from Sanskrit.

In 1927 Narayana Guru fell ill and on 20th of September 1928 at the age of 74 he died at Sivagiri.¹

By the end of the 19th century Sree Narayana Guru had become very popular both among the poor and unlettered Ezhavas as well as the newly emerged Ezhava middle class. While on the one hand his religious reputation and spiritual qualities "to cure people of their diseases, to exorcise evil spirits" etc.,² appealed to a large number of poor and illiterate Ezhavas, on the other hand his socio-religious activities attracted the bourgeois section of the Ezhavas. Narayana Guru's religious reform ideas found general acceptance among the educated Ezhavas throughout Kerala. The educated middle class was very much impressed not only by his attack against religious superstition and the sacerdotal dictatorship of Brahmins,³ but also by his social reform activities like the campaign for mass education, elimination of untouchability and casteism, abolition of evil customs and the encouragement of industries. The other factor which attracted Ezhava elites to Narayana Guru was

1. Kerala Kaumudi, 22nd September 1928, p.1.

2. Kumaran Asan, "Brahma Shri Narayana Gurugwanliyude Jeova Charitram," Vivekodayam, May-July 1915 (Edavam-Mithunam 1090), Vol.12, Nos. 2-3, p.40.

3. See, Private Paper of Dr. Palpu, File No.1.

his advocacy for social equality and promotion of social solidarity. Therefore, a number of doctors, advocates, judges, teachers, writers and other educated persons, as well as members of the landed middle class came forward to become his disciples.

By the end of 19th century, when Sree Narayana Guru entered into socio-religious reform activities, Ezhava community had already produced a strong middle class due to the impact of commercialization of agriculture, introduction of western education, system of law and public administration, introduction of land reforms patterned on the western concept of private property, developments of means of communication and philanthropic activities of Christian missionaries. It was through this class that Sree Narayana Guru's ideas found social expression. It was precisely this factor which accounted for his success.

It may, however, be noted that earlier an Ezhava saint, Veloyudha Panicker of Karthikappalli, tried to alter the traditional religious beliefs and practices of Ezhavas. In 1834 he established the first Ezhava temple for Shiva at Etakkad and in 1851 he started the first Kathakali Yogan for Ezhavas.¹ He also persuaded Ezhavas to adopt Nayar hair style and advised women to wear the blouse and ornaments of caste Hindu.² But due to the absence of a strong

1. M. S. N. Rao, op.cit., pp. 45-46.

2. Loc.cit.

middle class to support his movement the endeavours of Panicker did not acquire the character of a movement.

On the other side, when Travancore Ezhava Sabha, a secular organization founded by Palpu in 1896, failed to conquer the heart of the ordinary Ezhavas for its arguments appealed only to the small section of educated upper layers of the Ezhavas,¹ the Ezhava leaders soon realised that no movement would be a success without taking into account the religious prejudices of the people.² In the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru they found the answer to this problem. The coming together of Sree Narayana Guru and the Ezhava middle class was a result of this objective situation. The cooperation eventually caused the formation of the S. N. D. P. Yogam. In the mean time he inculcated in the minds of both laymen and middle class the need for developing social consciousness impregnated with basic human values.

Narayana Guru stressed the importance of an organization which according to him was inevitable for bringing about socio-religious change and at the same time to attain power and progress.³ That was why, in one of his messages

1. Woodcock, op.cit., p.229.

2. According to Charles H. Helmsath, the reasons for the failure of other reform movement in Kerala was due to lack of religious premises.
"The Functions of Hindu Social Reformers with Special Reference to Kerala," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.XV, No.1, January-March 1978, p.27.

3. Centenary Souvenir, p.182, quoted in Daniel Thomas, op.cit., p.36.

he exhorted the contemporaries to "strengthen themselves/ by organization, liberate by education."¹ His intention was not to start an organization for a particular community or caste but an organization to bring all men together.² Otherwise, he thought the need of an organization incorporating all who wished to follow the principle of human equality without the discrimination of religion or caste. Guru's appeal, of course, was religious and that religious influence was the reason for the formation of the Yogam.³

Kumaran Asan has written, "When Sree Narayana Guru consecrated a Shivalinga at Aruvippuram in 1063 M. E. (corresponding to 1838 A. D.) the seed of the S. N. D. P. Yogam was sown."⁴ When Sree Narayana Guru consecrated his first temple at Aruvippuram, a small Kshetra yogam generally known as "Aruvippuram Kshetra Yogam" consisting of 24 members holding eleven shares⁵ was formed with the object of performing daily

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1. Quoted in P. S. Volayudhan, "Sree Narayana Guru," S. N. D. P. Yogam Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, p.19.
 2. Swami Dharmanandaji, Sree Narayana Gurudevan, op.cit., p.173. See also, Contenary Souvenir, p.82 quoted in Daniel Thomas, op.cit., p.35.
 3. According to Guru, "Our organization should unite faiths all people. Religion should allow freedom of all faiths and should lead man to higher goals and values in life. This is the Sanatana Dharma of "one caste, one religion and one God for man." Swami Dharmanandaji, op.cit., p.173.
 4. Kumaran Asan's first report as the Secretary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, Vivekodayan, 13 May 1904 (31 Madam 1079), p.15.
 5. The face value of the share was Rs.100. Some members held half share, while others held one fourth of the share.

pooja and annual festivals in the temple.¹ Since this Kshetra Yogam did not have sufficient strength to fulfil the aims and aspirations of hospitable Swami, it was expanded as the S. N. D. P. Yogam.² According to T.K. Madhavan it is reported that Palpu was the person who inspired Srce Narayana Guru to expand the kshetra yogam into the S. N. D. P. Yogam,³ because he realised that the success was assured if an Ezhava organization could be associated with religion and saw the possibilities of expanding the Aruvippuram Temple Committee into such an organization.⁴ Thus the cooperation and attempt of Narayana Guru and the Ezhava middle class

1. After Narayana Guru's consecration at Aruvippuram, he acquired the reputation of a distinguished holy man and became the spiritual leader of the Ezhava community. A number of people used to visit his temple as pilgrims and they used to offer donations. The income of the temple, therefore, increased day by day. Then a sanctum sanctorum was constructed and it was protected by a "mandapam" can open before the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. In the mean time in 1893, a Chimmaya Sudrupa Swamikal, a conyoci from South Travancore approached Narayana Guru to clear his debt and in lieu of this clearance he offered his encumbered property in Thamarakulam near suchindram. To look after these properties, Pettayil Parameswaran, a brother of Dr. Palpu, was appointed as the manager of this temple. When they found the property of the Ashram had increased, in 1889 eleven members were selected under the name of "Aruvippuram Temple Yogam" to manage this temple. It is to be attributed that this kshetra yogam was the forerunner of the S. N. D. P. Yogam.

Vivekodayan, 13 May 1904, pp.15-19.

See also Swami Dharmachandagi, op.cit., p.167.

2. Vivekodayan, 13 May 1904, p.19.

3. T.K. Madhavan, Doctor Palpu, Vol.I (revised by Pollippattu Kunnikrishnan, Cheppad), Alleppy 1969, p.189.

4. H.K. Sano, op.cit., pp.170-71.

under Palpu helped to organize and bring together the scattered and subdivided Ezhavas of the whole Kerala into a strong caste union so that such a union would give them strength for collective effort in the field of education, social reform and political action. In short the genesis of the S.N.D.P. Yogam was on the one hand¹ due to the desire of the middle class among the Ezhavas to overcome the caste disabilities which affected their progress in society¹ and on the other due to a religious inspiration nourished by Bakti, whose main aim was to obtain access to high Gods for the low caste and out-castes.²

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1. Ramakrishnan Nair, "Ruling Class and Its Governing Elites of Kerala," Journal of Kerala Studies, Vol. I, No. I, July 1973, pp. 41-42.
 2. Francois, Houtert and Genevivo Lemercinac, op.cit., p. 13.

CHAPTER-III

FORMATION OF THE S. N. D. P. YOGAN AND ITS ROLE IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT

The formation of the S. N. D. P. Yogan, as discussed in the previous chapter, was a joint attempt of Sree Narayana Guru and the newly emerging middle class among the Ezhava. In this chapter the organization of the Yogan is examined in detail and its efforts at social and economic advancement with particular reference to their struggle against the deprivation in the field of education and employment in the government service and their activities for industrial advancement are discussed briefly.

The origin of the Yogan may be traced to the consecration at Aruvippuram and the founding of an Ashram there in 1888 by Sree Narayana Guru. In 1899 this Ashram was re-organized as the "Aruvippuram Temple Association" consisting of 24 members¹ with Kumaran Asan as its Secretary. The efficient administration of the temple, Madam and its properties and the performance of daily pooja and celebration of annual festivals were the motive behind the formation of this association.² It was this association which later transformed itself as the S. N. D. P. Yogan in January 1903.

1. For the details about the nature of membership see second chapter.

2. See the first Annual Report of the Secretary of the Yogan, Vivachodayan, 13 May 1904 (31 Madam 1079), pp. 15-19.

Palpu and the educated Ezhavas were not satisfied with the limited activities of performing daily puja and celebrating annual festivals at the temple and hence they took initiative to extend its activities and to alter its name to suit a wider purpose.¹ In December 1902 (23rd Dhanu 1078 A. E.) when ten members² of the Association who were paying Rs. 100 as life membership met at Kamalalaya Bengelow in Trivandrum presumably at the invitation of Kumaran Asan.³ It was unanimously decided to register the Temple Association as Joint Stock Company under the name of the S. N. D. P. Yogam.⁴ In January 1903 an application for registration was made by Pottayil Parameswaran, younger brother of Palpu and the licence was granted

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1. T. K. Madhevan, Doctor Palpu, Vol. I, pp. 170-71; P. K. Balakrishnan, Narayana Guru, p. 111. Vivakodayam, May, July 1915 (Edavam Mithunam 1090 ME), Vol. II, p. 52.
 2. These ten members were: Mattancheri Govindan Vaidhyar, Muttathara B. Kochutty Muthally, Koyipuzha Kochayyappon Channar, Karattuparambu Peringottukara S. Krishna Asan, Perinadu Mangalasseriyaal Govindan Channar, Perinadu S. Govindan Asan, Neyyattinkara Kottakkal Kumaran Madan, Thiruvananthapuram Puthanchoodu, P. M. Madhavan Vaidhyar, Kuttiyoppi Asan and Paravoor Kesavan Asan. See, P. S. Velayudhan, "S. N. D. P. Yogam Oru Charitrovachanam," Yogamadhan Anthorachitra Sree Narayana Guru Vagachal Prathi, 1977, p. 7. But Dr. Palpu, the patron of the Yogam could not attend the inaugural meeting of the Yogam. Robin Jeffrey, "The Social Origins of Caste Association 1075-1903: The Founding of the S. N. D. P. Yogam," South Asia, No. 4, 1974, p. 52.
 3. N. Kumaran, "S. N. D. P. Yoga Charitra Sarnachal," S. N. D. P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, Cullion 1953, p. 47. See, also P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Yoga Charitram, Cullion S. N. D. P. Yogam, 1978, pp. 94-95. P. Parameswaran, op. cit., pp. 75-77.
 4. Ibid., p. 95.

The object of the Yogam was to work for the material and moral advancement of the Ezhavas or Thiyyas of Travancore, Cochin and British Malabar¹ and "to promote and encourage religions and secular education and industrious habits among the Ezheva community."² Though the Yogam was organised around an ashram and it was claimed that it was formed to propagate the Sanatana Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru, a perusal of its Memorandum of Association, Article of Association and bye-laws will show that this organization was largely commercial in character than one meant to take an initiative in social and religious reform movement in Kerala. The rules and regulation regarding the collection of membership fee for the purpose of building up the property of the Yogam appeared outrightly commercial. The following examples throw light on the business character of the Yogam. According to 1903 Article of Association of the Yogam, not more than one fourth of the amount collected every year should be used for that year's expenses. Three fourth of the amount should be given on interest to enhance the capital. Not more than the income derived from the interest in a year, in any case should be spent for the works which are mentioned in the category number three of the Memorandum of Association

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1. Vivekodayam, May-July 1915 (Edavon-Mithunam 1090 M. E.), p. 53.
 2. The letter of P. Parameswaran to the Dewan of Travancore on 8th January 1903, Kerala Secretariat, Trivendrum, Travancore Government, English Records, Cover No. 8330.

of the Yogam.¹ The Section 'B' and 'C' of the Article of Association which related to the membership of the Yogam and the manner of depositing the money will also point out the commercial character of the Yogam. The section 'C' of the Article of Association says that in case a member fails once to remit the amount (of their annual share), according to the rules of section 'B'² of the Article of Association he may pay the amount next time with an annual interest of 10 per cent. But if any member discontinued the payment for more than a year, he was liable to pay the entire amount in one instalment.³

Structure of the Yogam

The Yogam was hierarchically structured with the President at the top, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Board of Directors, Council coming in that order with Unions at Taluk level and Branch Offices at village level. It was

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1. The amended Article of Association of the Yogam in 1903 category No.19, see, Vivekodayam, 13 May 1904 (31 Madam 1079 M. E.), Vol. I, No. I, p. 8.
 2. Section 'B' of the Article of Association says, "as agreed upon by the members (of the Association) they may remit the amount of their share in advance. If it is inconvenient they may pay the sum in not more than four equal instalments spread over a period of four years. However, as per the earlier Article of Association, those members who opt to pay an annual interest of 10 per cent continuously for a period of twenty years may also be deemed to have paid up the entire amount." The Article of Association of the Yogam which prepared at the meeting that held at Kamalaleya Dengolow in Trivendrum on 23 Uthuru 1078 (December 1902), Category 4, Section 'B'.
See, Vivekodayam, 11 February 1903 (30 Makaram 1080 M. E.), Vol. I, No. 9, p. 101.
 3. Ibid.

unanimously decided to make Sree Narayana Guru, the spiritual leader of the community, as the life president of the Yogam. The Yogam was to work under the direction and wishes of the Guru. Though Guru had all powers and freedom to function in every sphere of the Yogam, he was neither to mortgage his power nor misuse his privilege against the objectives of the Yogam.¹ The Vice President who was next in hierarchy was to be elected every year at the annual meeting of the Yogam.² His main duty was to help the President by supervising every activity of the Yogam.³ Next to the Vice-President was the Secretary. He was the most important and responsible official of the Yogam. His duties were organising meetings, keeping Yogam records in order and issuing certificates to the new members of the Yogam (with the permission of the President).⁴ The Treasurer maintained the accounts and looked after the finances of the Yogam. Then came the directors. There was no restriction on the number of directors. Generally all members who had more than 20 shares and became the life directors of the Yogam.⁵ In addition to the life directors, every year, according to the total number of shares, the

1. Ibid., p.103.

2. The amended Article of Association of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in the 4th annual meeting which held at Cannanore on 29th and 30th March 1907. See, Vivekodayam, November-January, 1907 (Vrishchikam-Dhanu 1033), Vol.IV, Nos. 8 & 9, p.14.

3. Loc.cit.

4. Vivekodayam, 13 May 1904 (31 Medam 1079 M. E.), p. 7.

5. Ibid., November-January 1907, p.19.

Yogam elected one Director for every hundred share holders.¹ There was a Board of Directors with the President, the Vice-President, the General Secretary and a group of elected Directors.² The important duties of the Board of Directors was to implement the decision which had been taken in the public meetings.³ Below the Board of Directors, there was a council of the Yogam which comprised of the President, the Secretary and two nominated members from the Board of Directors. Internal administration was managed by this Council. For broad basing the activities of the Yogam, Unions at Taluk level and Branch Offices at village level were established. The Taluk unions were administered by a committee consisting of one elected member from each Branch office under its jurisdiction. The branch offices were generally working under an agent. He carried on all correspondence with upper bodies of the Yogam.⁴

When the Yogam was registered in 1903 the Guru was unanimously made the Life President of the Yogam and the organization was named after him.⁵ On the recommendation

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid., p.14.

3. Ibid.

4. These unions and branch offices were actually functioned only after Mr. T.K. Madhavan became the organization Secretary of the Yogam. See, The "S.N.D.P. Organization Scheme," Vivekodayam, January 1929 (Ethena 1104), pp.4-13. Before Madhavan, in 1907 the Article of Association mentions about the branch offices. At that time, a samajam which had been run by the members who were having not less than 200 shares was known as branch office. See the bye-law of the S.N.D.P. Yogam of 1907, Vivekodayam, November-January 1907-08, p.19.

5. Vivekodayam, May-July 1915, Vol.XII (Edavan-Mithunam 1090), p.53.

of Guru and Palpu, Kumeran Ayan was elected as the Secretary of the Yogam¹ and he continued in this capacity for the first 12 years and again for four years² after a gap of one year.³

The Yogam celebrated its first anniversary in January 1904 (30 Makaram and 1st Kumbam 1079 M.E.) on the birth day of Lord Shiva generally known as Shivaratri.⁴ The first annual meeting of the Yogam reveals the influence of rich and educated people over the Yogam. Mattancheri Govindan Vaidhyar, the first Ezhava law graduate in Travancore, presided over the first day meeting of the Yogam.⁵ The President of the second day meeting was Chevarkkattu Kochu Cherukkan Vaidhyar, another rich Ezhava from Travancore.⁶ On the first day meeting Palpu delivered a speech which emphasised the importance of education and

1. M.K. Sano, op.cit., p.163.

2. P. S. Velayudhan, S.N.D.P. Yogam Charitram, p.97.

3. On 16th January 1915 Kumeran Ayan left the Secretaryship and Mr. N. Krichnan became the Secretary for one year. Vivekodayam, May-July 1915, p.66.

4. Vivekodayam, 13 May 1904, p.2. See also, S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1953, p.47.

5. Vivekodayam, 13 May 1904, p.3.

6. N. Kumeran, "S.N.D.P. Yogam: Chila Smanakal," S.N.D.P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, op.cit., p.48.

industry for the development of the Ezhavae.¹ From the first annual meeting onwards, as a part of a movement for the emancipation of women, Yogam organized a women's conference.² The first women's conference was presided over by Palpu's mother.³ This women's conference was made a regular feature at the annual conferences.⁴ These women's conferences created a platform for agitation for the redress of their grievances. These organizations worked for the social and educational advancement of the Ezhava women.⁵

It is significant that the very first meeting took a decision to publish a journal called Vivekodayam as the official organ of the Yogam. This name was given by Narayana Guru.⁶ Palpu described this as the "Ezhava Gazette."⁷ At first it was published once in two months under the editorship of M. Govindan.⁸ But within a year Kumaran "can

1. Vivekodayam, 13 May 1904, pp. 13-22.

2. N. Kumaran, "S. N. D. P. Yogam: Chila Smaranakal," op.cit., p.48.

3. Loc.cit.

4. Ibid.

5. See back volumes of Vivekodayam, 1904-1912.

6. Vivekodayam, December 1928, January 1929 (Dhanu 1104 ME), Vol.20, p.20. (By this time Vivekodayam was edited by K. I. Kunhikrishnan).

7. Loc.cit.

8. Ibid., 13 May 1904, p.1.

took over as the editor of Vivekodayam,¹ and in 1908 it was converted into a monthly.² The important aim of this magazine was to bring to light the grievances of Ezhavas before Travancore administration and also demand their rights. In addition to that this magazine focussed its attention on the frivolous customs and practices followed by the community and then initiated a fight against them.³ Vivekodayam did a lot for promoting the social reform movement particularly the campaign against caste system. This magazine did two purposes: (i) interpreting the acts of Government to the public, and (ii) exposing the grievances of the backward communities, for the information of the authorities.⁴ Thus this magazine worked as a mouthpiece of the Yogam and of the Ezhava community. Vivekodayam had also been in the forefront of literary activities under the leadership and guidance of Kumaran Asan. Most of the Asan's writings were first published in Vivekodayam. Some of the members viz., C.V. Kunjuraman, Muloor Padanabha Panikker and Murkothu Kumaran were the other literary

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1. Ibid., 13 January 1906 (30 Dhanu 1081), Vol.2, No.9, p.14.
 2. The meeting of the S.N.D.P. Yogam hold in April 1908 decided to publish S.N.D.P. from a quarterly to monthly. Vivekodayam, April-June 1908 (1083 Medam-Edavam ME), Vol.5, Nos. 1 and 2, p.8 (1908).
 3. Ibid., 13 May 1904, p.1.
 4. Ibid., April-June 1915 (Medam-Edavam 1090 ME), Vol.XII, p.53.

figures who made contributions to the journal. The works of Sree Narayana Guru especially the Atmapadisa sotokam was first published in Vivekodayam.¹

Expansion of the Yogam

In the early stages of the expansion and development, the Yogam was mainly concerned with the activities of Sree Narayana Guru, Palpu and Kumaran Asan. The spiritual qualities of the Guru, the enthusiastic activities and untinted financial support of Palpu and the consistent tour, powerful writings and fiery speeches of Kumaran Asan helped a lot for laying a strong foundation for the development of the Yogam, and to become a powerful organization of the Ezhavas or Thiyyas of Kerala. Though the influence of these three to a great extent helped the expansion of the Yogam, it utterly failed to attract not only the attention of unlettered Ezhava masses but also failed even to bring all Ezhava middle class under one roof. Though the Yogam attracted the attention of the Ezhava middle class which spread all over India, it remained more or less an organization of Travancore middle class. Though the Ezhavas were the largest single community in Kerala with a population of 13,37,848 (20 per cent of the total population)² in 1903

1. Vivekodayam, 13 May 1904, p.10.

2. According to 1909 Census the Ezhava population of Malabar Cochin and Travancore were 660,608; 185,446 and 491,774 respectively. This constitute about 20 per cent of the total population of Kerala.
Vivekodayam, October-November 1910 (Thulam 1086 ME), p.175.

(Makarana 1078 M. E.) the membership of the Yogam which represented this largest community was only 90.¹ It is clear that in the beginning the Yogam could not bring into its fold the ordinary Ezhavas. This is mainly because of two reasons.

The first and foremost reason was the high rate of membership fee, which only the well to do could afford to pay. At the commencement of the Yogam the face value of its membership was Rs.100. But quarter, half and one third shares for Rs.25, Rs.50 and Rs.75 respectively were available.² In the very next year the Yogam introduced a new system by which no share holder should possess less than one share and the share value of Rs.100 was reduced to Rs.25.³ According to the number of shares possessed, the share holders were known in different names. Those possessing upto three shares were called sahayikal, those who were having four to twenty shares were known as samajikannar and those who were having more than 20 shares were pradhanikal.⁴ In the beginning sahayikal did not have the voting rights,⁵ but in 1909 voting

1. Ibid., 13 May 1904, p.17.

2. Ibid., p.5.

3. But P. S. Velayudhan says that the amendment for reducing the value of the share from Rs.100 to Rs.25 was taken place in 1908.

Yoganathan, op.cit., p.7.

I have got this information from the Article of Association 'A' (1) which was published in the Vivekodayam, 13 May 1904, p.5.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid., p.6.

system was changed and every share holder was entitled to have one vote each. According to the number of shares the votes would be increased upto six.¹

But no member was entitled to more than six votes even if he was having more than 20 shares.² The samajikumar and pradhanikal were entitled to very many rights and privileges without their consent the Yogam proceedings could not take place. Pradhanikal had an additional right to check all documents of the Yogam and its affiliated bodies.³

The high rate of membership fee of Rs.25 was beyond the reach of the majority of the community who belonged to low paid agricultural labourers and landless peasants. To them, it was impossible to pay Rs.25 because most of them earned only 25 naya paise per day as their wage. Though the membership fee can be paid on instalment basis,⁴ Rs.25 was

1. The following Table-23 shows the share and number of votes.

Table-23

<u>No. of shares</u>	<u>No. of votes</u>
1	1
4	2
8	3
12	4
16	5
20	6

Vivekodayam, November-January 1907 (Vrischikam Dhanu 1083 ME), Vol. IV, p.18.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 13 May 1904, p.5.

4. The members can remit the amount of their share either in instalment basis or the entire amount together. Those who remit the amounts in instalment base may deposit annually at the rate of Rs.2.50 in a period of 10 years. See the bye-law which amended in the 4th annual/ of the Yogam which hold at Cannanore on March 29 and 30 of 1907 (16th and 17th Moenam 1082 ME) category 6 and 7 of the bye-law reproduced in the Vivekodayam, November-January 1907 (Vrischikam-Dhanu 1083 ME), Vol. IV, No. 8 and 9, p.18.

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actually beyond their capacity to pay. An ordinary Ezhava had to spend his income of nearly 4 months to get the membership of an organization which was constituted for their emancipation! Most of the Ezhavas became the members of the Yogan not voluntarily but because of the incessant pressure put on them by the organizers of the Yogan.¹ Very often, the poor Ezhavas failed to deposit their amount in right time and most of them had a large amount of arrears. The following table-24 shows the amounts which remained to be deposited by members in 1912 and 1913.

Table-24²

Balance of the Share Money to be Deposited by the
Members for the Years 1912 and 1913

Year	Total members	No. of shares	Amount deposited			Balance to be deposited		
			Rs.	Anna	PA	Rupees	Anna	PA
1912	1037	1661	12,530	4	6	30,010	3	4
1913	1201	1851	14,987	0	8	32,467	7	4

Table-24 shows that in 1912 while 1,037 members deposited rupees 12,530 for 1,661 shares, the balance to be remitted was Rs. 30,010. And in 1913, while 1,201 deposited Rs. 14,987 for 1,851 shares, the balance to be deposited was Rs. 32,467. This shows that the rate of membership fee was

1. See the 13th Annual Report of the Yogan by M. Krishnan, the then General Secretary of the Yogan reproduced in Vivekodayam, April-June 1916 (Medam Edavam 1091 ME), Vol. XIII, pp. 12-15.
2. Ibid., April-June 1912 (Medam Edavam 1087), p. 212 and April-June 1913 (Medam Edavam 1088 ME).

beyond the capacity of poor agricultural labourers and the other Ezhavas who belonged to working class and constituted about seventy five per cent of the total population of their respective community.¹ For the purpose of the collection of outstanding dues from the members the Yogam used to approach the court to get their property assessed. In 1916 when the members failed to deposit their instalment the Yogam took court action against 416 Ezhavas and sealed their houses and distrained their properties.² As a consequence of this strict manner of collecting membership fees instead of getting the friendship of the Ezhavas, about 6,000 people became bitter enemies of the Yogam.³

The comparatively higher rate of membership fee affected the possible cooperation of working class section of the Ezhavas with the S. N. D. P. Yogam. Those who joined the Yogam during the first two decades were either rich landlords or upper middle class people. In January 1904, when the Yogam met at Trivandrum, about 60 people attended the meeting and among them 16 were wealthy ayurvedic doctors.⁴ Actually the Yogam failed to capture the mind of the Ezhava masses and failed to inculcate in them the idea that the Yogam was a

1. Kerala Kaumudi, 6 May 1920, p.2

2. See the 13th Annual Report of the Yogam by M. Krishnan, op.cit., pp.12-15.

3. Ibid.

4. Robin Jeffrey, "The Social Origin of a Caste Association" op.cit., p.52.

representative body of the Ezhavas. Though, in the beginning of the present century the educated people among the Ezhavas were very few and English education was more or less nil,¹ the presidential addresses and most of the speeches of the annual meetings of the Yogam were in English.² As a rule the movement was more or less a platform of the educated middle class for whom the mass support remained important for giving weight to their claims. In short the Ezhava middle class though led the movement in the name of the whole community, tried to define its objectives primarily to suit their (middle classes) selfish interest.

The ambivalence between class interest and caste interest was an advantage to the new middle class.³ This naturally led the poorer sections among the Ezhavas to view the Yogam as an organization of the rich and educated Ezhavas. So naturally they kept aloof from the activities of the Yogam. According to C. V. Kunjuranon, "Till the time of 1927, the social activities of the S.R.M.P. Yogam and society's political, social and religious changes affected the upper class civilised people of the society as the wave of the shallow water and it could not touch the bottom of

1. According to the Census of 1901, 10 per cent of the Ezhava males were literate. But out of more than 5 lakhs of Ezhavas in Travancore, only 175 were literate in English. Census of India Travancore, 1901.

2. See back volumes of Vivekodayam, 1904-1912.

3. Francois Houtart Genovio Lemerzinov, "Social Religious Movement in Kerala: A Reaction to the Capitalist Mode of Production," Part I, social Scientist, Vol.6, No.11, June 1978, p.20.

the society.¹ This does not mean that the poor section of the Ezhavas totally kept aloof from the activities of the Yogam. A few poor people joined the Yogam and cooperated with its activities. This was due to their respect to Sree Narayana Guru and not because of their belief that the Yogam was their organization.² How did this respect come about? This respect was not because of their knowledge of Swami's Sanatana Philosophy or his social reform activities. The ignorant, illiterate and conservative Ezhavas were captivated by his super human powers such as healing of severe diseases with simple methods, controlling evil gods like Kuttichathan, Brahma Raksharu, etc., and his ability to remove sterility of women by giving a banana or a bunch of grapes to couples who were longing for children.³ For exploiting the weakness of poor people Yogam in its magazine Vivekodayam published the various miracles of Guru Narayana.⁴ Apart from that his disciples propagated a number of miracles of Swami with exaggeration⁵

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1. C. V. Kunjuraman, "The Annual Report of the 27th Session of the S. N. D. P. Yogam," Vivekodayam, 31 July 1930 (15 Korkadakan 1108 ME), Vol. 20, No. 6, pp. 9-10.
 2. Kerala Kaimudi, 7 July 1921, p. 1.
 3. N. Kumanan Nayan, "Brahma Sri Narayana Guru Swamiyude Jeova Charitru Sangraham," Vivekodayam, May-June 1915 (Edavam-Michunam 1090), Vol. 12, Nos. 2-3, pp. 39-41.
 4. See back volumes of Vivekodayam, e.g., Vivekodayam April-June 1913 (Medam-Edavam 1088 ME), Vol. 10, Nos. 1 & 2, p. 64.
Ibid., May-June 1915, Vol. 12, Nos. 2-3, pp. 39-41.
Ibid., 16 September 1907 (31 Chingam 1082 ME), No. 5, p. 11.
Ibid., April-May 1906 (Medam 1001 ME), Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 4.
 5. See, Swami Dharmenandaji, Sree Narayana Gurudayam, Kottayam, 1965.

and hence elevated Swami to the position of an incarnation of God.¹ More than anything else it was these miracles and 'superhuman' powers of Swamy formed the main attraction of poor Ezhavas to him.

Lack of cooperation from the Ezhavas and Thiyyas of Cochin and Malabar was the second factor which prevented the expansion of the Yogam. The Yogam, really failed to capture the attention of the people of Malabar and Cochin. Though the Yogam was organized for the benefit of the Ezhavas or Thiyyas of Kerala, it was true to say that its activities were mainly centred around the Travancore area and the problems of the Ezhavas of Travancore. We found that few rich Ezhava leaders met at Trivandrum at the invitation of Kumaran Asan in December 1902. Of these ten share holders six were from the area within 20 miles around Trivandrum and the other four were from Central Travancore around Quilon.² As far as the activities of the Yogam was concerned, the Ezhavas of British Malabar and Cochin did not take so much interest as the Ezhavas of Travancore. Though Shree Karattuparambil S. Krishnan was one of the directors of the Yogam in its first meeting³ and Shree Ayyakkutty and

1. Vivakodayam, 16 September 1906, p.11.

2. Robin Joffrey, "The Social Origin of a Caste Association" op.cit., p.52.

3. Gopi, "Cochin S. N. D. P. Yogam," S. N. D. P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p.257.

Sahodharan Ayyappan were very close to the Yogam, till the time of the conversion of the Ezhava Sabha of Cochin which was formed in 1915 as the Cochin S. N. D. P. Yogam in 1930¹ (1113 ME) the S. N. D. P. Yogam was not so strong in Cochin.

It was in its third annual meeting which was held in December 1903 at Quilon, the Malabar Ezhavas participated in the activities of the Yogam for the first time.² Their late participation was mainly because of comparative lack of grievances under British rule. Though the position of the Thiyyas of Malabar and the Ezhavas of Cochin and Travancore area were the same in the caste structure, there were considerable differences in their socio-political conditions. The Thiyyas of Malabar received a better deal at the hands of the alien rulers, than their counter parts in Travancore and Cochin. While the Ezhavas of Travancore were struggling for a government job earning a pay of Rs.5 per month and permission for sending their children to schools, the Ezhavas of Malabar occupied several important posts in the Government.³ The grievances of Thiyyas of

1. Ibid., p.235.

2. Vivakodayam, February-April 1907 (Kumbham-Meenam 1082 ME), p.13.

3. In 1869 a Thiyya, Churayyi Kanaran, the first Malayali to be appointed as the Deputy Collector in Malabar. See, C. Abbo, "Shrinan Churayyi Kanaran," S. N. D. P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p.246.

In addition to that Mr. P. C. Govindan passed I. C. S. in 1860s and became the political agent of Eden; Shri P. Sankunni was the first Malayali Principal in Palghat Victoria College (1916-1922).

See Murkoth Kunhappa, "Thiyyarude Charitram Oru Vihaka Vookshanam," S. N. D. P. Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, p. 72.

of Malabar were very limited when compared to that of the Ezhavas of Travancore and Cochin. This really created an indifference among the Ezhavas of Malabar to cooperate with the S. N. D. P. Yogam by organizing themselves.

Another factor which kept away the Thiyyas of Malabar from the S. N. D. P. Yogam was the influence of the National and Communist movements. With the formation of Malabar District Congress Committee in 1908, nationalist movement began to spread all over Malabar. Though the leaders of this movement were caste Hindus, their sympathetic attitude towards avarnas and the activities of Home Rule Movement under Mrs. Anne Besant against untouchability¹ convinced the untouchables that the Nationalists were not at all against their social development. By the end of 1930s the Communist movement also began to spread in Malabar and it organized the backward castes on class lines. All these factors, indeed, considerably restricted the membership from Malabar. Though towards the end of the 1920s the Yogam emerged as a well knit organization and its membership shot upto 63,674 in 1929,² the Yogam had only 121 members from Malabar.³ A number of organizations like the Thiyya Mahajana Sabha, Ezhava Maha Sabha and Sree Narayana Samajan

1. Nitavadi, May 1917, Vol.5, No.5, pp.1-2.

2. Vivekodayam, August-September 1930 (Chingam 1106 ME), Vol.21, No.1, p.10.

3. Ibid., 30 July 1930 (15 Karkkadakam 1105 ME), Vol.20, No.6, p.5.

were organized in Malabar and had worked actively for some time,¹ yet the spread of nationalism, influence of communism and the awareness of class consciousness rather than caste feelings among the avarnas especially Ezhavas failed any caste organization to take deep-root in the Malabar soil.

The restrictions of membership exclusively to the Ezhavas, Thiyyas or Chovans was the third important reason which hampered the growth in terms of its size of the Yogam.² Though the Yogam was described as an institution organized to propagate the sanatana philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru, till 1920 its membership was strictly closed to the people of other communities.³ In May 1920, at the 17th annual meeting of the Yogam it had been decided to open its membership to all genuine sympathisers, irrespective of social and religious differences.⁴ But this decision

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1. Above mentioned three organizations Sree Narayana Samajam, which was organized in 1925, was functioned actively for some time. Within a decade it could establish 40 branches with 1,200 members. It had a volunteer crops of 1,000 members with particular uniform. But by the end of 1930s this Yogam also came to an end.
V. C. Kumeran, "Malabar S.N.D.P. Yogam," S.N.D.P. Yogam Golden Jubilee Souvenir, pp.233-6.
 2. The Article of Association and the bye-laws of the Yogam very specifically mentioned that the membership should be given to the members of the "samudayan" which mean Ezhavas, Thiyyas or Chovan of Travancore-Cochin and Malabar.
See, Vivekodayam, 11 February 1905 (30 Makaram 1080 ME), Vol.I, No.5, p.100. See also, Vivekodayam, November 1907-January 1908, Vol.IV, Nos.8-9, pp.13-14.
 3. Sahodharam, May-July 1920 (Edavam-Michunam 1095 ME), p.5.
 4. Kerala Karmudi, 27 May 1920, Vol.II, No.13.

remained a paper resolution till 1927, whence T.K. Madhavan a prominent Congress leader was elected the organizing Secretary.

The Ezhava middle class, who had been controlling the Yogam realized that the cooperation and support of the Ezhava masses were inevitable to lead a crusade against the existing social set up and to redress their socio-economic and political grievances. Consequently the Yogam in 1922 reduced the membership fee from Rs.25 to Rs.5 in five instalments of one rupee each per year.¹ In addition to this reduction of membership fee, the Yogam decided to open branches and unions at village level and taluk level,² with the aim of establishing direct contact with masses and to acquire the character of a wider mass movement. But due to the indifference of the people³ and lack of enthusiasm on the part of Yogam workers,⁴ the decision of the 18th Annual meeting remained a paper resolution till 1926, when T.K. Madhavan was appointed as the Organizing Secretary of the Yogam.⁵ At that time Madhavan was

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1. Kerala Kumudi, 29 May 1924, p.1. See also, Vivekodayam, July-August 1930 (Karkkodakan 1105 ME), Vol.20, p.9.
 2. In the 18th Annual meeting of the Yogam, it was decided to establish branches at village level and unions at Taluk level. See, Kerala Kumudi, 12 May 1921, pp.21-22.
 3. Kerala Kumudi, 29 May 1924, p.21.
 4. Mitavadi, editor C. Krishnan criticised the activities of the Yogam was limited to organizing of an annual meeting Vivekodayam, August-September 1930 (Chingam 1106 ME), Vol.24, No.1, p.9.
 5. K. R. Narayanan, "Shree T.K. Madhavan: Chilo Anumaranakal," S. N. D.P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p.206.

one of the leading Congress men in Kerala. His experience with Congress organization had taught him very many lessons in organizing masses. Following the example of the Indian National Congress, Madhavan concentrated on membership and local organization. In a special meeting of the Yogam held at Alleppy on 1st January 1927 (17th Dhanu 1102 ME), Madhavan pointed out the weaknesses of the Yogam and the necessity of establishing branches at the Taluk and Village levels.¹ His resolution for establishing unions at Taluk level was approved. This meeting elected Madhavan as organising secretary. At that time, though the Ezhaveas were the largest community in Kerala with 20 lakhs of people,² the Yogam had only 1502 permanent members and 2311 temporary members.³ Madhavan did his best to organize people at village level and Taluk level. Due to Madhavan's consistent hard work, in June-July 1930 Yogam established 250 branches, 8 unions and 60 cooperatives.⁴ During this period the membership of the Yogam marked a tremendous increase from 3,318 to 50,684 by April 1928.⁵ In 1930 (Karkkadakam 1105 ME) the membership

1. Ibid.

2. Presidential address of Shri N. Kumaran Asan in the 20th Annual Meeting of the Yogam.
Kerala Kaumudi, 27th May 1923, p.1.

3. The temporary and permanent members divided on the basis of the deposit of the membership fee Rs.5. Those who paid Rs.5 in full were known as permanent members and those who were not paid full amount continued till the time of paying full amount as temporary members.
Vivekodayam, 30 July 1930, Vol.20, No.6, p.9.

4. Ibid., July-August 1930, Vol.20, pp.9-10.
But Mr. K. R. Narayanan says that on 5 May 1928 (23 Medam 1103 ME) Yogam had established 255 branches and 10 unions.
Op.cit., p.222.

5. K. R. Narayanan, op.cit., p.222.

further augmented to 63,674.¹ The Unions which were organized by Yogam at Taluk level functioned as a link which connected the branches at the village level and the main body of the Yogam. Madhavan was the person who brought the Yogam to the ordinary masses.

Apart from the work of organising local organizations, Madhavan sought the cooperation of other communities and tried to open the membership of the Yogam to the members of other communities irrespective of caste or religion. The factor which persuaded Madhavan to take such a step was nothing but his national consciousness.² We have found that Madhavan was a Congress leader who tried to follow the Congress method of organizing the people. The Congress appeal to all Indians to become its members irrespective of caste or creed naturally persuaded Madhavan to organize *the* S. N. D. P. Yogam in a similar manner. In addition to that the Sanatana Philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru did not admit ^{of} any caste privilege. Madhavan might have thought that it was a meaningless contradiction to the ideology of Narayana Guru to restrict the membership of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, which was formed to propagate the philosophy of the Guru to the Ezhava community alone. Therefore, Madhavan approached Narayana Guru and requested him to write a letter to the Yogam

1. Vivekodayam, July-August 1930, pp.9-10.

2. P. K. Madhavan, I. K. Madhavantea Jeeva Charitram, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 1112 (ME), p.580.

Secretary N. Kumeron to open its membership to all communities and religion.¹ Thus on 30 January 1927 (17th Makaram 1102 ME) Narayana Guru wrote a letter to Yogam Secretary to open its membership to all. In this letter Guru wrote:

Without organization no community will achieve progress or strength. I have founded the S. N. D. P. Yogam twenty five years ago on this principle. Ezhava does not refer to any caste or religion. Therefore all can join the Yogam irrespective of caste or religion. May many members join this Yogam.²

As a result of this letter the 5th clause of the bye-law of the Yogam was amended and from then onwards all those who believed in the Sree Narayana Dharma were permitted to join the Yogam.³ As a consequence of this change a number of members from other communities also joined the Yogam.⁴

Madhavan with his Congress background had an egalitarian ideology as well as a concept of organization based on mass support. This helped him to enlarge S. N. D. P. Yogam as one of the important caste organization in India. Madhavan followed an entirely different ideology and technique to bring the S. N. D. P. Yogam to the level of men in the street.

Regional Organizations

Even if the Yogam and its activities mainly attracted the attention of the middle class section of the society and mainly functioned in Travancore area, it could create an

1. Ibid., pp. 496-8.

See also, K. K. Panikkar, Sree Narayana Paramahansa (Biography of Sree Narayana Guru), Alleppy, 1963, p. 347.

2. Vivekodayam, March 1970.
Op. Cit., p. viii.

3. Yoganatham, op. cit., p. 5.

4. Ibid.

awakening among the Ezhavas of all over Kerala. As a consequence of this awakening a number of Ezhava Sabhas by different names emerged in different parts of Kerala. Soon after the formation of the Yogam, the Ezhavas of Karthikappally and Karunagappalli had organized two associations after the name of their province in 1904 (1079 ME).¹ The other important local associations sprang up in Kerala were Karappuram Ezhava Samajam in Shertalai, Cochin Ezhava Samajam (1915) which later became Cochin S. N. D. P. Yogam, Sree Narayana Chandrodaya Samajam at Vaikkom, Samurga Pradayini Yogam at Pulinkattu, Jnanodaya Yogam at Tellicherry, Vijnanodaya Sabha at Palaghat, the Malabar Thiyya Mahajan Sabha, Ezhava Mahasabha, Sree Narayana Sangam in Malabar etc., etc. The Sahodhara Movement of K. Ayyappan which was active in Cochin area for a long time and introduced a number of constructive social and religious reforms all over Kerala, was another notable movement in Kerala. All these organizations got linked up with the programme of action initiated by Srami on the one hand and the Yogam on the other.²

Yogam and Education

The factors responsible for the spread of modern education in Kerala were the activities of the foreign Christian missionaries like London Mission Society, the Church Mission Society and the interest and enthusiasm of the

1. Vivekodayam, 13 May 1904, p.23.

2. M. S. A. Rep, op.cit., p.53.

rulers of two princely states of Travancore and Cochin.¹ Even though education was wide spread in Travancore, it was really restricted to the privileged savarna sections of Hindus and Christians. The educated section mainly came from either land holding or bureaucratic families.² At the same time, among the untouchables, only Ezhavas got some education. This was due to three reasons. Firstly, the Ezhavas, the upper caste among the untouchables, was the first community that came into contact with European missionaries. They were able to get English education from the schools run by the missionaries.³ Secondly, among the untouchables and the whole of backward community, the emergence of a middle class was first noticed among the Ezhavas. In 1896, when Ezhavas submitted a memorial, generally known as Ezhava Memorial to the Maharaja their main submission was that the schools should be opened to their children, for education was the only means by which they would be able to

1. Financial and material aid to the missionaries and societies for the promotion of English education was more generous from the rulers of these princely states. See, C.M. Agur, op.cit., p.21.

2. Administrative Report, Travancore, 1899, p.103. (For details see Chapter I).

3. Private Papers of Dr. Palou, File No.12, p.129. Samuel Mateer of the London Missionary Society opened a school near Anjengo, the place between Trivandrum and Quilon for fifty "highly respectable" Ezhava boys who "were refused admission to the district schools." L.M. S. I. C. D. Report 1872, p.18 quoted in Robbin Jeffrey, "The Social Origins of a Caste Association 1873-1908...." op.cit., p.47. See also, M. Govindan, "Rao Bahadur P. Velayudhan," S.N.D.P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, op.cit., p.59.

compete with other communities.¹ Finally when grant-in-aid scheme was introduced by Travancore Government in 1868-69 and liberalised in 1873-74,² a number of schools which were opened for the education of the children belonging to the backward communities also helped Ezhavas to spread education among them. As a consequence, educational conditions of Ezhavas steadily improved. The rate of male literacy among the Ezhavas increased from 3.15 per cent in 1875 to 12.10 per cent in 1891 and in 1891, 30 Ezhavas were literate in English.³

Sree Narayana Guru and the leaders of the S. N. D. P. Yogan gave great importance to education because they realised that those who controlled educational facilities also controlled the economic and bureaucratic opportunities. Though Sree Narayana Guru, like other reformers and intellectuals, of the 19th century opposed to limiting the knowledge to the upper strata of the society, his concept of education was entirely different from that of the 19th century intellectuals like Akshay Kumar Dutt, Vidyasagar, Debendranath Tagore, Bal Shastri Jambhakar, Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Voeroselinger etc. While most of the 19th century reformers and intellectuals emphasised the vernacular languages as the medium through which knowledge could be

1. Private Papers of Dr. Palou, File No.12, p.129.

2. P. N. Gopinathan Nair, "Education and Socio-Economic Change in Kerala," Social Scientist, March 1976, Vol.4, No. 3, p.32.

3. Census Report, Travancore, 1891, Part III pp.456-67.

disseminated to the masses.¹ Sree Narayana Guru established Sanskrit schools and at the same time advised his followers to turn their attention towards English education. Speaking at Vignanavardhini Sabha at Cherai in 1912 Swami said:

Education leads any community to higher standards and therefore, if we are interested in the welfare of our community, we have to encourage it /.../ This would benefit the society as a whole /.../. The chief language now is English. Therefore our attention has to turn towards English.²

This emphasis on English education was because of the fact that the English education could alone ensure public appointments. The Guru sought to make them realize that only through education they would break to reach higher position in the society and also procure good employment. Guru once said:

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1. Most of them like Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, Akshay Kumar Dutt etc., argued that the mother tongue should be made the medium of instruction and totally opposed to education through English medium. See, Shan Mohammad (ed.), Writings and Speeches of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, 1972, pp.231-2. Tattwabodhini Patrik (A Bengali Journal of Akshay Kumar Dutt), Shrawan 1768, No.36, pp.309-11. See, K. N. Panikkar, Presidential Address Section III, Indian History Congress Thirty Sixth Session, Aligarh 1975, pp. 7-13. Though Sir Syed Ahmed opted for mother tongue in the beginning he changed his views on it afterwards when he was confronted with the problem of translating English works into regional language. Sir Sayyed Ahmed did not champion the cause of vernacular education consistently. For details see, Syed Yusuf Shah, "Politicization of Education in British India: A Case Study of the Establishment of Aligarh Muslim University," unpublished Ph.D thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1981, pp.159-70.
 2. Quoted in M.K. Sanyal, op.cit., pp.251-2. When Sree Narayana Guru asked his followers to turn their attention to English education, the persons like Akshay Kumar Dutt realized that the consequences of the English education creating a group of people enucleated from their national culture and alienated from their own country men. See, K. N. Panikkar, Presidential Address, op.cit., p.12.

We have only a small number of people who are well educated and holding good positions in the Government service Now-a-days any caste can be uplifted by means of education. If we have any plan of improving the conditions of down trodden masses we must educate our children.¹

After the modernization of administration and the practical recognition of English as official language of the State all communities started sending their children to schools and colleges with a view to qualify them for government service.² Ezhavas, being an avarna community, were denied admission into many schools. Till the first decade of the present century it could not even be thought of that the caste Hindus and non-caste Hindus could attend the same schools. Caste restrictions and the practice of untouchability were so hard in Travancore society. The call of Guru to strengthen their community "by organization and liberate by education" was a weapon to liberate individuals from the clutches of casteism and traditionalism. Moreover, Ezhave middle class considered that the closing of educational institutions to them by the government was not only an injustice but also one which did not recognize basic human rights. A large portion of the community who contributed their quota to the state revenues from which the schools

1. Murkothu Kumeran, Sree Narayana Guru Ormikalute Jeevacharithram, 2nd edition, Calicut, 1971, pp.261-2.

2. Report of the Unemployment Enquiry Committee of Travancore, 1928, p.23.

were mainly financed were dobered from attending them. This was naturally resented by them and in turn persuaded them to fight for their right of attending the schools.¹

First of all the Yogam turned its attention to secure admission in public schools. Till the beginning of the present century, almost all government schools were closed to them. A number of Ezhava students, who were coming from middle class families were denied educational facilities in govern ent schools as they belonged to an untouchable caste. Palpu and the members of his family were the first escapegoat of this mooningless caste restrictions of Travancore.² In 1895, when an Ezhava Raman applied for admission to Attingal English school as he belonged to the avarna community his admission was denied by the inspector of schools.³ The government gave two reasons for this decision. The first one was that these schools were located either in the premises of temples or palaces or highways or Brahmin houses, which were inaccessible to the avarna community.⁴ Secondly government

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1. See arguments of M. Govindan the representative of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in the 4th session of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.
Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1907, pp.45-46.
 2. P.T. Palpu, father of Dr. Palpu applied for Government pleaderchip examination in Travancore. Though his application fee was accepted, he was refused to appear in the examination, as he belonged to avarna community. Even though Dr. Palpu wrote the entrance examination for medicine in Travancore and secured second position, he was refused admission. This compelled him to leave for Madras from where he secured medical degree.
Dr. Palpu Papers, file No.12, pp.126-30.
 3. This letter had been reproduced in the Kerala Kaumudi, 23 November 1922, p.1.
 4. Proceedings of the 4th Meeting of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly Travancore 1903, pp.45-46.

blamed that the upper caste Hindus were opposed to the admission of low castes to the government schools.¹

For the educational opportunities, the representatives of the S. N. D. P. Yogam had continued their crusade in Sri Mulam Popular Assembly since 1905. The agitation, was in the beginning directed to get the government schools open to the Ezhava boys and girls. In 1905, N. Kumaran Ayan, the representative of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in the Assembly, brought out the disabilities of the Ezhavas in regard to their admission into government schools and highlighted the difficulties they were facing and requested that all Ezhava boys be admitted into all government schools.² In 1907 in the 4th meeting of the Assembly M. Govindan presented a memorial signed by 64 representatives of the Assembly on the subject of free admission of the Ezhavas into all overment schools.³ But the admission of the Ezhava children to public schools remained a vexed question till 1908. On 6th June 1908, the Travancore Government issued a notification (No. E2044) by which they decided to throw open all sikhur boys' schools, both English and Vernacular, to the Ezhava children except such as were situated in places inaccessible to them.⁴ The

1. Ibid. See also, P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., p.456.

2. Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly in Travancore 1905, p. 73. See also, The editorial, Vivekodayam, 11th February 1905 (30 Madam 1000 ME), Vol.2, No.1, p.1.

3. Proceedings of the 4th Meeting of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1907, p.40.

4. Education Department, Travancore File No.335 of 1910.

latter institutions were also ordered to be shifted to unobjectionable places as early as possible. In 1908, out of 369 government schools 326 were opened to the Ezhava community.¹ In 1913 there were only 13 schools inaccessible to the Ezhavas.²

The Girls' schools, however, were still closed to them. The justification on the part of the government was that the effect of putting them in government schools would probably be to empty these schools of the Brahmin and Nair girls.³ It was generally attributed that the girls were naturally more conservative. In 1910, the S. N. D. P. Yogam representative in the Assembly, Shri Kunju Panikkar, prayed to the government that the Ezhava girls should at least be admitted into those schools to which the Christian girls had access.⁴ Due to the constant struggle of the Ezhava members in the Assembly in 1910, 35 schools were opened for the first time for the Ezhava girls.⁵ The educational code of 1911, absolutely removed the restrictions on the admission of the backward class communities in the government schools.⁶

1. Proceedings Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1908, p. 73.
2. Dewan's reply to the question of a member, Proceedings Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1913, p. 137.
3. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1907, p. 46. See also, Education Department, Travancore File No. 335 of 1910, p. 2.
4. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1910, pp. 39-40. See also, Vivekodayam, November 1909 to January 1910 (Vrikshikan-Enanu 1025 ME), Vol. 6, Nos. 8-9, p. 252.
5. P. K. Gopalakrishnan, "Social Reform Movements", Kerala Charitram, Vol. I, Ernakulam, 1973, p. 1218.
6. T. K. Velu Pillai, op.cit., Vol. III, pp. 735 and 736.

By 1919 out of the 352 girls' schools only 180 were opened to the Ezhavas.¹

The next step was the agitation for admission to Sanskrit and Ayurvedic colleges which were situated in localities inaccessible to the Ezhavas.² However, they had to wait till 1915 to get admission in Ayurvedic college³ and till 1918 in Sanskrit college.⁴

In addition to their fight against the Government, the S. N. D. P. Yogam and rich Ezhavas along with Sree Narayana Guru started educational institutions for the Ezhavas. The need for social renaissance and economic development of the community, the need to compete with the developed communities like the Nairs, the non-Malayali Brahmins and the Christians who had a dominating position in the economic and bureaucratic sphere and the lack of support from the government in their community induced the Ezhavas to start a number of educational institutions. In 1906 (1081 ME) the S. N. D. P. Yogam started an Education Fund with the object of providing both technical and general education to the people of the community.⁵ Swami

1. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1919, p.91.

2. Reply of the Dewan to the demand of an Ezhava member in the Assembly to remove the restrictions on the admission to them in the Ayurvedic and Sanskrit College. Proceedings of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1907, p.46.

3. Vivekodayam, September-October 1914 (Kanni, 1090 ME), Vol. II, No. 6, p.233.

4. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1918, p.12.

5. Vivekodayam, June-August ¹⁹⁰⁵ (Mithudam-Karukadokan, 1081 ME), Vol. 3, Nos. 2 and 3, p.9.

started a Sanskrit school at Aruvippuram and later it was shifted to Trivandrum.¹ Paravoor V. Kesavenasan started an Ayurvedic school and where not only traditional Ayurvedic education was imparted but also the rudiments of anatomy and physiology.² In 1917, under the auspices of the S. N. D. P. Yogam and with the support of the Education Department an organization by name "Nikhila Ezhava Vidhyabhyasa Mahasabha" (An all Ezhava Education Conference) formed with the aim of providing primary education to the Ezhavas in Travancore.³ The main objectives of this conference were to persuade the government to open all elementary schools to the Ezhava children and to construct new schools in the areas where the Ezhavas were not having schools to educate their children.⁴ A central committee was set up at Trivandrum and Taluk level sub-committees were organized for the educational development of the Ezhavas.⁵ In 1922 the Yogam started its first English school at Perinadu in Alleppy.⁶ A free Anglo-Sanskrit Boarding school was started at Alwaye. This was the largest institution of the kind and had shown better result than even the

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1. Vivekodayam, 11 February 1905 (30 Makaram 1080 ME), Vol. I, No. 5, p. 94.
 2. Vivekodayam, July-September 1907 (Karkkadakam 1082 and Chingam 1083 ME), Vol. 4, No. 4, and 5, p. 3.
 3. Mitavadi, June 1917, Vol. 5, No. 6, p. 7.
 4. Vivekodayam, January-March 1917 (Makaram-Kumbham 1902 ME), Vol. 13, Nos. 10-11.
 5. Mitavadi, June 1917, Vol. 5, No. 7, p. 5.
The President of this central committee was P. Ramaswami Ayyar who was the Deputy Director of Education in Travancore and N. Kumaran Asan was elected as Secretary.
Loc. cit.
 6. Kerala Kaurudi, 24 May 1923, p. 1.

government schools in the country.¹ It would be seen, moreover, that the community had built many schools and made them over to government in addition to those privately conducted by themselves.² By these educational activities a number of graduates, post graduates and law-graduates, both male and female increased, who had distinguished themselves in the various offices in British Government and other princely states.³

Thus due to three decades of consistent hardwork of the S. N. D. P. Yogan the Ezhavas of Travancore achieved enviable success in the field of education. We have found that in 1875 the male literacy among the Ezhavas was 3.2 per cent, but in 1911 and 1931, these numbers were increased respectively to 19 per cent and 36 per cent.⁴ Similarly, the number of English literates also increased in hundreds. We have already seen that the number of Ezhavas educated in English were only 30 in 1890 and that it was increased to 5,202 in 1931.⁵ Out of 1,441 English educated Ezhavas in 1911, 82 were women.⁶ In 1917 it was calculated that

1. Dr. Palpu Pooer, File No.4, p.109.

2. Ibid., p.108.

3. Murkoth Kunhappa, "Thiyyarudecharitram Oru Vihagaveekshanam," S. N. D. P. Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, pp.71-72.
Dr. Palpu Pooer, File No.4, p.109.

4. Census of Travancore, 1875, 1911 and 1931.

5. See, Chapter I.

6. Vivekodayam, November-December 1912 (Vrischikam 1088 MB), Vol. I, No. 8.

the number of pupils belonging to this group and actually attending schools was 37,508.¹

Agitation for Government Job

Under the aegis of the S. N. D. P. Yogam the educated middle class turned their attention next to the rights of entry of the Ezhavas into public service. Due to overwhelming influence of casteism, untouchability and unapproachability, employment opportunities were denied to the Ezhavas in the Travancore Public administration.² During the time of Malayali Memorial in 1891, there was not a single representative of the Ezhava community holding any appointment on Rs.5 or upwards a month in the state.³ In response to the Memorial the Dewan had replied that education was not sufficiently widespread among the Ezhavas, in order to offer them employment in the public service.⁴ This statement was

1. Mitavadi, June 1917, Vol.5, No.6.

2. The government made it clear in 1891 that the social position of the untouchables "is such that they can hardly be eligible for public offices where a certain amount of respect is expected to be commanded in a state where Hindus are more conservative and superstitious than their brethren in Malabar." Government Endorsement to the Malayali Memorial No.1899 M 338, English Records, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum.

3. Malayali Memorial reproduced in the Kerala Archives News Letter, Vol.II, Nos.II and III, March and June 1976, p.5.

4. According to the Dewan, "There are only two of their class out of a population of 887,173, who have graduated from the university and a very few, indeed, if any who are seeking a higher education in the local college. Endorsement to Travancore Memorial, File No.1899/M 334, English Records, Government Secretariat, Trivandrum. See also, Vivakodayam, 18th October 1906 (32 Kann 1082 ME), Vol.3, No.7, p.4.

considered to be an excuse because the Census of 1891 showed that the number of educated persons among the Ezhavas was 23,000, yet not a single member of that community was permitted to be even a peon under the sirkar.¹ The tragic experiences of P. Velayudhan and Palpu who were graduated as early as 1880s being denied sirkar jobs is noteworthy.² An Ezhava graduate who applied for the post of a copyist in Travancore High Court was told that the traditional state policy was against his employment.³ According to the Government statement the Ezhavas were not admitted into the service chiefly owing to the objection of the high caste Hindus,⁴ presumably that of the Nairs.⁵ The Government order indicated that it did not want to act against

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1. Kerala Sanchari, 7 October 1896.
Madras Native News Paper Report, 1896, p.273.
 2. Dr. Palpu Paper, File No.12, pp.128-30.
See also the reply to P. Velayudhan from J. C. Mannington for his application for a job in Travancore on 21 July 1883. In this letter he says about his attempt and failure to get him a job in Travancore and Cochin, quoted in P. S. Velayudhan, N. D. P. Echaritram, p.28.
After taking his medical degree from Madras University when Dr. Palpu applied in Travancore Government for a job, he was informed that there was not only a vacancy in Medical Department at present but also was having no change in impending future.
Vivekodayam, July-September 1907 (Karkkaduka 1082 and Chingam 1083 ME), Vol.4, Nos. 4 and 5, p.6.
 3. Kerala Sanchari, 7 October 1896.
Madras Native News Paper Report 1896, p.273.
 4. "Disabilities of Thiyyas of Travancore," Kerala Sanchari, 1st January 1896, Madras Native News Paper Report 1896, p.11.
 5. P. K. Dalakrishnan, Sree Narayana Guru, pp.49-50.
But the statement of Nayar objection was denied by Gujananandhini an Ezhava journal and described this as an excuse of orthodox Brahmin Domans. See, Vivekodayam, 15 July 1905 (32 Mithunam 1080 ME), Vol.2, No.3, p.1.

the interest of caste Hindus, especially the Nayers, since it was feared that it would lead to communal conflicts detrimental to the progress of the state.¹ In short, till the beginning of the present century the Ezhavas were completely excluded from Travancore Public Service.

The first movement of the Ezhavas was the Ezhava Memorial signed by 13,175 members of the community and submitted to the Maharaja in 1896. The petition requested in humble terms the granting of ordinary civic rights (which were granted to the converts to Islam or Christianity) to the Ezhavas who remained within the fold of Hinduism.² The memorialists regretted that in Travancore they were still kept off from Government service. But this memorial failed to produce any result. Thereafter, according to the wishes of Palpu, G.P. Pillai raised the issue of the plight of the Ezhavas at the 9th Indian National Social Conference held at Poona in 1895 and in the British Parliament.³ But these activities did not improve the miserable conditions of the Ezhavas. The Government and savarna Hindu officials adopted various means and tactics to keep the Ezhavas out of the public service. According to a correspondent of the Madras Mail:

1. P.K. Balakrishnan, Sree Narayana Guru, pp.49-50.

2. See full text of Ezhava Memorial appended in M. J. Kochy, op.cit., Appendix No.IV, pp.190-200.

3. G.P. Sekhar (ed.), op.cit., pp.111-6.

One candidate is sympathetically advised not to appear. Another is made to wait one big official after another till he gets disgusted and leaves the State. A third is 'overaged' inspite of all proofs to the contrary. A fourth is told he is a 'lower caste' but no written endorsement to that would be given, 'traditional state policy' precludes, a fifth in one department and he is asked to seek employment in other departments where it may be possible to entertain men of his class
L.....↓

The educated Ezhavas realized that most of the jobs under government were closed to them. When E. N. Kesavan applied to the Travancore Police Department after taking his diploma from Mysore Police School he was informed by Bezli, the then Head of the Department of Police, that there was no vacancy for the time being and he was advised to seek a job elsewhere.² This meant that the government service was the preserve of caste Hindus. Therefore, the only alternative for well educated Ezhavas was to leave their State in search of employment.

This was the condition of the Ezhavas in the matter of public serve^{ic} during the time of the formation of the S. N. D. P. Yogam. As education and awakening spread among the Ezhava middle class because, they became conscious of their basic human rights and began to raise their voice for the realization of these rights. The leaders attempted to arouse^e the members of their community to fight for their rights.

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1. Quoted in the Memorandum submitted for the information of his Excellency the late Governor of Madras by Dr. Palpu. The memorandum is enclosed in the Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No. 6.
 2. Vivekodayam, 17 November 1906 (32 Thulam 1082 ME), Vol. 3, No. 7, p. 4.

particularly for their fightful share in the government service. They tried to make them conscious of their exploitation by the upper castes. They became more self-assertive and ready to fight for better status in bureaucratic and administrative spheres. This fight of the disappointed Ezhava middle class to get into the Travancore public service was mainly due to three reasons. Firstly, during that time government service was the most important means of acquiring wealth and influence in society. The denial of this opportunity was perceived as a major injustice.¹ The second reason was concerned with the consciousness of Ezhava middle class to achieve their rights. The hardship caused by the government in not taking into consideration their just rights and competence compelled them to show more interest in getting government jobs.² Owing to the overwhelming influence of nepotism, bureaucracy became the preserve of the upper castes. This denied the members of the new middle class among the Ezhavas a legitimate share in the bureaucracy.

First of all the Ezhavas demanded the privileges of Thiyyas in Malabar under the British rule and the Christian converts in Travancore in the matter of appointments to the government service. Narayana Panikker requested the government to extent the privileges which were enjoyed by the

1. Vivekodayam, 15 July 1905 (32 Midhunam, 1080 ME), Vol.2, No.3, p.3.

2. Loc. cit.

Christian converts to the Ezhavas also. To this, the Dewan replied that the government had nothing to do in this matter.¹ Till 1905, the number of Ezhavas were very little in the government service and the "traditional state policy" was being relaxed since 1908 (1083 ME) in the matter of entertaining the Ezhavas in the public service.² This sudden change was mainly because of the consistent pressure of the S. N. D. P. Yogam on the government and the attempt of the Ezhava members in the Sree Mulam Popular Assembly. The S. N. D. P. Yogam incessantly criticised the government policy of exclusion of the Ezhavas from the government service and at the same time requested time and again to accommodate the qualified Ezhavas in the public service.³ From 1905 onwards, one member from the Ezhava community was nominated to the Sree Mulam Popular Assembly. This representation of the Ezhavas in the Assembly helped to a large extent to bring the grievances of their community directly to the notice of the government. The members like Kumeran Asan, N. Kumeran etc., succeeded in convincing the government the grievances of Ezhavas regarding the appointment in the Travancore public service.⁴ In 1905 out of 5 lakh Ezhavas only 25 were

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1. Vivekodayam, 15 November 1906 (30 Thulam 1081 ME), Vol.2, No. 7, p.3.
 2. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1913, p.160.
 3. Vivekodayam, 15 July 1906 (editorial), p.1.
Vivekodayam, 17 November 1906, p.4 and other back volumes.
 4. See, T.K. Ravindran, Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala A Study of His Assembly Speeches, Trivandrum 1972.

appointed in the government service and one of them were drawing more than 15 rupees per month as their salary.¹ Out of these 25 Ezhavas, 5 were constables in police departments and others were primary school teachers drawing rupees nine to fifteen per mensem.² Though on paper all but the department of revenue and judicial were open to the Ezhavas, in practice almost all departments were closed to them. But the Ezhava representatives in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly consistently requested the Government to throw open all its departments to the Ezhavas and as a consequence of their regular demands within a decade, a slight improvement had taken place. Table 23 shows the number of Ezhavas in the government service in 1914.

Though the Ezhavas were appointed in some posts in the government service, indeed their representation in the government service was not proportionate to the population and the number of educationally qualified people. We have already seen that the justification of ^{the} Down for appointing less number of Ezhavas in the police department was that, if too many Ezhavas were recruited the work might be obstructed as they could not enter all places freely such as temples, Brahmin houses and the like.³ The Revenue

1. Vivakodayam, 15 July 1905 (32 Mithunam 1080 ME), Vol. II, No. 3, p. 13.

2. Loc. cit.

3. Proceeding of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1913, p. 163.

Table-25¹Number of Ezhavas in Government Service During 1914.

Department	Salary						Total
	upto	Between Rupees				Above	
	Rs. 5	5-10	10-25	25-50	50-100	Rs. 100	
Police	-	1	1	2	3	-	7
Excise	-	11	-	1	-	-	12
Forest	1	10	2	-	-	-	13
Public Works	-	-	2	1	-	-	3
Education	-	14	13	-	-	-	27
Registration	-	-	2	-	-	-	2
Medical	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Judicial	-	6	2	1	-	-	9
Revenue	-	-	1	1	-	-	2
Agriculture	-	2	-	-	-	1	3
Postal	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
Prison	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
	1	48	25	6	3	1	84

Department being a part of the Devasthanam Department it was closed to untouchables and non-Hindus.² Another problem faced by the Ezhavas was the one that concerned with promotion chances. Their promotion chances were very little. Therefore, Kumaran Asan requested that instructions be issued to the heads of departments to entertain qualified Ezhavas more in

1. Vivakodayam, April-June 1914 (Madam-Edavam 1089 ME), Vol. II, Nos. 1 and 2.

2. Vivakodayam, April-June 1914 (Madam-Edavam 1039 ME), Vol. II, Nos. 1 and 2.

the service and also to give them their legitimate promotion.¹

By this time, the resentment of the Christians and the Muslims began to mould up against the caste partiality of Government towards caste Hindus. Therefore, the Ezhavas utilized this opportunity by joining together with the two other deprived communities - Christians and Muslims - to fight for their rights and privileges. These disillusioned and deprived communities organized under the Christian leadership and formed a League for equal civic rights to agitate for the opening of all branches of the government service to Christians, Muslims and non-caste Hindus and to put an end to untouchability.² This was the first collective movement after the Malayali Memorial by the disappointed middle class sections of the Christians, the Muslims and the Ezhavas. The Civic Right League was primarily an expression of the aspiration of the middle class emerging from these communities. The League argued for 26 lakhs of people who were denied the civil liberty in their state.³ They pointed out the caste Hindu dominance in Travancore Administration. Out of 4,000 jobs in the crucial revenue department, more than 3,800 were held by caste Hindus.⁴ On 20th March 1919

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1. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1914, p.116.
 2. P.K.K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala (1888-1938), Vol.II, Trivandrum, 1966, p.203.
 3. Caste and Citizenship in Travancore, Kottayam, 1919, p.3.
 4. P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.209.
See also, Malayala Manorama, 14 December 1922.

working committee of the Civic Right League was formed with Mr. John Chandy as the President.

On 5th April a mammoth meeting held at Tirunakkore maiden in Kottayam District under the Chairmanship of E. J. John to discuss the future programme of the League.¹ This meeting questioned the exclusion of Christians and Muslims on the basis of religion and Ezhavas on the basis of caste. In 1920, on the basis of the decision taken at Tirunakkore meeting, T.K. Madhavan lead a delegation to submit a memorandum to the Travancore Government to throw open all government departments to non-Hindus and avaras.² But practically the result of this memorandum was not satisfactory.³ Therefore, one more deputation under E. J. John submitted another memorial to point out their various grievances including the exclusion of the law abiding Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims from Revenue Department and Imperial Service Brigade.⁴ The agitators thought that the separation of the Devaswam from the Revenue Department would provide better opportunities to the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims to get into government service. Though this was the largest department in Travancore Government it was opened

1. File No.53 of Political Department 1919, English Records, Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.

2. Ibid. See also, K. R. Narayanan, "Shri T.K. Madhavan," S.N.D.P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p.103.

3. English Records, File No.53 of Political Department 1919, op.cit.

4. Ibid.

only to the savarnas. Therefore, separation was a must to the agitators to get better opportunities in Revenue Department but on 20th February 1919 Downan very clearly stated in the meeting of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly that the separation of Revenue from Devaswam would neither be desirable nor practicable under the circumstances.¹ On 1st March 1919 K. C. Mammen Mappilla presented a memorial to the Downan demanding that the Revenue department should be opened to non-Hindus and untouchables.² League continued for the bifurcation of the Devaswam Department from the Revenue Department. As a result of their consistent struggle the Government constituted a committee consisting of Hindus and non-Hindus to report on the feasibility of separating the Devaswam from Revenue Department.³ On the basis of the recommendation of this committee which was supported by the Madras Governor, Lord Willington,⁴ the Maharaja issued a proclamation known as the Devaswam Proclamation on 12th April 1922 to bifurcate the Devaswam from the Revenue Department⁵ which enabled the non-Hindus and non-caste Hindus to get appointments in the Revenue Department.⁶

1. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1919.
2. P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.204.
3. Press communique on the Devaswam Proclamation of 1922. See, P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.287.
4. Ibid., p.288.
5. Devaswam Hand Book, SectionI. See also, English Records, File No.53, Political Department 1919, Collier Kerala Secretariat, Trivandrum.
P. S. Volayudhan, S.N.D.P. Charitram, p.198.
P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.283.
6. K.R. Narayanan, "Shri T.K. Madhavan," S.N.D.P. Golden Jubilee souvenir, p.103.

Though slight improvements had taken place on the question of government job, it did not seriously effect the caste Hindu predominance in the administrative field of Travancore. In 1922 out of 4,000 important jobs in the Revenue Department more than 3,800 were held by caste Hindus.¹ This actually infuriated the lower communities, especially the Ezhavas and the Christians because among the untouchables and non-Hindus most of the educated belonged to these two communities. But Civic Right League fell into inactivity even before achieving its aims and objectives. Therefore, the S. N. D. P. Yogam under T. K. Madhavan organized a Public Service Bureau in its annual meeting which was held at Quilon on 9 May 1926 (27th Medam 1101 ME) with the twin aims of collecting and publishing information regarding the representation of each caste and community in the government service and to press for the representation of the candidates belonging to the Ezhava community in government service.² On 4th August 1926 (20th Karkadokam 1101 ME) a meeting of the Public Service Bureau was held at L. M. S. Hall, Trivandrum and asked the Government to earmark a major percentage of new appointments to the Ezhavas in various departments like education, police etc., and requested the Government at least to appoint one Divisional Peshkar, one Nazur Secretary, one

1. Malayala Manorama, 14 December 1922.

2. P. K. Madhavan, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 458.

District Judge etc., from the Ezhava community.¹ During the visit of Simon Commission in 1928, C. V. Kunjuraman, the then General Secretary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam submitted a memorandum on 26 May 1928, in which he enumerated the various disabilities of the Ezhavas due to the caste domination. As a result of the continuous work of the S. N. D. P. Yogam the conditions of the Ezhavas improved considerably.

We have already seen that in the beginning of 1880s the Ezhavas had no place in the lower rungs of the administration. But by 1931 the same community had produced 32 Gazetted officers.² In the same way out of 503 posts carrying a monthly salary of Rs.150 or more there were five incumbents who belonged to the Ezhava community. This was mainly due to the activities of the S. N. D. P. Yogam. In other words the demand of the Ezhavas to get the privileges and facilities enjoyed by Christian converts from other communities was changed in course of 30 years and now their demand was to get equal Civic Rights which were enjoyed by Brahmans and Nairs.³ Though this achievement was remarkable they had not yet got a share in the administration as warranted by the strength of their population. Table 26 shows the monopoly

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1. Ibid., pp.469-70. See also, Vivekodayan, January-March 1932 (Makuram Kunbam 1107 ME), pp. 18-22.
 2. Vivekodayan, September-November 1930 (Kanni Thulam 1106 ME), Vol.21, Nos. 1 and 2, p.17.
 3. Ibid., p.18. See also, Kerala Kaumudi, 16 October 1929, p.5.

of caste Hindus especially the Nayers and Tamil Brahmins and the poor conditions of other communities in 1932.

Table-26¹

Monopoly of Caste Hindus and the Poor Conditions of Other Communities in 1932

Community	Population (total 5,092,237)	% to total population	Govt. job (total 20,378)	% to popula- tion
Nairs	868,411	17.08	10,588	51.94
Ezhavas	872,174	17.13	787	3.86
Christians	1,604,475	31.51	3,537	17.36
Muslims	353,274	6.94	436	2.14
Brahmins	42,040	0.83	2,622	12.87
Other Hindus	1,351,863	26.55	2,411	11.83

Table 26 shows that the Nayers with the total population of about 17 per cent had held about 52 per cent of the total appointments in the State. In the same way the Brahmins with 0.83 per cent of the total population occupied 12.87 per cent of the total appointments. At the same time all other communities together with a population of about 82 per cent had held less than 35 per cent of the total jobs in the Government service. This was exclusive of military and Devasthanam Departments. The military had constituted entirely of Nayers. The Devasthanam was staffed exclusively by caste Hindus of whom the large majority were the Nayers.² This

1. The Dagen, 27 August 1932.

2. Trovanore the Present Political Problem, op.cit., p.27.

hegemony of caste Hindus especially of the Noyars in the Travancore bureaucracy was one of the important reasons which persuaded the Ezhavas to join the Christians and the Muslims to organize abstention movement against the Government and the Savarna Hindu community in the beginning of 1930s.

Industrial Activities

Alongwith the attempt for educational advancement and the improvement of their condition in the government service, the S. N. D. P. Yogam concentrated their attention on economic progress of the community by improving industrial activities. The Ezhava community was one of the most hard working and industrious section among the Keralites. The Ezhavas had no hesitation to take up any work if it was found lucrative.¹ C. V. Kunjuraman says that the motto of Ezhavas was, "If you cannot find any other job go and steal something. Do not sit idle. Those who live on other's charity without doing any kind of work is a great gentleman thief."² Even though they had been struggling hard to get into the Government service, they generally preferred the more profitable occupations like trade, commerce and industry.³ To a certain extent they had a contempt towards low paid government jobs, and preferred more profitable cultivation

1. C. V. Kunjuraman, "Samuha Parichikaram," (Social Reform) Vivekodayam, 15 November 1904 (30 Thulam 1080 ME), Vol. I, No. 4, p. 64.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 15 July 1905 (32 Mithunam 1080 ME), Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 3.

and industry. According to them:

Those who walk wearing a red cap and khakki uniform on a salary of Rs.6 bid farewell to this world in the end leaving behind some wives and many children in the wilderness. Instead of these petty offices we have to respect forefathers who created a new world by clearing away the forest and by cultivating virgin land. In lieu of being the pomposity of the government employee, we have to follow the capitalists who sit and write bills in the shop and take the money of the government employees¹....

Though the Ezhavas were traditionally engaged in various sorts of industries, in modern time two factors influenced the industrial endeavours of the Ezhavas. These two factors were the influence of Sree Narayana Guru and the rejection of educated Ezhavas from the government service. Though Sree Narayana Guru did not put forward a new economic policy to improve the lot of working class section of community who constituted about 75 per cent of the total population of the Ezhavas,² he not only advised the Ezhava pilgrims to Sivagiri temple to organize speeches on trade, industry and commerce but also asked rich people to start industries to provide jobs for the poor and to improve the economic conditions of the people. He said:

If it is difficult for one man to take all the initial expense to run a factory then a group of people should get together. Factories will provide jobs for people. There are so many ways for making progress but our people will not follow them. We must manufacture goods from coconut fibre here ourselves instead of exporting them and then importing the manufactured goods from foreign countries.

1. Ibid.

2. Kerala Karmudi, 6 May 1920, p.2.

3. Murkothu Kumaran, Sree Narayana Guru Smaran, p.303.

He advised people to acquire different kinds of industrial training.¹ He encouraged small scale industries. He had started a weaving industry in his Ashram at Varkala for imparting training to people in spinning and weaving.² Narayana Guru himself was one of the Directors of Malabar Economic Union started in 1914.³ As a result of the advice of their spiritual leader, well to do Ezhavas started a number of factories textile mills, cashew factories etc., in various parts of Kerala.⁴ Secondly the rigid casteism excluded the educated Ezhava middle class from government service. So they were generally pushed towards small scale and cottage industries, trade and commerce, an area which caste Hindus tended to avoid.⁵

After the formation of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in 1903, it intended to improve their traditional and out of date methods and practices in industrial field by introducing improved methods and modern technical knowhow. With this idea in mind two industrial exhibitions were held under the auspices of the Yogam one at Quilon in 1903 and the other at Cannanore in 1907 along with the annual meeting of the

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1. Ibid.
 2. C. Kesavan, op.cit., p.p.330-31.
 3. Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No.19.
 4. M. S. A. Rao, op.cit., p.109.
 5. Robin Jeffrey, "Temple Entry Movement in Travancore," Social Scientist, March 1976, p.9.

Yogam. These exhibitions were held for the purpose of "comparative evaluation of products."¹ As a result of these exhibitions an unprecedented awakening took place in the Ezhava community.² In 1906 (1081 ME) due to the attempt of Palpu and some other wealthy Ezhavas "Travancore Weaving and Trading Company" with a capital of one lakh rupees was organized.³ In 1909 (1084 ME) with the aim of providing financial help to Ezhava weavers and traders one cooperative of "Weaving and Trading Association" was organized and registered in Travancore under the influence of the Yogam.⁴ In 1910-11 (1086 ME) C. Krishnan and Chozhy Valchy⁵ started the Calicut Bank with a capital of Rs. 50,000.⁵ In 1930 the Ezhavas of Travancore established another bank. The Travancore Ezhava Bank, with a capital of rupees two lakhs to improve the economic condition of the Ezhavas.⁶

In 1914, according to the decision of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in its 11th annual meeting, a company by name of Malabar Economic union was started with the aim of improving the industrial interest of the Ezhavas as well as to provide

1. Vivekodayam, April-June 1909 (Medam-Edavam 1084 ME), Vol.6, Nos. 1-2, p.21.
2. C. Kocavan, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.407-11.
3. Vivekodayam, June-August 1906 (Mithunam-Karkkadakam 1081 ME), Vol.3, Nos. 3-4.
4. Ibid., April-June 1909 (Medam-Edavam 1084 ME), Vol.6, Nos.1-2, p.21.
5. Ibid., January-March 1911 (Makaram-Kumbam 1086 ME), p.264. See also, Achuthan, C. Krishnan, pp. 71-76 and 244-75.
6. Vivekodayam, January-February 1930 (Makaram 1108 ME).

then employment opportunities.¹ It has already been mentioned that Sree Narayana Guru himself was one of the directors of this company and it was he who inaugurated this Company.² The capital of this company was rupees one lakh.³ After his retirement in 1920, Palpu organized an industrial museum at Trivandrum for the development of cottage and small scale industries.⁴

In 1920, a number of industries were owned by the Ezhavas. Some important industries run by the Ezhavas were the Malabar Produces and Industrials, Malayala Vyavasaya Company, Quilon Thamerakkulam Ottucompany, Malabar Economic Union and Kerala Vyavasaya Company.⁵ The S. N. D. P. Yogam had an intention to bring all Ezhava owned companies under one management as limited Ezhava Company under the supervision of N. Kumeron as its Managing Director.⁶ But this attempt of the Yogam did not materialize due to lack of interest of the concerned people.

1. Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No. 19. See also, Vivekodayam, April-June 1914 (Medam-Edavam 1089 ME), Vol. II, Nos. 1-2, p. 159.

2. Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No. 19.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., File No. 17.

5. Kerala Kaimudi, 6 May 1920, p. 2.

6. Ibid.

Though the S. N. D. P. Yogam did some considerable work for the industrial development of the Ezhava community, it did nothing to organize and to improve the conditions of the peasants and the workers who constituted the majority of the community. The Yogam had toyed with the idea of organizing the Ezhava labourers under the leadership of K. Nyyappan,¹ but it did not arouse any enthusiasm among the leaders.

1. Ibid.

CHAPTER-IV
SOCIAL REFORM

India, during the 19th and 20th centuries witnessed several social and religious reform movements. As religious and social reforms were often inseparable phenomena religious reformers also undertook social reform activities. This simultaneous movements for social and religious reform was mainly because of their belief that unless reforms in the religious sphere were undertaken achievement in the social sphere might be lost.¹ Therefore, nearly all religious reformers contributed to the social reforms also. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen, Debendranath Tagore, Sasipada Bannerjee, Gopal Hari Deshmukh, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Sree Narayana Guru were well known for their social as well as religious reform activities. Emancipation of women, abolition of caste and taboos on sea voyage, eradication of outdated customs and practices, temperance movement etc., were the important tasks undertaken by the reformers.² Generally almost all reformers gave priority to local problems.

The initiative for social reform activities in Travancore was started by Christian missionaries in the beginning of the second half of the 19th century. The abolition of

1. V. Ramakrishnaacharyulu, Social Reform in Andhra (1848-1919), unpublished Ph.D thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi 1977, p.452.

2. For details see Charles H. Heimath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1964.

slavery and the permission to cover the breast of the untouchable women were the most remarkable achievements of the Christian missionaries. Apart from the activities of the Christian missionaries, the fruits of western education helped the emerging middle class to revolt against rigid social conventions and outdated customs and practices.¹

This shows that before Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam, Travancore society was aware of the needs of social reform. But all these awareness, instead of spreading among the masses was restricted to the circle of educated upper class sections of the society. This was mainly because the activities of these reformers were confined to a few individuals, who gave expression to their views in their general and occasional writings, speeches and activities.

By this time Sree Narayana Guru appeared in the arena of socio-religious reform movement by consecrating a Shiva Linga at Aruvippuzha in 1898. After this consecration Sree Narayana Guru earned the reputation of a great inspiring teacher who strove to create an awareness and social consciousness among both the unlettered masses as well as the educated. The social and religious reform ideas of Sree Narayana Guru imbibed all the progressive tendencies which had already appeared on Indian society in the 19th century. Sree Narayana

1. The first movement for the amelioration of social evils in Travancore was started by C. Krishna Pillai and Thanu Pillai, two college educated Nairs. C. V. Kunjuran and other heterodox youth followed the activities of Mr. Krishna Pillai and Thanu Pillai. See, C. Kesavan, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 126-7.

Guru was not a product of western culture and civilization. The western ideas and thought had not the slightest influence in making Narayana Guru what he was. He did not know English at all like Dayananda Saraswati.¹ He was influenced neither by Bengali nor Maharashtra reformers and the interest in reform was his own.² Sree Narayana was much closer in inspiration, character and message to the traditional saints of pre-modern period than to any religious leaders of the modern westernised reform movements. But his active participation in the socio-religious movement in Kerala by the end of 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century gave him the halo of a modern Indian reformer rather than a traditional Hindu Sanyasi.

Apart from Sree Narayana Guru, the western educated Ezhavas who were aware of the social reform movement and for whom advancement of their caste implied adoption of modern social ideals, took very keen interest in social reform activities. They could no longer tolerate irrational and dehumanising social practices. The educated section which represented the S. N. D. P. Yogam under Sree Narayana Guru started a strong movement for social reform in Kerala. The scattered and individual ideas of early reformers were woven

1. Though Dayananda Saraswati was ignorant about English language, western culture and civilization, his ethical ideas, says Heimsoth, were derived to some extent at least from English educated reformers whom he met in Bombay and Bengal.
Heimsoth, op.cit., p.123.

2. As far as Kerala was concerned the activities of Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Aryasamaj etc., had hardly influenced the people and its reformers.

into an organised effort on systematic lines by Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam. Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam gave priority to local problems. While the emancipation of women was the stepping stone of social reform movement all over India, Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam took up issues which seriously affected the Ezhavas and other untouchables.¹ The agenda of their social change were,

1. Though Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam were not against the emancipation of women and extension of equal rights to them, he did not give a pivotal place to this subject is mainly because of two reasons. (1) The social and economic position of Kerala women were comparatively better than that of their counterparts in other parts of India. This better position of Kerala women was due to the practice of matrilineal law of inheritance. In Kerala majority of Hindus and a section of Muslims were followers of matriliney. According to matrilineal law of inheritance, the women had the right to inherit property and did they enjoy right to select and terminate their husbands under the prevailing system of Sambandham. The Pattam Proclamation law and the subsequent land reforms in Travancore, the government Pattam lands as private heritable, saleable and otherwise transferable. This made partition of families possible and thus the control of land by Karanavan was considerably curtailed. This increased the right of women to get their properties partitioned. Therefore, in Kerala, under matriliney, majority of women were both economically and socially independent. At the same time other parts of India women were economically and socially depended on men. This better condition of women caused Sree Narayana Guru to take a subordinate interest to the activities for the emancipation of women. As majority of the Ezhavas were also the followers of matriliney, the S. N. D. P. Yogam also turned their attention to other more grave conditions of the community. (2) The social and economic condition of upper caste women was worse than that of untouchable women (for getting a detailed account about the pathetic condition of Namboodiri women in Kerala, see the article, "Antherjanagoludayam Kuttikaludayam Annathe Sthithi," by Bhavadusen Bhattattiripodu, Mitavadi, June 1916, pp.12-15. See also, V. T. Bhattathiripod, Adukkalayilningum Aranathakku (Drama) Kozhikode, 1957; Kannirum Kinavum, Kottayam, 1970). At the same time majority of women from untouchables and low caste communities were field labourers and earned money along with men, they enjoyed relatively greater freedom of movement and in some respect a better status in the family than the upper class women. When social reformers from all over

propagating the importance of homogeneity within the caste, eradication of out dated and expensive customs and practices like Kettukalyanam, Thirancukuli, Pulikudi etc., amelioration of social evils like consumption of liquor, changes in the law of inheritance from matriliney to patriliney and abolition of casteism and untouchability.

Activities for Making Homogeneity Within the Ezhava Community

Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam did their best to encourage homogeneity within the caste. Harmony between the various sub-castes was an important factor for getting the support of the community as a whole. Therefore, they decided to break the barriers of casteism within the Ezhava society to unite them. At that time the Ezhavas were observing untouchability and unapproachability towards the various sub-castes among them in the same way as they themselves were treated by the sevarnas. The worst feature of all was that there was untouchability even between the Ezhavas and the Thiyyas. The Ezhava families of upper class and higher status had no social relation with the rest.

India tried to improve the conditions of widows, abolition of infant marriage and purdah etc., were mainly related to the upper caste Hindus. See, (Hoimesath, op.cit., p.248.) Therefore, social reformers from untouchable community and social reform organization of low caste communities did not take it as a serious problem. Being a reformer from untouchable community Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam being an organization of the Ezhavas, in lieu of taking this problem mainly concerned with upper caste Hindus, they concentrated their attention on other severe problems of untouchables especially the Ezhavas. V. T. Bhattathiripad and E. M. S. Namboodiripad were the champions of emancipation of women and they took active part to emancipate upper caste women especially Namboodiri women from their miserable plights.

The S. N. D. P. Yogam, first of all tried to bring all the Ezhavas or Thiyyas, without any discrimination of inferior superior status, under one roof. The ideas of unity were spread in initial stages through lectures, vernacular press, local seminars and discussions. The S. N. D. P. Yogam on the one hand did their best to publicise the common grievances of the Ezhava community to the masses and on the other emphasised the importance of unifying of the community to redress their grievances. Sree Narayana Guru was the champion of their crusade against caste feeling. He called upon people to destroy caste and to become socially one.¹ In a message given to all Kerala Conference of the Sahodhara Sangam - the Brotherhood Association of Sri K. Ayyappan - which was held at Alwaye in 1921, Swami asked, "whatever be the religion, customs, language etc., of men, since their caste is the same there is no harm in inter-marriage and inter-dinning."² For creating a feeling of oneness among the Ezhavas, the S. N. D. P. Yogam had decided to adopt a common name in lieu of different names like the Ezhavas, the Thiyyas, the Chovans etc. Therefore, in 1923, at the 20th annual meeting of the Yogam a resolution was passed to use the name Thiyya for all sections of the Ezhavas in Kerala and asked the government not to mention the name Ezhava and requested the use of the name

1. See, The Kerala Komudi, 2 June 1921, p.2.

2. Ibid., 2 June 1921, p.2.

Thiyyas in all government records and documents.¹ This idea of adopting the name Thiyyas was due to various reasons. The caste stratification in the Ezhava community was against the large interest of the community. The various subcastes objected any sort of understanding or unity among the members of the community as a whole.² To build up a united force of the community by dissolving the sub-castes and identifying themselves with other sections of the community in the rung the leaders of the movement thought of changing the title of their community itself. That was why this idea found expression at the 20th annual meeting of the Yogan to adopt the name, Thiyya in lieu of 'Ezhava.' Secondly, a group of Ezhavas believed that Ceylon was their original home and the Ezhavas had migrated from Ceylon, which was otherwise called Ezhavam.³ This theory of Ceylonee origin was not palatable to some leaders like C. V. Kunjuran,⁴ who wanted to establish that they were the aborigines of Kerala. They naturally disliked to be called as Ezhavar, derived from the word 'Ezham'. Finally, to the pro-changers the name Thiyyas appealed to be a more suitable alternative, since the Thiyyas of Malabar occupied important positions in the government

1. Ibid., 24 May 1923, p.3.

But many of the Ezhavas did not like this change and they protested against it. See, Kerala Kavudi, 14 June 1923, p.1.

2. K. R. Achutan, C. Krichnan (Malayalam), Biography, Kottayam, 1971, p.48.

3. Dr. Palpu was the prominent among them. For details see Chapter II.

4. Ibid., for details.

service and were comparatively economically well off than the Ezhavas of Cochin and Travancore. But this attempt to adopt the name Thiyyas did not materialise due to the opposition of a section of the Ezhavas in Travancore.¹ Even if the S. N. D. P. Yogam tried its best for unity within the Ezhavas, they could not uproot the caste feelings among its own following. The sad experience of a person like Kumaran Asan, who was not only a great poet of modern Kerala but also the General Secretary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam for more than 16 years since its establishment, of being subjected to humiliating treatment by some of the members of his community belonging to the sub-castes, considered superior to the one to which he belonged, is sufficient to indicate that the S. N. D. P. Yogam could not bring about harmony among the sub-castes.² Though the S. N. D. P. did not succeed in eradicating the sectarian feeling among the Ezhavas as a result of their activities the

1. Kerala Kavandi, 14 June, 1923, p.1.

2. Kumaran Asan and Chevrukettu P.M. Kunchu Sankaran Vaidhyar were very close friends from the time of their boyhood. The marriage of the latter's elder daughter was celebrated with very grandeur in 1919. Asan was also invited for the marriage. The bridegroom was rich college educated boy hailing from Kaikkara the native place of Kumaran Asan. On the day of marriage when Asan reached on the gate of his friend's house, latter approached Asan and very sadly informed that if he was participating the marriage, the bridegroom and his party would leave the place before marriage. The reason for this threat was that the bridegroom and his party were belonged to the upper caste section of the Ezhavas, they would not interdine with Kumaran Asan, who belonged to a low caste section of the Ezhavas. Standing outside the gate Asan conveyed his blessings and wishes and left the place. See, K. Surendran, Kumaran Asan (Literary Biography), Kottayam (3rd edition), 1971 pp.233-4.

Travancore Ezhavas recorded themselves as a single caste for the 1931 census as against 22 sub-divisions in 1891.¹ As regards social advancement, the Yogam did not recognize the differences of sect or class within the community.²

Modification of Temples and Worship

Sree Narayana Guru and the Yogam turned their reform activities for ameliorating the primitive form of worship - animal sacrifice, worship with the offering of blood of cocks and toddy and singing of obscene songs. The religious worship of the Ezhavas was a mixture of traditional Hinduism with animism and every other kind of primitive ideas.³ The Ezhavas being the non-caste Hindus, they were forbidden to worship the higher Gods and Goddess^{es} of Sanskrit tradition like Vishnu, Shiva etc. They had only the right to worship Gods and Goddesses of lesser status like Paycoil, Ammancoil, Kuttichhathan, Shodalamadan, Eboothathan, Mari Amman, Vankaramadan, Bhadrakali etc.⁴ The deity they worshipped usually was Bhadrakali, a female demon described as a mixture of mischief and cruelty. Bloody sacrifices and offerings and devil-dancing were the essential items of the ceremonies of the demon

1. Census of India 1941, Travancore, Part I, Trivandrum, 1942, p.131.

2. Vivekodayam, April-June 1909 (Medam Edavam 1084 ME), Nos. 1 & 2, p.22.

3. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, op.cit., Vol.III, p.442.

4. Census of Travancore 1876, p.162. Thiruvananthapuram, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.406-9. See also, Major Samuel, Travancore and Its People, London 1871, p.194. Anantha Krishna Iyyer, op.cit., Vol.I, p.310.

worshippers. The same way, the Kodugnallur Bhagavati was a very popular deity among the Ezhavas. For pleasing this Goddess they used to sing obscene songs¹ and worshipped with the offerings of fowl sacrifice called kozhivettu. Actually educated Ezhavas did not like these sorts of uncultured practices. In the first annual meeting of the Yogam Palpu said, "Whatever be the prosperity of a society in other walks of life, if it is practiced with cruel and dishonest appeal and civility no doubt that it is very wicked and ignorant."² Sree Narayana Guru not only consecrated the Gods of upper caste Hindus in the Ezhava Pantheon but also removed old evil deities from the Ezhava temples. In 1915 the Sree removed the evil deities like Yakshi, Madanpeedam, Bhoothathan, Chodalanadan, Ezhokathi Peedam, Mollenkam Koli Peedam, Karuppan, Erulan etc., from the Kottattu Arumukhon Pillayar Koil and the temples in the nearby streets.³ The Sree not only removed these deities from the Ezhava temples but also discarded them from the Ezhava houses. At that time, most of the well to do Ezhava houses had their own temples in which they installed evil

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1. During the time of Kodugnallur Ezhavani, the pilgrims from all over Kerala are going to the temples. On their way they sing Ezhavani nattus (songs). The peculiarity of these songs is that these verses centred round theme of male and female sex organs, copulation and masturbation. Even now this system is being continued.
 2. Vivekodayam, 15 July 1904 (32 Mithunam 1079 ME), Vol. I, No. 2.
 3. Twenty one deities were thus removed. See, Vivekodayam, January 1915 (Makaram 1090 ME), Vol. II, No. 10, p. 354.

deities like Chathan, Chamundi, Kandaran, Madan etc.¹ Swami removed these deities from the Ezhava houses.² Yet these sorts of practices continued in the society. Therefore, the Yogam issued a notice and distributed it among the Ezhavas for stopping the worship of evil deities and animal sacrifices. The 12th annual meeting of the Yogam which was held at Trivandrum in May 1915, passed a resolution to discard these forms of primitive worship and requested the Government to issue order to stop animal sacrifices which was practiced in certain temples in Travancore.³ There were also other individuals and associations fighting these practices. Prominent among them were A. Ayyappan and Haripped Madhavan who founded Sahodhara Sangam and Sree Narayana Karunavilasini Yogam respectively came into being. Sahodharan Ayyappan severely attacked the practice of obscene songs and offerings of fowl sacrifices in the Kodungallur Temple. The same way Harippadu Madhavan did his best to stop the singing of obscene songs and animal sacrifices in the Kolattupuzha Bhagavati temple at Karungappally.⁴

1. Pazhambally Achuthan, "Guruvinte Karmapapadhathy," S.N.D.P. Yogam Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, 1978, p.57.

2. K. Damodaran, Sree Narayana Guru, p.63. See also, P.K. Gopalakrishnan, Samudhaya Pariskarana Prasthanangal Kerala Charitram, Vol.I, p.1208.

3. Vivekodayam, April-May 1915 (Medam 1090 ME), Vol.XII, No.1, p.21.

4. M. S. A. Rao, op.cit., p.55.

As a consequence of these religious reform activities of Narayana Guru and the Yogan, the Ezhavas slowly began to give up their traditional system of worship. Then they started the worship of Shiva, Subramanya and Ganapathy; most of the Ezhavas later became the worshippers of Shiva.¹ According to Padmanabha Menon, "They are more saivite than vaishnavite but they do not eschew the worship of Vishnu altogether."² The passion for worship of Shiva might have been induced by the belief that Shiva is a God of Dravidian origin and the lack of interest to Vishnu and Brahma might have been due to their belief that these Gods were the product of Aryanisation in India. From 1888 to 1927 Shree Narayana Guru consecrated 64 temples all over Kerala. These temples were not only parallel to the temples of the caste Hindus but also existed as a challenge to the Brahmin hegemony in Kerala. The priests of these temples were selected from the community and they were generally known as Ezhavatti.³

Abolition of Superstitions, Customs and Practices

The other important work of the Yogan along with its religious reform activities was its crusade to liberate the unlettered untouchables from the grip of superstitious customs

1. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyyer, op.cit., Vol.I, p.310.

2. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, op.cit., Vol.I, p.443.

3. Ezhavatti was a sub-caste which functioned both as barbers and priests of the Ezhavas. See, Census of India 1901, Travancore Report, p.280. According to Dr. A. Ayyappan, Ezhavatti functioned in the capacity of quasi-priests at all important rites in connection with birth initiation and death. See, Ayyappan, Travancore and Culture Change, Madras Government Museum Bulletin, 1943, p.58.

and practices. The Yogam with the help and support of the Guru sought to effect a social change aimed at the eradication of senseless and meaningless social customs and practices like Ithalikettu Kalyanam, Thirandukuli and Pulikudi and the introduction of a new system of marriage among the Ezhavas. By this time almost all marumakkathayam or matri-lineal communities in Kerala celebrated the above mentioned customs in all pomp to show off the status of their Itharavada. Though the educated Nayar middle class had started a campaign against such practices in their community and the heterodox Ezhava youths like C. V. Kunjuraman and others got inspiration from them,¹ it had not found enthusiastic response among the Ezhavas. It was with the initiative taken by Narayana Guru and the Yogam and the enthusiasm of C. V. Kunjuraman this movement soon found a new vitality and strength.

It was customary to perform the Ithalikettu Kalyanam for girls even before they attained puberty. It was considered a dishonour to the families, if a girl were to attain puberty before the thalikettu kalyanam.² According to the famous jurist T. Muthuswamy Aiyer, "As a religious ceremony the kettu kalyanam is intended to give the girl a marriageable status."³ The ceremony was as follows: Generally all girls

1. C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 126-8.

2. P. K. Gopalakrishnan, "Ezhavar," Kerala Charitram, Vol. 1, p. 985.

3. Quoted in Census of India, Travancore, 1901, Part I, p. 328.

below the age of 12 in a Iharavad (joint family) with various Thavazhis (lineages) were seated from south to north¹ in decorated Pontal. Either a single boy or group of boys were then brought to the place in a procession who would tie the thali (chain) round their necks as in real marriage. The bridegrooms were escorted to the girls' houses either on an elephant or on a horse according to the status and dignity of the families.² This ceremony usually lasted four days. At the end of the four day festivities, the bridegroom should surrender his coronial robes and depart after obtaining his fixed fee.³ These boys, however, had no marital right over their young brides.⁴ In some places, there was a custom to tear up a cloth, called the kachcha, on the fourth day of the ceremony, as a symbol that the marriage had been dissolved.⁵

1. The sitting arrangement from south to north was an indication of the status of the girls. Those who were having less status (economic) in the family would be seated in the North.

Vivekodayam, 15 November 1905 (30 Thulam, 1080 ME), Vol. I, No. 4, pp. 73-74.

2. Loc.cit.

3. "As a rule, the person who tied the tali was paid a small sum, generally 25 Travancore fanam equal to Rs. 3.50 together with expenses incurred by him in connection with the ceremony.

Census of India, Travancore 1901, Report, p.280.

4. Ibid., pp.411-3.

5. Ibid., p.328.

The thirundukuli was the ceremonial bath performed after a girl had attained her first menstruation. This expensive ceremony also lasting for four days ending in a procession leading the girl to a tank or river for bath. The real marriage generally known as "mangalam" or "kalyanam" was another custom which was sought to be changed by Narayana Guru and the Yogan. At that time the consent of either the boy or the girl was not necessary for their marriage, the decision of the Karanavan being binding. During the time of marriage even the presence of the bridegroom was not necessary and in lieu of the bridegroom his sister would give the bride cloths¹ and then bride was taken to her husband's house.² The "gift of cloth" was usually to be presented in dark rooms of the house and in this darkness, it is said that the impersonation was very common and wrong girls were given the garments. Another feature of their marriage was that the existence of polygamy and polyandry. The practice of two or more brothers of the family marrying one woman was very common in central Travancore, northern side of the Cochin State and some parts of Malabar.³

Another prevalent custom was the Pulikudi which was performed in the seventh month of the first pregnancy of a

1. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.214.

2. After the marriage the bride was taken to the house of the bridegroom and installed as a member of his family. This was usually known as kudivaippu.
Edgar Thurston, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.413-5.

3. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyyer, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.263-95.

woman.¹ This was a ceremonial drinking of a juice prepared by mixing seven different ingredients of sour taste.

All these customs and festivities lasted four days with elaborate preparations involving huge expenditure. Though these customs did not have any social, moral or religious significance, it was very common among the Ezhavas and they spent a good portion of their income for these festivities and thus a number of families were impoverished. The pomp and prestige of the family were measured on the basis of the grandure of the functions. Therefore, generally, a number of families acting under a false sense of prestige even went to the extent of selling their properties to celebrate these customs.² A number of families were ruined due to this senseless and meaningless prestige. Every system has a rationale within the structure in which it came into being. It becomes out dated and baseless only when structural changes take place. These practices were looked down by the Swami and educated middle class.³ C.V. Kunjuranon's descriptions are illustrative. He ridiculed the Thirandukuli as a declaration that, "the ground is ready for sowing the seeds,"⁴ and commended the "Pulikudi" as a function to prove that the

1. Edgar Thurston, op.cit., Vol.II, p.416.

2. Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p.

3. Vivekodayam, 15 July 1904 (32 Mithunam, 1079 ME), p.30.

4. C. Kesavan, op.cit., p.134.

pregnancy is not illegitimate and to declare that her husband himself is responsible for the pregnancy.¹

Both the Swamy and educated Ezhavas had started a movement against these senseless and expensive customs. These social reform activities of Sree Narayana Guru and the Ezhava youths was with the object of both economic and social progress.² In the first report of the Yogam, Kumaran Asan wrote that the important aim of abolishing these customs was to prevent people from wasting money on illutionary pomp and prestige of the family by conducting grand feasts.³ Both the Guru and the Yogam told the people that unless these rituals were scrapped there will be no progress for the Ezhavas. They asked them to spend their money for the progress of the society and not for celebrating these absurd customs.⁴ The second reason was to protect the dignity of the community by repudiating these customs and to purify the society itself from its out dated and decadent practices. In short, the Yogam introduced social reforms with twin objectives; first to avoid extravagant spending of money for these superstitious and retrograde customs and secondly to remove the absurd customs and practices.⁵

1. Ibid., p.137.

2. P.K. Bolakrishnan, Narayana Guru, p. 75.

3. Vivekodayam, 15 July 1904 (32 Mithunam 1079 ME), Vol.I, No.2, p.28.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

Sree Narayana Guru very strongly opposed these customs and his messages against practicing these customs were propagated through the S. N. D. P. Yogam and its official organ Vivekodayam. In 1908 and 1911 Swami sent two messages to the Ezhavas in which he pointed out the waste of money in celebrating these customs.¹ The Yogam was of the view that their community was more influenced by ostentation than necessity.² In an Ezhava conference at Karthikappally in 1904 C. V. Kunjuranen very strongly criticised the evils perpetrated by these bad norms of social behaviour. According to him kettu kalyanam was an introduction to married life and an indication that they could change their husbands, if they did not like them.³ When all the activities of the educated Ezhavas did not make an impact on the traditional faith of the Ezhavas, in 1904, Sree Narayana Guru summoned a Ezhava conference at Paravoor in Quilon. The Guru himself presided over the function and advised the Ezhavas to stop those evil practices like Thalikettu, Thirandukuli and Pulikudy and he also evolved a new liturgy for the marriage ceremony.⁴ With the idea of avoiding the impersonation the Guru advised people to hold marriage ceremonies as far as possible either in the temples or on the open courtyard of the house in the presence

1. P.K. Balakrishnan, op.cit., p. 75.

2. Vivekodayam, 15 November 1904 (30 Thulam 1080 ME), Vol. I, No. 4, p. 72.

3. Ibid.

4. M.K. Ganoor, Narayana Guru Swamy, p. 210.

of a temple priest¹ and other elders of the village.² In order to spread this new ideas of social reform Swamy asked the Yogam to appoint a group of lecturers. In 1905 Swamy sent a message to the S. N. D. P. Yogam to clarify the topic on which they were to speak during their lecture tour. The subjects for these lectures were religion, morality, education and industry.³ These speakers undertook extensive tours for delivering speeches. In addition they published articles and distributed pamphlets to educate the general public.

But all these social reform activities of Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam were confined mainly to a section of the society. It is interesting to know that the section of society participated in these movements were educated youths, teachers, lawyers, Ayurvedic doctors and Government officials. In northern and central Travancore middle peasants and petty traders also took part in this movement. The reformers lacked the support of the masses as their ideas and programmes never went beyond the reach of the middle class. At the same time, as a result of the limited spread of education and extremely limited social mobility and above all due to the old feudal relation that continued to prevail, the rich peasants, big traders and even a section of educated people not only kept away from

1. Vivekodayam, 15 July 1904 (32 Mithunam, 1079 ME), pp.40-41.

2. Daniel Thomas, op.cit., p.32.

3. Vivekodayam, 12 May 1905 (30 Medam, 1080 ME), p.14.

this movement but also practiced these retrograde customs. This naturally annoyed the Guru. Then M. Govindan, a prominent leader of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, decided to arrange the Talikettu Kalyanam of his daughter. Narayana Guru himself wrote a letter asking him to stop it.¹ Swami himself intervened to prevent these kinds of customs in the rich Ezhava families more than once in Travancore.² Though a movement against these practices was wide spread a number of families still cherished these customs and practices. In 1908 Swami sent a message to the S. N. D. P. Yogam in which he said, "The functions like Thirandukuli and Pulikudi have almost ceased to be expensive. Advice regarding the stopping of Talikettu is no doubt, getting accepted, but the message has not created the same impact in all places. This practice should be stopped completely as early as possible. It is unprincipled and unnecessary/...../"³ Abolition and removal of these customs had been a regular resolution in the S. N. D. P. annual meetings.⁴ Besides the disapproval of these customs,

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1. On 8 May 1912 (26 Medam 1087 ME), Swami wrote a letter to the Nellenam Muttathara Theyarvillakathu House about the activities of person like M. Govindan in a critical manner. Vivekodayan, April-June 1913 (Medam-Edavam 1087 ME), Vol.6 Nos.1-2, p.1.
 2. Guru directly stopped the kettu kalyanam ceremonies in Kunnuvilla House in Trivandrum (Vivekodayan, June-July 1904 (Mithunam 1079 ME), Vol.1, No.3, p.40) and in the house of Cochchamini in Pottah (Vivekodayan, August-September 1904 (Chingam 1080 ME), Vol.1, No.3). See also, S. N. D. P. Charitram, p.129.
 3. Vivekodayan, April June 1909 (Medam-Edavam, 1084 ME), Vol.6, Nos.1-2, p.1.
 4. Vivekodayan, April-June 1916 (Medam-Edavam, 1091 ME), Vol.XIII, Nos. 1-2, p.14.

the Swamy also stood for a reform in the marriage system¹ and advised that polyandry and polygamy practiced by the Ezhavas be given up. He asked the Yogam to take steps against polygamy and polyandry.² He also criticised early marriages. The meetings of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, local associations and the womens conference of the Yogam sporadically passed resolutions supporting the need of ending these systems for ever.

As a consequence of the influence of Swamy and the consistent work of the S. N. D. P. those practices were considerably reduced. The lecture tour of social reformers appointed by the Yogam had succeeded to a large extent in revolutionising the social set up of the Ezhavas. Swamy Sathyvridhan says:

Thus according to the activities of Swamy and the S. N. D. P. Yogam, talikettu and other ceremonies were abandoned and thus within a period of 20 years since the beginning of the present century, the Thiyyas had effected a saving of ten crores of rupees from its unnecessary expense.³

In short in the direction of social reforms, the work and achievement of Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam were noteworthy. The Guru's magnetic personality and spiritual qualities on the one side, and the consistent work of the

1. He asked to tie a tali around the neck of the wife to indicate the marital status. But asked widows and the divorcees at the time of her remarriage should not wear anything in memory of her deceased or divorced husband. Therefore, a woman who gets married again should not wear either during her subsequent marriage or thereafter the tali used at the time of the early marriage.
Vivekodayam, April-June 1909 (Medam-Edavam, 1084 ME), Vol.6, Nos.1-2, p.1.

2. Ibid.

3. M. K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.282.

S. N. D. P. Yogan under Ezhava middle class on the other, helped considerably to reduce outdated and absurd customs which had become a heavy financial burden in all families.

The Movement for Changing the Law of Inheritance

Another important social reform activity of the S. N. D. P. Yogan was its effort to change the system of inheritance and succession rights. There were uniform system of law of inheritance among the Ezhavas of Travancore. As a matter of fact, they followed three distinct types of law of inheritance viz., marumakkathayam, or matriliney, makkathayam or patriliney and misradayam or mixed system of both marumakkathayam and makkathayam. According to marumakkathayam inheritance and succession was through the mother's side. In other words marumakkathayam - a system of inheritance and descent through the female line - a man's legal heirs were the children of his sisters'. The paternal property was never given to the children and wife.¹ Under misradayam system of inheritance both the children and anandaravas (younger male members of the family) inherited an equal share of the assets of the deceased.² In Travancore majority of the Ezhavas were the followers of matriliney. There were about sixty per cent marumakkathayam and thirty per cent misradayam. Generally

1. Census of India Travancore Report, Part I, p.279.

2. Proceedings of the 12th Session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1916, p.43.

matriliny was mainly followed by the Ezhavas in all taluks of the North of Quilon, patriliney in the extreme south and the micradayam mainly in Noyattinkara taluk.¹

By the beginning of the present century Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam started a movement for changing their law of inheritance. The various factors like the new economic changes in the society, new means for independent income for the junior members of the family, overwhelming influence of the karanavan over the anandhiravas new ideological and cultural perspectives acquired by the educated middle class and finally the Nayar Regulation of 1912 urged the Ezhavas for demanding a change in their law of inheritance.

In the second chapter we discussed the influence of factors like the development of public works department, penetration of British capital which led to the development of plantation industries, introduction of laws patterned on the western concept of private property in land, the demand for coconut articles from abroad and the demand for the manual labour in Ceylon and Burma inspiring the way for economic changes among the Ezhavas. A number of Ezhavas were appointed under the British Indian Government and a number of Ezhavas were accommodated in plantation industries, public works

1. Ibid. See also, Edgar Thurston, Caste and Tribes of South India, Vol. II, reprint in 1965, U.S.A., p.410.

departments and forest department. In addition to that the increased prices of coconut products like coir, copra oil, toddy etc., also contributed towards economic changes favourable to the Ezhavas. These opportunities provided by British colonialism, indeed, helped junior members of the Ezhava families to have an independent income for themselves. But under matriliney the wealth acquired from any source by either the males or the females of a taravad was considered as joint property which was under the management of karanavan. Being the manager of the taravad property the karanavan not only controlled the income but also used the excess money from the taravad properties for satisfying his own needs or that of his wife and children. At the same time other members of the family did not get equal share. Instead of equally sharing the income from the taravad properties, the junior members of the family were only entitled to their basic needs like food, clothing and oil from the taravad. The spread of education and the increase in social mobility considerably changed their world view and concept of life. The needs of junior members of the family "considerably increased due to changes in the social climate and in the nature of the internal market, and they soon perceived the disparity between what was due to them and what was actually received by them."¹ The dissatisfaction

1. K. N. Panikkar, "Land Control, Ideology and Reform: A Study of the Changes in Family Organization and Marriage System in Kerala," The Indian Historical Review, Vol. IV, No. I, July 1977, p. 40.

with the management of the karanavan, naturally, created dissension within the taravad. Apart from his attitude to help his wife and children, the karanavan actually failed to treat all the members of the taravad on equal terms. At that time, there was a tendency among the well to do families to send their children to English schools with the aim of getting appointment in government service. Though the taravads were economically not so bad, they could not afford school fee for all male members on equal terms. Therefore, the karanavan was more keen to help and educate his direct nephews and the nephews of other thavazhis (lineages) were kept as agriculturists and servants of the taravada. The increasing importance of education and the biased attitude of the karanavan created a dissension within the taravad and naturally infused in them an eagerness to break away from matriliney.

Another interesting feature was that the adults did not have the power of disposing of their self acquired property by will and if he died intestate his wife and children were not entitled to get anything from his property. The existence of the taravad and the joint management of property were no more to the advantage of junior members. The father had little responsibility to their children and these children lived as bull calf under the autocracy of the karanavan.¹ This pathetic condition of the wives and

1. O. Chandu Menon, in his preface to his famous social novel Indulokha describes the autocracy of the karanavan and the miserable condition of junior members. This description of Chandu Menon in regard to the Nayar taravads also

children under matriliney enforced Sree Narayana Guru and the educated Ezhavas for changing their law of inheritance. On 10th May 1909 Sree Narayana Guru sent a message to the S. N. D. P. Yogam in which he asked the Ezhavas:

Where marumakkathayam system is followed in the community, legal provision should be made to give to the wedded wife and children the right to a portion of a man's individual earnings. Otherwise marriage would be meaningless. Necessary steps in this direction, should be taken after careful consideration.

The change in the attitude of the Ezhava elites and the persuasion from Sree Narayana Guru undermined the cohesion and unity of matrilineal joint families.

Another factor which induced the Ezhavas for changing their law of inheritance was the 'unjust' share the women had in the taravad property. According to matriliney, inheritance and succession was through the mother and all the children (each son and daughter) of the daughters had the right to matrilineal property, whereas the children of the sons be they male or female had no such rights.²

applicable to all communities which followed matrilineal law of inheritance.

O Chandu Menon, Indulekha (10th edition) N. B. S. Kottayam, 1971, pp. 31-32. See also, Editorial of Vivekodayam, December 1912, February 1913, (Dhenu-Makarom 1088 ME), Vol. 9, Nos. 9-10.

1. A message dated 10th May 1909 (28 Medam 1084 ME) sent to the S. N. D. P. Yogam by Sree Narayana Guru. Vivekodayam, April-June 1909 (1084 Medam-Edavam), Vol. 6, Nos. 1-2, p. 2.
2. Murkoth Kunhappa, "The Thiyyas of Kerala," souvenir Indian History Congress, 1976, Calicut, p. 49.

Therefore, during the time of partition the major portion of the properties went to sisters and their children. This was one of the reasons which prompted the Ezhavas to change their law of inheritance.

Under matriliney, marriage were not recognized by law. Both the male and female fulfilled the sexual needs of each other without any obligation on their part. Though the marriage system of the Ezhavas were not so loose as the system of sambandham of the Nayers, the practice of polyandry was very common among the Ezhavas and either the man or women could end a liasion virtually at will. The educated Ezhavas The educated Ezhavas were ashamed of their loose marital practices. Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam took steps against polygamy and polyandry.¹

The other reason which induced the Ezhavas for changing their law of inheritance was their intention of uniting the Ezhavas. As they were the followers of three distinct type of inheritance, it had considerably reduced the feeling of oneness among the Ezhavas. There were a number of restrictions for marital relations with these different groups. Therefore, they thought that a common law of inheritance would help to unite them together² and to eradicate caste distinction among the Ezhavas.

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1. Vivekodayam, April-June 1909 (Medam-Edavam 1084 ME), Vol.6, Nos.1-2, p.1.
 2. Vivekodayam, December-January 1912-13 (Dhanu-Makararam 1088 ME), p.311.

The immediate cause which induced the Ezhavas to change the law of inheritance was concerned with the Nayar Regulation of 1912. From the last quarter of the 19th century onwards, the Nayar elites of Malabar¹ and Travancore started a movement for changing their law of inheritance and for getting legal validity to sambandham. In 1887 the Malayali Sabha, an organization of Travancore Nayars, circulated a draft of marriage bill among the Nayars. But

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1. In 1879, the Malabar Marriage Association was founded and this Association drafted and presented a bill to the government seeking legal sanction for the Nair marriages. But government did not take it seriously. Mr. William Logan, the then Malabar Collector in his report on the tenancy problem pressed the need of changing the marriage and the law of inheritance among the Nayars. Due to the impact of Logan's recommendation, Madras Government constituted a committee of 4 members to investigate the legal recognition of Nayar Marriages. The committee unanimously recommended the enactment of a marriage and succession law. In 1890 Sir C. Sankaran Nair, a member of Madras Legislative Council introduced a bill to permit the Nayars in the British India to register their sambandham. This would make the sambandham legally binding and enable the Nayars to dispose a part of their self acquired property to their wives and children. Instead of sanctioning this bill, Government of India asked Madras Government to collect more details on this subject. Thus the Malabar Marriage Commission was appointed in 1891 with T. Muthuswamy Aiyar as its president. This commission published its report by the end of 1891. But the Government had to wait till 1896 to pass the Malabar Marriage Bill. This Bill made sambandham a legal marriage, entitled a man to make over his self acquired property to his wife and children if he died intestate. But all these rules applicable to those who registered their sambandham with the government. Legislative Department Proceedings, Judicial Proceedings, Malabar Marriage Commission Report 1891 and Madras Native News Paper Reports. For details see, K. N. Panikkar, op.cit., pp. 39-45. The Malabar Marriage Bill actually inspired the Ezhavas to change their law of inheritance. See, Vivekodayam, November-December 1905 (Vrischikam 1081), Vol. 2, No. 8, pp. 1-2.

the government of Travancore did not take this movement seriously. In 1896 Thenu Pillai introduced a bill in the Travancore Legislative Council to provide legal recognition for all marriages solemnised by the presentation of cloth or some other recognised ceremony. But this bill did not undertake to change the system of inheritance. So when a man died his taravad and his nephews remained the rightful heirs of his personal property. The Travancore Bill Act of 1899 provided marginal reform to Nayers. This act conferred on marumakkathayis the right to bequeath up to one half of their self acquired property to their wives and children. The Nayers were not satisfied with this reform and continued their attempts. In 1907 the Nayers under the Kerala Nayar Samajam started a movement to reform their marriage customs and law of inheritance. In the same year, in the second annual meeting of the Kerala Nayar Samajam, P.G. Govinda Pillai introduced a resolution which advocated three things: (1) giving children a legal claim for maintenance from their father; (2) making a man's self acquired property heritable only by descendants of that branch of his taravad originating from his mother; (3) allotting half of a man's self acquired property to his wife and children on his death. Another resolution which was passed in the same meeting demanded recognition of the ceremony of sambandham as a legal marriage. As a result of their consistent demand, P. Rajagopalachari the then Dewan of Travancore appointed a

committee in 1907 to investigate and report on reforms which proposed by the Nayar elites regarding marriage, inheritance, custom, partition of taravad etc. of the joint families of Nayars.¹ This committee, after thorough investigation submitted its report in 1908. This report recommended the recognition of sambandham as legal marriage, maintenance of accounts by the karanevan, the grant to wives and children of a half share of the self acquired property of man dying intestate, the right of any tavashi to demand partition.² This report with some modification was accepted by the government and the Regulation of 1088 (ME) was passed in 1912. Thus this Regulation of 1088 (ME) (1912 A. D.) recognized sambandham as a legal marriage and gave wives and children of the Nayars dying intestate the right to half of the husband's self acquired property by making a will. The powers of karanevans were limited, simple procedures for divorce were laid down and caste distinction among the Nayars were theoretically ignored.³

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1. The important suggestions for reform were the recognition of sambandham as a legal marriage, statutory control over the power of karanevans and the rights to bequeath all of one's self acquired property to arrange partition of distantly related branches of taravads and to claim a share for wives and children from the self acquired property of a man dying intestate.
Report of the Morumakkathayam Committee, Travancore, Trivandrum, Government Press, 1908, p.1.
 2. Ibid., pp.1-70.
 3. Regulation I of 1088, Regulation and Proclamation of Travancore, Vol.V, p.820.

The Nayar Regulation as a rule, opened the eyes of the Ezhava elites.¹ Certain provisions of the Nayar Regulation devalued were very attractive to the Ezhavas.² As the law of inheritance and social customs and practices of the Ezhavas of Central Travancore, who followed matrilineal system had little difference from the customs and practices of the Nayers,³ the Ezhavas thought that a regulation like the Nayar Regulation with slight changes⁴ could help the Ezhavas to improve their social and economic condition.⁵ Though the Ezhavas were not wholly the followers of marmakkethiyam as the Nayers, about 60 per cent among them being the followers of matriliney, the educated Ezhavas took initiative for a strong movement to modify the system of inheritance and succession.

As soon as the Nayar Regulation was passed, the Ezhava elites organized meetings and discussions regarding the change of law of inheritance among them. Vivekodayam and Kerala Kumudi published articles and suggestions relating to this topic.⁶ In 1912 Shri Kumaran Asan

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1. Vivekodayam, December 1912 and January 1913 (Dhanu-Makaram 1088 ME), Vol. IX, Nos. 9-10, pp. 296, 311.
 2. C. G. Madhavan, "Ezhevarum Nayar Regulationum," Vivekodayam, December 1912 and January 1913 (Dhanu-Makaram 1088 ME), Vol. IX, Nos. 9-10, pp. 295-6.
 3. "Editorial," Ibid., p. 311.
 4. Ibid., November-December 1912 (Vrischikam 1088 ME), p. 258. Ibid., June-August 1914 (Mithunam-Karkkadukam 1089 ME), Vol. 11, Nos. 3 and 4, p. 130.
 5. Ibid., December 1912, January 1913 (Dhanu-Makaram 1088 ME) p. 311.
 6. Vivekodayam, November-December 1912 (Vrischikam 1088 ME), Vol. 9, No. 8, p. 258.

published an appeal in Vivekodayam to invite the attention of Ezhava leaders and to know their opinion for the need of an Ezhava Regulation among the margamakkathayam thavezhis.¹ In 1913, at the 9th session of the Shri Mulan Popular Assembly K.M. Krishnan, K.C. Krishnan, P. Kesavan Vaidhyan, R. Padmanabhan and N. Kumaran, the Ezhava representatives of the Assembly submitted a memorandum to the Dewan on 14th February 1913 (3rd Kumbam 1088 ME) for granting them a common law of inheritance to protect them from internal quarrels and bickerings and unnecessary litigations due to the absence of a law to regulate the law of inheritance of the Ezhavas.² From this year onwards the demand for "Ezhava Regulation" became a regular one in the Assembly. Ultimately in March 1916 the Government of Travancore appointed a committee of five members including the president, two official and two non-official members³ to frame a draft bill for regulating the law of inheritance and marriage among the Ezhavas.⁴ U. Subba Iyer, an Additional Head Sirkar Vakil, was appointed the President of this committee, with

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1. Vivekodayam, November-December 1912 (Vrischikom 1088 ME), Vol.9, No.8, p.258.
 2. In this memorandum, there is no arguments for changing their inheritance. This memorandum was nothing but a request. See, Vivekodayam, February-April 1912 (Kumbam-Meenam 1088 ME), Vol.IX, Nos. 11-12, pp.350-51.
 3. M. Govindan and S. Padmanabha Panikkar were the official members and N.Kumaran and N.Kumaran Asan were non-official members. See, Vivekodayam, March-April 1916 (Meenam 1091 ME), Vol.XII, Nos.12, p.403.
 4. Ibid., pp.402-3. See also, G. O. No. J-2808, dated 19 March 1916.

M. Govindan, S. Padmanabha Panicker, N. Kumaran and N. Kumaran Ajan as members.¹ In June of the same year two more non-official members were appointed to serve on the committee.² With this addition of two more members this committee represented the whole Ezhava community which followed three distinct types of law of inheritance.³

In February 1917 this committee suggested that they should be empowered to enquire into the question of partition and that the draft bill should contain a provision regarding testamentary deposition.⁴ The Ezhava members of the Assembly supported this suggestion at the 13th Session of the Assembly. Therefore, the government constituted another committee with P. N. Boothalingam Iyer as President and M. Govindan, N. Kumaran, N. Kumaran Ajan, K. M. Krishnan, V. Kochunni Vaidhyan and K. C. Kunjuranan as members.⁵ On first January 1919, the committee submitted both its report and draft bill after a thorough study about the existing conditions and tendency among the Ezhavas following marumakkathayan and the mixed system of inheritance, the committee recommended that the marumakkathayan Ezhavas and the Ezhava converts to other

1. Vivakodayam, March-April 1916, pp. 402-3. See also, G. O. No. J-5184, dated 21st June 1916.

2. G. O. No. J-5184, dated 21st June 1916.

3. When this committee was constituted in March 1916, it was represented only by the members those who followed mixed system of inheritance and marumakkathayan system. By adding two more non-official members from Kottayam area, the followers of makkathayan system also got representation. See, P. K. K. Menon, The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol. III (1885-1938), p. 468. Foot note No. 23.

4. Ibid., p. 169.

5. G. O. No. J-2235, dated 6th March 1918.

religion in the state should be excluded from the operation of the proposed legislation.¹ The important recommendations of the committee were the legal recognition of marriage, the abolition of polyandry and polygamy, the devolution of self acquired property on wife and children in case of intestacy, thavazhi partition in respect of taravads, individual partition in respect of makkathayam property and the right to dispose of all of one's self acquired property by making will.² The bill was introduced in the legislative council in 1920. The misradaya groups of Ezhavas in Travancore under Shri Parameswaran, Karuva S. Krishnan Menon, Padmanabhan Vaidhyan and other opposed this bill very severely. M Parameswaran was an ardent enemy of the Ezhava Regulation.³ Under his leadership they organised protest meetings in various parts of Travancore. On 25 January 1925 the annual meeting of the misradaya section of the Ezhavas was held at Trivandrum Jubilee Hall. This meeting very severely opposed

1. P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.468.

2. See the Ezhava Regulation - A regulation relating to marriage, succession, family management and partition among the Ezhavas. Reproduced in Vivekodayam, November-December 1923 (Thulam 1099 ME), Vol.17, No.3, pp.123-5.
Ibid., December 1923, January 1924 (Vrischikan 1099 ME), Vol.17, No.4.
Ibid., February-March 1925 (Kumbam 1100 ME), Vol.18, No.10.

3. In order to get favour to the misradaya group from government, Parameswaran even opposed the bill which was introduced in the Assembly to give the freedom to the Ezhavas and other backward communities to use the public road. The bill was defeated by one vote of Mr.Parameswaran. C.Kesavan, op.cit., Vol.I, p.367.

the Ezhava Regulation.¹ Parameswaran also collected a letter from Sree Narayana Guru opposing the Ezhava Regulation, and that letter was sent to the government to indicate that the spiritual leader of the community was also against this regulation.²

The Misradaya group continued its opposition till the time of passing this bill in the Council.³ Karuva S. Krishnan Ayan, the representative of this section

1. Vivekodayan, January-February 1925 (Makaram 1100 ME), Vol. 18, No. 9, p. 303.

2. Ibid. See also, D.K. Madhavan, The Life of T.K. Madhavan, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 1112 ME (1937 A. D.), p. 586. But when Mr. Parameswaran published this letter of Swami, T.K. Madhavan and a group of Ezhavas, who were supporting Ezhava regulation approached Swami to get them another letter from Swami supporting Ezhava regulation. Swami with little bit of reluctance gave Madhavan also a letter which was supporting the Ezhava Regulation. Ibid., p. 585.

3. The following reasons were attributed by Mr. Kochunni to consider this bill was defective: (1) The system of inheritance therein proposed tended to pave the way for Makkathayam, which was too radical a change and was unguited to the present condition of the community. (2) The evidence collected by the Ezhava Law Committee was not satisfactory, because most of the witnesses who deposed before the committee in support of the principle were ignorant persons who did not know what they were speaking about. (3) The provision that the self acquired property of an Ezhava dying with issue should devolve on his wife was inequitable, in as much as it left out of account the poor old parents, if any, of the deceased. According to his opinion half the property alone should go to the wife. (4) The provision of the Ezhava Regulation did not affect the Makkathayam Ezhavas. That would be destructive of unanimity as regards the community as a whole and was not, therefore, a desirable restriction of the scope of the proposed law. (5) Finally he touched upon thavazhi partition which, he said was highly desirable but he suggested two modifications to the clause 27 of the bill viz., (a) that partition should be so effective as to give equal share to all the thavazhis, irrespective

protesting against the passage of the Ezhava bill, said that it was the result of the mischievous activity of the advanced party of Ezhavas and he impressed on the government the fact that the bill would never benefit the migradava section and submitted that the government were bound to protect them in preserving their ancient law of inheritance.¹ When Krishnan Asan and Padmanabhan Vaidhyar represented the government against the passage of the Ezhava Regulation in the Assembly, C. Krishnan Vaidhyar, a supporter of the bill, pointed out that the representation made by the two members should not be taken as reflecting the opinion of the Ezhava community.²

In spite of the opposition the government was compelled to pay due regard to the sentiments of the majority section of the society and passed the bill into law on 12 February 1925.³ The Ezhavas Regulation of 1925 provided for partition of the Ezhava thavazhis in respect of taravada and inheritance of

of the members in each and (b) that partition should give only the right of enjoyment and not that of alienation.
Proceedings of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 17th Session 1921, p.52.

1. Proceedings, Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1924, pp.216-7.
T.K. Ravindran, Asan and Social Revolution, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1972, p.92.
2. Ibid.
3. Vivekodayam, February-March 1925 (Kumbham 1100 ME), Vol.18, No.10, pp.380-41.
See also, Travancore Gazette, dated April 1925.

the father's self acquired property.¹ Thus the Ezhava Regulation (Regulation III of 1100 (1925) settled the problems relating to marriage, succession, family management and partition among the Ezhavas. The Ezhava Regulation was certainly an achievement of the S. N. D. P. leaders' consistent attempt for more than one decade in the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

Temperance Movement

Before the social reform activities of Sree Narayana Guru and the formation of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, the social reformers of 19th and 20th centuries had taken up the issue of temperance as a part of their reform work. The temperance agitation in India is generally connected with the process of Sanskritization and westernisation.² The influence and importance of these two processes are not to be ignored.

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1. Vivekodayan, February-March 1925, pp.330-41.
According to Raghaviah, the then Dewan of Travancore, the Ezhava Bill which is an important piece of social legislation purports to define and amend the law relating to marriage succession, partition and family management among the Ezhavas /...../ I think that this bill as passed by the Council, ought to meet the legitimate wishes of all sections of the community.
Dewan's Address, Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1924, p.21.
 2. While a group of Indian writers like M. N. Sreenivasan have connected the liquor question with the Sanskrit tradition, (M. N. Sreenivasan, op.cit., pp.387-8), the English writers like Lucy Carroll have intimately connected the temperance agitation in India in the late 19th centuries with the temperance agitation in England. See, Lucy Carroll, "Origins of the Kayastha Temperance Movement," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, December 1974, Vol.XII, No.4, pp.432-47.

In India one of the first reformers who made the temperance as a crucial issue was Swami Narayana (1771-1830) of Gujarat. Swami Narayana sect propagated the need of renouncing alcohol.¹ But in the early stages this temperance was confined to a few individuals who gave expression to their views in their general and occasional writings and speeches. By the second half of 19th century, due to the activities of Sasipada Banerjee,² the Anglo Indian Temperance Association,³ the Kayastha Temperance Association,⁴ the Indian Social Conference,⁵ and the Indian National

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1. Charles H. Helgath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, Bombay 1964, pp.38-40.
 2. Sasipada Banerjee, a Bengal social reformer, started a Temperance Society in his own native town Baranagar in 1863 and later this society was closely affiliated with the Bengal Temperance Society of Calcutta. His temperance movement very highly influenced among the working class section of Baranagar. Albion Raja Kumar Banerjee, An Indian Path Finder Being the Memoirs of Sevabrata Sasipada Banerjee 1840-1924, Oxford Kemptell Press (n.d.), p. 74. See also, Dipesh Chakraborty, "Sasipada Banerjee: A Study in the Nature of the First Contact of the Bengal Bhadrakalok with Working Class in Bengal," The Indian Historical Review, July 1975, Vol. II, No. I, pp.343-4.
 3. The Anglo Indian Association was formed in London in 1883 by W. S. Cairne and Samuel Smith, two liberal members of British Parliament. They took up the leadership of a number of anti-Drinking movement in India. See, Lucy Carroll, op. cit.
 4. Ibid., pp.432-47.
 5. The Indian Social Conference during its 10th session at Calcutta in 1896, discussed the issue and passed resolution in favour of the temperance movement. See, C.Y. Chintamani, Indian Social Reform Madras, 1901, Appendix, p.372.

Congress,¹ the earlier individual efforts had become well organized and systematic. Therefore, in 1921, when the S. N. D. P. Yogam took up this issue as a part of their social reform activities, Northern India and some parts of Madras presidency² anti-drinking became an important movement for social purity. Even if Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam were not the precursors of anti-drinking movement the movement launched by Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam against intemperance was very conspicuous and more noticeable than the attempt of any other social reformers and organizations for temperance. Because by their anti-drinking movement Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam openly declared a war not only against the so called traditional occupation of the community but also against the most lucrative³ and monopolistic business of their community and the livelihood of a good number of the Ezhavas.

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1. The Indian National Congress took up the issue of temperance from the time of its inception. They started passing resolutions against the excise policy of the government. See the resolutions of 1888, 1889, 1890, 1900, 1901 etc. At the 16th Session, Congress passed a detailed resolution on this topic. See, K. Iyengar Dutt, Congress Cyclopaedia The Indian National Congress 1885-1920, Vol. I, New Delhi, pp. 38, 49, 57 & 145.
 2. In Madras Presidency a few individuals like Venkata Ratnam Naidu, Veerasingam and G. Subramanya Aiyar were active against intemperance. According to Venkata Ratnam Naidu, "to an Indian temperance has no other meanings it denotes nothing other than to abstinence." Quoted in, M. Ram-krishnamacharyulu, op. cit., p. 299.
 3. During the period between 1911-1920 (1086-1095 ME) the demand for arrack and toddy increased 47 per cent and 50 per cent respectively and the income of the Ezhavas earned per year about 70 lakhs of rupees from toddy business. P. K. Madhavan, op. cit., pp. 437-45.

In Travancore the Ezhava community whose exclusive avocation was toddy tapping, launched a movement for abolishing alcoholic drink in their province under their spiritual leader Sree Narayana Guru and the educated Ezhavas like T.K. Madhavan with the aim of having self purification and attaining social status and self respect. This would in turn "qualify" them to enter the temples - a place where they had hitherto been prevented from entering on account of their "filthy" profession. Ayyappan says that,

Sree Narayana Guru and the Ezhava leaders were of the view that adherence to the occupation of manufacturing and selling of liquor was one of the factors which contributed to the low caste status of the Irvavas. Irvavas of economic status took pride in claiming that it is only the poorer Irvavas who were tappers.¹

Palpu strongly believed that the reason for the degradation of the Ezhavas in the society was that some of them were engaged in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks.² With the spread of socio-religious activities of the Swami and education among the Ezhavas, a social stigma was attached to drinking and consumption of liquor became taboo. The spread of education had infused in the Ezhavas a higher sense of dignity of profession.³ Therefore, the number of toddy tappers decreased day by day. According to Vivekodayem

1. A. Ayyappan, Social Revolution in a Kerala Village: A Study in Culture Change, p.154.

2. Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No.4, p.99.

3. T.K. Velu Pillai, op.cit., Vol.III, p.13.

in 1912, out of 1,000 workers only 110 continued their so called traditional occupation¹ and it was again reduced to 8 per cent in 1921.² In the 18th annual meeting of the Yogam which was held at Karunagappally in June 1921, passed unanimously a resolution of T.K. Madhavan calling the Ezhavas to stop completely toddy tapping and liquor business, which hampered social progress and moral status among the Ezhavas and contributed to an inferiority feeling among them.³ In the 20th annual meeting of the Yogam another resolution was passed for social boycott of drunkards and those engaged in liquor industry.⁴

Sree Narayana Guru attacked the drink evil on two grounds viz., social and economic. He found that liquor was one of the fundamental causes of the deterioration of society. His conclusion was that the evils of drink such as drunkenness, violence, loss of work and money, impoverish society both socially and economically. Socially it would lead to the increase of crime in society and also it would ruin the health of its addicts. Economically it was one of the causes for impoverishment, primarily among the poorer sections of society. Sree Narayana Guru like Sasipada Banerjee⁵ showed

1. Vivekodayam, November-December 1912 (Vrischikam 1088 ME), p.47.
2. Census of India Travancore, Report 1921, p.125.
3. Kerala Kaimudi, 12 May 1921, p.3. See also, the Proceedings of the 18th Annual Meeting of the S.N.D.P. Yogam, No.17.
4. Kerala Kaimudi, 24 May 1923, p.3.
5. Sasipada Banerjee started a temperance society among the local factory workers at Baranagar for removing working class from the evils of drink and disciplining the labourers by removing evils like drunkenness. See, Dipesh Chakrobarty, op.cit., pp.339-64.

keen interest to reform the poor agricultural and field labourers like the Parayars, the Pulayars and the Ezhavas from the evils of drink and disciplining them by removing evils like drunkenness and teaching them "middle class virtues of industry, ambition, sobriety and thrift." The motive behind his anti drinking movement was for making a satisfactory life of poor labourers. Addressing a Pulaya assembly at Muttathara (Trivandrum) in 1916 Sree said

Pulayars lack money and education. These deficiencies should be made up. Education is the chief thing. Once it is had, money, cleanliness etc. would follow. It is wrong to say that you have no wealth. You are yourself wealth. You earn money every day by your work. But you waste it - say on drinks. If you set apart one anna a day for a common fund you can educate your children /...../ you should stop the habit of drinking. Hereafter, you should not allow your children to drink. Even elders should try to stop the habit. It is for such purposes that you should gather in assemblies /...../ and discuss your problems and do the needful.¹

Sree Narayana Guru had a severe contempt to the profession of toddy tapping and toddy tappers. Once he humorously remarked that the knife which used for tapping should be cut into four pieces and be used as razor in a barber shop for shaving.² In a message sent by Guru on 27 August 1920, he

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1. Vivakodayam, August-September 1920, quoted in P.K. Dalakrishnan, Narayana Guru, p.152. The above address of Sree Narayana Guru shows that he himself pointed out the evils of drink to the poor people and asked them to forsake it. At the same time both Daniel Thomas and V.T. Samuel made wrong comments that Sree Narayana Guru was never tired of speaking and asking his followers to speak about the evils of drink. See, Daniel Thomas, op.cit., p.32. V.T. Samuel, op.cit., p.60.
 2. Murkothu Kumaran, Sree Narayana Guru Sreeyam, p.470. See also, M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.840.

condemned toddy tapping and liquor traffic by stating that "Liquor is poison. It should not be manufactured, served or drunk. The toddy tapper's body will stink, his clothes will stink, his house will stink and whatever he touches will stink."¹ The drinking habit having been adversely affected the social progress, self respect and mental peace of families, Sree Narayana Guru advised people to cut off the tappers and drunkards. He was comparing toddy drawing with plague and leprosy.² Therefore, he said:

As we cut off the diseased limb, so the tappers should be cut off from society. We should have no social relations with them. When they give up tapping we may take them back.³

When Narayana Guru incorporated prohibition in his programme of social reform, there was an unprecedented awakening in the entire society. Due to the influence of the Swami, a number of drunkards, toddy shop agents and toddy tappers were freed from the shackles of that evil habit.⁴ While in other parts of India, the temperance movement appeared to have been confined mostly to urban areas,⁵ in Kerala it was, indeed, due to the influence of Sree Narayana Guru,

1. Sahodharan, September-October 1920 (Kanni 1096 ME), Vol. 3, No. 9, p. 162.

2. Swami Dharmath^{eer}than, The Prophet of Peace, p. 47.

3. Ibid.

4. Kerala Kamudi, 22 June 1922, p. 4.

5. V. Ramakrishnamacharyulu, op. cit., p. 310.

this movement became wide spread in the urban and rural areas. As it was essential a problem that hit the poor sections, Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam took the message of temperance to the masses.

The reason which induced the Ezhava middle class for launching a campaign for renouncing the most lucrative business of tapping and vending of toddy and the manufacture and sale of arrack was not only to increase social status and self respect but also to purify themselves to seek admission to the caste temples to "qualify" themselves for the entry and thus to get into the government service. At that time the appointment in the government service was considered to be a prestigious thing and the government employees had very many privileges in the society. But this privilege was mostly restricted to the circle of the caste Hindus. Most of the offices were remained to be inaccessible to the non-caste Hindus and the non-Hindus. By this time, Devassam being a part of the Revenue Department, this largest department which provided about 50 per cent of the total jobs in Travancore were closed to the non-Hindus and the non-caste Hindus. Therefore, the Ezhava elites might have thought that the entrance to the government service was possible only through the entrance of the caste Hindu temples. They felt that the entrance to the caste Hindu temples must be possible only after purifying themselves. At that time there was a strong belief among the Ezhava leaders that the manufacturing and selling of liquor was one

of the factors that contributed to the low caste status of the Ezhavas.¹ Therefore, they might have thought of renouncing the manufacture and the sale of intoxicating drinks.

Though the Indian National Congress had passed a number of resolutions against intemperance and the Abkari policy of the government from the time of its inception, they did not include anti-drinking as a part of their programme. During the time of the first civil disobedience movement, as a part of its constructive programme, the Congress adopted picketing and boycotting of liquor shops. But Narayana Guru had advocated total abstinence from drinking much earlier than its inclusion in the Congress's programme. Therefore, when the Congress started the picketing and boycott of liquor shops, Keralites found nothing new in it. Nevertheless, the policy of Congress gave added emphasis to the temperance movement. At that time the popularity of Mahatma Gandhi and his ideology began to spread among the people and nationalist feeling also began to spread all over Kerala. The people like T.K. Madhavan were the followers of Sree Narayana Guru and Gandhiji alike.² When they found the same ideology of the

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1. Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No.4, p.99.
A. Ayyappan, Social Revolution in a Kerala Village, p.154.
 2. Kerala Karmudi, 12 May 1921, p.3.

Swami, in Mahatma Gandhi it naturally increased their enthusiasm and vigour.

From the very beginning the S. N. D. P. Yogam had to face very many difficulties and problems either from the government side or from their own community. As far as the government was concerned opkari and excise was one of the main sources of the income of the state.¹ This economic motive had, indeed, prevented the government not only from cooperating with this movement but also to persuade them to suppress this anti-drinking movement and also sought to make liquor from cereals without the help of the Ezhavas.² The prohibition movement among the Ezhavas was beset with serious problems. When the S. N. D. P. Yogam passed a resolution in its 20th annual meeting for social boycott of drunkards and tappers, a strong protest was organised by a section of the Ezhavas against this resolution.³ Therefore, Yogam had to fight on the one side against the government and on the other side with a section of their own community.

But T. K. Madhavan, G. Krishnan and other Ezhava leaders without taking the opposition seriously started their campaign for the abolition of liquor business, boycott

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1. Though Travancore was an agricultural country, in 1931, while agriculture contributed 17.6 per cent of the total income to the state revenue, the contribution on the part of excise and customs was 34.7 per cent. See, Travancore the Present Political Problems, pp. 24-26.
 2. See the conversation between T. K. Madhavan and Mahatma Gandhi reproduced in M. K. Sanoo, op. cit., p. 408.
 3. Kerala Kamudi, 14 June 1923, p. 1.

of toddy shops and dissuading the Ezhavas from toddy tapping. Many volunteer organizations like the Sarmogadayini in Peravoor, the Karthikappally Ezhava Samajam and the Ezhava Mahajana Sabha in Kottayam took leading part in the movement.¹ As a consequence of these consistent activities of the Yogam and its local and affiliated organizations, a number of drunkards, toddy tappers, contractors and liquor business men took the vow of abstinence.² In a meeting organized by the Ezhava Mahajana Sabha of Kottayam in Velur in 1922 under the presidentship of T.K. Madhavan, twenty two toddy shop agents and a number of toddy tappers had taken a pledge to abstain from toddy tapping and toddy business before the portrait of Sree Narayana Guru.³ This meeting immediately proposed a scheme for starting an industry by investing a capital of Rs. 10,000 for providing jobs for those who had stopped toddy tapping and liquor industry.⁴ Due to the strenuous efforts of T.K. Madhavan and other heterodox youths a number of mass meetings were organized at Alleppy, Meentholakkara in Tiruvalla, Ramankara, Karthikappally and other places in between the years 1921-24⁵ against intemperance. Moreover, these public meetings and the

1. Ibid., 22 June 1922, p.4.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. P.K. Madhavan, op.cit., Vol. II, pp.433-9.

vernacular papers like Vivokodayam, Doshabhini and Kerala Kounudi also attacked evils of drinking and the indifference of the government in not taking stern measures against intemperance. As a result of these activities, a favourable atmosphere was created in Travancore in favour of anti-drinking.

The meeting held at Karthikappally on 29 September 1922 (13 Kanni 1098 ME) organized a "vigilance" committee to find out and to report the violation of abkari regulation by tappers, contractors, shopowners, sellers and excise officials.¹ For the knowledge of "vigilance committee," in Doshabhini, Medhevan published the rules of abkari Regulation which dealt with tappers, contractors, shop owners, sellers and excise officials.² This vigilance committee functioned very sincerely in Travancore. Thus the movement became strong and widespread in a larger area of Travancore.

The decision of excommunication of tappers from the society and the advise of the Yogam to its community members not to bid the shops at the time of next auction of 1922, had created very good impact among the people. Thereafter, in lieu of excessive competition of previous years for auctioning the shops, this year (1922) the number of auctioners were less than the total number of shops. In Kottayam itself out

1. Ibid., p. 339.

2. Ibid., pp. 448-56.

of 69 shops only 41 were auctioned and out of this 41 shops only 30 were auctioned by the Ezhavas.¹ Due to this indifference of the Ezhavas towards their "traditional" occupation during the period of 1922-23 the government had a loss of four lakhs of rupees from the item of Abkari.² The threat of excommunication of tappers, the advise not to bid the shops at the time of auction by the S. N. D. P. Yogam and the consequent result of the great loss of Rs.4 lacs from the item of Abkari had caused anxiety to the Government of Travancore. Therefore, the government was thinking of implementing two solutions to overcome this grave condition: (1) They had an intention to start a school for imparting the art of toddy tapping to the members other than the Ezhavas,³ and (2) to make liquor from cereals.⁴ But when the attempts failed the government decided to suppress this movement by force. Arrest and imprisonment became very common.⁵ This arrest and incarceration instead of stopping the movement, increased its vigour and vitality. A number of protest meetings were organized at Trivandrum.

1. Kerala Kaumudi, 22 June 1922, p.4.

2. P.K. Madhavan, op.cit., Vol.II, pp. 446.

3. See the conversation between Mahatmaji and T.K. Madhavan on prohibition reproduced in M.K. Sano, op.cit., p.408.

4. Loc.cit.

5. On 9 November 1925 (24 Thulam 1098) Shri M. Madhavan, the Secretary of the Liquor Abolition Smiti and a number of others were arrested and imprisoned under section 90 of Travancore Criminal code. P.K. Madhavan, op.cit., Vol.II, p.440.

Alleppey, and Quilon against the governmental suppression.¹ These meetings continued its crusade against the evil by exposing the economic motives of the government in not taking stern measures against intemperance and in suppressing the movement of the Yogam. This criticism was also against the system of auctioning liquor shops as it would give great inducement to the promotion of the liquor traffic.

In the meanwhile the S. N. D. P. Yogam approached M. E. Madhava Varier, the then leader of the Legislative Council, to introduce a resolution in Travancore legislature on prohibition. On 23 November 1922 (8th Vrischikam 1098 ME) Varier introduced a resolution for asking the government to pass an order to use alcoholic drinks only for medical and industrial purposes and to ban the production and import of liquor.² As a consequence of this resolution, an excise committee was appointed by the government to study the problem. On the basis of the recommendation of this committee government decided to introduce prohibition gradually in a limited period of time.³ As this reply was not satisfactory to Madhavan and his colleagues, they revived their movement more vigorously. Eventually the government promised that the drinking would be prohibited totally within a period of 40 years of time.⁴ Perhaps realizing that it was impossible to

1. Ibid., pp.141-2.

2. Ibid., p.439.

3. Ibid.,

4. Ibid., p.436.

get full cooperation from the government to wipe out the evil completely, Madhavan and his co-workers had to accept the suggestion of gradual reduction of the number of toddy and arrack shops in a course of 40 years time. This was certainly a great achievement of the Yogam.

Although the movement had succeeded in creating a feeling among the Ezhavas that their "traditional" occupation of tapping and vending of toddy was an inferior occupation and a notable decrease was found in the problem of excessive drinking, it had failed to fulfil the aspirations of the Swamy to cut off this occupation from the Ezhavas and to keep people away from the habit of drinking. This partial failure of the movement was mainly due to three reasons. Stiff opposition on the part of the government, the indifference of a section of the Ezhava leaders and finally tapping was the sole means of livelihood of a good number of people. The stiff opposition of the government had already been discussed. The Yogam leaders like Palpu and C. V. Kunjuraman, though they were not opposed to this movement did not strongly support this movement. According to Palpu, "it was the only available means they had of getting back at least a portion of the enormous sums that were being systematically wasted here on the so called Brahmins in the name of God and religion."¹ After his retirement in 1919, Palpu started a

1. Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File No.12, p.103, NML, New Delhi.

"non-alcoholic madhu campaign" and tried to develop his community's "traditional occupation" as an industry.¹ The same way C. V. Kunjuraman also did not cooperate with this movement. The indifference of the leaders like Kunjuraman and Palpu was mainly because of economic reason. It should be noted that toddy tapping had been the only livelihood of many of the poor families of Ezhave community through out Kerala. For many people, tapping was the sole means of livelihood and its sudden stoppage would have rendered them jobless. Therefore, the pragmatic among the Ezhaveas like C. V. Kunjuraman and Palpu did not cooperate with the ideas of the Guru and other nationalist minded leaders like T.K. Madhavan. Thus due to the indifference of some prominent leaders and the opposition from a section of community and the government the temperance movement did not really succeed. Many continued to tap and to drink.

The ideological struggle against liquor business floundered against the hard rocks of reality. There were not many avenues left for those who would be rendered jobless as a consequence of the movement. In other words, the material conditions were not conducive for the success of the struggle. At the same time, many business men, tappers and contractors who had taken the vow of stopping the liquor trade pointed to the fact that narrow economic self interest need not prevent the acceptance of an ideology which stood against it.

1. For details about his activities for "non-alcoholic madhu campaign" see, Private Papers of Dr. Palpu, File Nos. 1 & 2.

CHAPTER-V

FIGHT AGAINST CASTEISM AND UNTOUCHABILITY

All social reformers of modern India from Raja Rammohan Roy to Ambedkar had regarded casteism as the main cause of India's social evil. The Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, the Theosophical Society and nearly almost all reform organizations and reformers not only raised their voice against the caste system, but also held the view that caste should no longer continue. Even if these organizations and reformers were anti caste and made constant reference to the caste system as the root of India's social ill, none of them except Jotiba Govind Phule, the founder of the Satyashodak Samaj (1873), Sree Narayana Guru, one of the founders of the S. N. D. P. Yogam (1903) and B. R. Ambedkar, the organizer of the All India Depressed Class Federation, questioned the caste structure as such.¹ The reformers like Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Mahatma Gandhi defended the vedic notion of chaturvarna or four fold division of Hindu society. According to Dayananda, a person was not born into any varna but he was identified as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra according to the kind of life he led.² Like Dayananda,

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1. Charles H. Heimath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, Bombay 1964, p.6.
 2. Ibid., pp.120, 300-301. See also, A. R. Desai, Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Bombay, 5th edition, 1976, p.255.

Gandhiji was also a defender of chaturvarna. In 1925, during the time of Vaikkam satyagraha, when Gandhiji visited Kerala, he paid a visit to Sree Narayana Guru. At that time Gandhiji had talked about the caste theory in Hinduism and he asked whether it was not according to nature to have different caste among men. As an example he had cited that all leaves of the same tree were not alike. By nature some were big and others small.¹ The Swami explained that the juice of every leaf was similar in quality. Likewise men may appear to belong to different kinds but were basically the manifestation of the same essence.²

The first movement of Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam against caste was their attempt to encourage homogeneity within the Ezhavas. There were several subdivisions within the Ezhavas. The Yogam attempted to break down all these distinctions.

Secondly they endeavoured to remove the caste attitude of the Ezhavas towards those castes which were supposed to be inferior to them. The Ezhavas treated the castes lower to them in the same way as they themselves were treated by those above.³ A number of Ezhava temples were not opened to those

1. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.441.

2. Loc.cit.

3. See, Vivokodayam, June-August 1906 (Mithunam-Karkkadakan 1081 ME), p.5.
Ibid., December January 1908-1909 (Dhanu 1084 ME), Vol.5, No.9, p.5.
P.K. Balakrishnan, "Kerala Navothanathinu Charithraparamayo Oru Mukavura," Yoganadan, October 1977, Vol.3, No.7, p.32.
All over Kerala, it was very common that the Ezhavas practiced untouchability towards the Parayas and the Pulayus.

who were lower in the caste hierarchy.¹ These caste attitude of Ezhavas pained the Swamy very much.² He advised the Ezhavas that the man has only one caste. Sree Narayana Guru and Sahodharan Ayyappan were the two staunch opponents of this caste feeling of the Ezhavas towards the Pulayas and the Parayas. Both of them felt that it was a contradiction, in that while the Ezhavas were fighting against pollution as practiced by the caste above them, they were themselves treating the Pulayas and Parayas severely as untouchables. Therefore, they felt that one of the first thing to be done should be to eradicate the feeling of superiority which many Ezhavas entertained. This would at the same time create the feeling that they were inferior to none.³ Therefore, Sree Narayana Guru reminded the Ezhavas that unless they changed their attitude towards the communities just inferior to them in the caste system, they had no right to clamour for justice. Hence he told them:

* number of Ezhava temples were not opened to the Parayas and the Pulayas.

Idem, "Oru Madhyasthan," Narayana Guru, op.cit., pp.150-51.

Murkot Kunhappa, Murkot Kumaran, Kottayam, 1975, p.104.

In Cannanore, one Pulaya and his sister were severely beaten up by Ezhavas for not having moved off the way to allow the Ezhava to pass unpolluted. See, Kerala Kaumudi, 14 June 1923, p.4.

1. P.K. Balakrishnan, Narayana Guru, op.cit., pp.150-57.
Murkoth Kunhappa, Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit., p.104.
2. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., pp.240-41.
3. P.K. Balakrishnan, Narayana Guru, p.236.

You must look upon the Pulayas and the like with love. The Ezhavas should behave towards their inferior in such a way that those who deem themselves superior to the Ezhavas should see and learn from it. This is a matter you should pay special attention to.¹

The uplift of the communities like the Pulayas were considered by the Swami as a part of his life's mission. Without any distinction of caste, the Swami admitted students to his Ashram. The students from different communities lived and studied together there.² In the morning they would bath together in the Alwayo river, pray together and eat together. A number of Harijan boys had been living in the Ashram as boarders. He also made them cook food for the guests and others. Whenever a few prominent caste conscious people came to the Ashram, the Pulayas used to serve food to them. Nay the Swami even introduced to the servers to them telling that they were Pulayas.³ He taught the sacred books freely to the low caste people and insisted that temples dedicated by him should be accessible to them. At assemblies and feasts he treated them as equals. Whenever quarrels arose between the caste Hindus and the Pulayas Sree Narayana Guru was with the non-caste Hindus.⁴ He stressed the fundamental

1. Quoted in P. Parameshwaran, op.cit., p.108.

2. Pazhambally Achyuthan, Sree Narayana Guru (Smaranakal), op.cit., p.11.

3. P. Parameshwaran, op.cit., pp.107-8.

4. Generally during the time of clashes between the Nairs and the Pulayas, the Ezhavas took their position on the side of the Nairs. This attitude of the Ezhavas deeply pained the Swami. See, M.K. Seneo, op.cit., pp.355-8.

unity of mankind. He said, "Whatever be the difference in faith, dress or language, as all humanity belongs to the same caste, there is no harm in intermarriage and interdining."¹ The Guru set up the ideal of casteless society and his followers appreciated it and tried to implement it. As mentioned earlier Sahodaran Ayyappan had raised a storm in society by working on these lines. Even before the message of Sriee Narayana Guru for intercaste marriage and interdining² in May 1917 Ayyappan had organized an interdining of some members of his caste with some Pulayas.³ Soon after this, Ayyappan visited the Swami at Alwaye and told him what had been done. Swami was happy; he smiled and said, "The movement will grow; behave like Christ."⁴ The result of this interdining was that Ayyappan and other 21 families who took part in this function were subjected to severe social ostracism and Ayyappan was "honoured" by the name "Pulayan Ayyappan."⁵ Undaunted Ayyappan started a

1. Kerala Kaimudi, 2nd June 1921, p.2.

2. Ayyappan himself was responsible for issuing this message by the Swami. While he had been vigorously started his inter-dining movement, the community at that time was so well knit that it could effectively take the measures against anyone who dared to flout its authority. The chief among the people took various steps against Ayyappan. Therefore, Ayyappan approached the Swami and prayed for a message regarding interdining and Swami issued a message in favour of interdining and intercaste marriage.

M. Prabha, "Sahodaran Ayyappan," M. Govindan (ed.), Op.cit., pp.230-31.

3. Ibid. See also, P.K. Balakrishnan, Narayana Guru, p.235.

4. M. Prabha, op.cit., p.230.

5. Ibid. See also, P.K. Balakrishnan, op.cit., p.235.

movement called Sahodhara Praasthanam believing in the brotherhood of men with the aim of eradicating casteism, superstition and social injustices. Later Ayyappan was known popularly as Sahodaran Ayyappan. In 1919 Ayyappan established a journal called Sahodharan as the mouth piece of the movement. Both his "Praasthanam" and journal did a lot with the blessings and special consideration of the Swamy¹ for promoting social reform movements particularly the campaign against caste system and other pernicious customs prevailing among the Hindus. Apart from Ayyappan, Kumaran Asan, Palpu, C. V. Kunjuraman, I. K. Madhavan, C. Krishnan, C. Kesavan, Swami Satya Vradhan and other educated heterodox youths were often moved to speech and action on behalf of social unity that is the breaking down of caste discrimination. But the campaign of Sree Narayana Guru and a few of his supporters for abolishing casteism did not function properly in Kerala. When Sree Narayana Guru, the God father of the Ezhavas, set up the ideal of one caste before his people, though a few progressive Ezhavas appreciated it, the majority of the Ezhavas and the E. N. D. P. Yogan itself failed to implement it in the society. This failure was mainly because of three reasons. First, since a majority of the uneducated Ezhavas were under the influence

1. P. A. Achyuthan, Sree Narayana Guru Smaranikal, op. cit., pp. 34-30.

of traditional ideologies the advice of Narayana Guru did not make an immediate impact on their mind. Secondly the Ezhavas were naturally inclined to claim rights for themselves but reluctant to yield the same rights to others.¹ Finally, the S. N. D. P. Yogam which was born and brought up under the shade of Sree Narayana Guru, itself functioned against the idea of one caste. The idea of Sree Narayana Guru behind the formation of the S. N. D. P. Yogam was not to organize the Ezhava community as such but to organize people without any discrimination of caste or creed, for a religious and social reformation. At the same time the S. N. D. P. Yogam tended to become exclusively an Ezhava organization. From the time of its inception the Yogam was very parochial and caste oriented. The bye-law of the S. N. D. P. Yogam very specifically mentioned that it is an organization formed with the object of social and economic advancement of the Ezhavas.² Its memberships were strictly restricted to the members of the Ezhavas and its various denominations.³ All the activities of the Yogam were confined to the Ezhava community. When the S. N. D. P. Yogam confined its activities on caste basis and started ignoring matters concerned with Sree Narayana Guru, Guru himself severed all his relations

1. V. T. Samuel, op.cit., p.62.

2. For details see Chapter III.

3. Ibid.

with the Yogam.¹ Then the S. N. D. P. Yogam and majority of the Ezhavas became selfish and narrow minded and failed to come above the caste feeling, the dream of abolishing casteism remained to be realised. Even then, the consistent struggle for Sree Narayana Guru had actually shaken the foundation of casteism in Kerala.

Fight Against Untouchability and Unapproachability

Though fight against disabilities like the denial of admission to the public school and the Government offices and services were their indirect crusade against untouchability and unapproachability, the movement of the S. N. D. P. Yogam and the Ezhavas against untouchability and unapproachability as such was started only by the end of the second decade of the 20th century. By this time they turned their attention to the problems of unapproachability and to the exclusion from public roads. Though the evils of untouchability and caste were the very core of Indian social life,² in Kerala caste rules practiced in the most irrational manner with tripple social evils of untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability. The members of the lower

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1. The letter of Sree Narayana Guru dated 12 May 1916 to Dr. Palpu; Reproduced in the Gurukulam, Vol. 15, Nos. 6-7, September-October 1978, p. 283.
 2. See, J. R. Hutton, op. cit.
Bupendranath Datta, Studies in Indian Polity, Calcutta, 1944.
Emile Durkheim translated by Sir E. Denison Ross, Caste in India; The Facts and the System, London 1930;
J. N. Ehottecharyo, Hindu Castes and Sects, Calcutta (second edition) 1968;
L. S. S. O'Malley, Indian Caste System, New Delhi (second edition), 1974.

castes polluted their superior castes not only by touch or approach but also by sight. The public roads in the premises of temples and the Brahmin houses earned sign boards put up by the government prohibiting lower castes from entering the area. Therefore, all over Kerala very many streets, roads and paths were not public in the sense of being opened to all communities.¹ There were several roads in Kerala at the beginning of the 20th century.² In addition to that even the distance at which the Ezhavas or other low caste people should stand when the upper caste Hindus were on the road was stipulated. Those who violated these rules intentionally or unintentionally were not only beaten up very severely but also proceeded against in court and the verdict of the court too was against the lower castes.³ These caste repressions made Vivekananda to describe Malabar as "a paradise of fools where every one was happy in his ignorance, in his superstition and in his age long social bondage."⁴ Gandhiji's denunciation was

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1. T.K. Ravindran, "Consequences of Unapproachability in Travancore," The Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Culture, July-December 1955, Madras University, p.57.
 2. The Vaikkom Temple Road in Travancore, Trippunithura Road in Cochin, the Tali Road in Calicut were a few among the hundreds of prohibited highways "to low caste" in Kerala.
 3. Vivekodayam, 16 September 1907 (31st Chingam 1082 ME), Vol.3, No.5, p.5. See also, Mitavadi, February 1917, Vol.5, No.2, p.4.
 4. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Moyavoti Memorial Edition (9th edition), Calcutta 1964, pp.294-5.

equally emphatic. He said, "unfortunately for Hinduism, unfortunately for the state and unfortunately even for the whole of India, there is not much credit to the state in the matter of untouchability."¹

We found that the Ezhavas of Travancore was at the verge of a transition due to the impact of the emergence of new economic forces, the spread of English education the ideology and precepts of Sree Narayana Guru, the modern western ideas and culture and the increased awareness of the world. The influence of these factors not only heightened the consciousness of the backwardness of and degradation of their society under the hegemony of Savarnas, but further too strengthened to resolve reform and to revolt against rigid social convention and outdated customs like untouchability and unapproachability. The emerging middle class among the Ezhavas formulated the demand for status and demand for power. For achieving these factors, they had to eradicate untouchability observed by the government and the upper castes. By the end of the first score of the present century, they had already started resisting untouchability.² The self assertive new middle class, for achieving their objects of more freedom and better social status, had to fight hard against mighty Savarna Government and the influential caste Hindu community.

1. Quoted in Mahadev Dogal, op.cit., p.4.

2. P.K. Gopalakrishnan, "Samuha Parickarana Pragathanangal," Kerala Charitram, Vol.I, op.cit., pp.1216-17.

The most important factor which induced the Ezhavas to fight against untouchability and unapproachability was related to their interest to get into government service for having both social status and economic advantage.¹ It is common knowledge that the present lopsided advancement of education in this community had only served to bring into existence a large body of modern educated youngmen who had become dissatisfied with their old environment and time honoured pursuits and had developed a feeling of cherished hopes of getting government employment.² Due to severity of casteism and untouchability, most of the departments like army, police and Devarnam were not opened to the untouchables till 1936.³ Even in 1913 the Dewan had to defend the Government's reluctance to employ these people in certain departments on account of their caste. He said, "...../ if too many Ezhavas are taken, the work may be obstructed as they could enter all places freely such as temples, Brahmin houses and the like."⁴ Then most of the departments were closed to the Ezhavas due to untouchability and unapproachability the educated section naturally thought that it was very essential to demolish these evil customs and practices.

1. Vivekodayam, 15 July 1905 (32 Michunam 1080 ME), Vol.2, No.3, p.3.

2. Proceedings, 7th session of Sree Mulam Popular Assembly, 1921, p.11.

3. Vivekodayam, March-August 1931 (Meenam-Korkkadokan, 1106 ME), Vol.21, Nos.8-12, p.22.

4. Proceedings of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1913, p.163.

which prohibited them to enter the government service in Travancore. To materialise their ambition, to get into all government departments, the removal of untouchability and unapproachability was the only solution and it would be possible only through the temple entry.¹ In short this movement was launched not only to put an end to caste discrimination, but also to secure the rights of entering into government service by abolishing the hegemony of the Savarnas and the caste discrimination of the government.

The second reason was related to the humiliating treatment which challenged their self respect. The rich and the educated Ezhava middle class was fed up with the humiliating treatment and unbearable social disabilities imposed upon them due to rigid casteism. The Ezhavas had, for some time, felt that the notice boards in the vicinities of certain shrines and stipulated highways in the North and South Travancore prohibiting the Ezhavas and other backward communities from their entrance as a humiliating action.² Big landlords and educated persons also had to suffer the disabilities of their caste. The experience of Alommootil Channer is a good example of the resentment of the Ezhava land lords and upper middle class section. Channer was one

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1. Vivekodayam, March-August 1931, Vol.21, Nos.8-12, p.23.
 2. The Report of the Temple Entry Enquiry Committee published on 24th April 1934, Trivandrum, p.47. See also, File No.66/1911 Judicial Department, Travancore. Proceedings, 17th Session of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1968, p.108.

of the two persons who had owned a car in Travancore.¹ His driver was a Muslim. When the car reached a spot beyond which the Ezhavas could not proceed the Chanar had to get down and take a longer way and join the road about a mile or so away. Meanwhile, the driver drove the car along the road forbidden to his 'Master' and he could be seen waiting at the wheel for the Chanar to arrive.² Likewise during the time of festivals in temples like Trichurpuzham, the Ezhavas and other untouchables who were living on the road sides were required to vacate their houses to avoid pollution to the procession, which carried the image of God with the retinue of Brahmins and other upper caste people.³ Rich, well educated and well employed Ezhavas like C. Krishnan, Palpu, P. Velayudhan, Kumaran Asan etc., being untouchables could not use very many roads in their provinces though they had respectable position not only among the Ezhavas but also among the savarnas. Palpu, therefore, wrote to Gandhiji in 1925 that the right to "walk through the public road is one that even dogs and pigs enjoy everywhere without having to resort to any catyagraha at all."⁴ Naturally the Ezhavas felt these disabilities as

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1. C. Kesavan, Jeevithasamaran (autobiography), Kottayam, 1968, p.302.
 2. Loc. cit. See also, Murkot Kunhappa, "The Thiyyas of Kerala," Souvenir Indian History Congress, XXXVII, 1976, Calicut, p.48.
 3. Mitavadi, November 1918, Vol.6, No.11, p.26.
 4. Letter to Mahatmaji on 21st April 1925, Dr. Palpu Paper, File No.1, p.4.

humiliating and very seriously affecting their self respect.

The third reason centred round the commercial prosperity of the Ezhavas. We have found that the Ezhavas were not mere agricultural labourers like the other Avarn² communities like the Pulaya and Parayas but were an industrial and trading community as well. The following table shows the involvement of the various communities in industry, transport and trade and the place of the Ezhavas.¹

Table-27

Involvement of Various Communities in Industry, Transport and Trade and the place of the Ezhavas.

Community	Industry	Transport	Trade
Ezhava	26.3	3.4	7.0
Muslims	15.5	2.3	18.9
Christians	7.8	1.8	6.7
Nayars	2.8	1.1	4.7

But the prohibition to the use of certain roads undermined the smooth process of their business. Therefore, on 13 June 1910 forty five Ezhavas of Ramamangalam in Muvathupuzha submitted a petition stating that the government notification dated 23.4.1865 prohibiting the Ezhavas from using the public roads around the temples of Ramamangalam

1. Travancore The Present Political Problem, pp.25-26.

inhibited their development.¹ The petitioners requested the government to withdraw the notification since all the public offices and most of the traffics were situated along these roads and therefore, the closing of them will considerably effect the commercial prosperity of their race.²

The fourth reason which persuaded the Ezhavas to build up a powerful movement against rigid casteism was to establish their rights and privileges. Till 1918, when the Ezhavas were excluded from the outer precincts of the Brahmin temples, without any objection or questioning the monopoly of the Savarnas, they decided to have temples of their own and established a number of temples accordingly. But this attitude of the Ezhavas began to change by the end of the second decade of the present century. In 1921 government spent more than 24 lakhs rupees for the administration of temples and the maintenance of ottupuras. At the same time, the income from the temples was only Rs.4 lakhs.³ While the government spent more than Rs.24 lakhs for temples and its allied institutions, the expenditure for all other department was Rs.93,52,226.⁴ The benefits of these temples accrued to a microscopic minority of the society. The Ezhava being the largest tax payers in the State, they

1. Judicial Department Travancore, File No.40/4 of 1907, p.1.

2. Ibid.

3. Shri K. Ayyappan pointed out that the discrimination of income from the temple and expenditure for the temples. In 1921 income from the temples was four lakhs rupees and the expenditure for temples administration and Uttupura expense was Rs.2444,249.
Sahodharan, May-June 1921 (Edavam 1096 ME), Vol.3, No.12.

4. Ibid.

thought that the taxes which the government collected from them was also using for the administration of temples and the construction of roads, they should have got their deserving rights.¹ The upcoming commercial and mercantile elements within the Ezhava community wanted the money collected from them as tax to be spent in ways conducive to their further development.

The last reason which accelerated the movement against untouchability was the cooperation and support of educated middle class sections among the Avarnas. The cooperation and support of savarna community was concerned with various factors like the growth of education, the growth of nationalist sentiment, influence of Gandhiji, impact of modern western ideas and finally the rivalry with Christianity. They understood that for the growth of national unity and solidarity, eradication of casteism and untouchability which had prevented unity of people, was very essential. The attitude of Mahatma Gandhi towards untouchables and casteism² to a certain extent helped to change the attitude of the Savarna Congress leaders.

The first reason, which induced the Savarna community especially the Nayers to cooperate with the Ezhavas and other untouchables being the influence of nationalist ideology, the second reason emerged from the economic interest of the

1. Mitavadi, January 1919, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 9-11.

2. In the Belgian session of the Congress in 1924, Gandhiji said, "Untouchability is another hindrance to Swaraj. Its removal is just as essential for Swaraj as the attainment of Hindu Muslim unity. This is an essentially Hindu question and Hindus cannot claim or take Swaraj till they have resorted to liberty of the suppressed classes/...../" Congress Presidential Address, the Silver to Golden Jubilee, second series, Madras, p. 77.

Savarna community especially the Nayar middle class. By this time there started competition between the Nayar middle class and the middle class among the Christians for the control of land, jobs, education, legislature and the government service. This rivalry for economic supremacy naturally perpetuated the Savarnas to create an intimacy with Savarnas especially the Ezhavas. By that time old position of the Nayars in the field of land, education and sirkar jobs¹ were being captured by the Syrian Christians. The Table 28 shows the positions of Nairs and Christians in education, size of land holding and the average income per year.

Table-28²

Economical and Educational Position of Nairs and Christians in Travancore During the early 30s.

	Nairs (in thousands)	Syrian Christians
i) Literacy		
a) Vernacular	453	482
b) English	234	322
ii) Average size of Land Holding	3.12 (acre)	4.46 (acre)
iii) Average Income per Year	147 (Rs.)	275 (Rs.)

1. Out of 503 posts with a salary of Rs.150 per month the candidates from Nair and Christians were respectively 130 and 149.

Kerala Karmudi, 16 October 1929, p.5.

2. Travancore the Present Political Problem, op.cit., pp.15-20.

The S. N. D. P. Yogam and the Ezhava middle class devoted first two decades of the 20th century to win over their rights to send their children to government schools and to enter the government service. Though these movements were indeed, their indirect fight against untouchability and unapproachability, an open and organized movement against evils of casteism was started only with the advent of Shri K. Ayyappan and T.K. Madhavan by the end of the second decade of the present century. With the advent of the above mentioned two leaders a revolutionary change both in policy and in tactics took place. So far the Ezhava leaders like Palpu, Kumaran Asan and others practiced the method of submitting memorials and representations. The movement of these constitutionalists remained confined to the urban lower and middle classes. Their movement failed to reach the masses of the state, the peasants and unlettered agricultural labourers. Therefore, they failed in giving a positive lead to the people. But the method of the new leaders were different from that of their predecessors. They were not satisfied with mere resolutions passed at public meetings and duly forwarded to authorities. They thought that the awareness of one in need is more important than that of authorities. Therefore, they were determined to carry their message to the villages and secure the momentum of a mass movement for their agitation. Within a few months the whole face of the Ezhava movement was

changed. What Gandhiji did to the National Congress both Madhavan and Ayyappan did to the Ezhava community.

While Sahodharan Ayyappan concentrated his attention on eradicating the evils of caste and popularising the idea of inter-dining among the Ezhavas and castes considered inferior to them, T.K. Madhavan devoted his entire time and energy for the socio-economic development of the Ezhavas.

According to Madhavan:

So long as the authorities held that Gods and temples, would be polluted by the approach of so called untouchables the social disabilities could not be entirely eradicated. If Gods cease to observe untouchability men will have no justification.¹

Madhavan had emphasised communal justice which he brought was the proper basis for the spirit of nationalism. His movement and activities were more political in character. Though his political career was started not as a Congress man, his activities had a nationalist outlook even in the beginning and later he became a firm follower of Gandhiji and his satyagraha.

After getting inspiration for temple entry movement from Shri Ramon Thampi,² T.K. Madhavan and his friends

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1. K.M. Panikar, "Introduction," to T.K. Madhavan, by P.K. Madhavan, op.cit., pp. IV and V.
 2. Though the Ezhavas started some movement against untouchability and to open certain roads which ran past to the temples closed to them, the concept of temple entry was, as a matter of fact, beyond the imagination of the Ezhavas. In 1917, when the Ezhavas of Cochin submitted a petition to their Maharaja, they said, "..... Even now we have no admission to schools, particularly girls schools. We could not go near to some of the Anchal offices"

launched an intense campaign not only for entry into temple roads but for temple entry as such, making it a part of the equality of citizenship movement. In December 1917 the first editorial on temple entry written by C.V.Kunjuraman for Deshabhimani marked the commencement of temple entry movement in Travancore on the part of the Ezhavas.¹

We have no request that we should get very high places. We have no desire to enter the temples of the caste Hindus. Our prayer is very limited in scope. Our only request is that we have to get the rights and privileges which we would be getting if we were to convert to either Islam or Christianity while remain within the fold of Hinduism."

Mitavadi, August 1917, Vol.5, No.8, pp.31-32.

But among the severnas, Mr. C. Ramen Thempi in Travancore and Kannath Janardhana Menon in Cochin for the first time had mooted the idea of opening temples to the Ezhavas and other untouchables.

(N. Muralidharan, "Nammude Avela ghesemorangal," S.N.D.P. Yogan Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, op.cit., p.313).

While presiding over a meeting held at Quilon in 1917 in connection with the 63rd birth anniversary of Sree Noreyana Guru, Mr. Ramen Thempi stated that the Ezhavas no longer need the parallel temples of their own and suggested that the temples of government and the caste Hindus should have opened them for worshipping.

N. Kumeran, "S.N.D.P. Yogan Chila Smeranakal," S.N.D.P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, op.cit., p.57.

This speech of Ramen Thempi, actually saw the seeds of temple entry movement in Travancore.

2. Actually this article was written by C.V. Kunjuraman very earlier than the date of which had been published. But Mr. K.P. Padmanabha Channer, generally known as K.P. Kayyalakkal the owner of the Deshabhimani had frightened to publish this article in his paper due to counter action from the government side. Ultimately after getting assurance from N. Kumeran, a legal expert from the Ezhava community, who later retired as High court Judge in Travancore, that it would not cause any infringement of existing law, it was published in December 1917. N. Kumeran, op.cit., p.57.

Madhavan was the representative of the S.N.D.P. Yogam in the All Kerala Thiyya conference which was held at Calicut on 14th October 1918 under the auspices of the Cochin Ezhava Samajam presided by Kottiyath Ramunni.¹ In this conference Madhavan delivered a long and inspiring speech in which he stressed the following three points:² (1) Thiyyas should give up without any reservation, the practice of untouchability in respect of those considered lower to them. (2) They should oppose the untouchability practiced by those considered above them, and (3) Thiyyas should observe satyagraha to put an end to untouchability. In the same conference itself the Thiyya Passive Resistance League was formed to fight against untouchability and for temple entry.³

By this time unprecedented awakening was seen among the Ezhavas and a number of meetings were organized by the Ezhava youths all over Kerala. In 1918 about 500 Ezhava youths held a meeting at Eravavoor and took a vow to use public roads which were prohibited to them. They also raised a fund to launch a movement against untouchability.⁴

1. Mitavadi, November 1918, pp.30-32.

2. M.K. Narayanan, "S.N.D.P. Yogavun T.K. Madhavanum," S.N.D.P. Yogam Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, p.149. See also, M.K. Sanoor, op.cit., pp.403-4.

3. Mitavadi, November 1918, pp.8 and 27.

4. Mitavadi, August 1918, p.6.

In the 17th annual meeting of the Yogam, a unanimous resolution was passed to boycott and non-cooperation with all savarna temples, till they were opened to them.¹ As per the request of the Ezhava leaders in 1918 the Ezhavas boycotted Guruvayur Ekadasi.² On 17 Dhanu 1096 (January 1931) a meeting of the untouchables was held at Sivagiri and constituted a committee ^{which} prepared ten principles on temple boycott and propagated it all over Kerala.³ They explained to the people how to implement temple desertion. As a consequence of this propaganda a number of Ezhavas non-cooperated with the caste Hindu temples all over Kerala leading to a reduction in the income of the temples.⁴ In 1919, the Ezhava leaders asked them to refuse to pay taxes till the ban on using temple roads by them was removed.⁵

From 1918 onwards Madhavan and other Ezhava representatives of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly made temple entry a routine issue and discussed that in Travancore Assembly during the next three years. Temple being a religious subject it should not be discussed in the "House" was the reply of the Dewan⁶ and till 1921 Government did not allow

1. P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, op.cit., p.203.

2. Mitavadi, December 1918, Vol.6, No.12, pp.24-26.

3. P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, op.cit., p.216.

4. C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol.I, p.354.

5. Mitavadi, January 1919, Vol.7, No.I, pp.9-11.

6. Menon, P.K.K., op.cit., Vol.II, p.297.

the Ezhavas to present temple entry bill in the Assembly.¹ In 1921 both Madhavan and Chavarkattu Marthandan Vaidhyan had given a notice for a petition for equal citizens rights with special emphasis on entry for all Hindus into public temples. Chief Secretary informed Madhavan that this subject being directly related to religion, according to the rule 19(D) of Popular Assembly this subject came under prohibited one. And he asked him to amend the subject of the petition as equality of citizens right and hoped that he would not refer the subject 'temple entry.'² The hue and cry of Ezhava members time and again in the Assembly did not create any impact due to the indifference of the authorities. On 24th Kumbham 1096, during the time of the session of Popular Assembly, a big protest meeting of the Savarnas and the Avarnas was held at L.I. S. Hall in Travandrum and then a deputation of the Ezhava representatives in the Assembly met Dewan and threatened that if they were not permitted to submit the representation in the Assembly they would walk out from the Assembly.³ The Dewan assured them that the rules of the Assembly would be amended before the next

1. Kerala Kounudi, 12 May 1921.

2. Letter dated 10 February 1921, from N. Rajarand Rao, Chief Secretary of Government to T.K. Madhavan quoted in P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, p.215. See also, M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.412.

3. P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, p.216.

session and then the Ezhavas would be allowed to present their representation.¹ But in the next Assembly in lieu of introducing any amendment, Dewan Raghava Ayya said that the Ezhavas should not be given the same privileges and rights which a convert to Islam or Christianity would get, while remaining within the fold of Hinduism.² This strained the relation between the government and the Ezhavas.

The orthodox section of the savarna Hindus did not like these organized and "defiant" movement of the Ezhavas. The vigour and enthusiasm of the Ezhavas to annihilate the humiliating casteism on the one hand and the interest of the Savarnas to retain their caste hegemony over untouchables on the other caused a number of skirmishes between the Savarnas and the Ezhavas in various parts of Travancore like Kotta, Kadakkavur, Tirunakkara etc.³

One of the important solution to caste suppression, seriously considered by the Ezhava leaders was conversion. There was, however, no unanimity of opinion on the question of conversion and the religion to which conversion was to be sought. While C. V. Kunjuraman supported Christianity, C. Krishnan was in favour of Buddhism and Rarichchan Muppan from Malabar opted for Brahma religion. C. V. Kunjuraman

1. Ibid.

2. P.K. Madhavan, op.cit., Vol. I, pp.130-31.

3. Mitavadi, April 1918, pp.23-26; May 1918; March 1920, p.8c.

preferred Christianity in the light of the favours the Christians received in Travancore. The factor which induced Krishnan to opt Buddhism was the possibility of social and moral uplift.¹ The reason which persuaded Parichchan Muppan to embrace Brahma religion was its anti-idoltry, anti casteism and opposition to priesthood. He very severely criticised Swami's consecration of temples and other religious activities. According to him Swami's activities were nothing but unscrupulous imitation of Brahmanical practices and this would only lead to stratification of mutual antagonism among the Ezhavas.² He asked the Swamy to induce the Ezhavas to join Brahma religion.³ Sahodharan Ayyappan, who propagated the philosophy of "no caste, no religion, no God for man" was neither against Christianity, nor against Buddhism. Though in the later period he embraced Buddhism,⁴ in the beginning he neither supported conversion nor opposed it. However, he was to comment later that, "Past experiences taught one that so long as Hindus remained Hindus, it is impossible to wipe out caste feeling from their mind." In support of

1. C. Krishnan, "Eo Mathamaenu Namude Abimanathe Keduthiyathu," P.K. Balakrishnan (ed.), NarayanaGuru, op.cit., pp.86-87.

2. Mitevedi, April 1917, Vol.5, No.4, pp.38-40.

3. Ibid.

4. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., p.351.

Christianity he said, "It is better to convert to Christianity in which there is no untouchability and unapproachability."¹

Another section advocated the founding of a new religion. For this purpose some of Swami's disciples approached him. In his letter addressed to the Guru, Sivaprasad, one of the disciples of the Swami, said that his (Swami's) teachings of Brahmanical practices to the Ezhavas would not remove mutual antagonism within the community.² As a solution he appealed to the Guru to preach a new religion which is casteless like Buddhism.

Otherwise let us give an open permission to convert to Buddhism or Christianity or Brahma religion, whatever we like to provide at least our offsprings to have freedom and worldly life.³

The conversion idea did not get much of a support since most of the prominent leaders were opposed to it. T.K. Madhavan, Kumaran Asan, Murkoth Kumaran and above all Sree Narayana Guru himself opposed this idea. In fact, in the universalist outlook of the Guru conversion had no place. In a message to the All Religious Conference at Alwaye Advaita Ashrama in 1924 he said,

1. Sahacharan, March-May 1920 (Mecanam-Medam 1095 ME), Vol.2, Nos. 11-12, p.290.

2. Letter dated 12 February 1917 (1st Kumbham 1092 ME) quoted in, Mitavadi, March 1917, Vol.5, No.3, pp.252-3.

3. Ibid.

This great parliament of religion makes it abundantly clear that the ultimate goal of all religion is the same and so there is no need for followers of different religions to indulge in mutual conflict.

The religious conference and repulse of Vaikkam satyagraha pacified the enthusiasm for conversion by a section of Ezhavas for the time being.

Vaikkam Satyagraha

The Vaikkam satyagraha was an agitation launched under the auspices of Indian National Congress and under the leadership of T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon, K. Kelappan, Kuru Namboodiripad, George Joseph etc., in front of the great temple at Vaikkam¹ to open the roads leading to this temple, traditionally off bounds to the low castes. This satyagraha was a product of various factors like the consistent and tiresome work of T.K. Madhavan cooperation and enthusiasm of the educated Savarna middle class and finally the widespread influence and popularity of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress.

Madhavan realised that by the mere presenting resolutions in the Assembly, there were not going to achieve anything. He was watching with growing interest the freedom movement that was taking shape under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. By this time temple entry of untouchables was one of the important issues of the Indian National Congress. Madhavan, therefore, thought of approaching to the Congress for help.

1. Vaikkam is generally known as Dakshinakasi or Varanasi of the south.

Another important reason which compelled Madhavan to seek Congress help was the failure of the League for Equal Civic Rights for campaigning against the practice of untouchability. Though the separation of the Devaswam from the Revenue was one of the important achievements of the League and hence the Ezhavas got some jobs in sarkar service, they were still excluded from highways and public buildings and prohibited from entering and approaching caste Hindu temples. According to Robbin Jeffrey, "The Civic Right League had been quick to forget the anti-untouchability aspect of its original programme when the major grievance of the educated Syrian Christians was met."¹ This disappointment with the League also drove Madhavan to seek the help of Gandhiji.

Apart from the opposition of the government and the failure of the Civic Right League to fight against untouchability aspects of its original programme, the support from the Ezhava community in general² as well as from those Ezhavas in the government service³ was not available for the social struggle against untouchability and other

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1. Robbin Jeffrey, "Temple Entry Movement," Social Scientist, March 1976, p.12.
 2. M.P. Sreekumaran Nair, "Review" of Vaikkom Satyagraha and Gandhi by T.K. Ravindran, published in Journal of Indian History, December 1976, Vol.IV, Part III, p.763.
 3. Madras Mail, 18 May 1920, p.5.

associated disabilities. Since the majority of the Ezhavas were afraid of reprisals from their caste Hindu land lords, they kept away from the movement.¹ Those who were in the government service also had not given any active support to Madhavan's belligerent talk of forceful temple entry,² as they feared that it would be interpreted as an anti-government activity. Therefore, Madhavan had no choice other than to appeal to the Congress for support in order to activate the movement.

When Gandhiji visited South India in 1921 Madhavan met him at Tinnevelley on 30th September 1921 (14 Kanni 1097 ME) to seek his advice for temple entry in Travancore. Mahatmaji advised him to offer Civil Disobedience.³ Gandhiji assured that the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee should take up the matter.⁴ Madhavan described his interview with Mahatmaji as a unique experience. "When I sat near Mahatmaji, I felt a change is coming over my attitude."⁵ The attitude of Mahatmaji towards temple entry had inspired both the educated sevarna middle class as well as the Ezhavas. Caste Hindu leaders like Changanacherry Parameswaran Pillai, Patten

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1. Robin Jeffrey (ed.), People Princes and Paramount Power, p.153.
 2. Madras Mail, 13 May 1920, p.5.
 3. M.K. Sano, op.cit., p.413.
 4. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Ahmedabad, Vol.XXI, 1966, pp.185-8.
 5. M.K. Sano, op.cit., p.406.

Thanu Pillai, T.K. Velu Pillai etc., expressed their support for temple entry.¹

In December 1923, along with K.M. Panicker and K.P. Kesava Menon, Madhavan attended the Kakinada session of the Indian National Congress² and succeeded in getting a resolution for the removal of untouchability adopted by the subject committee of the Congress. As a consequence it was decided to intensify the programme for eradication of untouchability. The Kerala provincial committee met at Ernakulam on 24th January 1924 and formed a committee for the removal of untouchability.³ K.P. Kesava Menon, A.K. Pillai, T.K. Madhavan and others toured all parts of Kerala to explain to the people the Congress programme. It was decided to start a satyagraha at Vaikkam on 30th March 1924. This satyagraha was, indeed, not for temple entry but for the right of the avarnas to use the roads near the temple.⁴ In point of fact, it was the Vaikkam satyagraha which for the first time revealed the depth of the evils of untouchability in India.⁵

1. Ibid., p.413.

2. K.P. Kesava Menon, Kazhinje Kalem, Kozhikode (3d edition), 1969, p.158.

3. This committee was constituted with K. Keleppan, T.K. Madhavan, Kurur Namboodiripad, T.K. Krishna Swamy Iyyer and K. Velayudha Menon as members.

4. Kerala Kaimudi, 1st May 1924, p.1.

5. Bose Anina, "Gandhi's stand on Human Rights in the Vaikkam Satyagraha," Gandhi Marg Journal of Peace Foundation, Vol.2, No.1, April 1920, p.24.

The government followed a repressive policy of arrest and incarceration. K.P. Kesava Menon and T.K. Madhavan were arrested on 7th April and sentenced for 6 months simple imprisonment.¹ It was followed by the arrest of A.K. Pillai, K. Kelappan, K. Velayudha Menon, George Joseph and others on 9th and 11th of April.² But after the arrest of George Joseph and others on 11th April, incarceration was discontinued and barricades were put on the roads against the satyagrahis, who, there upon sat in front of them. In the meanwhile satyagraha became all India famous and attracted leaders from all over India.³ Gandhiji visited Vaikkom on 8th March 1925 and held discussion with Regent Maharani, the Dewan, the Police Commissioner and the caste Hindu leaders.⁴ As a result of his discussion the government agreed to withdraw the police and removed the barricades on condition that the satyagrahis would not enter the forbidden part of the streets.⁵ By November 1925 the government agreed to throw open all streets except to

1. The Hindu, 11 April 1924;

K.P. Kesava Menon, Kozhinje Kalam, pp.168-9. See also, Idem, Bandhanathil Ninny, pp.19-20.

2. T.K. Ravindran, Vaikkom Satyagraha and Gandhi, p.83.

3. C. Rajagopalachari, Vijaya Raghavachariar, E.V. Ramo Swami Naicker came to Vaikkom to lead the satyagraha. The Sikh community from Punjab offered direct support by opening a kitchen for the satyagrahis. But by this time Gandhiji asked to withdraw non-Hindus and non-Keralithes from the movement. See, Kerala Kaumudi, 19th June 1924, p.1.

4. The Hindu, 14 March 1925.

5. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.XXVI, pp.386-7.

the eastern side. At this point, on the advice of Gandhiji, the satyagraha was withdrawn.¹

Though the immediate effect of this movement was negligible in the matter concerned with untouchability and unapproachability, it could create some impact both in the social and political history of India. This satyagraha was the first movement which brought the question of civil rights of the so-called depressed classes into the forefront of Indian politics and emphasised integral connection between Hindu temples and the disabilities of the avarna communities. The satyagraha brought the social disabilities of untouchables to the forefront and made it a problem of practical politics. The sympathy which that satyagraha worked in all parts of India, and impetus it gave to the national struggle of depressed classes for equality were remarkable. In short this satyagraha created a public opinion against the system of untouchability and unapproachability generally in India and particularly in Kerala. Another result of the satyagraha was that the idea of conversion to other religions was stopped for the time being. In the Palpathuruthy meeting of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in 1927, it was decided to forsake the idea of conversion and asked Ezhavus to follow the idea of "one caste, one religion and one God for man," of Sree Narayana Guru.²

1. Madras Mail, 9 February 1925, p.4.

2. Ibid., p.1245.

It is interesting to examine the role of the S. N. D. P. Yogam and the Ezhavas in the genesis and development of the Vaikkam satyagraha. Though Madhavan was a prominent member of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, neither the S. N. D. P. Yogam nor the Ezhava community were responsible for Vaikkam satyagraha.¹ Though the satyagraha included participants from all castes, leadership was mostly in the hands of the sevarnas. The Ezhava community was on the whole indifferent.² When the satyagraha was inaugurated, the S. N. D. P. Yogam did not come out with a clear cut policy regarding temple entry. This indecision is best reflected in C. V. Kunjuraman's words who stated that it was time the Ezhavas seriously considered whether to extend support to a movement which might either be conducive for their development or detrimental to it.³ The Secretary of the Yogam issued a notice in November calling for a meeting to consider the attitude towards the satyagraha 'till the resolution on freedom of movement was still under consideration in the Assembly.'⁴ This shows the real interest and attitude of the S. N. D. P. Yogam. Various

1. Kerala Kamudi, 10 April 1924, p.1.

2. M. P. Gopakumaran Nair, op.cit., p. 763.

3. Kerala Kamudi, 10 April 1924, p.1.

4. Ibid., 27 November 1924, p.1.

factors were responsible for this lack of cooperation from the S. N. D. P. Yogam and the Ezhavas.

By this time the S. N. D. P. Yogam was divided into two different groups which followed two entirely different ideologies. One section which was influenced by the upper strata of the Ezhava community under C. Krishnan was an ardent enemy of the Indian National Congress. The other group which was led by T.K. Madhavan represented the nationalist element in the Ezhavas, took active part in the satyagraha. C. V. Kunjuranan and Sahodharan Ayyappan were not the supporters of satyagraha. As they believed that the untouchability and unapproachability were illegal they wanted to have the sign boards indicating unapproachability removed not by satyagraha but by force.¹ But both of them actively participated in the movement. Sri Narayana Guru himself came out with warm expression of sympathy and support for the satyagraha movement.² According to the advice of Mahatma Gandhi, when the outsiders and the non-Hindus were withdrawn from the movement, C. V. Kunjuranan started a pidiyari prasthanam (a handful of rice contribution from each family every day) which helped to feed the satyagrahis.³

1. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., pp.418-9

2. G. Priyadarshan, "Narayana Guruvum Vaikkam Satyagrahavam," S. N. D. P. Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, op.cit., pp.143-5. But Mr. P. Parameswaran says that there are ample reasons to believe that the Swamiji was not in complete agreement with satyagraha movement. He says it cannot be said that the Swami held the same views as Gandhi regarding satyagraha as a means of solving the problem of pollution and untouchability. See, Parameswaran, op.cit., p.145.

3. C. Kesavan, op.cit., p.145.

But generally the cooperation and support of the Ezhava community was far from satisfactory. Of the nineteen satyagrahis who were convicted in the first phase of the satyagraha only one was an average Hindu.¹ C. Rajagopalachari,² and Ayyamuttu Goundar were dissatisfied with the lack of cooperation from the Ezhavas.

The most important reason for this indifference of the Ezhavas towards this satyagraha was concerned with the attitude of a section of the Ezhava middle class towards the Indian National Congress and the British imperialism. The moderate section of the Ezhava middle class had very great respect and faith in the British sense of justice and fair play. They had imbibed colonial ideology. Kumaran Asan, C. Krishnan, Dalpu and others had believed that the little privileges which they enjoyed were due to the foreign rule.³ During the time of the coronation of British King as the Emperor of India, the S. N. D. P. Yogam celebrated it in all over Kerala and sent a message which said;

The S. N. D. P. Yogam, an association representing the Thiyyas, the most numerous and industrious community in Malabar, Travancore and Cochin beg respectfully to acknowledge their gratitude for the numerous benefit the community have received both directly and indirectly from the British rule to offer their most loyal and heartfelt

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1. Robin Jeffrey (ed.), People Princes and Paramount Power, p. 153.
 2. The Hindu, 27 May 1924.
 3. Achuthan, op.cit., p.141.

congratulations to your Majesty's on this auspicious occasion.¹

Some of them considered that the Britishers were sent to India by God to protect the avarnas from their social grievances.² Therefore, the Ezhava considered that the improvement of untouchables in the social and economic field was due to the influence of British administration.

And at the same time, they thought that the Indian National Congress was an all India organization of the avarnas to retain and continue their social, political and economic hegemony over the untouchables.³ They had little faith in the Congress and their movement for swaraj. As for Krishnan and other Ezhava leader, so long as casteism was existing in India, Indians did not deserve self government. "Reflection of a Thiyya Boy" written by Kumaran Asan in 1908, brought out his deep concern about the miserable plight of the downtrodden untouchables. He wrote:

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1. Vivekodayan, November 1911 to January 1912 (Vrischikam-Dhanu 1087 ME), Vol. VIII, Nos. 8-9, p. 184.
N. Kumaran Asan wrote a poem captioned, "Delhi Kireedadharam," in this poem he extolled British imperialism and its benevolent rule.
Ibid., pp. 17-18.
 2. Vivekodayan, January-February 1916 (Makoran 1091 ME), Vol. XIII, No. 10, p. 351.
 3. Mitavadi, December 1917, Vol. 5, No. 12, pp. 31-32.

"Thy shouldst thou wail, then, O Bharat?
Thy slavery is thy destiny, O Mother!
Thy sons, blinded by caste, clash, among themselves
And get killed; what for is freedom then?"¹

This was the general tendency of a good section of the educated Ezhavas towards Indian freedom. They argued that till the time the untouchables gained necessary self-confidence to demand their rights from government, the British Administration should be continued in India. Otherwise, they feared that the conditions of the untouchables would again be hewers of wood and drawers of water.² According to Krishnan, the success of the Home Rule group would not be the success of the untouchables and he feared that the miserable plight of the untouchables in the princely state would spread to areas which were directly under the British control, after the success of the Home Rulers. Therefore, he asked his people to organize the mighty savarna community and their organization the Indian National Congress, which wanted swaraj.³ Like Ambedkar, Krishnan also considered that the movement of Gandhiji as, "irresponsible" and "insane." In his letters,

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1. Poem reproduced after translation in M. Govindan, op.cit., p.238 - translation was done by K. Ayyappa Panikker.
 2. Achuthan, op.cit., p.141. See also, Mitavadi, December 1917, Vol.5, No.12, p.31.
 3. Mitavadi, October 1917, Vol.5, No.10, pp.2-3.

which he addressed to the Labour Party leaders, George Landbury and Mrs. Lord Athol, Krishnan described the activities of Mahatma Gandhi as "destructive" and a "Himalayan Blunder."¹ Palpu says, "The Congress came here without our knowledge or permission and have nevertheless kept aloof from them so as not to displease the authorities."² Just like Krishnan, another prominent Ezhava leader from Malabar, Shri Murkkoth Kumaran, also opposed Gandhiji and his satyagraha movement and Civil Disobedience Movement. This was mainly because of his belief that so long as the caste grievances existed, if at all self government was obtained it will only be a mere transfer of power from the white man to the upper castes.³ As this satyagraha was controlled by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, this influential sections among the Ezhavas did not cooperate with this movement. There is no wonder that a section of the Ezhavas non-cooperated with the Vaikkom satyagraha, which was launched under the auspices of the Indian National Congress and under the control of Mahatma Gandhi. Though this movement was started for opening the roads to Vaikkom temple, the Ezhava middle class frightened that their cooperation with the Indian National Congress, the ardent enemy of the

1. Letter dated the 23th March 1938 quoted in Achuthan, op.cit., p.196.

2. Dr. Palpu Paper, File No. 7.

3. Murkot Kunhappa, "Murkot Kumaran," pp.167-3.

British Imperialism in India would cause bad relation with the latter. Secondly they preferred British paramountcy to swaraj and Nationalism or self government of the Congress¹ because they feared that the swaraj of the Congress meant government of the savarna. Therefore, they welcomed British supremacy rather than the nationalism of the Congress.²

From this it is clear that the Ezhava elites had no grasp of the nature of British colonial rule in India and the freedom they visualised or wanted was of a limited character. As K. N. Panikkar has described about the 19th century intellectuals³ the Ezhava elites of 20th century were also under a "false consciousness" and hence they failed to grasp the contradiction between British imperialism and the interests of the Indian people which led them to believe that freedom from British rule would reinforce the traditional form of savarna hegemony both in the social and political field. Having imbibed the colonial ideology in place of the traditional forms of authority, it was difficult for them to perceive the spirit of nationalism. They tended to identify the rise of nationalism with the reinforcement of traditional forms of authority sanctioned

1. Vivekodayam, 1907 (1083 ME), Vol.4, No.7, p.5.

2. C. Kosavan, op.cit., Vol.1, p.357.

3. See, K. N. Panikkar, Presidential Address Section III, Indian History Congress, Thirty-Sixth Session, Aligarh, 1973, pp.17-18.

by the Brahmanical Hinduism.

Another section of the Ezhavas, followed the policy of cooperation with the government to get their grievances redressed. This section was ready to do anything for their selfish interest. On the 2nd October 1924, when N. Kumaran introduced a resolution in the Legislative Council for removing the ban on the untouchables to use public road and high ways, that resolution was lost by a lone vote. This solitary vote to defeat this resolution was cast not by the savarnas but by Parameswaran, one of the founding leaders of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, and the younger brother of Palpu.¹ In a letter to Gandhi a satyagrahi wrote, "I am ashamed to say one member of the depressed and prohibited classes himself voted against the entry and sided with the government."² The reason which persuaded Parameswaran to cast his vote against the primary civic right of his community is very interesting. Parameswaran and his supporters wanted to retain the migradaya law of inheritance.³ Government assured him some favours to migradayam, if he voted against the resolution which was introduced in the council for getting

1. Travancore Legislative Council Proceedings, VI February 1925, pp. 76-73.

2. Young India, 19 February 1925.

3. By that time the Ezhavas were divided into two sections on the question of law of inheritance. The modern educated Ezhavas wanted to break the law of inheritance of matriliney and the mixture of both matriliney and patriliney that is generally known as migradayam. It was against the attitude of Parameswaran to retain the migradaya law of inheritance. Therefore, the Ezhavas of Travancore were divided into two.

freedom of using public roads and high ways.¹ In the same way the Ezhava officials also supported the government and opposed satyagraha.²

Another reason was that a group of youths did not have belief in the non-violent satyagraha to remove the notice board which prevented the untouchables to use that roads. As these boards were illegal and illegitimate it was considered that it was their right to remove them by force. A big controversy ensued between Deshabhimani and Kerala Kaumudi on this subject. As these sign boards indicating unapproachability was illegitimate, Kerala Kaumudi under C. V. Kunjuraman argued that these sign boards should be removed by force.³ At the same time Madhavan argued for non-violence and asked to implement Gandhian means of satyagraha to achieve their ends.⁴ This argument between these two veteran leaders also created an ideological confusion among the youths.

The other two important reasons were: (1) the vast majority of the Ezhavas were too fearful of their caste Hindu land lords. Since the poor Ezhavas were dependent on the caste Hindu land lords it was impossible to give

1. Vivekodayam, January-February 1925 (Makaram 1100 ME), Vol. 18, No. 19, p. 302. See also, C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 367.

2. C. V. Madhavan wrote to Chief Secretary, the S. N. D. P. Yogam fell into the hands of "a few misguided Ezhava young men," letter dated 31st October 1933 confidential section. Mr. Madhavan was a high ranking officer in Travancore Government service.

3. C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 356.

4. Loc.cit. See also, M. K. Sanoo, op.cit., p. 419.

their open support to the satyagraha. (2) In addition to that these poor illiterate and ignorant Ezhava masses were actually the slaves of tradition and never liked to break that age long tradition all in a sudden. The poor Ezhavas, who were running after the spiritual qualities of Sree Narayana Guru had little enthusiasm for Gandhian method of satyagraha which was responsible for keeping them away from this movement.¹

Due to the pressure exerted by a few orthodox Hindus² the government did not keep the promises which they assured during the time of Vaikkom settlement. Therefore, a number of satyagrahas of this sort were organized in various parts of Travancore, like Suchindram in 1926 and Tiruvarp in 1927 in order to get the temple roads opened. The government and the orthodox Hindus continued their efforts to suppress this satyagraha.³ In connection with Tiruvarp temple Gandhiji again visited Travancore in 1927. But it did not create any serious impact on the attitude of the authorities and the orthodox Hindus. Therefore, status quo was continued. In 1930 another satyagraha was started again at Suchindram under Gandhi Ramon Pillai. But this satyagraha also failed to

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1. Robbin Jeffroy (ed.), People Princes and Paramount Power, p.153.
 2. The Vaikkom settlement was "flimsy in one respect" as Gandhiji described it for the government had taken shelter under the terms "open to non Hindus /..../"
Mahadev Desai, op.cit., pp.21-22.
 3. The Kerala Karmudi, 21 September 1927, p.1. See also, Mahadev Desai, op.cit., p.22.

achieve their ultimate end. Though the N. S. S. and the S. N. D. P. joined together in fighting against the Hindu orthodoxy and obsecurantism, the political turmoil of early 1930s was not conducive to this cordial relationship. The non-compromising mentality of the Nayers to retain their undoubted hegemony in the sirkar service and legislature on the one side and the inequity of social disabilities of the Ezhavas and the growing class consciousness of the radical sections among the Ezhava middle class were responsible for this bad relation between these two communities. The failure of the struggle to achieve the objective of social equality by getting the temples opened for which thousands had suffered especially due to the opposition of the orthodox Hindus naturally irritated the radical youths of the Ezhava community. The other reason was the long awaited constitutional reform of 1932, where instead of providing any political opportunities to the Christians, the Ezhavas or the Muslim middle class retained the supremacy of caste Hindus especially the Nayers in the legislature. This tended to confirm the idea that the Government of Travancore was for caste Hindus and the Ezhavas and other untouchables would not receive any benefit from this regime. Therefore, the Ezhavas naturally attracted to the Christian and the Muslim camp to form a joint political Congress, which was formed to eliminate the influence of the Nayers who had been

enjoying the political and bureaucratic monopoly of State for centuries, for launching the abstention movement in Travancore. This led the Noyars to leave the camp of agitation for social equality.¹ This cooperation of the Ezhavas with non-Hindus obviously frightened the government. Therefore, on 8th November 1932 with the aim of getting the Ezhavas out of the joint political congress government appointed a Temple Entry Enquiry Committee.² In their report the Committee did not advocate temple entry to the avarnas. According to them, "There is a strong feeling among the avarnas in favour of temple entry. At the same time it has to be recognised that there is considerable opposition from a large body of the savarnas on the other side."³ But they pleaded for the uplift of the avarnas from their social, economic and political grievances and to put an end to distant pollution and recommended the opening of most of the roads, wells and tanks to all castes.⁴

1. R. Velayudhan, op.cit., p.17.

2. A Committee of eight members under V. S. Subramanya Iyer, a retired Dewan of Travancore, was constituted to report on the question of temple entry.
R. Dis No. 648/Dev. dated 25 November 1932. English Records, Trivandrum. See also,
P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.303.

3. The Report of the Temple Entry Enquiry Committee, Trivandrum 1933, p.80.

4. Ibid., p.82.

This reluctance of the expert committee to open the government temples to the avaras, infuriated the Ezhava middle class. The question of conversion came up again. The Ezhava youths formed various organizations in Travancore by the names of Samyuktha Ezhava Sangam, Ezhava Yuvajana Sangam, All Travancore Ezhava Youth League etc. On 31st July 1933 at the first meeting of the Ezhava Sangam passed a resolution urging the S. N. D. P. Yogan to declare that the Ezhavas no longer wish to remain Hindus.¹ These Ezhava youths were eager to demolish the outdated practices of Hinduism and to put an end to the hegemony of caste Hindus for ever and finally to capture the Civic Rights from the caste Hindu Government. As for the Ezhavas both political and religious freedom was inevitable.² The All Travancore Ezhava Youth League propagated the idea of the Ezhavas as an "Independent Community."³ In 1934 the All Travancore Ezhava Youth League was converted to All Kerala Thiyya Yuvajana Sangam.⁴ This League did considerable propoganda work to maintain that the Ezhavas constituted an independent community.⁵ By this time E. Modhevan published a book captioned Swathanthra

1. P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, p.321. See also, The Report of the 30th Annual Meeting of the S. N. D. P. Yogan by Secretary, K.M. Kesavan, 1933, p.7.

2. Ibid.

3. S. N. D. P. Charitram, p.331.

4. Ibid.

5. The Report of the 31st Annual Meeting of the S. N. D. P. Yogan by C. Kesavan, 1934, p.11.

Samudayan (an Independent Community) calling the Ezhavas to abandon all religions and asking them to be an independent community.¹ These sorts of aggressive attack against Hinduism was never witnessed before or after. While presiding over the second meeting of the All Travancore Youth League at Karunagappally on 16th September 1933, Sahodaran Ayyappan urged the Ezhavas to renounce Hinduism as it was impossible to overcome all kinds of deprivation and humiliation at the hands of the upper castes.² From 1934 to 1936 the calls for conversion became an almost daily occurrence in the Travancore native press.³ Though C. V. Kunjuraman was against the Abstention Movement, as far as conversion was concerned he was in favour of radical youths. He supported the Christianity and thousands Ezhavas were ready to renounce Hinduism.⁴ But C. Krishnan and K. P. Thayyali supported Buddhism and Islam respectively. A few Ezhavas embraced Sikhism.⁵ Missionaries of Christianity, Buddhism and Islam came to Kerala to convert Ezhavas to their respective religions.⁶ The Ezhava leaders undertook this conversion as a panacea to fight against the conservative

1. E. Madhavan, Swanthanthra Samudayan, Trivandrum, 1973 (first published in October 1934), pp.111-16.

2. C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol.II, p.112.

3. See the back columns of Kerala Kounudi, Deepika, Malayala Menorana, etc. 1935-36 period.

4. The Kerala Kounudi, 15 March 1936, p.7.

5. Rawalpindi Report says that 5 Ezhavas converted to Sikhism was in order to get rid of their grievances faced by them for having born as low caste Hindus.
Ibid.: 30 April 1936, p.3.

6. C. V. Kunjuraman, Ezhevarudae Mathaparivarthane Samranbham, Kottayam. 1930.

government and orthodox caste Hindus.¹ The 33rd annual meeting of the S. N. D. P. Yogam unanimously passed a resolution to renounce Hinduism en masse by the Ezhavas to get rid of grievances under Hindu obscuratism.² While the choice of a particular religion varied, the determination for renouncing Hinduism was both uniform and firm.

In addition to the aggressive policy of the Ezhavas against Hinduism, the activities of the Indian National Congress also accelerated the movement for temple entry. Gandhiji's epic fast in 1932 and K. Kelappan's fast at Guruvayur had created an unprecedented impact in favour of temple entry movement in Kerala. The activities of Harijan Seva Sangh and the historic "Harijan tour" of Mahatma Gandhi had created an acute demand for temple entry. The Harijan Seva Sangh organized various meetings all over Travancore. In January 1936, Sangham passed a resolution that the effective step should be taken for securing temple entry for the Harijans.³ On 10th March 1936, another meeting of the All Kerala Harijan Seva Sangh was held at Trivandrum for preparing an elaborate agenda for their future action.⁴ This meeting decided to launch a temple entry movement on 5th April 1936, and also to

1. The Kerala Kaumudi, 26 March 1936, p.1.

2. Ibid., 7 May 1936, p.10.

3. Desai Mahadev, op.cit., p.34.

4. The Kerala Kaumudi, 26 March 1936, p.6.

organize public meetings in other 70 centres in Kerala.¹ Another decision was to celebrate 19th April 1936 as an All Kerala Temple Entry day.² They organized procession in 13 districts in favour of temple entry. Mrs. Rameswari Nehru presided over the All Kerala Temple Entry Conference held at Trivandrum on 9th and 10th May 1936 under the auspices of Kerala Provincial Board of the Harijan Seva Sangh.³ This Conference appealed to the Travancore Government to open all state temples to the Harijans immediately. On 3rd November 1936 the All Kerala Temple Entry Conference submitted a memorial signed by 50,522 savarna Hindus of Travancore demanding temple entry for the Harijans.⁴ Thus the "Harijan tour" of Mahatma Gandhi, the continuous work of local Congress supporters and the activities of National leaders like C. Rajagopalachari, Mrs. Rameswari Nehru etc. helped to provide a climate in favour of temple entry. In sum on the one side the radical sections of the Ezhavas were getting restive and even threatened to go out of the Hindu fold, on the other side the consistent work of the Congress and the change of the savarnas in their attitude towards temple entry of untouchables actually prepared the background for the temple entry proclamation in Travancore.

1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Mahadev Desai, op.cit., p.34.

4. P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.309.

Besides the above mentioned reasons, the granting of temple entry can be viewed as a clever tactical move on the part of the then Dewan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer. Ramaswami Aiyer had found a political advantage in opening of the temples. Ramaswamy Aiyer perceived that the opening of temples might lead to the withdrawal of the Ezhavas the strongest section of the Joint Political Congress, from the abstention movement. In addition to this political acumen, Ramaswamy Aiyer being a staunch supporter of Hinduism and an ardent enemy of the activities of Christian missionaries,¹ he did not like the idea of the Ezhavas converting to Christianity.² Therefore, the motive behind this proclamation of Temple Entry was, indeed, to put an end to the problem of conversion for ever. Thus on 12 November 1936, on the occasion of the young Maharaja's birth day, a proclamation was issued, which threw open all the government temples in the state to all Hindus without any discrimination of caste or creed. Rajagopalachari, hailed this as "the most non-violent and bloodless revolution in the history of man in the recent years."³

1. K. Sukumaran, "V.K. Velayudhan," S.N.D.P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, op.cit., p.200.

2. In a conference of the Ezhava Maha Yogam passed a resolution for wholesale conversion of the Ezhavas to the Christianity.
The Kerala Kaimudi, 26 March 1936, p.9.

3. Quoted in Dr. C.C. Karunakaran, "The Temple Entry Proclamation," S.N.D.P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p.109.

CHAPTER-VI
POLITICAL PROTEST

The history of the political movement of the Ezhavas is as old as the Malayali Memorial of 1891. The political protest movement of the Ezhavas and the S. N. D. P. Yogam was started with more than one purpose: for getting representation in the public service and in the legislature in proportion to their numerical strength, for abolishing property qualification of suffrage, for introducing adult franchise and communal electorate, for communal representation in the legislature and finally to put an end to undue predominance of the caste Hindus especially the Noyars in the legislature and public services.

Though the role of the Ezhavas in the movement of Malayali Memorial, the first political protest movement in Travancore, was very nominal, the impact of that movement was very remarkable on the Ezhavas. The Malayali Memorial Movement was organized by the Nayar elites against the dominance of non-Malayali Brahmins in Travancore administration. The non-Malayali Brahmins not only occupied 35 per cent of the top most offices of the State, but also occupied almost all the posts worth Rs. 600 per month and above in Travancore public service.¹ The period between 1817 to

1. Malayali Memorial, p.6, reproduced in the Kerala Archives News Letters, Vol. II, No. II and III, March 1976.

1914, almost all the Dewans except N. Nanu Pillai¹ were the non-Malayali Brahmins. The dominance of non-Malayali Brahmins was resented by the Nayers, who earlier enjoyed political influence as well as a major share in the administration. The Nayers found it difficult to get into government service due to the influence of non-Malayali Brahmins in the Maharaja's Palace and in the administration.² Their inability to reach the higher realm of the administration led them to advocate the claim of "Travancore for Travancoreans." The Nayers highlighted the hegemony of the non-Malayali Brahmins as a dominance of "foreigners." When the Nayers selected the Travancorean theme with anti-Brahmin aspect and they launched their movement on that direction, it was very easy to attract the attention and cooperation of other castes and communities like the Christians, the Ezhavas and the Muslims. With the support of these communities a memorial, generally known as the "Malayali Memorial" signed by 10,037 citizens from various communities was submitted to Sri Mulam Thirunal Maharaja on 11th January 1891.³ The

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1. In 1877 N. Nanu Pillai was appointed as Dewan of Travancore by Ayilyam Thirunal and he continued in that post till 1880. When Visakam Thirunal became the Maharaja in 1880, he asked him to resign and appointed a non-Malayali Brahmin as the Dewan. See, Robin Jeffrey, Decline of Nayar Dominance, p. 340. See also, K. R. Elankath, Dewan Nanu Pillai Biography with His Selected Writings and Letters, Trivandrum, 1981.
 2. Malayali Memorial, op.cit., pp. 11-12.
 3. Ibid., p. 1.

memorial reflected the sentiments and aspirations of the vast majority of the subjects. In that Memorial they protested against "the denial to them of a fair share in the government of their country and their systematic exclusion from the higher grades of its service."¹

This was the first attempt at a mass movement against the Brahmin domination and to secure their rights and privileges by Travancoreans. The interest of all communities were not uniform. While the Nayers tried to recover their lost position, the efforts of the Christians was to get more posts in the government service and the Muslims and the Ezhavas were only agitating for the very entry into the government service.² But this memorial had worked well only for the Nayers, the key organizers of this movement, who soon gained much of what they had sought.³ Even if the memorialists had stressed the point that "there is not a single representative of the Thiyyo Community holding any government appointment on Rs.5 or upwards a month in the state, though intelligent and educated men are not wanting among them; whereas several of their caste-men in Malabar have been advanced to some of the highest offices of the Uncovenanted Civil Service open to the natives of India;"⁴ the public departments of Travancore

1. Ibid., p.2, para 2.

2. Ibid., p.5.

3. Vivakodayam, June-July 1905 (Mithunam 1080 ME), p.32.

4. Malayali Memorial, p.5.

ore closed to the Ezhavas till 1906. The Christians were also dissatisfied with the results of the Malayali Memorial. Therefore, the educated members of these communities looked upon the memorial as a petition of "over 10,000 Nairs."¹ The achievement of the Noyars and the rejection of other communities from the Government service, indeed, infuriated the Christians, the Ezhavas and the Muslims. Therefore, these communities followed the examples of the Malayali Memorial by submitting memorials and memoranda of their separate caste and community to the Maharaja of Travancore. In 1895 and 1896 the Ezhavas submitted two memorials to the Travancore Government. In 1895 an Ezhava Memorial signed by Palpu was submitted to S. Sankara Sobha, the then Dewan to the Maharaja of Travancore.² This memorial said that the backward position of their community was mainly due "to the political and educational disabilities to which the Tijars of Travancore are subjected".³ As that memorial did not do any benefit to the Ezhavas, in 1896 a community Memorial, it is generally known as the Ezhava Memorial, signed by 13,176 Ezhavas, was submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore. This memorial requested in humble terms the granting of ordinary civic rights, which were granted to the converts to Islam or

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- The Madras Mail, 16 November 1896, p.3
 - The Ezhava Memorial, Bangalore, 12 May 1895 was signed by Dr. P. Palpu and submitted to S. Sankara Sobhar, Dewan to T.K. Ravindran, Voikkom Satyagraha and Gandhi, op.cit., p.27.
 - Quoted in Ibid.

Christianity, to the Ezhavas who remained within the fold of Hinduism. But this memorial also failed to produce any results. Not only the memorials of the Ezhavas but also those of the Christians and the Muslims were rejected by the Government on the ground that these memorials arose out of the self interest of these communities. At the same time, Malayali Memorialists, instead of stressing the grievances of the Nayers, gave a Travancorean colour to their petition and that movement was described as anti-Brahmin movement.¹ Therefore, the Ezhava and the Christian Memorials, which represented the grievances of their respective communities, could not create any impact which Malayali Memorial had achieved. Instead of stressing the grievances of separate communities, had it been a movement of non-Hindus and non-caste Hindus against the caste Hindu domination, it would have been more successful. But they could not make such a movement till 193.

When individual attempts of these communities failed, the educated elites of the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims understood that the alliance of the non-Hindu non-savarna communities was essential to fight against the caste Hindu hegemony in Travancore. Thus the Christians, the Ezhavas and the Muslims under the Syrian Christian initiative formed an alliance for the same cause for which they fought

1. "Save us from the Foreign Brahmins is the burden of the cry..." Madras Times, 20 January, 1891. Quoted in, Robin Jeffrey, "A Note on the Malayali Origins of Anti-Brahminism in South India," The Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. XIV, No. 2, 1977, p. 263.

in association with the Nayers. But now the Nayers were their formidable foe. Thus 27 years after the Malayali Memorial, the elites of Christians, the Ezhavas and the Muslims joined together and formed a League for Equal Civic Rights in Travancore to struggle for opening all branches of the government service to all castes and communities and for ending untouchability.¹ As a result of their consistent struggle for more than 3 years² eventually in 1922, they succeeded in achieving their main demand of separating the Devaswam from the Revenue Department. The Government of Travancore announced what is called the Devaswam Proclamation by which the Devaswam was separated from the Revenue Department and the Christians, the Muslims and the Untouchables were appointed in all departments but the Devaswam and Kottaram. Though all the communities had got some benefits in the matter of government job, it was still very meagre, when compared to their numerical strength and educational qualifications. Therefore, the S. N. D. P. Yogan constituted a Public Service Bureau under the Secretaryship of T. K. Madhavan with the aim of pointing out the discrepancy regarding representation of each caste and community in the Travancore public service. But all these activities did not make much difference regarding the monopoly of the caste Hindus

1. Caste and Citizenship in Travancore, published by the Travancore Civic Right League, Kottayam, 1919, p.3.

2. The activities and the demand of the Civic Right League has already been discussed in detail in the third chapter.

especially the Noyars and the non-Malayali Brahmins in the government service. In 1932, the Noyars and the non-Malayali Brahmins who constituted about 18 per cent of the total population of Travancore held 74 per cent of the total appointments in the state. At the same time all other communities, who constituted about 82 per cent of the total population of the state occupied only 36 per cent of the total jobs in the state. The military and the Devaswam departments were excluded from this account. Both these departments were staffed exclusively by the caste Hindus of whom large majority were the Noyars. Therefore, this bureaucratic hegemony of the caste Hindus especially, the Noyars and the Non-Malayali Brahmins and the nominal representation of the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims naturally exasperated the latter and brought them together in their fight against the dominant share of the caste Hindus in the Travancore bureaucracy. This was one of the important reasons for the most important well organized political protest viz., the Abstention Movement in the 1930s.

The unemployment problem was another important reason for political protest in Travancore. With the beginning of the 1930s the problem of unemployment had reached an acute stage in this educationally advanced princely state. This problem was associated with various factors such as rapid growth of population, increase in the number of educated people was in excess of demand, lack of industrial development coupled with the renunciation of "traditional"

occupation by most of the castes, the caste restrictions imposed upon the untouchables and the non-Hindus, the monopoly of government service by the caste Hindus, decline of the joint families etc. In the period between 1901 and 1921 the population of Travancore had increased by more than a million.¹ After the modernization and the practical recognition of English as official language of the state, almost all castes and communities started sending their children to schools and colleges with a view to qualify them in the government service. As a consequence of this the qualified hands were in excess of demand.² Being an agricultural country, the industries were not yet developed to accommodate the increase in population, they remained more or less unemployed. Though the concept of "traditional" occupation was wrong notion a number of communities due to the erroneous notion of prestige drifted away from their important occupations which they monopolised for a long time.³

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1. According to 1901 Census the total population of Travancore was 29,52,151 (Census of India Travancore Part I 1901, p. 88) In 1921 it was increased to 40,06,062 (Census of India Travancore, Part I 1921, p. 34).
 2. According to the estimate of the Unemployment Enquiry Committee the total number of educated people seeking employment every year in Travancore was 3,500. At the same time the number of people absorbed both in the government and private service was 1,360. This shows that 2,140 out of 3,500 were remained as unemployed. See, The Census of India, Travancore, Part I, 1931, p. 253.
 3. Among the Ezhavas only 8 in hundred followed toddy drawing and among the Brahmins only 17 in hundred continued their 'traditional' occupation of priesthood. Census of India Travancore, 1921, p. 123. But Velu Pillai says, among the Ezhavas only 38 in a thousand and among the Brahmins only 161 in a thousand followed their traditional occupations. Op. cit., Vol. III, p. 12.

As a result of the partition of joint families, the holdings of land became uneconomic¹ and inadequate to meet their increased needs. Therefore, the younger educated generation left their fields in search of jobs.

When the government service was mainly reserved for upper caste Hindus, the educated youths from the non-Hindus and the non-caste Hindus remained unemployed. About 37.3 per cent of the English educated and 25.1 per cent of the vernacular educated Christians and 9.2 per cent of the English educated and 8.9 per cent of vernacular educated Ezhavas were unemployed.² They were, indeed, exasperated and annoyed. Therefore, they organised themselves to secure their due share in the government service, and to demolish the hegemony of the caste Hindus in the government service. In the meantime the Nayers, among them about 32.8 per cent of the English educated and 51.1 per cent of the vernacular educated people who were unemployed³ wanted to retain their control in the government service. Then the educated unemployed section among the non-caste Hindus and the non-Hindus cherished a tendency to question the sway of the caste Hindus, especially the Nayers in the government service,

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1. According to 1921 Census about 38 per cent of the holdings were below the size of one acre. Of the total number of holdings more than 87 per cent were less than five acres and as much as 95.5 per cent below 10 acres. Census of India Travancore 1921, p.490.
 2. Census of India Travancore 1931, Part I, p.258.
 3. Ibid.

whereas the Nayers showed eagerness to retain, their old position. The interest of both these groups clashed in the early 1930s.

Legislative Reforms and Abstention Movement

Travancore enjoyed special prerogatives among the princely states for having the distinction of being the first Indian state to set up a Legislative Council in 1888 for the purpose of making law and regulation.¹ It was a small council of eight members of whom not less than two were non-officials. These non-officials were nominated by the government. The Dewan was the ex-officio President. The tenure of the Council was three years. The Council was purely a deliberative body for purposes of legislation and had no administrative function. Though all the members had the right of discussion and voting and the council had plenary powers of legislation subject to the Ruler's assent before a measure could pass into law, there was no measure relating to public revenues could be introduced in the council except with the previous sanction of the Dewan.² In 1898 the Council was enlarged. It raised the minimum number of members from five to eight and maximum from eight to fifteen.³ This time the proportion of the non-official members nominated by the government fixed at two fifths of the

1. The Travancore Government Gazette, 10 April 1888, Part II, Chapter I, No. I.

2. Administrative Report of Travancore 1937-38, p.20.

3. Ibid.

total number. The principles of electing members were not conceded. The previous sanction of the Dowry was made necessary not only for measures affecting public revenue but also for those affecting the religion or religious rites and usages of any class.

Besides establishing the Legislative Council, the Maharaja Sri Mulam Thirunal also extended his administrative experiments by setting up in 1904 a "Praja Sabha" called Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. During 1905-06 the Maharaja of Travancore granted the people the right to elect members to the assembly. But the right to franchise was mainly determined by the land revenue.¹ In the beginning, those who were paying more than hundred rupees per annum as land tax were only eligible to cast their vote.² But later this amount was reduced to rupees fifty.³ That was why Henry Bruce commented about this thus:

The constitution and the working of the Assembly shows that however genuinely popular it may be it is neither legislative nor executive nor widely representative. No such body would for a moment satisfy the modern agitators in British India. In order to elect or to be elected a person has essentially to have a yearly income of 3,000 Rupees
.....⁴

In short this was an "assembly of the representatives of the land holders and merchants in the country."⁵

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1. See, Proceedings of the second meeting of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, Travancore 1905, p.1. See also, P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.62.
 2. Proceeding of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, 1905, p.1.
 3. Ibid., 10th session 1911, Appendix 'A', p.v.
 4. Letters from Malabar, p.xxvi quoted in P.K.K.Menon, op.cit., p.59.
 5. The Travancore Government Gazette, dated 4 October 1904, see Part II, Chapter I, No.3.

In 1919 the Legislative Council was again remodelled by the Regulation I of 1095 ME. The new Council was not only enlarged by raising the minimum number of members to 25 but also granted to the people the privilege of electing the members to the Council. Eight out of the eleven non-official seats were thrown open for election, four by the general electorate (one for each of the four Revenue Divisions of the State) one by the Jermias, one by the European Planting Community, one by the merchants traders and factory owners, and one by the non-official members of Town Improvement Committee.¹ This time a limited right was granted to the Council to interpellate the government and to discuss the annual budget was conceded. According to the Legislative Council Regulation II of 1097 ME (1921 A. D.) all persons who paid an annual land tax not less than Rs.5 or a municipal tax of Rs.3 and in the Town of Trivandrum which returned one member of Rs.1 or professional tax to a municipality or income tax to the government and all the graduates of a recognised university and all retired officers of the Nair Brigade or Army or Navy were entitled to cast their vote.² The franchise qualification shows that both these constituent bodies were

1. R. Ramakrishnan Nair, Constitutional Experiments in Kerala, Trivandrum, 1964, p.9.

2. See, Travancore Administrative Report 1937-38, pp.21-22. See also, P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.64.

dominated by the land lords and the upper middle class section of the society. According to this amended regulation of 1921, the total number of electors during 1922-23 was about 96,316 which formed 2.5 per cent of the total population of the state.¹ Though some relaxation was made by the various constitutional reforms introduced in the Council and Assembly as land tax still continued to be the main criteria of franchise, the traditional land holding savarna communities especially the Noyars monopolised the legislature and most of the communities like the Ezhavas and the Muslims were completely excluded from the Legislature.

As long as the suffrage was based upon property qualification, the Noyars being the largest body of tax payers, they used to get more seats than what they really deserved on the basis of their population. This situation arose out of the steps taken by the government in order to change the existing land relations. After the pattam proclamation law of 1865, the Noyars, who were the then tenants of the state, became land lords. When partition took place in the Nayar Iaravada, most of their lands were mortgaged to the Christians and other communities. Though the Christians and other communities had purchased the partitioned land of the Noyars, even if they practically enjoyed the permanent occupancy right they were not legally recognised as the owners of the land

1. Loc. cit.

and the land taxes were still paid in the name of mortgagors.¹ This naturally gave more voting right to the Noyars than the actual property qualification warranted. In addition to that, the partition of the Taravads also favourably affected the Noyars. Since the new branches of the families also had enough land to qualify the Noyars for franchise. This could be demonstrated by referring to the deeds executed during the five year period after the proclamation of "Nair Regulation" in 1925. The Noyars had executed 32,903 partition deeds covering an area of 334,300 acres of land which had been distributed among the 400,864 individuals.² This naturally increased both the number of land owners and small scale holdings among the Noyars. The actual changes in the land holding, therefore, did not materially affect the dominance of the Noyars in the legislature. The following Table 29 shows the position of the Noyars and other communities in the legislature.

Table-29³

The Representation of Various Castes and Communities in the Travancore Legislative Assembly Between 1922-1931

Community	Population	Members in the Legislative Council			
		1922	1925	1928	1931
TOTAL	50.59	23	23	23	23
Noyars	8.68	12	13	14	15
Christians	16.04	7	7	6	4
Ezhavas	8.69	0	0	0	0
Muslims	3.53	0	0	1	0
Other Caste Hindus	4.29	4	3	2	3
Depressed Class	9.17	0	0	0	1

1. Travancore The Present Political Problem, pp.24-25.

2. Ibid., p.7.

3. Ibid., p.24.

This shows that the Nayers who constituted about 17 per cent of the total population captured a majority of seats in the Council - 52 per cent in 1922, 57 per cent in 1925, 61 per cent in 1928 and 65 per cent in 1931. Similarly the Sri Mulam Assembly was also dominated by the Nayers. In 1933 43 seats in the Assembly were distributed as follows: 24 Nayers, 8 Christians, 3 Ezhavas, 5 Caste Hindus, one Muslim and one from the depressed classes.¹

In the first four elections, the Ezhavas did not get a single seat in the Council. The Muslims and the Christian were also dissatisfied either with their non-representation or their nominal representation. The attempt of the Ezhavas and the S. N. D. P. Yogan to get their due share in the Legislative Council, Sri Mulam Assembly and other representative bodies started since 1904.

Since the formation of Sri Mulam Popular Assembly in 1904 the Ezhava middle class demanded adequate representation in the various democratic bodies such as Legislative Council, Sri Mulam Popular Assembly etc. In 1905, Kumaran Asan, a nominated member from the Ezhava community to Sri Mulam Popular Assembly, pleaded for providing adequate representation in the Legislative Council and various town improvement Committees.² In 1914 the Ezhava representatives in the Assembly argued for

1. Ibid., p.21.

2. Proceedings Sri Mulam Popular Assembly 1905, p. 73.

a special electorate for their community to get adequate representation. According to K.M. Krishnan, "Since the institution of Assembly only one Eshava had been elected as a member by the Taluk voters in one year, they had little or no chance of being adequately represented in the Assembly under the ordinary rules."¹ The S.N.D.P. Yogam, both inside and outside the Assembly, time and again complained about their grievances. On 5th August 1927, ^{the} S.N.D.P. Yogam submitted a memorial to the Maharani Regent to redress their grievances in the Legislative Council. In this memorial they said that the electoral rules pertaining to the Legislative Council did not enable them to get elected from the general constituency.²

Though we are a land owning class owing to the high franchise now fixed by the rules we have not got a majority of voters in any one of the electorates ~~...~~ We also beg to submit that a great majority of our men are workers and the electoral rules fortunately did not make any provision for a labour constituency, although the government were careful to make adequate provision for capitalists, viz., jeemias, the planters and the commercial and industrial interests. Our prayer, therefore, for a proper and adequate representation in the Council is justified by the large interests that we have to safeguard. We have waited in 1924 on deputation to the Dewan and submitted a memorial on the subject for this consideration, when he promised to consider our claim for separate representation if we fail to win any seat in the second general election. Though we have contested more than one seat, we failed to secure any. The third general election is fast approaching and, we, therefore, pray that this

1. Ibid., 1914, p.110.

2. Travancore The Present Political Problem, op.cit., p.22.

question may be taken up for consideration and adequate provision made in the rules so that we may be enabled to return our own candidates for the Ezhavas or by the formation of plural constituencies with seats reserved for the Ezhavas.¹

A community of which the majority of people were agricultural labourers and industrial workers had been denied franchise rights, since the suffrage was based upon land revenue. Though the Ezhavas, through excise and customs contributed a good portion of income to the state revenue, the government totally excluded these sort of revenues in the fixing of franchise qualification. Therefore, they described the suffrage which was based upon land revenue as aristocratic semi-feudal and oligarchical in character. As long as education was concerned the percentage of literates among the Ezhavas was 42 per cent which was greater than the state average. As far as industrial activities were concerned their contribution was more than any other community. That was why Dewan Katt, once said, "The Ezhavas are entitled to special consideration and gratitude of all Travancore."²

The franchise based essentially on land tax was unsuited to the condition that prevailed in Travancore because at that time only 54.3 per cent of the population was dependent on agriculture and the income from the land was

1. Quoted in ibid., p.22.

2. Quoted in ibid.

only 17.6 per cent of the total income of the state.¹ At the same time excise and customs contributed 34.7 per cent of the total income of the state.² The excise and customs revenues had mainly been contributed by the Christians, the Ezhavas and the Muslims. The exclusion of excise and customs for the purpose of franchise qualification annoyed all these communities and hence they demanded abolition of property qualification. Another factor which induced the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims to oppose property qualification was that the persons who were in possession and who actually paid the land tax was not entitled for franchise since the taxes were still paid in the name of mortgagors. Therefore, they demanded when property qualification is regarded as a criterion of eligibility to vote, it is obvious that a person, who is in possession and who actually pays the land tax, though in another mans name should be entitled to vote than the nominal registry holder.³ Had the franchise not been confined to land tax alone the position of the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims, who were mainly engaged in industry, transport and trade would have been better. That was why the meeting of the Ezhava Maha Jana Sabha, which was held at Alleppy on 27th November 1932 under the auspices of the S. N. D. P. Yogam and under the Presidentship

1. Ibid., p.26.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., p.24.

of K. Ayyappan opposed the land revenue qualification.¹ On 26 May 1928, during the time of Simon Commission's visit to India C. V. Kunjuraman, General Secretary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, submitted a representation to the commission to enumerate the various disabilities and pointed out the need to retain the communal electorate, to provide separate electorate for the Ezhavas and requested the introduction of adult franchise.² In addition to this several representations were sent to the Dewan and the Resident demanding adult franchise and reservation of seats. On 18th March 1932 the Ezhava members of the Sri Mula Popular Assembly submitted a representation to the Dewan Katts pointing out that the Ezhavas would not be able to elect a single candidate, if the franchise was on the basis of land revenue and requested him to introduce either adult franchise or special electorate for the Ezhavas.³ But there was no change in the attitude of the authorities.

Meanwhile, in June 1932, an announcement regarding constitutional reform was made by the government.⁴ Immediately the S. N. D. P. Yogam summoned a meeting on 29 June 1932

1. P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, p. 204.

2. See, P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, Appendix 22, pp. CXLVIII-CLVI. See also, M. Muralidharan, "Nammude Avakaso Samarangal," S. N. D. P. Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, p. 309.

3. Thazhava Kesavan, "Nivarthana Prakashobhanam," S. N. D. P. Golden Jubilee Souvenir, p. 226. See also, P. K. K. Menon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 335.

4. The Press Communique, 2 June 1932, see, Ibid., p. 325.

at Quilon under the Presidentship of K. P. Asan and demanded adult franchise and if this was not found possible all tax payers irrespective of the quantum of tax paid, be made eligible to vote.¹ The meeting proposed to the government to reserve 17 per cent of the seats for the Ezhavas in the Assembly and the Council on the basis of population. As a political body of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, it was decided to form a new organization by the name of Ezhava Rashtra Sabha which came into being in 1932.² When this new organization met at Quilon on 31 July 1932, the need for adult franchise and the reservation of seats on the basis of communal representation for the Ezhavas was stressed.³ But government rejected these demands. According to the government, "The formation of communal electorate is altogether unsuited to Travancore," it would only help "to create a communal cleavage in the country."⁴ On the question of adult franchise, the government's answer was that:

The decision in Travancore is at present based on communal or sectional interests and unless popular parties formed on political lines come into existence the introduction of adult franchise would endanger the larger interest of the state.⁵

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1. C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 39.
 2. P. S. Volayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, p. 282.
 3. C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 40-41.
 4. P. S. Volayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, p. 279.
 5. Dasan, 31 October 1932, Vol. 6, No. 11.

By this time the Legislative Council Reform was passed on 28 October 1932 which came into force with effect from 1 January 1933. The main feature of this Regulation was that the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly and the Legislative Council were abolished and a bicameral legislature was created the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly and the Travancore Sri Chitra State Council.¹ This new reform neither changed the franchise nor made it in any way responsible to the legislature. The principle of autocracy remained unchanged. The new regulation once again stressed the property qualification; in the Sri Mulam Assembly eligibility required annual land tax of Rs.5 or more and in the council it was fixed on a higher standard of annual land tax of Rs.25 or a municipal tax of Rs.5.²

This long awaited administrative reform, instead of providing any new opportunities to the untouchables and minority communities again retained the supremacy of caste Hindus by giving undue importance to land tax. This naturally increased the frustration of the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims. They understood that as long as the franchise was based upon property qualification the Noyars would continue to have majority in the legislature for they constituted the largest number of tax payers in the state.

1. Administrative Report of Travancore, 1936-37, p.22.

2. Ibid.

According to them, "The autocracy of one individual is infinitely better than the predominance of a single community in an Indian state when there are conflicting communal interests."¹ They also thought, "So long as the Nayar community maintain predominance in the public service and in the legislature no truly democratic aim is realisable."²

As soon as the announcement of the constitutional reforms, a meeting of the Ezhava Maha Jana Sabha was held at Quilon on 27 November 1932 under the auspices of the S. N. D. P. Yogam to protest against the new reform and demanded adult franchise and demanded the reservation of four seats in the Council and 10 seats in the assembly for the Ezhavas.³

This Yogam appointed a committee to formulate a programme of action in association with the like minded organization.⁴ According to R. Velayudhan, "The sociological process of the crisis among the Ezhavas brought them shoulder to shoulder with the Christians and the Muslims."⁵ Now the Ezhavas, under C. Kesavan began to turn towards the aggrieved and disappointed Christians and the Muslims to launch a crusade for political and bureaucratic representation on communal

1. Travancore Joint Political Congress, p.22.

2. Loc. cit.

3. Thezhava Kesavan, op. cit., p.227.

4. Loc. cit.

5. R. Velayudhan, op. cit., p.17.

basis. Thus the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslim middle class stood, as a united body and resolved to work along strictly constitutional lines to get their grievances redressed.¹ On 17th December 1932 a combined meeting of the Christians, the Ezhavas and the Muslims met at Trivandrum under the Presidentship of A. J. John. This meeting gave birth to the Travancore Joint Political Conference.² This conference submitted a memorandum to the Dewan on 9 January 1933, which demanded the introduction of communal representation and reserved seats for particular communities in the Legislature.³

But the press note issued by the government on 27th January 1933 revealed the reluctance of the government for reservation of seats in the joint electorates.⁴ This reluctance from the government side had created a strong and tempestuous political agitation in Travancore. On 25th January 1933 a meeting of Joint Political Conference was held at L.M. S. Hall, Trivandrum, under the Presidentship of A. J. John and passed the famous Nivarthanam⁵ or 'absention'

1. Travancore Joint Political Congress, p.1.

2. Thezhava Kesavan, op.cit., p.227.

3. The Memorandum reproduced in the Dasan, 14 January 1936, Vol.6, No.21.

4. K.K. Kusuman, The absention Movement, Trivandrum, 1976, p.33.

5. Famous Malayalam scholar I. C. Cheeko was the person who coined the word, 'Nivarthanam' (Malayalam) which means absention. The joint political conference did not want to use the word non-cooperation in lieu of absention because they wanted to identify their movement with the

resolution. According to this resolution, the Joint Political Conference planned to launch an agitation aimed at boycotting election to the new legislative bodies¹ and requested the persons who had filed their nomination would withdraw as a protest against the discrimination of the government towards non-Hindus and untouchables.² On behalf of the Ezhavas and the S.N.D.P. Yogam, C. Kocovan, C. V. Kunjuraman and M. Govindan supported this Nirvarthanam resolution.

In the meanwhile the government had admitted the demands of the Ezhavas and the Muslims. On 7th February 1933, C. V. Kunjuraman and M. Govindan of the S. N. D. P. Yogam along with Kamalizethu Sankaran and M. Madhavan Vaidhyar met the Maharaja at Kanyakumari.³ At this meeting the Maharaja assured the Ezhava representatives that provision would be made for getting the Ezhavas seven seats in the Assembly and two seats in the council through representation, election and nomination.⁴ As this assurance had been felt as very genuine, both C. V. Kunjuraman and M. Govindan

non-cooperation movement under Mahatma Gandhi in British India. This was mainly because that the abstentionists wanted the sympathy from Britishers. To avoid misunderstanding that their movement was a part of non-cooperation movement, they intentionally selected nirvarthanam or abstention instead of nirahakaranam or non-cooperation.

M.M. Varkey, Ormakalilute (Autobiography), Kottayam, 1971, p.96.

1. Travancore Joint Political Congress, op.cit., p.221.
2. Ibid.
3. 30th Annual Report of the General Secretary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam 1933 (1109-1-11), p.4.
4. The Kerala Karmudi, 7 May 1936, p.1.

changed their prior attitude towards abstention movement. Therefore, with the aim of creating an atmosphere to retreat from the Abstention Movement the leaders of this community met at Kalthamukku S. N. D. P. Office in Trivandrum. This meeting was summoned by the Yogam President Madhavan Vaidhyar.¹ C. Kesavan and other radical sections among the Ezhavas left the meeting as a protest against this change of attitude of C. V. Kunjuraman and M. Govindan.² A special meeting of the S. N. D. P. Yogam was summoned at Changanecherry on 14th March 1933 under the Presidentship of K. Ayyappan. In this meeting both C. V. Kunjuraman and M. Govindan tried to convince the audience about the positive implications of their stand. But the Yogam, in general, was against this proposal of C. V. Kunjuraman and M. Govindan and the abstention resolution was ratified with 1491 votes against 9 votes.³ Various Ezhava organizations arranged a number of meetings to support the abstention movement.⁴

Due to the combined efforts of the Ezhavas, the Christians and the Muslims under the leadership of C. Kesavan, N. V. Joseph, T. M. Varghese, M. M. Varkey, P. K. Kunju etc., the Niyarthanam agitation spread all over Travancore. Even though the activities of the Joint Political Conference had

1. C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 68.

2. Ibid.

3. Thezhava Kesavan, op.cit., p. 228.

4. See, C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 71.

succeeded in marshalling the support of the bulk of these three communities, the government managed to conduct the election in June 1933 and some members belonging to these communities contested the election. In this election, through election and nomination Ezhavas got seven seats in the Assembly and 2 seats in the Council.¹ That in the Assembly more than 60 per cent and in the Council about 59 per cent of the seats were elected without contest² reveals the success of the abstention movement.

After the election the abstentionists continued their agitation for the dissolution of the Legislature. On 21st August 1933 the All Travancore Joint Political Conference met at Trivandrum and changed its name, the All Travancore Joint Political Congress. In this meeting it was declared that the aim of the Congress was to achieve the representation in the Legislature, the Public Service and the Noir Brigade in proportion to the numerical strength of each community, the introduction of adult franchise and finally to usher in responsible government.³ On 31st July 1933 Ezhava Mahajana Sabha under the Presidentship of C. Kesavan passed a resolution demanding the S. N. D. P. Yogam to pass

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1. In the Assembly out of seven, three were elected and 4 were nominated and in the Council 2 of them were nominated. See, P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Cheritam, p.319.
 2. On the whole out of 48 seats in the Assembly 29 seats and in the Council out of 22 seats, 13 seats were filled unopposed.
A. Balakrishna Pillai, Kesariyude Mukaprasangal, Kottayam, 1961, pp.84-87.
 3. Yuvabharathy, 26 August 1933, Vol.II, No.2.

non-confidence against those who had submitted the nomination for election against the decisions of the S. N. D. P. Yogam.¹ In the end of July a meeting of the S. N. D. P. Yogam passed a non-confidence resolution against K.M. Krishnan Vakil and K. C. Karunakaran who had submitted the nomination for election and had accepted the nomination of the government respectively.² A similar resolution was also passed in the meeting of the Ezheva Mahajana Sabha held at Quilon against K. Sankaran and C. V. Kunjuran.³ The S. N. D. P. Yogam at its 30th Annual meeting which was held at Alleppy on 27 August 1933 passed a resolution demanding the dissolution of the Legislature. On the day of the first meeting of the newly constituted Council, the members of these three communities organized a mass fast to protest against the new Council.⁴ At that time a strong movement against C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar was organized and its historical meeting Kozhancheri on 13 May 1935, C. Kesavan, who presided over this meeting openly demanded the dismissal of C. P. Ramaswamy.⁵ Kesavan was arrested on 7th June 1935 for his inciting speech at Kozhancheri⁶ and sentenced for two years imprisonment and a

1. P. S. Velayudhan, S. N. D. P. Charitram, p. 332.

2. C. Kesavan, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 86.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., p. 87.

5. Thazhava Kesavan, op.cit., p. 228. See also, P. K. K. Menon, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 369. Malayala Manorama, 14th May 1935.

6. Malayala Manorama, 8th June 1935.

fine of Rs.500.¹ In addition to that the government prohibited the meeting of the Joint Political Congress. The arrest of Kesavan came as a shock to the Ezhavas and the S. N. D. P. Yogam. They sent telegrams and memoranda to the Viceroy, the Maharaja and other officials against oppression and the arrest of their leaders.²

The political unrest in the State persuaded Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar to advise the Maharaja to introduce various reforms to redress the grievances of non-Hindus and untouchables. A public service commission was constituted to ensure fair representation for backward communities in the public service and 40 per cent of the jobs in the intermediate division were reserved for backward communities.³ All lower level posts were to be filled in proportion to the population of each caste or community.⁴ The second victory of Abstentionists was when the government decided to reorganize the Nair Brigade and Travancore military force and to bring them under the Indian State force.⁵ Now

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1. Though the Session Judge at Quilon sentenced him for one year simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs.500. But in the High Court it was increased to two years and a fine of Rs.500. See, 33rd Annual Report of the General Secretary of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in 1936, p.6.
 2. In the telegram to the Viceroy says, "The S. N. D. P. Yogam Council protest Travancore Government's highly repressive measures against oppressive communities. Their leaders and General Secretary of the Yogam arrested and prosecuted. Public meetings banned and individuals gagged. Discontent aggravated. Pray your Excellency intervene, alleviate suffering, redress grievances." Malayala Manorama, 18 June 1933, p.3.
 3. Thazhava Kesavan, op.cit., p.230.
 4. Ibid.
 5. P.K.K. Menon, op.cit., Vol.II, p.368.

recruitment became open to all, earlier only the Nayers were recruited. The franchise qualification had also been widened by reducing property qualification and communal representation in the Legislature. According to the new reform 8 seats for the Ezhavas and 3 seats each for the Muslim and the Latin Catholics were reserved in the Assembly and in the Council 2 seats for the Ezhavas and one each for the Muslims and the Latin Catholics were reserved.¹ The first general election on the basis of this communal representation was held in April 1937 (Madam 1112) and there was no contest for any of the 8 seats reserved for the Ezhavas in the Assembly and 2 seats in the Council.² In the election Travancore Joint Political Congress obtained absolute majority and T.M. Varghese was elected as the Deputy President, the highest elective office of the Legislative Assembly, after defeating Puthuppally S. Krishna Pillai, E. Subramanya Iyyer, Pattan Thanu Pillai and Vaikkam Rama Krishna Pillai.³

Thus due to the consistent work of the S. N. D. P. Yogam along with the Christians and the Muslims, the dominance of the Nayers in the legislature, public service and military

1. The Administrative Report of Travancore 1936-37, pp.22 and 98-99. See also, Thozhava Kocuvan, op.cit., p.230.

2. Loc.cit., see also, Administrative Report, 1936-37, p.99.

3. E.M. Kovoov, T.M. Varghese (Biography), Kottayam, 1965, p.83.

was reduced to a considerable extent. The success and achievement of the S. N. D. P. Yogam in their fight against discrimination in various fields like education, employment, politics and religion was remarkable.

At the same time it has to be admitted that the abstention movement was avowedly a communal movement. This movement became reactionary and undemocratic when they organized on caste basis for securing communal electorates and for reservation of seats on communal basis in the legislature as well as in the public service. It was, indeed, the first mass political movement in Travancore and precursor of the Travancore State Congress, but the nature of this movement was communal and therefore, against the unity of the people. It is a contradiction that the S. N. D. P. Yogam, which was named after Sree Narayana Guru, who lived and worked for the unity of all contributed to the growth of communal feelings.

CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

From the second half of the 19th century, the princely state of Travancore was in a state of transition. The factors largely responsible for changes in the social and economic spheres were the introduction of laws patterned on western concept of private property in land, growth of a cash economy due to the development of plantation industries, organization of transport and communications, growth of small scale industries and increase of overseas trade and the spread of English education. The emergence of a middle class in Travancore was as a result of the transformation brought about by these forces. The impact of these forces was not limited to the upper castes alone but to the untouchables like the Ezhavas. The middle classes in Travancore were, therefore, drawn from almost every religion and caste.

But the members of middle classes belonging to lower castes like the Ezhava faced discriminations from the upper castes. Most of the public facilities and opportunities were denied to them which affected their social and economic advance. Therefore, their immediate material interest necessitated a change in the existing caste and social practices which kept them segregated from the mainstream of social and political life. The Travancore Ezhava Sabha

founded by Palpu in 1896 to bring the various denominations of the Ezhavas under one common organization was an expression of this need. But these endeavours failed to get the support of the masses, since its arguments had appealed only to a small group of educated upper sections of the Ezhavas.

It was the spiritual leadership and the ideas of Sree Narayana Guru that attracted the masses. By this time Sree Narayana Guru had become popular after his famous consecration of "Ezhava Shiva" at Aruvippuram. The consecration was a rebellion against the existing tradition and customs of the society. In other words it was a protest and challenge against Brahmins domination in religious matters. From that day onwards the 'lower castes' enjoyed the freedom to worship the higher Gods of Hinduism. Apart from the religious significance, his ideas on caste, customs and rituals, on western education and on the importance of industry and commerce were also in conformity with the aspiration of the middle classes which immediately adopted these ideas for their progress.

It is generally held that the S. N. D. P. Yogam was organized for the propagation of the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru.¹ Kumaran Asan had traced the genesis of the

1. M. S. A. Rao, op.cit., p.vii. See also, P. V. Velayudhan, "Sree Narayana Guru: A Peep into His Life and Work," S. N. D. P. Yogam Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, p.16.

S. N. D. P. Yogam to the consecration of Aruvippuram Shiva temple in 1888. Though it is true that the S. N. D. P. Yogam was an extension of the Aruvippuram Kshetrayogam which was formed to protect the temple and mutt adjacent to it, the ideas behind the consecration of Aruvippuram temple and the motives behind the formation of the Yogam were entirely different. It has been enumerated in detail in the second chapter that the consecration of Aruvippuram temple was with a sacred object of creating a world of brotherhood, without having any discrimination of caste and creed. The words of Narayana Guru inscribed in front of the temple well eloquently declare his vision of the oneness of man. "In this model place all inhabitants irrespective of caste and religion can dwell freely as brothers."¹ At the same time the S. N. D. P. Yogam was formed not with the object of organizing all communities for their spiritual and material advancement but with the aim of organizing the Ezhava community itself for their social and economic progress. The object of the Yogam as mentioned by P. Parameswaran to the Dewan of Travancore was to promote and encourage religious and secular education and industrial habits among the Ezhava community.² Its by-laws specifically laid down that it was an organization formed with the object of social and economic progress

1. See Chapter II.

2. P. Parameswaran, to the Dewan of Travancore, 8 January 1903, Travancore Government, English Records, Cover No. 8338, Kerala Secretariat Trivandrum.

of the Ezhavas. In short, all the activities of the Yogam were confined to the interest of the community. This shows that the S. N. D. P. Yogam was totally a caste association, formed with the object of redressing the grievances of the Ezhava community, instead of introducing and propagating the broad ideas of oneness of man as preached by Sree Narayana Guru. It is, therefore, not correct to view the S. N. D. P. Yogam as a vehicle for the propagation of the philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru. Sree Narayana Guru's support and cooperation was available to the Yogam in its early years. When he supported the Yogam his aim was not to organize the Ezhava community as a new religious community but to bring about a religious and social reformation in the society as a whole. He said, "This organization must bring all men together. Religions must have the freedom of faith, must be acceptable to all cultured people, must lead people to the ultimate aim. Then the sanatana principle of "one caste, one religion and one God," will be acceptable to such a religion."¹ Instead of propagating the sanatana philosophy of Sree Narayana Guru, the S. N. D. P. Yogam became exclusively an Ezhava union and hence the union of all caste and creed which Narayana Guru had in mind was hardly realized.² When the S. N. D. P. Yogam openly renounced the ideals of Narayana Guru and became

1. Sree Narayana Guru Centenary Souvenir, Sree Ram Vilasam Press, 1954, p.182.

2. Stephen Fuchs, Rebellious Prophets: A Study of Messianic Movements in Indian Religion, New York, 1965, pp.274-6.

totally caste oriented, the Guru broke away from the Yogam. In 1916, he wrote to Palpu:

Since it is seen that the Yogam takes all its decision without my knowledge, that it is not showing any favour in matters of my interest and that it is becoming increasingly caste oriented, I am severing my connections with the Yogam.¹

Soon, even Palpu was also alienated from the Yogam.² Though the Swami was above caste feeling, the organization which was named after Swami became exclusively a communal organization³ and the Guru felt that his name was being misused. He, therefore, made a public declaration:

It is a few years since I eschewed all caste and religious considerations. I no longer consider myself belonging to any caste or religion. Though this is my real and true position, today, a certain caste seems to still consider me one of them. This, it appears, has created some misunderstanding in the minds of some people regarding my true position/.../ I do not belong to any particular caste or religion /..../ I publish this for the information of the public.⁴

1. Letter dated 22nd May 1916, reproduced in the Guru Kulam, September-October 1978, Vol.15, No.67, p.283.
2. On 6th May 1923 Dr. Palpu wrote a letter to the special secretaries of the Yogam in which he said, "It has come to my notice that for a long time the S. N. D. P. Yogam, though showed respect to the Guru in public, has been doing things which were acting against the interest of the public/.../ Though I tried to set right things in consultation with the Guru, these people were opposing me. They are continuing to do things according to their own free will. Since I would not like to work and spend money on such an organization where a group of "hog rat" are operating for their benefit/.../"
Dr. Palpu Papers, File No.19 (NMM&L)
3. V.K. Sukumaran Nair, "Communal Interest Groups in Kerala," D. E. Smith (ed.), South Asian Politics and Religion, Princeton, 1966, pp.182-3.
The Yogam was named after Guru to attract, its very name those whose imagination had been stirred by the personality and the activities of the Guru.
George Woodcock, op.cit., p.230.
4. Vivokodayam Antharashtra Shri Narayana Guru Varsha Smeraka Pathippu, March 1978, p.1.

He also bemoaned:

How I wish to establish a society without caste!
I have told several men about it. Unfortunately
there is none to work for it/..../1

In fact the Swamy established an alternative association -
the Sree Narayana Dharma Sangam in 1927.² The fact that
he considered this association to be the one wedded to his
ideas is testified by the fact that he bequeathed all his
property to it.³

This does not mean that the S. N. D. P. Yogam and the
Ezhava community did not do anything against casteism.
Though all their activities confined to the benefit of their
caste, during the first four decades of the 20th century,
the S. N. D. P. Yogam consistently fought against caste discri-
mination. Two important persons in the forefront of this
movement were Sahodharan Ayyappan and T.K. Madhavan. The
Sahodhara Sangham of K. Ayyappan worked for eradicating the
evils of untouchability and other caste evils and popularising
the idea of inter dining among the Ezhavas and other backward
castes such as the Pulayas and the Parayas. In 1920 the

1. M.K. Sanoo, op.cit., pp.345-6.

2. Sree Nijananda Swami, "Sree Narayana Dharma Sangam Trust,"
Vivekodayan Viseshal Prathi, Vol.II, No.9, 1968, p.169.

3. Murkothu Kumaran, op.cit., p.300.

For the property of Sree Narayana Guru, there was a long
court litigation between the Dharma Sangam and the
S. N. D. P. Yogam. For details see,

Sree Nijananda Swami, op.cit., p.169; See also,
Dr. Palpu Panara, File No.19, pp.100-101.

And A.K. Bhaskaran, Sree Narayana Casentha Highkkodathi
Vithi, Quilon, 1973.

S. N. D. P. Yogam formed a Passive Resistance League to put an end to untouchability. T. K. Madhavan who was one of the important leaders of the Passive Resistance League was the real organizer of the Vaikom satyagraha. The Vaikom satyagraha and the consequent satyagrahas in Travancore were launched for securing the right to use public roads around the Hindu temples for the untouchables. A number of educated Ezhavas took part in these satyagrahas either directly or indirectly. Though various factors were responsible for getting all the temples thrown open to all Hindus by the Travancore Government in 1938, one of the most important factors was the social and political protest of the Ezhavas under the S. N. D. P. Yogam. No other caste organization of untouchables anywhere in India has removed the stigma of untouchability and unapproachability as the S. N. D. P. Yogam had achieved in Travancore. By their consistent struggle for more than 3 decades the S. N. D. P. Yogam could remove untouchability and unapproachability, and thus make a definite dent in caste consciousness.

At the same time the Yogam was very keen on introducing social reform activities connected with puberty, marriage, pregnancy, birth, death etc. This again suited the ideological and economic prospects of the middle classes. Sree Narayana Guru's call against ignorance, laziness, extravagance and expensive social customs helped the development of virtues like thrift, frugality and hardwork which were

conducive to the progress of the Ezhava middle class. Therefore, they took to these reforms with great enthusiasm which helped the development of bourgeois ideas within the Ezhava community.

The social reform movement in Kerala under Sree Narayana Guru and the S. N. D. P. Yogam was not an isolated phenomenon, though their social reform movement was hardly influenced by the reform movements in other parts of India, especially in Bengal and Maharashtra, it was certainly a part of the all India reform movement. This movement awakened the Ezhava community and brought about many great changes in the life and thought of the Hindu society in Kerala. No doubt, this movement, in fact helped to bring Kerala into the stream of national awakening in India. It is true that this reform movement focussed its attention on local and regional problems to which the lower caste communities were subjected for generations. The contribution of the Yogam in the awakening of the Ezhavas through the campaign for literacy, abolition of expensive ceremonies and obscurantist social rituals and customs, temperance and a new law of inheritance was significant. Yet the movement failed to bring the lower sections of the community within its fold.

Though the S. N. D. P. Yogam was formed initially for non-political purposes, it gradually plunged into politics. The important reasons which induced the S. N. D. P. Yogam to

enter politics was relating to their disappointment regarding representation in the public service and in the legislature. They demanded a share in the public service and in the legislature on the basis of the population. The constitutional reform of 1932, instead of providing better opportunities to the Christians, the Ezhavas and the Muslims, the supremacy of the caste Hindus was preserved. Therefore, the disappointed middle class section of these communities joined together and formed the Joint Political Congress to fight against the hegemony of the caste Hindus in the legislature and public service. In its first meeting on 31st August 1933, it had been declared that the aim of the Congress was to achieve representation in the legislature, public service and Nair Brigade in proportion to the numerical strength of each community, abolition of property qualification for franchise, introduction of adult franchise, communal electorate, reservation of seats for particular communities in the legislature, and finally to press for responsible government.¹ Though it was the first mass political movement in Travancore, the communal character severely restricted its contribution. Yet it emphasised the political rights of the Ezhavas and other non-caste and non-Hindus. As a consequence of this movement the Government of Travancore took steps to redress some of

1. Yuvabharathy, 26 August 1933, Vol. II, No. 2.

the grievances of non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus. Thus, job reservation was granted, the franchise rights were extended by reducing property qualifications and by introducing communal representation in the legislature, the Nair Brigade was reorganized and brought under Indian state force and the government temples in the State were thrown open to all Hindus without any discrimination of caste.

Though the Yogam was born under the inspiration of Sree Narayana Guru, ideologically it was divorced from his teachings. In fact the practice of the Yogam was opposed to the egalitarian ideals of the Guru. Caste organizations have now become a way of public life in Kerala. One of the early efforts in this direction was provided by the S. N. D. P. Yogam. It is a very good example of a caste reform movement becoming a caste solidarity movement.

GLOSSARY OF INDIAN WORDS

Acharam	Established custom
Adiyan	A low caste man refer himself before an upper caste man not as 'I' but only as 'adiyan' means dependent
Advaitan	Non-duality that is the Paramatma and Jeevatma (the supreme being and the soul) are one and the same
Anandran	Junior male member of a taravad
Antrala Jati	Intermediate caste; generally the embelavasi; castes are known under this name
Asan	A village school master in traditional time
Ashram	The abode of the rishis or ascetics
Avadhuta	Free from worldly ties
Avadhutan	One who has abandoned all worldly ties and relations
Avarna	Not belonging to any one of the four high castes
Bikshu	One who wanders begging alms
Bromaswan	Relating to Brahmins
Cherunappad	The distance at which a pulaya had to stand before high caste people
Cheruman	The slave caste pulaya is known as Cheruman in Malabar side
Chitties	An indigenous saving-cum-credit system prevailing in Kerala
Dewan	Prime Minister of a native state
Devaswan	Religious endowments and property belonging to temples
Dharma	Ordained mode of action or procedure
Dwipa	Island

Eakadosi	The 11th day from new moon or full moon (observed as a day of fasting by devout Hindus)
Guru	Preceptor
Gurukulam	The abode of the Guru
Illam	Generally the houses of Namboodiri Brahmins are known as Illam; the exogenous groups of Ezhavas are also known as Illam
Jati	Caste
Jemi	One who possesses free hold right over landed property
Jemman	'Absolute ownership'; type of tenure in which no rent or tax is paid
Jemikkaram	Jemi's dues - the commuted value of the rent fixed by State for the lands covered by the Travancore Jemikudiy ^a n act of 1896
Kachcha	A piece of cloth used as waist belt
Kalyanam	Marriage ceremony
Kanam	Land held from Jemi or state, on which tax or rent is paid
Kanandar	Holder of kanam land; tenant
Kara	Village
Karanavan	Male head of the matrilineal joint family of Kerala
Kozhivettu	fowl sacrifice
Kshetram	temple
Kshetroyogam	temple association
Kudiyam	Usually the holder of jemikkaram land but some times used for a kanam tenant
Kuri	Chitti
Madam/mutt	Literally meaning a monastery, ancient Gurukula university or temple

Makkathoyam	Patrilineal descent system
Marumakkathoyam	Matrilineal descent system
Migradayam	The system according to which both the children and the nephews are getting equal share of ones self acquired property
Mletchas	Literally means 'impure people'
Muzi	A division of land, a parish in Travancore
Nikrights	Despised or condemned
Nivarthanam	Abstention or non-cooperation
Otti	Type of tenure in which land is mortgaged to holder
Pandaravaka	Belonging to the state
Pandaravaka otti	Favourable tenure of government sort/lands having the characteristic of mortgage
Pandaravakam pattam	Non-favourable tenure of government sort lands on which full rate of land revenue is charged
Pantal	Temporary loggia in which tali rite is held
Peripalanam	Protection, propagation, fostering care
Pattakkeram	A lease holder
Pattam	Rent or tenancy
Pooja	Adoration; sacrifice to the deity with the accompaniments of ceremonial offerings and other rites
Pradhonikal	Literally means the important person or chief
Prasthanam	Movement
Rajabogam	The light revenue assessment on land under the control of certain jemies
Sahoyikal	Literally meaning helping hands
Sahodharan	Brother

Samojikammar	Persons who pertaining to an assembly or samojem
Sembandham	Literally 'connection.' The simple Nayar marriage ceremony involving the presentation of a cloth by the man to the woman
Savarna	Caste Hindus - one belonging to any of the four high castes
Shivalinga	Phallic emblem of God Shiva
Sirkar	Government
Tali	The small gold pendant tied by the bridegroom round the neck of the bride at the time of tali tying marriage or marriage
Taluk	A revenue subdivision of a district
Taravad	Matrilineal joint family of Nayers
Tavazhi	Branches of matrilineal joint family
Thampuran	The males of upper caste communities were addressed by the low caste people as thampuran means master - The males in royal family as at Calicut were also addressed by other castes including upper castes
Thampuratti	Feminine gender of Thampuran
Thiyyapad	The distance at which a Thiyya or Ezhava had to stand before high caste people
Uralimar	Brahmin managers of temples
Uriyal or Uliyam	Forced labour demanded by the Sirkar
Uttupura	Free feeding houses for Brahmins
Verumpattokkorum	Tenant leasing in land in tenancy at will
Verumpattam	Ordinary lease for a year/tenancy at will
Viruthi (or virutti)	Land granted at concessionary rent or tax in return for the performances/services
Yogam	Organization

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- Aiyar, Sir C. P. Ramaswami (1875-1966):** Tamil Brahmin, Law graduate. As an administrator, legal expert, educationist and orator Sir C. P. has an important place in modern India. From 1936-47 he was the Dewan of Travancore. Though he was a good administrator, his dictatorial ways gave him a bad name in Travancore. In 1947 he was compelled to leave Travancore, then became the Vice-Chancellor of Annamalai and Benaras Hindu Universities
- Asan, Kumaran (1873-1924):** At the age of eighteen came under the influence of Sree Narayana Guru, who made him a profound impact on his future career both as a poet and as a social reformer. He was well versed in Malayalam, Sanskrit and English. He did his higher education in Sanskrit from Bangalore, Calcutta and Madras. He was one of the organizers of the S. N. D. P. Yogam and worked as the General Secretary of the Yogam for about 16 years. A number of times he represented the Ezhava community in the Travancore Sri Mulam Popular Assembly. Both as the Secretary of the Yogam and the member of the Assembly he did his best to bring radical changes in the social relations between castes and communities. But his fame rests in Kerala history not as a social reformer or a legislative expert but as one of the three important poets of modern Malayalam Literature. In January 1924, Asan met an untimely death, when he drowned in a boat accident of Pallana near Alleppey.
- Ayyakutty, A (1871-1951):** One of the first Ezhavaggraduates in Cochin. An active member of the S. N. D. P. Yogam; entered Government service as a clerk and retired as a District Judge. He was a believer of Buddhism and supported the idea of whole-sale conversion of Ezhavas to Buddhism
- Ayyappan, K. (1869-1968):** Popularly known as Sahodharan Ayyappan. Born in an Ezhava family in Cochin. Graduated from Travancore Maharaja's College. Vigorously attacked superstition and social injustices. Organized an inter-caste dining with Pulayans and hence he was ex-communicated as "Pulayan Ayyappan." Started Sahodhara Prasthanam believing in the brotherhood of man; edited a weekly journal Sahodharan. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly, Deputy Speaker and Minister of Cochin State and subsequently a Minister of Travancore Cochin State.

- Govindan, M. (1874-1958): An Ezhava law graduate; the first editor of the Vivekodayam, a quarterly publication of the S.N.D.P. Yogam; he was one of the earliest Ezhavas who entered the Travancore Government service; in 1908 he was appointed as a Munsif and in 1920 he was promoted as a Judge. In 1929 he retired from the government service and then involved in Travancore politics. But could not have much influence among the radical sections of the Ezhavas.
- Kelappan, K (1890-1971): Took degree in science from Madras Christian College. Generally known as Kerala Gandhi. As a nationalist, freedom fighter, social reformer and journalist his position is unique in modern Kerala history. During the time of the Mappilla Rebellion Kelappan rendered Yeoman's service to pacify the unrest. He relentlessly campaigned against all social evils and inequalities in the Hindu society and vigorously worked to remove untouchability. While he was one of the important organizers of Vaikkam satyagraha of 1924-25 and the Guruvayur satyagraha of 1931. As a freedom fighter as well as a fighter against social evils he was arrested more than once. He had functioned as the editor of Mathrubhumi daily, President of Malabar District Board and founder President of the Nayar Service Society. By the end of his life he was active in Sarvodaya movement.
- Kogavan, C. (1891-1969): One of the most important leaders of the Freedom Movement in the erstwhile Travancore Princely State. He was the sphere head of the abstention movement of early 1930s. The member of the first state cabinet and later the Chief Minister of Travancore Cochin. His autobiography Jeevithe Samaram is one of the most important biographies in Malayalam literature. In 1934 he was the General Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam.
- Krishnan, C (1866-1938): An Ezhava law graduate from Malabar. In 1913 he edited and published a journal called Mitavadi which earned the title Mitavadi Krishnan. He was not only a prominent member of the S.N.D.P. Yogam but also presided four times the annual meetings of the Yogam in 1912, 1919, 1929 and 1934. He was a prominent enemy of both the Congress and the caste Hindus. He believed in Buddhism and asked the Ezhavas to renounce Hinduism and to join Buddhism.
- Kumaran, N (1861-1964): An Ezhava law graduate; in 1913 he was a member of the Ezhava Law Committee; from 1919 to 1928 he served the S.N.D.P. Yogam as its General Secretary; a number of times he was nominated to the Sree Mula Popular Assembly as the representative of the Ezhavas.

In 1928 he joined the Government service as a second grade Judge and in 1936 he was promoted as a High Court Judge. In 1938 he retired from the service and started practice at Travancore High Court.

Kunjuraman, C.V. (1871-1949): Famous Ezhava social reformer. Founder editor of the influential Malayalam daily Kerala Kaumudi. Active worker and leader of the S.N.D.P. Yogam. In 1929-30 period he was the General Secretary of the Yogam. He was one of the precursors of the idea of mass conversion of the Ezhavas to Christianity. He was famous in the world of letters of his time.

Madhavan, T.K. (1885-1931): A leader of the Vaikom satyagraha, journalist and orator with nationalist outlook. Active member of the S.N.D.P. Yogam; worked as the Organization Secretary of the S.N.D.P. Yogam. Founder editor of Deshabhinani.

Mannathu Padmanabhan (1878-1970): He was the founder of the Nair Service Society and from the time of its formation, for thirty one years he continued as its secretary and for three years was its President. In 1924 he took part in the Vaikom satyagraha and led the savarna jatha (demonstration of caste Hindus). In 1947 he became a member of the Indian National Congress and took part in the Travancore State Congress agitation. In 1949 he became a member of the Travancore Legislative Assembly. In appreciation of his valuable service he was awarded the title 'Bharata Kesari' by the President of India.

Menon, K.P. Kesava (1886-1973): He became a barrister-at-law and entered public life where he has left his mark as a liberal thinker and an active crusader for human rights. He was one of the most prominent organizers of the Vaikom satyagraha and courted arrest. He started Mathrubhumi in 1923 as a mouth piece of national movement in Malabar. He was a well known writer in Malayalam. In 1951 he was appointed in Sri Lanka as India's High Commissioner.

Murkoth Kuzharan (1877-1947): Famous teacher, essayist, critic and one of the first biographers of Sree Narayana Guru. He was a very famous short story writer of his time. He severely attacked caste system and meaningless customs and practices. He was a staunch follower and admirer of Sree Narayana Guru.

Palpu, P. (1860-1950): He was born at Trivandrum in an Ezhava family. He was a medical graduate. Being an Ezhava he was refused employment in Travancore medical service. Therefore, he first served in Madras in 1890 and in the next year joined in Mysore Service, where he occupied position of distinction in the State Government service. Dr. Palpu was one of the prominent signatories of the Malayali Memorial. The S. N. D. P. Yogam was a product of his vision. He was the leading supporter of the Yogam for many years. He is the author of the Treatments of Teeyas in Travancore. He retired from Mysore service in 1917 and established three philanthropic institutions, the Dharmasala, the Dharma Sodhari Mutt and the Dharma Deepa Sadanam and established Dharma Nidhi to finance these institutions.

Panicker, Moolur S. Padmanabha (1869-1931): A prominent figure of his time who distinguished as a poet and scholar. He is very famous in Malayalam literature as the creator of "Kavi Ramayana." He was one of the close disciples of Sree Narayana Guru.

Pillai, G. P. (1864-1903): Nayar; Barrister. He is generally known as "the father of political agitation in Travancore." Forced to leave his native place in 1882 for writing anonymous articles in Cochin Argus attacking the then Dewan of Travancore. He was the most predominant organizer of the Malayali Memorial. He was a famous journalist and edited Madras standard in 1890s.

Swamikol Chottampi (1853-1924): Born in a Nayar family. His actual name was Kunjan Pillai. Ascetic and holy man. He was a versatile genius, who distinguished himself as a vedanta scholar, social reformer and spiritual leader.

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