

IMAGES OF PAZHASSI RAJA: TEXT AND CONTEXT, 1785 - 2010

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this thesis entitled '**Images of Pazhassi Raja: Text and Context, 1785-2010**' submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History, University of Calicut is a record of bonafide research carried out by **Joobitha C. T.**, under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for the award of any degree or title before.

C.U. Campus
19.05.2023

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Declaration

I, Joobitha, C.T. hereby state that the thesis entitled '**Images of Pazhassi Raja: Text and Context, 1785-2010**' submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History is done by me and that has not previously formed the basis for the award of any other degree or title before.

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Acknowledgement

I joined for my Ph. D Degree in November 2017 after a gap of two years since the completion of my M. Phil Degree. The topic for my Ph. D Degree was both enthusiastic and creative. I was properly guided to pursue the right sources and information from different corners. Meanwhile, I was stuck in the journey of research studies because of having a baby. However, I could revive my studies soon. Unfortunately, the pandemic scenario caused by Covid - 19 has hindered my further endeavors. But I could come up and cope with all such kinds of situations. Thus, it eventually resulted in the completion of my Ph. D thesis by the beginning of 2023.

My research supervisor Prof. Dr. Sivadasan. P deserves all credit for the successful submission of my Ph. D dissertation. I have no words to express the depth of my gratitude towards him. He was truly an amazing research supervisor who could give me the right direction toward bringing fine research work. Probably he would be the only person to my knowledge who does multiple duties at a time. He is such a gem of a person who found time to guide and correct me throughout the research period amidst a hectic life. I swear this research work would not be possible in the right way if my guide was someone else. So most importantly a big thanks goes to you, sir.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja is one of the most debated historical figures in the history of Kerala. The history of Pazhassi Raja is remembered in the world today in multiple images created in different periods. The colonial records, oral ballads, vernacular literature, films, etc., depicted the image of this anti-colonial fighter in different ways. One unique way of looking at Pazhassi Raja is not traceable in these records. Each figure appeared according to the taste of the time in which it was produced. This multiplicity of historical images is to be studied in detail to understand the operation of the text and contexts in the understanding of history.

The life of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja is the story of twin resistance to Mysorean tyranny as well as British domination.¹ He collaborated with the British in fighting the Mysorean forces but soon turned against the British when they betrayed the faith he had reposed in them.² Pazhassi Raja reacted sharply and fought against them to the bitter end, unmindful of his safety. Pazhassi Raja possessed huge popular support for his anti-colonial struggles. Though he had failed still remembered in all our minds being an unbeaten warrior.

The study endeavors to examine the 'multiple images' of Pazhassi Raja from 1785 to 2010 with specific notes on contemporary perceptions. Both British and indigenous sources, films, and other relevant aspects were studied in detail towards molding the image of Pazhassi Raja at each time and context.

¹ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samarangal*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, pp. 2-60.

² *Ibid.*

1.2 Research Problem

The study entitled 'Images of Pazhassi Raja: Text and Context, 1785-2010', attempts to explore the image constitution of Pazhassi Raja right from the beginning of his political career to the contemporary period.

Pazhassi Raja is an eminent historical figure in Indian history, he has been remembered for his amazing anti-colonial fights and tactics. He was a king who fought against the foreign power putting all his sweat and strength. Pazhassi Raja finally lost his life on the battlefield against the British. He was supported and respected by the entire society from then till now. It is to be noted that an original photograph of Pazhassi Raja was not done when he was alive. Thus, there comes both British as well as Indian perceptions and descriptions of the image of Pazhassi Raja.

Meanwhile, two films about the political life of Pazhassi Raja got released in Malayalam.³ Projected two kinds of images of Pazhassi Raja. Many paintings, statues, photos, etc., in the post-colonial period, highlighted different kinds of images of Pazhassi Raja. The folk songs in Malabar have shown a unique image of Pazhassi Raja. The contemporary perception of Pazhassi Raja is something influenced by the latest release of the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*. So the crucial problem arises here about the 'real' image of Pazhassi Raja. The discussions and studies on who is Pazhassi Raja and how and why his image is portrayed differently through various sources are something to be examined in this study.

Thus, the research problem sprouted up out of the keen inquiry regarding what has exactly been done on the image conceptualization of Pazhassi Raja. The study concentrates on the significance of time and context in perceiving the image concept of Pazhassi Raja with a comparative approach. The time selected for the study is according to the image constructed about Pazhassi from 1785 to 2010.

³ *Pazhassi Raja* (Malayalam movie, 1964), *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* (Malayalam movie, 2009).

Throughout the period, Raja's image was drawn by different sources in different ways.

1.3 Hypothesis

This study tries to examine how the image of Pazhassi Raja is remembered in literature, historical works, archival sources, films, and all. Specifically speaking, the character representation of Pazhassi Raja by various writers, historians, British administrators, novelists, etc., could be different. The kind of character projection of Pazhassi in the British accounts could be laid with light distortions. Because Pazhassi Raja is one of India's unique historical figures who fought strongly against colonial rule until his last breath. Thus the British could project the image of Pazhassi Raja a little down, as they want to glorify their strategies and power ahead. Images are not real. It's contextual, Image formations vary based on time and context. Indigenous literary accounts and other cultural elements including film could be projecting Pazhassi Raja as an unbeaten hero with great courage and strength.

Thus, people might still recall the image of Pazhassi Raja as a superhero with great masculine power and intelligence. So distortion of the image projection is expected in the British literary accounts and personification of character is expected from the indigenous accounts. This study expects that the people of Kerala still remember the image of Pazhassi Raja as an outstanding historical figure. This resulted from a distorted image projection from the side of the British and a 'colorful' representation of the image from the indigenous spheres. This study is based on these hypotheses.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The present study intended to look into various perspectives formulated to remember the personality of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja. The focus of the study is surrounded on the image perception of Pazhassi Raja. Thus, it has put forward

some relevant objectives which require to be examined and studied. Chief objectives could be noted as:

- Examine the entry of Pazhassi Raja into the socio, political and economic frame.
- Evaluating the concept of image.
- Understanding how the image of Pazhassi Raja is remembered over different times and contexts.
- Examining the role of time and context in formulating different shades of images.
- Analysing the contribution of Pazhassi Raja in the process of social reconstruction.
- Evaluate the role of Pazhassi revolts in generating anti-British feelings among people.
- Study how the Pazhassi Raja episode became a unique frame in Kerala history.
- Study the image of Pazhassi Raja projected in British literature as well as other accounts.
- Study how the character of Pazhassi Raja has been portrayed in Indian literary sources.
- Examine the role of historical research in creating the image of Pazhassi Raja from an academic perspective.
- Study the character projection of Pazhassi Raja in films.
- Study the relationship between the character projection of Pazhassi Raja in films and the popular acceptance of it.
- Exploring the character remembrance of Pazhassi Raja by historians, British administrators, archaeologists, novelists, etc.
- Evaluating how Pazhassi Raja has gained much popularity then.
- Study the impact of British literary accounts in formulating the character representation of Pazhassi Raja.

1.5 Review of Literature

There is a wide array of primary sources related to the area of study in the form of archival sources. It comprises foreign political consultations and proceedings, correspondences related to the 'Pychy' rebellion, secret consultations, revenue consultations, military despatches, and all. Most of the documents were examined and are added in the bibliography attached at the end of this study. Academic publications are also explained well to enrich the study apart from the archival materials.

Pazhassiraja: Kalavum Jeevithavum written by Dr. K.K.N. Kurup gives a clear outlook on the character of Pazhassi Raja.⁴ It covers well on Pazhassi Raja's fights with the British along with notable information on its beginning and end. The book describes each stage of Pazhassi Raja's political journey through each chapter. The book provides valuable knowledge on Pazhassi Raja in person by being an administrator, a leader, and a human being. This book can't be treated as a biography of Pazhassi Raja. Because it lacks many years of the life of Pazhassi Raja. Even though the author has done something noteworthy in reconstructing Pazhassi Raja's life by collecting and writing through primary sources.

Pazhassi Samarangal written by Dr. K.K.N. Kurup marks great significance related to the Pazhassi revolt.⁵ This book elaborately discusses the causes, course, and the results of Pazhassi revolts. The book has been written on grounds of British documents due to the lack of native records. The book comprises translated copies of official letters written by Pazhassi Raja and the company officials. The book points out the involvement of thousands of persons in strengthening the revolt from various sectors of society. The author traces how the Pazhassi revolts helped the growth of Indian nationalism.

⁴ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassirajaja Kalavum Jeevithavum*, Melinda Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012.

⁵ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samarangal*, *op. cit.*

Wayanad Rekhakal written by O.K. Johny provides a brief history of Wayanad.⁶ The author describes in detail Pazhassi Raja and his colonial resistance in the first half of the book. The author specifies the role of tribal communities in supporting Pazhassi Raja throughout the war. The book marks how beautiful Pazhassi Raja had been depicted in northern ballads.

Pazhassiyum Kadathanadum written by K. Balakrishnan is a notable effort at the cultural, political, and historical tradition of Malabar, especially Kannur.⁷ The book is a travelogue published in *Deshabhimani* weekly during 2003-2004. It gives a short history of many places and persons who comes under Kannur along with examining Pazhassi Raja. The book gives some precious knowledge about Pazhassi Raja and his training and association with *Kalari*. TKalarihor mentions the physical features of Pazhassi Raja as quoted in the British documents. The book elaborates on Pazhassi Raja's love for the well-being of his land and people.

Pazhassi Rekhakal edited by Dr. Joseph Scaria is the collection of the fourth volume and twelfth volumes of 'Tellicherry Documents' kept in Tuebingen University, Germany.⁸ The book is a hub of knowledge from Herman Gundert's documents collection on British India. This book provides some fundamental information on the establishment of British power in north Malabar. Letters written by Pazhassi Raja, his contemporary rulers, and many *naduvazhi* chiefs were all shown in the book without distortions. This book gives much importance to native accounts which are path-breaking in the study of Kerala history.

Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha written by Dr. Joseph Scaria is an attempt to invade the discourse semantics of *Pazhassi Rekhakal*.⁹ It gives a multi-dimensional outlook hidden inside the *Pazhassi Rekhakal*. The author never attempts a discourse analysis here, more significance has been poured on stressing

⁶ O.K. Johny, *Wayanad Rekhakal*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2010.

⁷ K. Balakrishnan, *Pazhassiyum Kadathanadum*, DC Books, Kottayam, 2011.

⁸ Dr. Joseph Scaria, (ed.), *Pazhassi Rekhakal*, SPCS, Kottayam, 2017.

⁹ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2007.

discourse mode description. The book can be taken as the first step toward a discourse study. The author doesn't scrutinize the entire *Pazhassi Rekhakal* here. Some notable letters, appeals, declarations, orders, and agreements were taken for study as it gives representation for different discourse models.

Kerala Simham written by K.M. Panikkar is an incredible novel on the confrontation between Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja and Lord Wellesley.¹⁰ The novel does not give a picture of the biography of Pazhassi Raja. Nor it shows the history of Kerala then. The novel carries only a part of Kerala Varma's story. It has been presented with much exaggeration. The novel shows how Pazhassi Raja loved and cared about his country and people. More specifically it sketches Pazhassi's affection for his wife. The author glorifies the physical features of Pazhassi Raja and notes his shares each matter. The novel embraces a happy ending.

From Contact to Conquest, Transition to British rule in Malabar 1790-1805, by Margret Frenz, is a comprehensive study on the establishment of early colonial rule in south India with a focus on Kottayam in northern Kerala.¹¹ The book studies well the transitional phase between the mode of indigenous administration and the colonial pattern. It analyses the perception of the state on local and colonial conception. The author has made a fresh approach to understanding colonial encounters by making extensive use of Malayalam sources. The book makes an in-depth exploration of the concept of a clash of sovereignty between the rule constituted by the British in Malabar based on Eurocentric notions with the complex indigenous ideas of a state built on redistributive processes by the local elites.¹²

¹⁰ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, DC Books, Kottayam, 2008.

¹¹ Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest, Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790-1805*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 165-200.

Dheera Samaranggalumayi Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja written by Purathur Sreedharan provides a comprehensive account of Pazhassi Raja and his revolts.¹³ The author throws much light on the aspects responsible for the unbeaten popularity gained by Pazhassi Raja then. Pazhassi Raja's care for his country and people were well explained in this book.

Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja by Dr. K. S. Mohan points out the history of the Kottayam royal family followed by the events preceding the Pazhassi rebellion.¹⁴ Much significance has been given to the hereditary features and places related to the Kottayam rulers. The author discusses some of the myths developed around the Kottayam rulers along with their temple connections.

Pazhassi Raja written by George Emmatty gives a comprehensive picture of Pazhassi Raja by explaining each episode of his life.¹⁵ The book highlights Pazhassi Raja as a powerful leader who led fights right at the front. Pazhassi Raja's massive popular support was specifically mentioned in this book.

Kuttikalude Pazhassi Raja written by Raju Kattupuram gives a broad account of Pazhassi Raja's features.¹⁶ Pazhassi Raja's religious beliefs and association with temples are discussed well in this book. Pazhassi Raja and his *kalari* training along with the peculiarities of the Kottayam royal family was also pointed out by the author.

In addition to these books, many other literary works have pursued the completion of this research work. The drama entitled *Veera Sree Pazhassi Raja* was written by Swami Brahma Vrathan, the drama called *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* written by Kappana Krishna Menon, *Pazhassiraja Villadichanpatt* written by Krishna Kumar Kannothe, *Pazhassiyude Pataval* written by P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pazhassi Raja*

¹³ Purathur Sreedharan, *Dheera Samaranggalumayi Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, H&C Books, Thrissur, 2019.

¹⁴ Dr. K.S. Mohan, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, Indological Trust, Kozhikode, 2018.

¹⁵ George Emmatty, *Pazhassi Raja*, H&C Publishing House, Thrissur, 2014.

¹⁶ Raju Kattupunam, *Kuttikalude Pazhassi Raja*, SPCS, Kottayam, 2017.

drama written by Pirappinkod Murali, *Pazhassi Raja Vadakkanpatt* by Krishna A. Payeri, *Vadakkanpattile Pazhassi Raja* written by K.V. Thomas and so on were used well for this thesis writing.

1.6 Methodology and Sources

The methodology intended for this research study is primarily critical and analytical. This study also attempted to make an interdisciplinary approach. A detailed analysis of both primary and secondary literary sources is required to draw the image projection of Pazhassi Raja. A proper evaluation of films related to Pazhassi Raja and other cultural developments to derive the remembrance of the character of Pazhassi was done from multiple perspectives.

Primary sources are the backbone of this study. It comprises foreign political consultations and proceedings, official correspondences, secret consultations, revenue consultations, military despatches to England, official letters, inward letters to the political department, extract of the testimonials of Karunakaran Menon, Extract from the minutes of consultations, Bombay supervisor's diary, correspondences related to Pychy rebellion, *Duke of Wellington Despatches* and all. These materials were accessed from the National Archives of India, New Delhi, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai, Tamil Nadu State Archives (TSA), Egmore, Kerala State Archives (KSA), Thiruvananthapuram, Regional Archives, Kozhikode (RAK) and Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut. Details regarding the availability of these sources are given well at the end of this thesis. Interviews were also conducted to ensure oral evidence and knowledge for this study.

Secondary sources enriched the thesis with adequate information. Some important books in Malayalam which encouraged this study are *Pazhassiraja Kalavum Jeevithavum* by Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samaranggal* by Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samara Rekhakal* by Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassiyum Kadathanadum* by K. Balakrishnan, *Pazhassi Rekhakal* by Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile*

Vyavaharabhasha by Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Kerala Simham* by Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* by Dr. K.S. Mohan, *Pazhassi Raja* by George Emmatty, *Pazhassi Thampuram* by Thekkumbhaghom Mohan, *Pazhassi Raja Chamayangalillathe* by Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassi Raja* by Ezhamkulam Mohan Kumar, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* by Kappana Krishna Menon, *Pazhassi Raja Vadakkan Patt* by Krishnan A. Payeri and all.

Apart from this, various other important primary and secondary sources were collected from libraries which include the Centre for development studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Sri Chithira Thirunal Grantha Sala, Thiruvananthapuram, Library of the Kerala Council for Historical Research, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala University Library, Thiruvananthapuram, Malayalam and History department libraries at Karyavattom Campus, Thiruvananthapuram, Public Library - Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Sahithya Academy Library - Thrissur, Malabar Research Institute – K.K.N. Kurup Library, Kannur, Municipal Library - Payyannur, Asad Library - Thalassery, Paral Library - Thalassery, Pazhassi Raja Smriti Mandiram - Mattannur, Taluk Library - Payyanur, History Department Library – Madappally College, Vatakara, Deshaposhini Library – Kottoli, KIRTADS – Chevayur, Pazhassi Raja Library – Mananthavady, etc. Online resources were also used for this study. Complete details of all such documents are explained at the thesis end.

1.7 Organisation of Study

The work has been divided into seven chapters including the introduction and conclusion. The very first chapter ‘Introduction’ clearly examines the research problem, methodology, scheme of the thesis, and the methodology followed throughout the study. The second chapter titled ‘The Image in Popular Culture’, analyses the meaning of the concept called ‘image’. It attempted to explore the implications of image concepts in the arena of culture and popular culture. The same chapter addressed the relevance of visual culture in molding image

conception among the audience. It explored the representation of historical figures on screen as well.

The third chapter titled 'British Perception of Pazhassi Raja', gives major goals towards the backbone of this study. The chapter provided how the British evaluated and projected the image of Pazhassi Raja through official records. Thus the colonial perception of Pazhassi Raja has been vividly explained in the third chapter at the demarcation of two phases. The chapter specially mentioned experiences of Colonel Arthur Wellesley's failed measures in apprehending Pazhassi Raja. Most importantly the professional achievements of T. H. Baber under colonial services in India were well explained in the chapter. Those zealous efforts taken by T.H. Baber regarding the suppression of the slavery system in Malabar were discussed in detail as well. The final episode of Pazhassi Raja's life was dealt along with specifications on the role played by Karunakara Menon on critical lines as well.

The fourth chapter titled 'Raja in Folk Literature', is supposed to be regarded as one of the entertaining and enthusiastic chapters of the thesis. The chapter attempted to bring out the image perception of Pazhassi Raja through folk literature. Interestingly, the chapter traced to explore much information about the unknown facts of Pazhassi Raja's personal life. Thus the chapter could bring out many specifications and observations on the image concept of Pazhassi Raja.

The fifth chapter titled 'Liberation, Literature, and the Lion' analyzed the image of Pazhassi Raja portrayed through literature. The chapter explored multiple penetrations into the representation of Pazhassi Raja through different novels, dramas, poems, etc. The chapter also could bring out and study some relevant anti-colonial rebellions that occurred in different parts of India during the period of Pazhassi Raja. This chapter brings some notable analysis of the Pazhassi rebellion on grounds of Indian nationalism. Thus, it opens a new outlook and definition to Pazhassi episodes in Indian history.

The sixth chapter 'The Cinematic Portrayal of Pazhassi Raja', deals with the image representation of Pazhassi Raja through films. There were only two movies released so far in Malayalam regarding the political life of Pazhassi Raja. Thus, both movies were thoroughly studied and evaluated and could bring out the essence of the image perception of Pazhassi Raja. The same chapter also explored the journey of Malayalam cinema right from the beginning to explore those vivid changes in the character of films as well as the audience. The chapter also attempted to present the concept of stardom and the reasons behind casting Malayalam actor Mammooty as Pazhassi Raja in the latest movie.

The final chapter of the thesis is the 'Conclusion' which contains all the findings of the study. The thesis ends up with a detailed glossary, bibliography, and an appendix.

Chapter 2

The Image in Popular Culture

2.1. Introduction

The word 'image' is derived from the Latin word 'Imago' which means imitation.¹ Initially, the term image was signified as the reproduction or the imitation of a form of a person or a thing. But today the word 'image' denotes a picture that was produced by a camera, artist, mirror, or anything else. We see an image through visual presentation and mental activities.² There is image, imagery, imaging, and imagination surrendered with one particular aspect. Those images and imagination derived from images naturally come in individual fantasy and circulation.³

The concept of image perpetuates multiple dimensions through cultural spheres. The molding of the concept through the constructive measures of popular culture requires a serious study under historical research.

2.2. Image Reconstruction in Popular Culture

The word image is often used to refer to what is always called a 'mental image' or 'mental picture'. Images are what we frame when we visualize something. Although words like 'visualize' or 'image' may be used in such a way that visualizing or imagining something need not involve framing images.⁴ Images are thought to be peculiar entities existing in the human mind. They are frequently said to be 'seen in the mind's eye or occur 'before' the mind's eye'. An image is a reproduction in the mind of a sensation produced by a physical perception. The

¹ Dr. T. Githesh, *Chalachithra Siddhandhangaal*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2014, p. 83.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*, Wiley Black Well, UK, 2010, pp. 136 – 139.

world indeed to be neat and logical in the varied domains of human affairs having better produce was enough to ensure success. But as all close human beings, know well that the logical is outweighed by the psychological.⁵

What is imperative in every case is that people build an image according to their mousetrap. It is this concept of the image which classifies the otherwise inexplicable situation of distinct preferences among products.⁶ They are objectively identical or imperceptible in their differences, which clarifies the even more disconcerting situation in which the objectively worse is preferred to the better.

Multiple factors are responsible for constituting the concept of image. It could be described that an image is a reproduction in the mind of a sensation produced out of physical perception. There are different aspects of images. Graphic images, optical images perceptual images, mental images, and verbal images.⁷

The past few years have witnessed remarkable growth in the application of the image concept. We hear of brand images, company images, corporate images, and the images of political leaders, film stars, sports persons, and other dignitaries.⁸ Certainly, this development has its faddist aspect but there are indications that the enlarging application of the image concept points to something more significant as an increasing realization of the importance of the psychological dimension of human affairs.

At times, it is also referred to as the notion of the image has connotations that are not in accord with the psychological facts of perception. Somewhat on the analogy of a simple mirror, the term 'image' they feel implies a rather direct

⁵ Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, Ithaca Cornell University Press, London, 1986, p. 58.

⁶ Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies: A practical Introduction*, pp. 140 – 142.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Jonathan Cullur, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1983, pp. 178 – 179.

correspondence between external reality and the image that is mirrored in individual perception.⁹ Whereas recent psychological research has emphasized that individual perception of reality is a complex psychological product involving as much the individual's contribution as the external stimuli.¹⁰

There is the implication that one needs only to provide a person with correct information to change a false image. However, enormous images can be tenaciously held even in the face of correct information because of the infusion of images of one's values and purposes. When enormous images satisfy needs and appear to work as they resist change.¹¹ "An image formation embraces different forms based on time and context. It is evident to recall various images of the same person or the same thing varied as per change in time and context."¹²

Altogether a critical approach to these sources shows that the image of Pazhassi Raja had been remembered in diverse ways in different periods. Enormous primary sources are there which give information about the image of Pazhassi Raja from a close point of view. In British administrative accounts, the character of Pazhassi Raja was explained from a colonial perspective.¹³ Thus finally it constitutes to imbibe how the present society views the image of Pazhassi and what kind of a person was Pazhassi to them. Inculcating different perspectives and views towards the image of Pazhassi Raja opens a deep critical exploration of various sources. Thus, it constitutes the necessity of an in-depth study of different attitudes and perspectives.

⁹ Dr. T. Githesh, *Chalachithra Siddandhangal*, p. 84.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85

¹¹ Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies: A practical Introduction*, pp. 143 – 144.

¹² Patricia Uberoi, *Freedom and Destiny, Gender family and popular culture in India*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 56-82.

¹³ William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol. I, J. Jetley for Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1989.

2.3 Culture and Popular Culture in Image Framing

The term culture in the broad sense had multiple meanings, in one sense culture is something inseparable from human life. It begins with what we wear to what we eat, speaks, think, and behave.¹⁴ Thus, the term culture provides some unstated rules by which we live, and those rules regulate our everyday activities and practices without thinking or noticing them.

A much familiar meaning of the word culture represents certain things that we translate ideas into objects. The first sense of the word culture consists of individual behavior and institutions.¹⁵ The second sense of the meaning of culture includes cultural artifacts and things that shape what we built in the environment. The second phase also includes the forms of environment we create and the kind of music we learn.¹⁶

Culture is the one concept that involves both sociologists and anthropologists alike. It has helped both disciplines in clarifying some of the issues when such a conception must take on broad. The question of cultural change has been much more accurately problematized as a solid consequence. This has created the realization that cultures are not monolithic blocks.¹⁷ They are very clear and neutral to considerations of power and politics. Cultures express power relativized evoking strong emotions in people.¹⁸

One has to work with large economic entities to engage in the cultural activity of making television shows or movies. Also, one has to be well educated and to know the language well at least and must be trained in how to write novels

¹⁴ Dipankar Gupta, *Culture, space and the Nation State*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 2000, p. 122.

¹⁵ Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural studies in the Future Tense*, Orient Blackswan print limited, New Delhi, 2012, p. 68.

¹⁶ Dipankar Gupta, *Culture, space and the Nation State*, p. 123.

¹⁷ T.K.N. Unnithan (ed)., *Towards A Sociology of Culture in India*, Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, 1965, p. 42

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

and all.¹⁹ As far as filmmaking is concerned, culture has always been a physical act apart from an ideational event. It brings together talented concepts and production mechanisms.²⁰

The product-driven nature of the culture industries aims towards standardization of produce to assure the continuity of income. Any departure from the standard that is financially successful would be the same reason for quickly generating copies by considering the amount of money at stake. Thus, the new quick process becomes standard. The process of standardization become essential because of the nature of the audience at both national as well as global level.²¹ The audience is featured by the range of educational levels along with a related range of aptitudes provides the understanding of audio-visual messages and images.²² There is a concept called lowest common denominator which is usually used to denote how the "mass" culture industries create products that appeal to a wide section of people from a highly diverse audience and appears to address and seek to please.²³

Thus, it has turned commonplace to remark that the general audience prefers to make simple fare with uncomplicated characters, plot lines, and themes. The performance of mass audiences is said to see their vision of the world endorsed rather than challenged.²⁴ This condition further leads to making a bifurcation in many forms of culture including film and music.

¹⁹ Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural studies in the Future Tense*, p. 69.

²⁰ Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader*, Third Edition, Taylor and Francis, UK, 2007, p. 22.

²¹ Kate Mc Gowan, *Key Issues in Critical and Cultural theory*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2007, p. 34.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, p. 60.

²⁴ Dr. T. Githesh, *Chalachithra Siddandhangal*, p. 86

2.4 The Communication of Culture

It is to be noted that cultures must communicate. But it is very important to note down that this communication cannot presume a consensus or a unified set of meanings. The concept of culture became meaningful to the extent that it informs how people interact with one another.²⁵ There comes various forms of interaction but generally speaking these all take place in defined spaces and bounded locals. The connection between culture and space is inevitable, thus without space, there is no clear conception of cultural membership.²⁶

Edward Taylor often regarded culture as the culmination of knowledge, beliefs, art, novels, customs, law, and any other capacity habit imbibed by a person being a member of society. This concept is rather generous and cumbersome which marks relevance even today.²⁷ Culture is something that cannot be gathered from afar. It can only be acquired through active social engagements among others who are members of the culture. Thus, culture is neither learned nor passed on as an artifice, culture is all about experiences and interaction with other members.²⁸ This aspect of understanding culture is very important and is often lost sight of.

Culture is quite often not what people do, but what they have locked up in their heads. Politics becomes an obvious feature when culture is about what people do with other people. This political aspect is often hidden from the general views or when acknowledged or examined as an oddity in its connection with culture.²⁹ Both politics and power are viewed rarely as branches of culture. But it is considered an external phenomenon affected by it from the outside. Culture in this sense could be regarded as the deepest and the very most solid rock of our common sense. The culture of a particular group shows the way of their life,

²⁵ T.K.N. Unnithan, (ed.), *Towards a Sociology of Culture in India*, p. 43.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁷ Kate Mc Gowan, *Key Issues in Critical and Cultural theory*, p. 35.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Abin Chakraborty, *Popular Culture*, Orient Black Swan, Hyderabad, 2019, p. 25.

values, meanings, and ideas embodied in the institutions in social relations, in the system of belief, morals and customs, the use of objects, and their material life.³⁰ Thus, the social organization of life is distinctive and shaped made by culture. It paves the how social relations of a group are structured and shaped. It is also how those shapes are experienced, understood, and interpreted.³¹

The significance is to be noted that the lived experiences of historical changes were constituted in the textual or expressive culture. Here people lived and gave meaning to the historical as well as political changes along with the challenges of their lives. Thus, culture becomes constitutive and constituted focus for the emergent structure of feelings.³² It gives a gradual orientation to society in hearing, viewing, observing, and understanding images of anything. Thus, they imprint solid images out of the sources of knowledge imbibed. Broadly, this would suggest that a particular anthropological inflection that has been significantly influential with social historians may provide an over-consensual view of culture.³³ This could be regarded as a system of shared meanings, attitudes, values, and the reflection of performances and artifacts in which they were embodied.³⁴ The culture acts as the platform for diverse resources in which the traffic easily passes between the literate and the oral, the superordinate and the subordinate, and the metropolis, and the village. These are considered conflictual elements which need some specific compelling pressure.³⁵

Both the practices and norms of the existing social system reproduced down the generations within the slowly differentiating ambiance of meanings, attitudes, and values. Thus, the traditions are perpetuated largely on grounds of

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 26.

³¹ Rumina Rai and Kishwar Panner, *Introduction to Culture Studies*, Himalaya Publishing House, New Delhi, 2015, p. 52

³² Prantik Banerjee, *Cultural Studies, Texts and Contexts*, Datt Sons, Nagpur, 2021, p. 46.

³³ Simon During (ed.), *The cultural studies Reader*, p. 26.

³⁴ Kate Mc Gowan, *Key Issues in Critical and Cultural theory*, p. 39.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

oral transmission along with its repertoire of anecdotes and narrative examples. This is the arena where the oral tradition is supplemented by the growing literacy level inculcating the most widely circulated. Printed outputs and visual image transmissions.³⁶ Thus, all such factors tend to be subdued to the expectations of the oral culture rather than challenging it with certain alternatives. It influences the human thought process and evokes to conceive some perceptions of image building. Thus, the term culture with its very cost invocation of consensus attributes. Low men build up and constitute their ideas towards image formation on their own.³⁷

The concept of popular culture required a precise evaluation on the grounds the influence upon the image conceptualization process. Popular culture in a wide sense indicates the culture of 'the people' in the sense of folk culture. It may refer to products exclusively of the modern mass media by the industrialized capitalist societies.³⁸ They emphasize the wide popular circulation and saturation of what they endorsed. It also refers to a non-elite subculture that may or may not eventually transforms into a mass phenomenon.³⁹

In a broad sense, popular culture is a mass culture that could be identified as an instrument that enables the imposition of hegemonic ideas. It is termed a site of popular resistance against society's official and dominant ideologies.⁴⁰ The concept of 'popular culture' allows people to think expansively across generations and to constitute ideas over it. There comes the consideration of commonalities overlaps and significantly the dialogical intertextual resonances between multiple genres and cultural formations. Popular culture also allows for a creative dialogue between modern mass media and the genres of folk culture. Generally, the tension

³⁶ Prantik Banerjee, *Cultural Studies, Texts and Contexts*, p. 52

³⁷ Rumina Rai and Kishwar Panner, *Introduction to Culture Studies*, p. 99.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁹ Abin Chakraborty, *Popular Culture*, p. 15.

⁴⁰ Marcel Dansei, *Popular culture*, Fourth Edition, Rowman and Littlefield, USA, 2018, p. 18.

between the dominant culture and the resistance voices precisely results in fruitful conditions for social restriction.⁴¹

The concept called 'popular ignorance' makes a decisive role in the individual perception of an image framework through cultural discourses, popular ignorance suggests for misjudging of events, persons, or things by individuals due to fear, embarrassment, illiteracy, social desirability, or social inhibition.⁴² Thus it causes for providing an inaccurate perception of knowledge. It hinders persons from constituting the right observation of images. The educated society brings up a unique way of conceiving facts and envisages a convincing representation of images. Thus, in popular culture, the idea of popular ignorance plays a crucial role in imbibing and transmitting the so-called image constructive.⁴³

The term 'popular culture' has been used with both misgiving and bravado aspects. It is misgiving because it accesses as one of the undeniably slippery concepts in the world of contemporary social science.⁴⁴ Sometimes popular culture becomes bravado because the term is ultimately more enabling than disabling. It happens even in its slipperiness.⁴⁵ At the debasement of 'high culture' and 'art proper', popular culture may carry some strong derogative connotations. This is what has been celebrated as a carnivalesque counterculture.⁴⁶ Thus it carries the everyday normative orders which are unremarkable. It also may refer to dramatic eruptions against the established social order. It generates thought-evoking ideas and establishes a platform for its acquisition. This makes the framework for rejuvenating the existing ideas and calls for the adaptation of certain

⁴¹ Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies: A practical Introduction*, p. 148.

⁴² John Foster, *A Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance*. George Bell and Sons, London, 1876, pp. 40 – 80.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Kate Mc Gowan, *Key Issues in Critical and Cultural Theory*, p. 39.

⁴⁵ K. Moti Gokulsing and Wiman Dissanayake, (ed.), *Popular Culture in Globalised India*, Taylor and Francis e-library, London, 2008, p. 26.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

newly driven concepts.⁴⁷ Thus, people get to know about new things which helps them to conceive an imaginary structure for the unseen pictures. This is what enables them to perceive images more broadly.

2.5. Visual Culture and Image Conception

In our life the gift of sight and what we are seeing is visual. The entire world is seen visually. The images in our eyes become the most vivid engagements with the world around us, visual images mark everything more vivid than words, sounds, and ideas in our minds. Visual communication is the major contact point between us and the cultural world.⁴⁸ Those images come to our mind from many sources like news, movies, internet magazines, and so on carry a picture. Each image is like a peephole then and it only affords us a very limited vision of things that have a much greater amplitude.

Most of the images come to us as part of narrative stories and that patterns our experiences of the world in the mode of temporal sequences. This is what is addressed to be logical and informed with valuations.⁴⁹ For example, the images of the Taliban in Afghanistan or Pakistan has been depicting them as violent aggressors in the story of warfare. Thus, they presented with bad characters. Hence, the logic of the story is moral and those embedded values in it make us experience image consciousness.⁵⁰ Thus, we order the visual world by converting that random information that comes to us into stories. This does explain and endows the randomness with moral values along with another kind of meaning.⁵¹

Michael Ryan points out his experience that he considered communism in the Soviet Union as dark after going through the lens of images from popular

⁴⁷ John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, Seventh Edition, Routledge publication, New York, 2015, p.43.

⁴⁸ Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*, p. 149.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵⁰ Dr. T. Jithesh, *Chalachithra Siddandhangal*, p. 87.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

movies. The portrayal of communists was negative, threatening, sinister, and unkind.⁵² The author took years of reading and studies and had contact with 'actual' communists to understand and realize that those images he had in mind were not entirely accurate. He learned that those aspects responsible for making them were themselves often guilty of crimes against the humanely committed to preventing what communism always represented. This is what called for a fair and equal distribution of wealth from the occurring.⁵³ The author stresses the impact of visual media in imprinting images in our brains at the deep.

According to William Shakespeare, everyone is a performer if the world is indeed a stage. To evaluate the performer, one must consider not only the script but also the bodies of the actors, how the lighting and set have been designed, how dressing and costumes were done, how the layout of the venue was presented, how they appear on the advertising posters and how printed pictures that accompany reviews.⁵⁴ Thus all these elements together produce the meaning. People interested in visual culture, therefore, attempt to tease apart from how images become saturated with concepts of discourses ideologies, and power.

Many critics attribute that visual culture possesses a greater ability in shaping people's beliefs than written texts and spoken words do. The folk wisdom regarding visuality comments like a picture itself worth to thousand words, "believe what we see' and 'out of sight means out of mind'. It shows that we quickly trust what we see immediately and be transparent.⁵⁵ But words arouse our suspicion towards potential tools for deception. Anyway, the inherent faith that people have in visuality makes it such an effective way of transmitting ideas which meant

⁵² Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies: A practical Introduction*, p. 150.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Dr. T. Githesh, *Chalachithra Siddandhangal*, pp. 88-90.

⁵⁵ K. Moti Gokulsing and Wiman Dissanayake, (ed.), *Popular Culture in Globalised India*, 62-70.

constructing a sense of reality. Audiences try to bracket our emotional response to images to analyze and criticize visual culture.⁵⁶

The cultural supremacy inaugurated by visual communication is a relative phenomenon. As far as pre-modern societies were concerned, the myths and legends which shaped social groups were passed over generations through oral performances or were recorded in hand-crafted texts.⁵⁷ Films, television, and other mass-produced visual media were inaugurated for a new kind of cultural literacy and mass audience by the mid-twentieth century. A great deal of intellectual effort from listeners or readers is required in traditional oral and literacy practices.⁵⁸ The readers or the listeners only could mentally visualize those events described in words and texts, on the other hand, visual media bring the language to vivid life for us. Everything would be on screen for the viewers to imbibe quickly, visual culture stands as an index of deciding who we are as people and denotes a tangible artistic object. It is regarded as a created thing with shape and contour along with spatial and temporal dimensions.⁵⁹

Visual culture prominently enters storytelling through characterization and meaning. In visual narratives, meaning is dependent on context or the surroundings. The context could be anything, from the genre kind of visual narrative about the place in the story where the action occurs. Most importantly visual culture examines how the same thing is represented differently in different visual situations.⁶⁰

Both thematic analysis and formal analysis in visual culture operate on the construction of images and their form rather than concentrating on what it is about. Formal analysis makes an in-depth understanding of different techniques

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Abin Chakraborty, *Popular Culture*, pp. 16-25.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Rumina Rai and Kishwar Panner, *Introduction to Culture Studies*, p. 102.

used for the construction of images which were used to build the narrative and how the character got constructed and the way they convey meaning and tell stories.⁶¹ The kind of meaning we assign to events and people in the visual narrative was often influenced by the implication of formal derives of image character and narrative construction.⁶²

Thus, visual media project certain images in a particular way, and that was quickly imbibed by the common people. For them what they have seen through the visual media is the right representation of images that they carry in mind and passed over to generations. Those who get the correct knowledge of images they perceived could rectify the 'false images' they locked in their brains.⁶³ This could be helped by an in-depth understanding of the subject through the wide reading of sources, conducting interviews, and exploring primary data materials. Thus, the role of visual media is very crucial in the imprinting of images on the popular mind with a strong foundation.⁶⁴

2.6 Representation of Historical Images

There is a different kind of character representation in fiction today. Characters were mostly projected as acceptable to the audience. Is imagination a world with high-profile features for the hero? The recombinant fiction makes extensive use of artistic imagination which is 'licentious' in the original sense of that world which means taking excessive license connects the disregarding of limits.⁶⁵ The outer effect is this disjointed and disoriented fracture as well as the fantastic battle for predominance. Finally, the fantastic wins come at the end discrediting even the facts that share the stage. These fictions may lead one to biographies and

⁶¹ Pramod K. Nayar, *An Introduction to Cultural Studies*, Second Edition, Viva books Private limited, New Delhi, 2016, pp. 65-90.

⁶² John Storey, *Cultural Theory and popular culture: An Introduction*, pp. 44-50.

⁶³ Frantz Fanon, *Black skin white Masks*, Penguin Random House, UK, 2021, pp. 18-30.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies: A practical Introduction*, pp. 162-170.

histories in hopes of resolving the confusion. At a particular level, they cancel history and merely exist on the imaginative level alone.⁶⁶ Thus the historical characters float in and out as they once realized and were unrealizable. This is what marks the writer's relinquished power to control readers' responses. The writer even shrugged off the obligations to develop a character and maintain an illusion of reality.⁶⁷ Those historical figures which emerge as the focus of narrative interests are simply tools for a collage-like vision. It could be satiric, speculative, magical, or mythical like the puppets. Thus, historical characters have a limited range of expression and movement.⁶⁸ It carries a range of significance confused by the fact that every reader feels and understands differently about them.

The use of historical figures in a fantastic setting goes back at least to the Greek Satirist Lucian. He wrote his famous dialogues satirizing official mythology and great heroes in the second century AD.⁶⁹ In the case of Pazhassi Raja always the image has been celebrated fantastically by us. In the popular culture imagination, a typical Mammootty kind of physical figure became attributed to the character of Pazhassi Raja.⁷⁰ How many imaginative figures are constituting popular culture is a significant aspect to study. Why people not reconstructing our historical figures in their 'original' representation is something to be enquired about. Primarily popular construction of historical figures' images according to their wishes is mostly connected with the text and context of the society. So popular imagination of historical figures is bound to text and context which requires an in-depth exploration of knowledge.⁷¹

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, pp. 57-60.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, Aakar books, New Delhi, 2016, pp. 15-30.

⁷⁰ G.P. Ramachandran, *Malayalam Cinema, Desham, Bhasha, Samskaram*, The State Institute of Language, Thiruvananthapuram, 2009, pp. 62-100.

⁷¹ Patricia Uberio, *Freedom and Destiny, Gender, Family and Popular Culture*, pp. 104-122.

Man constitutes ideas and concepts over his experiences within the social structure. The factors responsible for evolving such thought processes come out from the temporary social condition. It carries the influence of enormous aspects along with stabilizing narratives. It's to be noted that here both the codified and uncoded customs, moral beliefs, and individual perspectives were in continual flux.⁷² It was a field of change and context, this could be regarded as an arena in which opposing interests made conflicting claims. This suggests that one must be cautious to generalize in the so-called popular culture when the whole ideas are in a floating position. This could be regarded as the component factor resulting in changing the image perspectives.⁷³

There have always been raising questions about skin tone and perceiving images in brains by it. Multiple factors push people to think and conceptualize the images of unseen heroes. Fair skin tone is attributed to the super-celebrated elite figures on hegemonic grounds.⁷⁴ Men's marks are the potential for self-consciousness or negation. If that consciousness is regarded as transcendental, then we all must realize that this transcendence is obsessed primarily with the issue of love and understanding. Colour consciousness and division are promoted and perpetuated by colonial suppressive theories.⁷⁵ It has been passed over generations across the world in marginalizing certain groups and establishing white superiority. Men are generally propelled towards the world towards attitude. A movement of aggressiveness engendering the wings of servitude or conquest. This could be regarded as a movement of love, a gift of self, and at the end, it culminates in what is commonly called ethical orientation.⁷⁶ But the suppressive part insists that we believe in color disparities. It has been engraved and highlighted throughout human minds in different forms of articulations. It does not

⁷² John Foster, *A Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance*, pp. 12-42.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, pp. 45-60.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ John Foster, *A Essay on the Evils of Popular Ignorance*, pp. 44-75.

believe the idea that the notion of equality is inseparable from human dignity and that it is essential that every perceive a notion that white color would give a superior position and acceptance to the images perceived by people. This was stabilized by the idea driven by the socio-economic political and cultural systems. The color consciousness segregation and articulation of white images is a matter of critical study regarding the image conceptualization of the eminent historical figure Kerala Varna Pazhassi Raja.⁷⁷

2.7 Conclusion

In a nutshell, it could be pointed out that popular culture is simply the culture that is widely favored or well-liked by many people. It is a merge of perspectives, ideas, images, attitudes, and other phenomena within itself at the mainstream of the given culture. There also attributes some crucial aspects in molding the image perception apart from time and context. Thus, conceptualizing, and framing images of persons and other things are subjected to enormous components of the social drive.

An image evaluation in popular culture does connect with text and context. The text releases a set of possibilities both for the constitution of cultural objects and the subsequent understanding of their significance on a wide range. The text could not be considered as an object which can be computed. This would involve space, time, and resistance. These were not available to the conceptualization of the subject of the study. The so-called socio-economic political and cultural ideas of the period generate certain values and opinions. It influences the context of the text and thus leads to image conceptualization and formation. The particular time in which the text got released was bound to all such influences of impact. The context gives a crucial base for the period along with recognizing those ideas eventually generated in the popular culture. Perceiving an image is thus subjected

⁷⁷ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Charithravum Chalachithravum, Deshya bhavanayude Harshamulyanggal*, The state Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2010, pp. 68-98.

to time and context. It could be any image that brings up as the outcome of certain widespread knowledge of the time and context. It carries changes over time and results in changes in context and popular character.

Thus, in popular culture, certain element signifies and peruses the image perception of people which is primarily subjected to time and context. This could be addressed as a universal phenomenon that is applicable and happens eventually everywhere.

Chapter 3

British Perception of Pazhassi Raja

3.1 Introduction

The colonial resistance by Indian rulers was sporadic, weak, and disunited. The process of colonization was done through protracted elements which were achieved through making military conquest as well as diplomatic maneuver over an approximate period of one hundred years.¹ The East India Company masked its political ambitions initially and changed its character from a trading organization to a territorial power. The name of Pazhassi Raja comes in as one of the strong opponents of East India Company from Malabar.

Broadly speaking there are two versions of the descriptions account on Pazhassi episodes are available. One category contains the official views of the British colonial authorities and their aims evidently to present the local chief as a rebel and unlawful. Also, they attempted to explain the prolonged fight between the Company and local chiefs. The colonial version does not fail to explain the national forces as inferior both technically and in terms of efficiency.² The second version was presented by nationalist historians under the influence of the Indian national movement. It understandably depicted Pazhassi Raja as a hero and a freedom fighter. The prime thing to be noted is that both these versions are based on British official documents.³ There was a set of documents collected by the British which provides scholars with the opportunity to study and evaluate the political life of Pazhassi Raja. The credibility of the sources is suspicious, but it is dependable to a certain extent.

¹ K. N. Panikkar, *Colonialism, Culture and Resistance*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2007, p. 1.

² Rajan Gurukkal and M.R. Raghavan Varrier, *History of Kerala; Prehistoric to the Present*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 2018, p. 232.

³ *Ibid.*

3.2 The Image of Pazhassi Raja in British Accounts

Pazhassi Raja has been named as 'Pychy Raja', 'Pyche Raja', 'Cotiote Raja', and 'Kottayam Raja' in British accounts.⁴ The British perception of the image of Pazhassi Raja could be viewed through official correspondences, reports, and letters. Multiple opinions regarding the image of Pazhassi Raja were thus found to be constituted.

As far as British official records are concerned Pazhassi Raja had been written as a man of very shallow intelligence and acknowledged by himself uniformly and unequivocally. Pazhassi Raja was treated as someone inexperienced and governed, his conduct and professions exhibited variance often. This denoted the incapacity of the Raja to manage the affairs of Kottayam and, it could appear to have been an indisposition to help company servants in the introduction of authority to their heads into the province. This judgment that the behaviour of Pazhassi Raja was not always unambiguous and the British considered that he was not capable of ruling his country.⁵ It is important to note that the British correlated what they conceived as the inept behaviour of Pazhassi Raja as a possibly deliberate act that is designed to erupt their claim over sovereignty. The British addressed Pazhassi Raja as the 'most intractable and unreasonable' Raja when he refused to pay the sum of money demanded by the British on 7 October 1792.⁶

During 1795, British troops were located at Kottayam *bazaar* to protect the tax-gatherers of Kurumbranad Raja from molestation and to sustain peace.⁷ Rickards, the Principal Collector of Malabar then observed the conduct of Pazhassi

⁴ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, Vol. 155, 20th February 1800, No. 2. G/16, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

⁵ [http://www.sarthaks.com/1237665/what-made-Pazhassi Raja-turn-against-the British](http://www.sarthaks.com/1237665/what-made-Pazhassi-Raja-turn-against-the-British), accessed on 12th April 2020, 2.00pm.

⁶ Foreign and political department consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 24, G/11, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

⁷ The word *bazaar* is used to denote a marketplace. It suggests the assemblage of people for selling and buying different kinds of products.

Raja in this context as continued to be distinguished by a contempt for authority.⁸ Rickards continued that Pazhassi Raja was happy to reveal all kinds of weaknesses of Kurumbranad Veera Varma regarding the revenue collection of Kottayam. It indicated the depth of rage possessed by Pazhassi Raja for transferring the power of Kottayam to Kurumbranad Raja from him.⁹ British commissioners decided to issue a proclamation forbidding people to assemble to assist Pazhassi Raja by 18th December 1796. It was like a warning to those who helped Pazhassi Raja during the Pazhassi revolts. They could be declared as irreconcilable enemies of the company and provided for the confiscation of their properties if proved in assisting him."¹⁰ Pazhassi Raja is said to have made the characteristic remark at the information of the content of British proclamation that "not a sepoy shall rest in this province till you and all your adherents are extirpated".¹¹

A photo or a portrait of the 'original' Pazhassi Raja is not available anywhere. Bombay Governor Jonathan Duncan depicted Pazhassi Raja as a person with long hair, a beard, and a mustache. Pazhassi Raja according to Duncan was a short man and sometimes wore a red hat. His face carried divinity all the time.¹² Walter Ever, a former member of the Court of Directors, came to India to study the activities of the British army in Bombay directly and submitted a report. He met Pazhassi Raja in a peace settlement meeting at Chirakkal Kovilakam and portrayed him as a small person like an ape with a smile on his face. The companions of Pazhassi Raja according to Ever found to respect and love him. Pazhassi Raja and his companions were nude except for a piece of cloth worn from waist to knee.¹³ This representation throws much light on the physical image of Pazhassi Raja and the kind of dressing that prevailed then.

⁸ Foreign and Political department consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 25, G/11, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, Vol. 27, 5th January 1800, No. 18, National Archives, New Delhi.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Foreign and Political Department consultations, Vol. 30, 5th June 1798, No. 132, National Archives, New Delhi.

¹³ Walter Ever, Home miscellaneous, Vol. 438, 10th may 1797, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

Walter Ever in his official report regarding the administration of Malabar during the time of the Pazhassi revolts criticized British administrators. According to Ever, they must recognize the need of respecting rulers like Pazhassi Raja who comes from a family of great legacy and heritage. Ever also pointed out that the language and manners used by Pazhassi Raja are far better than the behavior of the educated and civilized company officials.¹⁴

From 28th September 1796 onwards, Pazhassi Raja and Christopher Pelie, the Superintendent of Tellichery began to write letters to each other. Christopher Pelie wrote gently to Pazhassi Raja after realizing the depth of his popular support. Pelie understood that people possess much loyalty towards Pazhassi Raja and thus he attempted to establish a cordial relationship with Pazhassi Raja. It was well evident in his reply letters to Pazhassi Raja.¹⁵ A letter written by company official Englis to Lieutenant General Hairs shows the importance of the Pazhassi rebellion and the relevance of popular participation. Englis found that Nairs and peasants of the country have come up together with weapons to protect Pazhassi Raja's interests and helped him to refrain his country from colonial subjugation.¹⁶ Interestingly a letter written by William Macleod in 1802 to the government Chief Secretary at Fort St. George, mentioned Pazhassi Raja as a notorious and dangerous rebel.¹⁷ Malabar Commission President Thomas Wilkinson once wrote that Pazhassi Raja neither accepts company laws nor respects them. Wellesley, the Commander in Chief of East India Company forces in Malabar has observed that "the very difficult problem of the company is facing the question of resisting Pazhassi Raja. Everything would be quiet if he was defeated. The annihilation of

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ Selected Records, A Collection of Treaties relating to British affairs in Malabar, Serial No. 25, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

¹⁶ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 27, G/11, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

¹⁷ Foreign and Political Department secret Consultations, Extracts of letters from Macleod to the Principal Government Secretary, 9th November 1802, Serial No. 124, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

Pazhassi Raja would give a great effect on the minds of the disaffected. Because the people had faith in him and had a decided interest in the Raja."¹⁸

Thus, it was clear that the moderation and lenity pursued towards the Raja failed to reduce his ferocity of disposition and natural restlessness. He preferred to become a 'rebel' and 'not willing to be accommodated and thus indulged in desperate acts' according to colonial perception.¹⁹

3.3. The Image of Pazhassi Raja During Revolt Settlement

In the official letter to Sir John Shore Bart, the Governor General of Council from John Duncan and John Stuart mentioned the continuation of the Company's proceedings respecting Pazhassi Raja on appearing before the authority.²⁰ A letter written by Pazhassi Raja to the Governor denoted that he had caused to be forwarded to Tellichery by his younger brother. The Parappanad Raja arrived then and was admitted for an interview with the president but nothing particular passed at the meeting.²¹ Later on 3rd July, he returned to the jungle the elder *Bhandari* reported on the 8th of July that he had received a letter from his son in which he mentioned the meeting with Pazhassi Raja.²² His son explained everything in detail to him but Pazhassi Raja continued with apprehension and fear.

The company officials were thus instructed not to hurt or disagree with Pazhassi Raja if he is ready for a meeting at Chirakkal in 1797. Thus, it was conveyed even in writing a letter to Pazhassi Raja that neither their life nor his honour should endanger if he was ready for a reconciliation meeting.²³ During this time, Colonel Dow was entrusted with civil and military charges of Kottayam. He

¹⁸ Guide to the Records of the Malabar District 1714 to 1835, Vol. VII, Published by the superintendent, Madras, 1936, p. 268.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Foreign and Political consultation 24th March 1797, No. 39, National Archives, New Delhi.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² The word *bhandari* denotes a position under colonial rule who worked as the translator between British Officials and the natives.

²³ Foreign and political secret consultations, 20th September 1797, No.12, National Archives, New Delhi.

had a short correspondence with the Raja through letters regarding the meeting for bringing a desirable conclusion by putting an end to the disturbances of Pazhassi Raja. East India Company was much apprehended to restore peace in the province in the context of the war in Europe along with the entered course and intrigues of the French with Tippu Sultan.²⁴

In the peace settlement meeting, Pazhassi Raja was asked to go and reside in Travancore for a term of three years with a pension from the Company.²⁵ It was however positively rejected by Pazhassi Raja along with Company's firm demand to quit Kottayam. Pazhassi Raja could not separate himself from the temples and Gods of Kottayam.²⁶ The support and worship of Gods have constituted the prime object for his constant solicitude. Besides that, such an exile was unacceptable to Pazhassi Raja which he had never done under Tippu's government. Pazhassi Raja either would live in Kottayam peacefully with his family under the senior Raja or he would leave the management of the country for a period of two years and the authority must be handed over to any Indian hands of the Company's nomination.²⁷

Pazhassi Raja possessed great affinity to traditional customs, norms, rituals, and practices. In a letter written to Jonathan Duncan Alex Dow mentioned that the head Brahmin at Manathana, Patteriepossessess much influence upon Pazhassi Raja on grounds of respectability of his age and office.²⁸ Company records mentioned the annual ceremony performance of Pazhassi Raja's mother's death date at Thodeekalam temple. No other temple at the devotion or in terms of the

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Foreign and Political Consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 23. G/11. Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Foreign and Political Secret Consultations, 10th July 1797, No. 54, National Archives, New Delhi.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

power of Pazhassi Raja to make him comfortable and suitable to go through the observance.²⁹

The president's minutes described about East India Company's Chirakkal meeting with Pazhassi Raja on 7th May 1797, the meeting intended to bring a peaceful settlement after the first Pazhassi rebellion. Pazhassi Raja came to the venue on foot with two Principal people with him. He begged for permission to get in with his sword.³⁰ Pazhassi Raja does not have a single attendant of his own. *Bhandari* and his son were the other persons assembled in the room. Pazhassi Raja was a little man seen weaving his hair long a short bushy beard. He had a red cap which he occasionally put on. It was a countenance that purely indicated a degree of spirit but not much of sagacity.³¹ The meeting was on a serious subject, but Pazhassi Raja was found laughing more than once as he talked to the *bhandari*. The Raja does not speak Hindustani and that is why the interpreter *bhandari* was appointed at the meeting.³² Pazhassi Raja demanded the return of the looted property from Kovilakam in the meeting. The so-called property assumption happened on 19th April 1796 when British troops under the leadership of James Gorden, encroached in Pazhassi *kovilKovilakamearch* of Pazhassi Raja.³³

The Governor further reported the positive rejection of Pazhassi Raja about his transfer to Travancore. For Pazhassi his temples and Gods whom it was the prime subject of his life to be taken care of. It acquits him with and would create loss and deprivation and ignominy which he could not think of ever. Pazhassi Raja's official letters to company officials exhibited that he was a religious person and had undertaken religious observances frequently.³⁴ The negotiation with Pazhassi Raja highlighted that any treaty with Pazhassi is exceptionally able which is not

²⁹ Foreign and Political Department consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 33, G/11, Kerala History Achieves, Department of History, University of Calicut.

³⁰ Foreign and Political department consultations, 28th August 1797, No 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Foreign and Political Department consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 35.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Foreign and Political department consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 36

surrounded by an unequivocal confession of his offenses and would be treated as an unreserved submission to the British government. Pazhassi Raja has been considered as the cause for the magnitude of the evils and it is required for atonement. He might be inclined to admit the degree of chastisement regarding how much or how little. But it becomes demanded the authority the questions of difficult solutions.³⁵

The Governor explained in his minutes that Pazhassi Raja appeared to him quitting during violations against the constituted British government. Because it would create bad consequences if he was permitted to return immediately and occupy as formerly dwelling Pazhassi. It would be clear because the appearance of treating on a footing of equality is consistent with the situation as a dependent and subject.³⁶ Governor extended his words that Pazhassi Raja's past offenses were enormous in number but since he had personally approached for pardon then it's necessary to consider the last degree of punishment. It would make an honorable acceptance than a full extent of correction due to his perverse.³⁷ A quick decision was taken to restore permanent peace in the province and make a general display of Raja's submission and repentance. A temporary residence in any of the neighboring laces would secure him the protection as well as the favor of the government on easy terms. He won't refuse without identifying the little value which allows him to estimate the Company's friendship and exposure to the insincerity of his profession of recognition and obedience.³⁸

The Governor highlighted that if Pazhassi Raja consents to retirement then the entire purity of his intentions would be placed beyond controversy. It would be considered as the better earnest of his peaceable and obedient approach in the future than an individual assurance or any other security however is widely

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Home Miscellaneous, Vol. 438-466, Tamil Nadu Archives.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Foreign and political department Consultations, 10th July 1797, No. 72, National Archives, New Delhi.

respected.³⁹ The Governor highlighted that it would make many beneficial results. It would be a strong declaration to the inhabitants that Pazhassi Raja had sincerely resolved to be faithful and loyal to the British government. It would rather universally be construed as a punishment for his aims and a consequent acknowledgment of British superiority. The Governor finally made it clear that Pazhassi Raja should be restored to his former condition at Pazhassi without making any sort of redistribution or public atonement.⁴⁰ In the context of the Governor's minutes, the *bhandari* replied that Pazhassi Raja would never give consent even for a temporary explement from his country. Also, he stated that Pazhassi Raja would never gain lift his arms against the company according to his intimate and sincere conviction.⁴¹

The President's report mentioned the arrival of Pazhassi Raja as more affected and grasped the hands of Jonathan Duncan with much earnestness and delivered some strong expressions of his sense of kindness. Pazhassi Raja declared that he neither should run into his late excesses nor again be guilty towards the company.⁴² Jonathan Duncan felt it as a genuine sentiment by judging from his countenance and manner. In the President's report, there is a painful and melancholy idea was evident regarding the unfortunate loss and serious provocation from Pazhassi Raja by the plunder at his mansion. However, the first Pazhassi rebellion was brought to a peaceful end by settling with Pazhassi Raja in July 1797.⁴³ He had been pacified then with the assurance of returning the plundered property along with the provision of a sum of money as a pension. Even though the British were still under suspicion regarding Raja's loyalty and apprehensiveness towards the future. The Earl of Mornington expressed the view that the settlement with Pazhassi Raja was not such "to warrant a sentiment of

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 37.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 38.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

security either in his weakness or in his sincerity."⁴⁴ It sounded like the unconditional submission of Pazhassi Raja was an essential pre-requisite regarding the safety of the British possessions over the Malabar coast.

3.3.1 The Image of Pazhassi Raja's Revolt and Settlement

James Rivett's minutes were pursued with an equal degree of concern and regret transmitted from the committee of government in Malabar about their negotiation with rebel Raja. It was bounded with the temper of the time and the admitted posture of affairs which had been sent to render peace desirable to its foundation. The conclusion of hostilities is affected on terms but will tend to nurse the spirit of rebellion and would call it forth at the fitter time armed with powers and repute with double rancor and revenge.⁴⁵ Mir Rivett in his reflections upon this subject demanded not to convey the most distant ideas that the negotiation has not been entered into. The preliminaries concluded was essential regarding ensuring peace even in the civilization. He was not insensible that the entire phase of the war had been deemed. Thus, if not declared then a war of hopelessness and desperation by those from whose exertions, courage and zeal could be brought to a favourable conclusion.⁴⁶

Rivett admitted the reasoning and the utter importance of Pazhassi Raja at the very example of the proposed negotiation as framing a contemptible opposition against company authority. He made this assertion based on local information and asserted it as a positive belief. It highlighted that neither Pazhassi Raja nor his adherents which had been held out of them, there the smallest glimmering of hope existed towards a successful opposition to British arms.⁴⁷ The well-known restlessness shown by Pazhassi Raja aWayanad'sad disposition before the establishment of company authority in Malabar was truly indicating his

⁴⁴ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 9th October 1797, No. 4, National Archives, New Delhi.

⁴⁵ Foreign and Political Department Consultation, 28th August 1797, No. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Secret and political Diaries, 11th September 1797, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.

character. His reiterated disobedience and defective engagements with the state since the establishment of the colonial authority exhibited his style of approach.⁴⁸ Pazhassi Raja's rebellion conduct, the repeat of premature exultation, and inadmissible claims which marked the progress of the rebellion in himself and his followers together confirmed the opinion of Rivett beyond a possibility of doubt. No negotiation with short of unconditional submission would fail to have a future.⁴⁹

Rivett proposes a contrary conduct of the open and a vowed rebel, Pazhassi Raja was tantamount to a declaration of our weakness and would highlight his superiority. Rivett suggested that the continuation of the warfare would have reduced the strength of the rebel under all political probability. Rivett pointed out the springing of incalculable evil from an admission of the conclusions at the authorised residence in Kottayam by the ruler.⁵⁰ Thus the apparent hopelessness expressed by Rivett regarding the desultory warfare on the coast and the critical situation of public affairs in Europe along with the apprehended consequences of Tippu's interference. It later made some decisive evaluations from the company. It was highlighted that any articles of negotiation or any concessions from the part of East India Company on grounds of political justice or necessity would either tend to compromise the dignity of the government or it would weaken the impression of authority in Malabar.⁵¹ As the outcome, it would lead through progressive steps towards the probable renewal of those very hostilities which they meant to terminate.

The Governor's minutes on 27th September 1797 at Tellichery explained the signing of an engagement regarding bone references principally to Wayanad and to carry the business of Kottayam.⁵² The senior Raja was permitted to rule Kottayam after the settlement and he was proposed to act concerning Company government

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Secret and Political Diaries, 11th September 1797, No. 61.

⁵⁰ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 28th August 1797, No. 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 8th October 1797, No. 28 National Archives, New Delhi.

advice in Wayanad. The senior Raja observed the great trouble handled by company officials in bringing him up from Travancore to correspond to their intentions regarding the management of the country. Otherwise, he had no real desire to enter the frame by recognising the influence of the country considerably with Pazhassi Raja.⁵³

It was added that if Pazhassi Raja had not received a good allowance made on him then he must take part with ryots against revenue collection. Thus, there might issue new disturbances. The senior Raja replied that he had no occasion to apprehend Pazhassi Raja who must be satisfied with the allowance assigned to him by his superior. The written engagement with the senior Raja renouncing the management of his favour towards which the principal people of the country subscribed formally and also the civil and military powers of the honourable company would continue in support of the senior Raja against all opponents.⁵⁴ The senior Raja might have an English gentleman like Colonel Dow as an assistant if he likes or would provide many facilities for his security.

In a letter written to John Spencer, the President of the Commission on Malabar by the Resident in Mysore, Colonel Barry close on 7th February 1800 requested for assembling a force immediately. It has to be done at the earliest to employ them eventually against Pazhassi Raja who was seen persistently refusing to acknowledge company government authority in Wayanad.⁵⁵ The letter also highlighted the assembling of the force from Mysore and the request had been sent for Smee to continue his endeavour to strengthen the influence of the Company over Kottayam. It would weaken the connections of Pazhassi Raja in the district.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ [http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/history-and-culture/trailing-Pazhassi Raja-to-his death/article4584713.ece/amp/](http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/history-and-culture/trailing-Pazhassi-Raja-to-his-death/article4584713.ece/amp/), accessed on 28th October 2020, 8.00pm.

⁵⁵ Foreign and Political Department Consultation, 24th April 1800, No. 15, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The letter from the Governor to Lieutenant Colonel Barry Close, the Resident of Mysore on 3rd February 1800 mentioned the decided opinion of the Governor General with concerns. It was stated that any considerations about the pretensions of Pazhassi Raja would be injurious to Company's authority. It would be very clear that when it happened previously to the Company while taking possession of the district under the treaty of Mysore.⁵⁷ The Governor made it clear that no compromise can therefore be admitted on this subject. Thus, the establishment of the authority of the Company must be done as soon as possible in Wayanad. Governor instructed that the continuance of Pazhassi Raja must be punished with the most signed sovereignty if he presumes to resist the measures.⁵⁸

Thus, in such an occasion a force on both sides of Wayanad becomes sufficient either to defeat him or ultimately reduce him to submission. Thus, it becomes necessary to evacuate him immediately at the pain of considering and treating him as a rebel and a traitor.⁵⁹ The experience with the turbulent and refractory chief would become a salutary lesson to the military officers in the context of future hostilities with him. It would thus preclude the return of those errors which provide on a formal occasion something so disgraceful to the arms and injurious to the interests of the company.⁶⁰

In a letter written to Colonel Barry close the Resident of Mysore from Jonathan Duncan and James Rivett on 5th March 1800, stressed the civil capacity of the Company in subjugating at the event of Pazhassi Raja conduct which is inducing the requirement of entering upon hostilities with him. It shall be done to promote the main objects for the counteraction of the efforts which was disposed of by his old party in Malabar in his favour.⁶¹ It was highlighted that the disturbances of rather a serious nature in one or two of the southern districts of the province. It

⁵⁷ Foreign and Political Department Consultation, 24th April 1800, No. 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Foreign and Political Department Consultation, 24th April 1800, No. 17.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Foreign and Political Department Consultation 5th June 1800, No, 38, G/16, Kerala History Archives Department of History, University of Calicut.

was considered as commencing by a very daring act of opposition to the government authority.⁶²

In a letter to Jonathan Duncan, the President in Council from J. Sartorius, Colonel commanding on 1st February 1800 expressed his anxiety upon the loss of coolies during the late contest with Pazhassi Raja. He expressed the fear of having experienced great difficulties from the obvious disinclination towards this description of people who expressed for a similar service.⁶³ Some may be procurable but appears to be highly advisable that the company should receive the supply of those people from the presidency.⁶⁴

Pazhassi Raja remained a few months in Kottayam during the close of the 18th century and quit the place and moved to Wayanad when the authority of government had not been established as formerly. The final decision regarding the question of the Company's authority in Wayanad was at the end before the Court of Directors after a great deal of discussion and inquiry was made in India.⁶⁵ The Bombay government had yet refrained from taking any measures towards asserting that the district of Wayanad in a manner left to itself in which state it remained formally relinquishing their claim. Pazhassi Raja had principal body inhabitants in his interests repaired through and took upon himself its administration. Pazhassi Raja assumed the management of the western part and ranges on the border of Wayanad on account of revenues.⁶⁶ Pazhassi also had sent frequent deputations to Seringapattam and on all occasions they were received and treated with respect as well as distinction.⁶⁷

In the meantime, the person Palloor Emman Nair was the principal adherent and supporter of Pazhassi Raja during his rebellion and possessed

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 24th April 1800, No. 15.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Foreign and Political Department consultations, 5th June 1800, No. 38.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 5th June 1800, No. 39.

considerable personal influence in Wayanad. During this period in 1798, an open rupture took place in the relationship between Pazhassi Raja and Emman Nair.⁶⁸ The former alleges the latter's independent conduct and failure to account for the revenue management as the causes of the rift. Emman Nair attributed this refusal in joining in the hostile measures against the British government and his determined opposition to all such plans as the reasons for his fight with Pazhassi Raja. As the context, it may mark when hostilities were positively determined against the late Sultan, and the armies began to move from both sides of the Peninsula.⁶⁹ The Bombay government especially General Stuart was aware of the opportunity and recommended to the commissioners for conciliatory conduct with Pazhassi Raja.⁷⁰

The first circumstance that brought the notice of Pazhassi Raja was in consequence of a letter that was addressed to the commissioners by him. It allocated to himself the merit of conduct during the later contest in which he noticed in rather a free manner the countenance that had been provided to Emman Nair.⁷¹ Emmen Nair was obliged to quit the district under the superior influence of Pazhassi Raja. The Company government expressed permission to him to reside under the protection of the government.⁷²

The Bombay government rendered instructions about the resolution of the lordship that the territory quoted in the Partition treaty would be under the management of the presidency of Fort St. George. It had been communicated to restrict any sort of interference in the district of Wayanad or the conduct of Pazhassi Raja who so far as well had a connection with it. It was ensured to be watchful over his conduct with the view of frustrating any endeavours on his part to renew intrigues in Kottayam below the ghats. Because there was a considerable

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 5th June 1800, No. 40.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Extracts of the letter from Emman Nair to Major Walker, Foreign and Political Department Consultations, Vol. 4, 1st November 1800, p. 731.

⁷² *Ibid.*

amount of people who were still supposed to be attached to him.⁷³ Thus, the whole matter was referred before the committee and asked for ensuring some decisive measures with respect to Pazhassi Raja and to restrict his apparent disposition to assert protection to independence.

In a letter written by John Spencer, the President of the Joint Commission in Malabar on 24th October 1799 marked that after the treaty of Seringapatam the Governor and commander in Chief suspended all operations in the upper country confining with their final instructions.⁷⁴ The pension to Pazhassi Raja was not granted, being a condition of his submission in 1797 and he had suffered his property at the occasion of the possession of his family mansion by company troops. Some remarkable notes allude by being elucidatory of the views of the late Tippu Sultan in courting amicable relations with Pazhassi Raja.⁷⁵ It was heard that the late Sultan declined the offer of a sum of money as the revenue from Wayanad was tendered by Pazhassi Raja. In this context, Pazhassi Raja started to have asserted a pretension that was considered a power, something which is distinct and independent of Tippu Sultan.⁷⁶ His situation was not affected by the event which terminated the life of Tippu and his dominions were subjugated by the honourable company.⁷⁷

Eventually, Pazhassi Raja was leading towards the outbreak of the second Pazhassi revolt. The prime reason which forced Pazhassi Raja to yet another revolt was his claim over the district of Wayanad Post Tippu Sultan's death.⁷⁸

⁷³ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 5th June 1800, No. 38.

⁷⁴ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 5th June 1800, No. 41.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Extracts from *Military Reminiscences*, Extracted from a Journal of 'Nearly Forty years Active Service in the East Indies', from Colonel James Welsh, 1830, p. 148.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Kottayam Collection Diary, Secret Despatches, Vol. 40, 29th May 1803, Madras Council Consultations, Tamil Nadu, Archives.

3.4. Colonel Arthur Wellesley and Pazhassi Raja

Most of us may not have come across significant historical facts which are related to the early colonial era in Malabar, especially with Wayanad. This place interestingly has links with Arthur Wellesley, an Irish-born soldier who belonged to the British army.⁷⁹ He began his career at the age of twenty-eight in Calcutta. He joined the thirty-third regiment of the East Indian Company then. Wellesley moved to South India two years later. He joined the British army in their war mission to Mysore. He could kill Tippu Sultan in the final Anglo-Mysorean war in 1799.⁸⁰ He emerged victorious against the mighty powerful emperor Napoleon Bonaparte of France at the famous war at Waterloo in June 1815.⁸¹ Wellesley was bestowed with the covetous Peerage of the Duke of Wellington in 1814 for his incredible services towards the British army and administration. He became the 'conqueror of the conquer of the world' in 1815 after his victorious warfare with Napoleon at Waterloo.⁸²

Wellesley was backed by vast experiences in various phases of war and administration in India which stood him in good to achieve tremendous goals in the future. Wellesley was so close to King George IV and could enter British Politics soon. Eventually, he could become the Prime Minister of Britain in 1828 and was politically active till 1846.⁸³

The appointment of Colonel Arthur Wellesley as the commander of the forces in Malabar, Canara, and Mysore was a tactful move from the East Indian Company to suppress the threats raised by Pazhassi Raja. Wellesley had been helped by Smee, who had been in charge of the Kottayam district for opening

⁷⁹ <http://www.indiatimes.com/amp/news/india/kerala - Varma - Pazhassi-rajaa-true-warrior-king-who-fought - the-british-and-earned-their-respect-350807. Html>, accessed on 24th April 2021, 9.00pm.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Malayinkeezh Gopalakrishnan, *Keralam Loka Charithrathilode*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, pp. 214-215.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ [http:// www. Indiatimes.com](http://www.Indiatimes.com)

certain roads with the help of some friendly Nairs.⁸⁴ Those roads helped Wellesley immensely in his future military operations against Pazhassi Raja. Wellesley took the initiative in constructing places of strength and security for grains, provisions, and stores at the centre of Kottayam. Wellesley calculated that the annihilation of Pazhassi Raja would make a great effect on the minds of the disaffected with which the land of Kottayam abounds.⁸⁵ Wellesley understood that the fall of Pazhassi Raja and the reduction of Wayanad would curb the depth of rebellion. Considerably, because there never was a country that formed its nature, its situation, the manners of the people as well as its government so well calculated for the turbulence.⁸⁶

The whole Wayanad according to Wellesley was a country of one jungle and had openings in some parts. But the entire land was so thick, and he found it impossible to see objects at a distance of two yards. Wellesley has found Wayanad as the hub of criminals along with those who refrain from the payment of dues to the government and those who oppose East India Company.⁸⁷ Thus Wellesley termed his first object as to capture Pazhassi Raja as the head of all the disturbers of peace and subjection of Wayanad. Very soon Wellesley established powerful regiments of the army on both sides of Wayanad.⁸⁸

Wellesley had information about the supply of rice to Pazhassi Raja by Unni Moosa from Thalassery. Thus, he prohibited rice distribution to Wayanad from the Western regions of Malabar and applied an economic siege on Wayanad.⁸⁹ Wellesley also determined to prevent the practice of carrying arms in Malabar. The opinion of Wellesley was that Malabar could never be reckoned upon excepting as

⁸⁴ Duke of Wellington papers, Vol.5, 19th October 1802, p. 329, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Duke of Wellington Despatches, Vol. 5, 19th October 1802, p. 331

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁸⁸ Duke of Wellington Despatches, Vol. 5, pp. 332-334.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

a country that is ripe for insurrection and a state in which it has probably never been till a strong officer comes in.⁹⁰

In a letter written to Colonel Boles, Wellesley admitted that he has recognised the strength of Pazhassi Raja by evaluating his previous rebellion history. Wellesley accepted that Pazhassi Raja has grown up as a great force in Wayanad.⁹¹ Wellesley had always wondered like Captain Dickenson about the huge number of men on Pazhassi Raja's side. It was wondering them to know how Pazhassi Raja could feed them properly. Questions further raised whether they were armed or did they possess any ammunition.⁹² Wellesley knew the necessity of strengthening military activities against Pazhassi Raja at the earliest. Because the rebellion would become regularly organised and would get ahead if something is not done soon. Wellesley had foreseen that the entire system or the warfare must be changed and would become more tedious if proper plans were failed to implement.⁹³

Wellesley was well-planned and determined to subjugate Pazhassi Raja and cease the Pazhassi episode forever. He organised the army well ever since he joined in the military service in Malabar. Colonel Wellesley has declared to confiscate the families and properties of those who help Pazhassi Raja on any grounds.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, Pazhassi Raja stepped down from Wayanad during the months of June and July 1800 and attacked army camps organised by Wellesley in places like Kannavath, Koothuparambu, Manathana, etc. Pazhassi Raja joined hands with Unnimoosa and some prominent Nambiars of Malabar in those attacks.

⁹⁰ Secret Political Diary, 1799-1800, No. 88, P. 260, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassiraja Kalavum Jeevithavum*, Melinda Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, P. 72.

⁹³ Secret Political Diary, 1799-1800, p. 262.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Athan Gurukkal from Manjeri was also reached to help Pazhassi Raja in his mission.⁹⁵

Wellesley had sent huge military camps in different parts of Kottayam and Wayanad. The military persons were instructed either to kill or to capture Pazhassi Raja. Thus, the entire country was enriched by the British army.⁹⁶ Wellesley tried his level best to subjugate the Pazhassi rebellion. Unfortunately, he could not subdue the protests led by Pazhassi Raja in his three years long struggles in Malabar. Wellesley has found the existence of disaffection, disturbance, and rebellion in different parts of Malabar. He enquired whether the country was not on the whole more civilized, quiet, and more submissive to the government than that was in March 1800 previously to the last rebellion organised by Pazhassi Raja.⁹⁷ Wellesley asked those who were so loud in their aimed versions upon the administration of civil affairs whether they have not foreseen at least not repeatedly foretold that the Pazhassi rebellion could not be considered at an end as long as Pazhassi Raja was alive. Wellesley continued that it would be renewed at large as soon as the force in Malabar gets weakened and particularly when there should be employment for the troops in the Mysore country.⁹⁸

Some historians opine that both Pazhassi Raja and Arthur Wellesley met each other once and exchanged gifts as well. Pazhassi Raja gifted a golden chain to Arthur Wellesley and a handgun was gifted in return by Wellesley to Pazhassi Raja.⁹⁹ However, this opinion does not have historical validity at all. K. M Panicker in his novel *Kerala Simham* has expressed that Colonel Wellesley could come out in good stead in his campaigns against Napoleon Bonaparte in Spain through the experiences he had gained in the guerrilla warfare against Pazhassi Raja in the wilds

⁹⁵ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 11th November 1802, No. I, National Archives, New Delhi.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Duke of Wellington Papers, Vol. 5, pp. 334-336.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ R. Vinod Kumar, *Keralathile Smarakangal*, DC Books, Kottayam, 2012, p. 83.

of Wayanad.¹⁰⁰ Thus those observations and evaluations made by Wellesley on Pazhassi Raja and the Pazhassi rebellion would portray how powerful was Pazhassi Raja. The real strength of Pazhassi Raja was revealed in the failure of Colonel Arthur Wellesley in subjugating him. Though Wellesley could not defeat Pazhassi Raja but accepted his power as well as compassionate feelings toward war captives.¹⁰¹

3.5 T. H. Baber and Pazhassi Raja

Thomas Harvey Baber sailed from England to Bombay in 1797 after joining the East India Company.¹⁰² Baber was sent to Tellichery where some of the East India Company factories were located within months of his arrival in Bombay. Baber held the position of district judge in Tellichery during 1808 – 1816. Later he was transferred to Mangalore as the third judge of the Western Provincial Court during 1816-1824. During 1824 – 1827, Baber moved to Bombay due to some health problems and he came to Dharwar as the Principal Collector and Political agent.¹⁰³ He was soon appointed as the first judge of the Western Provincial Court. He retired from service by 1838 and moved back to Tellichery. He spent almost over thirty years in the western Konkan, Maratha, and Malabar regions as a faithful official under the East India Company.¹⁰⁴

Thomas Warden became the Principal Collector of Malabar in succession to Rickards and Thomas Harvey Baber was appointed as the Sub-collector of north Malabar during the early part of 1804.¹⁰⁵ Baber was an officer of exceptional energy and his efforts resulted in the suppression of the Pazhassi rebellion. Baber officially took charge of Wayanad on 1st November 1805, when Pearson, the Sub-

¹⁰⁰ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, DC books, Kottayam, 2008, P. 7.

¹⁰¹ <http://Navarangindia.blogspot.com/2021/01/Col-arthur-wellesley-and-his-defeat-in.html?m=1>, accessed on 8th March 2019, 12.00pm

¹⁰² Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 14th May 1803 copy No. 37-40, G./154, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ <http://historicaleys.blogspot.com/2009/04/tomas-baber-and-nairs-of-Malabar.html?m=1>, accessed on 23rd November 2018, 3.00pm

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

collector in charge of Wayanad was incapacitated by the fifth attack of Malaria.¹⁰⁶ Baber was asked consequently to exchange duties with Pearson for the present or until the declaration of further orders. Baber submitted his charging report to higher officials on 14th November. But he had joined in official duties some days previously. He had been busy counteracting a movement of the rebel leaders and their *kurichya* followers to get the country's people who had a gain embroiled in their submission.¹⁰⁷

T.H. Baber began his preparations for the suppression of the Pazhassi rebellion by the end of 1800 onwards. Baber was efficient in warfare and administration as well. He was entrusted to handle the eminent Mappila heads of south Malabar, Unni Moosa, Chemban Pokkar, Athan Gurukkal etc. Baber was successful in detaining Chemban Pokker by February 1800 as well.¹⁰⁸ Baber was busily engaged in subjugating an extensive rising in the eastern and jungle portion of Chirakkal under the leadership of Kallyat Nambiar, the followers of Pazhassi Raja during February 1804. Baber has found that the Mappilas of Irukkur, Kallayi and Venkat were supplying the rebels with adequate ammunition in exchange for pepper. Eventually, the rebels were dispersed by Colonel Montresor with the use of *kolkar* and the regular troops.¹⁰⁹ The formation of *kolkar* was the result of a tactful move from the colonial camp. Governor General Jonathan Duncan and Lieutenant General Stuart understood that its impossible to defeat Pazhassi Raja by existing military force. Samoothiri's minister Sham Nath Pattar has told Duncan about the need for organising and training a group of common people against Pazhassi Raja.¹¹⁰ It was conceived that only then British can establish their Power over Malabar. Sham Nath Pattar helped immensely in the formation of the group called *kolkar*. Those caste groups who were not involved in Pazhassi Rajas, camp

¹⁰⁶ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, J. Jetley for Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 530-535.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Secret Political Diary, 1799-1800, No. 88, pp. 267-269.

¹⁰⁹ K.Balalkrishnan, *Pazahassiyum Kadathanadum*, DC books, Kottayam, 2011, p. 64.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

were influenced and promised high salaries and thus recruited as semi-military groups in the name of *kolkar*. T. H. Baber actively worked for refining, moulding, and stabilising a strong structure for the growth and establishment of *kolkar*.¹¹¹

T H Baber had initiated various policies and measures which helped in dissolving the rebel confederation in Chirakkal by 20th June. He could restore confidence in the most rebellious tracts and undermine the influence of the rebel leaders by representing them in the worst light as the enemies of society. Baber further implemented complete disarmament of the tract and collected a tremendous number of muskets, knives and swords among other articles.¹¹² This energetic action resulted in circumscribing the disturbed area and enabling the troops to hold it more in subjection.

Later Baber turned his attention towards Kottayam. Company officials knew very well about the efficiency and potential tactics of Baber. So, they allowed him to take prominent decisions without any permission. Thus, Baber used this opportunity to abandon illegal goods carriers on roads and stopped buying articles for more than one *vellippanam* and certain other things which helped to restrict the agitators.¹¹³ T.H. Baber's troops and *kolkar* had been constantly on the move in consequence and a couple of encounters had taken place. The 'notorious' Thalakkal Chanthu, the right hand of Edachena Kunkan who led the attack on the Panamaram post on 11th October 1802 was taken as a prisoner in one of these affairs.¹¹⁴ Thus Baber was successful in suppressing the Pazhassi revolt in Kottayam and other places.

Mundakkayam Gopi Portrays T.H. Baber at the time of Pazhazzi Raja's death as a young charming British Official who wore a colourful dress with laces. He had

¹¹¹ <http://historicaleys.blogspot.com>

¹¹² William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, pp. 532-536.

¹¹³ *Vellippanam* means a kind of monetary means which prevailed in Colonial Malabar for Economic Transactions.

¹¹⁴ Vanidas Elayavooru, *Vadakkan Aithithyamala*, Part I, Current books, Kottayam, 1996, pp. 112-114.

long boots which were made from the skin of oxen and had curly golden hairs.¹¹⁵ T.H. Baber was there in Wayanad from 1st November 1805 till Pazhassi Raja's death. Within a short span, he did many things to capture Pazhassi Raja. Baber explored the entire Wayanad first. Baber convinced and explained to people about – the company's measures regarding Pazhassi Raja and appointed many of them to the revenue department along with proper training. Baber restricted Chetti, Gowda people, and Nairs from helping Pazhassi Raja on any ground.¹¹⁶ Baber in his official report to the Principal Collector of Malabar stated that people were reluctant to hand over information about Pazhassi Raja. It indicated the depth of popular support for Pazhassi Raja from all categories of people.¹¹⁷

T.H. Baber and his troops were stationed in Pulpally a few days before 30th November 1805. They met with some confrontations with Pazhassi Raja's supporters as well. But Baber conveniently suppressed everything. He warned the people of Pulpally about the side effects of helping Pazhassi Raja and explained to them the power and strength of the English government. Baber could induce some *paniya's* who had been of most essential service to the Pazhassi Rajas Party with exhortations and occasional presents.¹¹⁸ Baber has taken the precaution of swearing all whom he had employed to secrecy. Finally, on 30th November, three of them at last brought intelligence of Pazhassi Raja and all the rebel leaders except Pallur Emman Nair to T H Baber.¹¹⁹

The team of T.H. Baber was comprised of Lieutenant Colonel Hill, Captain Watson, Captain Clapham, Cheran, Subedar, Cutcherry servant Karunakara Menon, *kolkar*, and the troops. They observed the existence of a vast number of huts which appeared to be recent habitation on the banks of Kangara riven in

¹¹⁵ Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassiraja Chamayangalillathe*, Sahya Publications, Kalpetta, 2005, p. 124.

¹¹⁶ Correspondence Files, (transl.), T.H. Baber, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Selected Records, *A Collection of Treaties relating to British affairs* in Malabar Serial No. 26, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Mavilamthode.¹²⁰ Finally, Cheran Subedar, who belonged to Captain Watson's armed police had found the sitting of around ten persons near the banks of nulla. A fight of short duration finally occurred between the teams of Pazhassi Raja and T.H. Baber. Several of the rebels had fallen soon and a running fight was kept up after the rest till Baber could see no more of them.¹²¹ Soon Edachena Kunkan and his party were also joined in the attack from the right side. From one of the rebels of the first party to the left side whom Baber has discovered as concealed in the grass. Baber has found that Pazhassi Raja was amongst those whom he first observed on the banks of nulla. Baber while his return from the pursuit understood that it was Pazhassi Raja amongst the first who had fallen.¹²² Meanwhile one of the cutcherry servants Karunakara Menon had stopped the flight of Raja neglecting the hazard of his life. Pazhassi Raja has put his musket at the chest of Karunakara Menon and called out to him not to approach and defile his person in the most dignified and commanding manner.¹²³ It could be regarded as an extraordinary personage of Pazhassi Raja even at the moment of his death.

Finally, Baber took up and put the dead body of Pazhassi Raja into his palanquin. The wife of Pazhassi Raja who was terrifically reduced from sickness was transferred into Captain Clapham's palanquin.¹²⁴ Baber could confiscate a golden dagger and a waist chain from Pazhassi Raja. The golden dagger was put under Baber's custody and the latter was gifted to Captain Clapham. Five elephants and a small quantity of sandalwood apart from several copper plates were seized as the property of Pazhassi Raja. T.H. Baber had recommended for their immediate sale as well.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Inward in the Public Department from 31st December 1805 to 29th March 1806, Miscellaneous Records, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Selected Records, *A Collection of Treaties relating to British affairs in Malabar*, Serial No. 27

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Letters related to T.H. Baber, Madras Correspondence File, No. 2172, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

T.H. Baer has found Pazhassi Raja as one of the natural chieftains of the country and was considered on that account rather than a fallen enemy. Thus Baber despatched the dead body of Pazhassi Raja to Mananthavady in a palanquin with a strong escort.¹²⁶ Baber was entrusted with officials to assemble Brahmins to perform all the customary honours at the funeral of Pazhassi Raja. Baber in his official report expressed that he has terminated the career of a man who had been enabled to preserve in hostilities against East India Company for almost nine years.¹²⁷ Baber admitted that the phase of the Pazhassi Raja rebellion caused the death of thousands of valuable lives and the expenditure of huge amounts of money beyond all calculations. Baber described that every effort of moderation and lenity was pursued towards the Raja, but nothing could get the better of his natural restlessness and ferocity of disposition.¹²⁸

According to Baber, Pazhassi Raja was aided by the evil counsels of his advisers, and they impelled him into the most desperate acts. Thus, it produced an infatuation that rendered him insensible to the dictates of the humanity of reason. Baber claimed that the annihilation of Pazhassi Raja was necessary for ensuring the stability and security of the company government and its subjects.¹²⁹ Meanwhile, Baber recollected those services performed by Pazhassi Raja during the infancy of East India Company in Malabar. Baber said that it inspires us with a sentiment of regret when a man who is so formed should have pursued a conduct that would have thrown so insuperable a bar to all kinds of accommodations.¹³⁰ Baber added that what temporized further than was done would have been to yield and would have afforded a precedent to have yielded which might have been fatal to the East India Company in India then. Further T. H. Baber stated that the records of India

¹²⁶ Inward in the Public Department from 31st December 1805 to 27th March 1806, Malabar Collectorate Records, Serial No. 2172, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 9th January 1806, No. 84-89, G/16, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Inward in the Public Department, Malabar Collectorate Records, No. 2172.

and England would convey an idea about Pazhassi Raja in the future.¹³¹ The history of Pazhassi Raja would be disclosed through the leading features of so extraordinary and singular character. Baber has observed a decided interest in Pazhassi Raja in all classes. The inhabitants have entertained regard and respect bordering on veneration which according to him, not even his death can efface.¹³²

How does Pazhassi Raja's death remain a mystery. T.H. Baber kept it undisclosed in his official report as well. As a huge amount of money was promised by East India Company for the apprehension of Pazhassi Raja. Thus, Baber conveniently kept dumb from mentioning anything about the mode of Pazhassi Raja's death in order to establish his claim over the remuneration.¹³³ The joint operation initiated by both military and civil officials resulted in the death of Pazhassi Raja. However, there aroused some claims among them for the reward offered for the apprehension of Pazhassi Raja. Captain Clapham claimed that he has killed Pazhassi Raja and that was agreed by Colonel Hill. T. H. Baber mentioned that Cheran Subedar was in the front portion of the troops and marked that Captain Clapham was at the back to show the non-involvement of military officials in suppressing Pazhassi Raja.¹³⁴ The historian of the Madras army W.J. Wilson stated that Pazhassi Raja had been killed by Clapham and the fourth battalion on 30th November 1805.¹³⁵ Similarly, many other officials came up with the same claim. Thus the fight between civil and military officials upon the death of Pazhassi Raja exposed then. According to historians either Pazhassi Raja committed suicide or had been killed by one of the *kolkars*.¹³⁶ Thomas Warden the Principal Collector of Malabar then in his official letter about the declaration of Pazhassi Raja's death stated that it would be a golden opportunity for Company's government to acquire

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Correspondence Files, (transl.), T.H. Baber.

¹³³ Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassiraja Chamayangalillathe*, pp. 129-135.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ In various Files, Madras Correspondence Files from 1803-1806, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

all the wealth from Malabar as calculated before.¹³⁷ This single comment marks the relevance of Pazhassi Raja and Pazhassi rebellion along with colonial perception towards the Raja.

Finally Thomas Warden in his official letter to the chief secretary to Madras government on 8th December 1805, asked to give the right consideration for the hardships and efforts put by Baber in bringing the death of Pazhassi Raja.¹³⁸ He stated that Pazhassi Raja was a powerful enemy of the company who left Malabar in a dangerous and horrible situation of warfare for many years. However, the Company was always shown compassion and concession to the culprits of Wayand and Pazhassi Raja was the best example according to Thomas Warden.¹³⁹

The annihilation of Pazhassi Raja has brought a golden feather to the career of T.H. Baber. Though he didn't kill Pazhassi Raja but took all the required steps to kill Raja. William Logan described T.H. Baber as the master brain behind suppressing the Pazhassi rebellion.¹⁴⁰ K. M. Panicker in his novel *Kerala Sinham* projected the urge of Baber for money.¹⁴¹ The film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* also portrayed Baber in accordance with Logan's opinion.¹⁴² However, Baber was a faithful British servant who did his best towards the benefit of the East Indian Company.

3.5.1 T. H. Baber and His Career Appreciation

T.H. Baber was widely accepted and appreciated for his brilliance in his career by the higher officials of East India Company. The Commission Thackeray's report on 4th August 1807 attributed that the entire atrocious activities which were so common in Malabar and Canara before became less in common post-Pazhassi

¹³⁷ Inward in the Public Department, Malabar Collectorate Records, No. 2172.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, 9th January 1806, No. 84-89, G/16.

¹⁴⁰ William Logan, *Malabar*, pp. 552-553.

¹⁴¹ Sardar K. M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, 2008.

¹⁴² The film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, directed by Hariharan, released on 16th October 2009.

Raja's death.¹⁴³ The Commission has found that the rebellions of Malabar were not objects caused by Police deeds but obviously, civil wars which got burnt completely with a raging flame ever since the arrival of the company in that province. He acknowledged Baber's zeal effort, activity, and success in suppressing the Pazhassi rebellion. The rebellion has caused great loss to the Company in the form of brained officers, troops, and enormous sums of money. It would have been continued if Baber failed to finish the rebellion by suppressing the Raja¹⁴⁴

The minutes of Lord William Bentick in October 1807 cleared the need for a better promotion for T.H. Baber. According to him, with the indefatigable exertions along with Baber's intelligence and zeal, the company could capture Pazhassi Raja. Thus, the tranquillity established in Malabar helped the formation of Zillah courts.¹⁴⁵ He added about his previous hesitation in recommending T.H. Baber for the post of Zillah judge. But his efficiency in the Pazhassi episode changed Bentick's opinion. In the letter from W. Petrie, the member of the council from Madras mentioned the special consideration taken by William Bentick in sanctioning the donation of 2,500 *pagodas* for T H Baber at the capture of Pazhassi Raja.¹⁴⁶ W. Petrie highlighted that Lord William Bentick took the Prime initiative at the immediate sanction and order of the amount to Baber as a public and honourable testimony to the merits of the conduct of Baber.¹⁴⁷

R. Rickards, the late Principal Collector and he first judge of Malabar in his letter on 26th October 1807, has appreciated Baber for his efforts in eradicating the very source of rebellion.¹⁴⁸ He found to be happy working with Baber in the

¹⁴³ Possession of Thomas Harvey Baber related to the Public Services in the East India 01.01.1830, Jstor Primary Sources, T.H. Baber, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/60210599>, accessed on 26th January 2022, 10.00AM, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ From A. Obins, Private Secretary to Lord. W. Bentick, Governor of Madras, 5th October 1807, jstor, p. 9.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Pagoda* was a unit of currency which is made of gold or half gold minted by Indian Dynasties as well as the British, the Dutch, and the French.

¹⁴⁷ From A. Obins, Esq., Private Secretary to Lord. W. Bentick, 5th October 1807, jstor, p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ From R. Rickard's Esq., Late Principal Collector and first Judge of Malabar, 26th October 1807, jstor, p. 12.

Malabar province before his achievement. The letter from Edward Locker, the Secretary to Edward Pellew to Bombay harbour on 30th May 1808 acknowledged the thanks from the commander in Chief of the naval department for the valuable services Baber rendered for them.¹⁴⁹ Baber took significant efforts in protecting and ensuring the authority in procuring timbers from Travancore. Locker continued in appreciating Baber for his influence on local experiences and support. It helped Company to obtain timbers readily notwithstanding every impediment at a considerable price which was so advantageous to his service.¹⁵⁰

Edward Pellew's observations on the naval establishments of India in his letter on 5th September 1809 expressed that Travancore has abounded in poon timber which is particularly applicable to masts and yards in large ships. These spares have been obtained for individuals, kings, and companies service at the most extravagant prices under the operation of some unfair management on the part of European residents in the coastal zone.¹⁵¹ During emergency situations, the price hiked much. But the valuable guidance and convenient interventions from T.H. Baber helped to bring down the price to a moderate level. Edward Pellew acknowledged the very iniquitous mode of dealing by Baber helped company officials to get spars at a fair price. Captain Graham, the honourable company's agent admitted and declared his happiness for Baber in procuring the supply of the line of battleships.¹⁵² According to Graham, Baber's kind intercession helped their native country to reap the advantages of the local areas of company attention. He literally addressed Baber as the father of the people for his belovedness to the inhabitants of Malabar and without hesitation he upheld the veneration of Baber's name for his commitment and authenticity.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Extract of a letter from Edward Locker, Esq., Secretary to Sir Edward Pellew, 30th May 180, Jstor, p. 14.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² From captain Graham, Honble. Company's Agent 28th June 1828, jstor, p. 17.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

G. Buchan, the Chief Secretary to government and the private Secretary to G. Barlow has mentioned in his letter 20th July 1808 about the significance of Baber's conception of the police corps and said that his general course of public proceedings was strongly recommendable. He also admitted the significance of reducing the number of *kolkar* as suggested by Baber.¹⁵⁴ G. Buchan marked the concern of the Governor in Council regarding the reduction of superfluous expenditure in the accounts of the police corps. The Governor in the Council highlighted the desire to revise those accounts with utmost care. Baber has pointed out that expenditure is unnecessary and improper which needs to be accounted for immediate exclusion of charges.¹⁵⁵

G.H. Barlow, the private Secretary to the honourable Governor has highlighted the endeavours taken by Baber to correct abuses and to give the spirit of efficiency and purity to the public service.¹⁵⁶ The zealous interest taken by Baber in renovating and rectifying the public service department was highly appreciated. A. Falconer, the Chief Secretary to the government in his letter on 6th September 1809 has acknowledged that the Governor in Council has been concerned to recognise those difficulties experienced by Baber in the execution of government orders.¹⁵⁷ Falconer approves the temper and firmness possessed by Baber during the encounter of those difficulties. He continued to accept the high sense of spirit and resolution Baber preserved during the performance of his public duty. The mentions about the personal indignities offered on Baber from some persons must have been guilty of so gross a dereliction of their duty to their government. Falconer also pointed out that Baber failed to experience decision support. The

¹⁵⁴ From G. Buchan, Chief Secretary to Government and Private Secretary to Sir G. Barlow, 20th July 1808, jstor, p. 20.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁵⁶ From captain G.H. Barlow, Private Secretary to the Hon'ble. The Governor, 21st August 1809, jstor, p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ From A Falconer, Esq., Chief Secretary to Government, 6th September 1809, jstor, p. 22.

Governor in Council relied on him in receiving from the officer commanding the provinces.¹⁵⁸

F. Gahagan, the Secretary to the Government in his letter on 22nd August 1811, pointed out the relevance of the question agitated by Baber about the native servants in both civil and military departments for being concerned in commercial transactions as well as speculations of a private nature.¹⁵⁹ This had appeared before the Governor in Council and received a particular consideration. The impropriety of such transactions being enquired from the opportunity offered to the native servants holding significant offices of trust regarding the embezzlement of public money. Thus, Baber took a great effort in bringing a serious subject to the notice of the Governor in Council with the view to ensure the security of public interest.¹⁶⁰

Colonel Lockhart, the commanding H. M. of the 30th regiment in the provinces of Malabar and Canara, wrote a letter to T. H. Baber on 8th April 1812. Lockhart stated that Baber has to deal with a rebellion in north Malabar while working as the Zillah judge. The inhabitants had been driven towards a rebellion due to the oppressive conduct of the revenue servants.¹⁶¹ Baber adjourned his court in order to make use of his personal influence and gained support from the troops. Finally, Baber could bring back the inhabitants to their allegiance. Thus, he met with a happy ending. Colonel Lockhart in his letter to Baber reminds that Baber has done something great for the company although that was not a part of his duty.¹⁶² He reminds us that a trifling accident to Baber at that time would cause serious public inconvenience which would bring down things adversely. Colonel Lockhart continued to congratulate Baber on the agreeable intelligence conveyed to him at the right time. Colonel Lockhart could quell the insurrection easily by

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ From F. Gahagan, Secretary to Government, 18th April 1810, jstor, p. 23.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ From Col. Lockhart, Commanding H.M., 30th Regiment and the provinces of Malabar and Canara, 8th April 1812, jstor, p. 26.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

adopting those prompt measures suggested by Baber and hoping that there shall be no more disturbances in Wayanad.¹⁶³ The Company is thus very much indebted to Baber's energy and exertions.

In a report submitted by D. Hill, the Secretary to government on 30th June 1812, disclosed that the Governor in Council has derived great satisfaction in knowing the complete termination of the late insurrection in Wayanad.¹⁶⁴ Baber expressed a confident opinion in which the Governor in Council concurs that the peace of that country is never to be disturbed again. The leader of the rebels, Kalloo died, and the Principal Coarchers surrendered at the convenient interference of Baber and the Governor in council acknowledged the real judgement and activity marked the proceedings of Baber.¹⁶⁵ The cordial cooperation of other offices and troops brought into the field was also mentioned. The prompt and effectual steps taken by T. H. Baber, the magistrate of north Malabar on the fresh symptoms of contumacious resistance in Wayanad were specially denoted in a general letter from England in the judicial department on 12th October 1814.¹⁶⁶ Baber was constantly appreciated for restoring tranquillity in Wayanad through his zealous exertions. Thus, Baber was acknowledged for his high sense of activity and meritorious services during the whole period of his employment. The letter continued to highlight that as a judge and magistrate of that district, Baber deserves a solid testimony for his approbation in any advancement considering his rank in the service and by the line of his official destination.¹⁶⁷

The extracts from the *Hamilton Hindostan*, quarto edition, second volume mentioned a peculiar achievement of Baber in the Travancore state.¹⁶⁸ The heir

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ From D. Hill, Esq., Secretary to Government, 30th June 1812, jstor, p. 27.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Extract of a general letter from England, in the judicial department, 12th October 1814, jstor, p. 28.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Extracts from *Hamiltons Hindustan*, quarto edition, 2nd volume, P. 319, jstor, p. 31.

apparent of Travancore state, Elaya Raja had obtained the possession of certain jewels belonging to the state before his removal from the country. It was recovered and restored to the legitimate government by Baber, the magistrate of Malabar through his exertions and intelligence. Those jewels were unique and worn by the Raja's at the time of religious festivals and public processions.¹⁶⁹ The value of the jewels was estimated beyond imagination.

The Resident of Travancore, Colonel Thomas Munro has written a letter to Baber on 8th May 1813 to express his best thanks for Baber's exertions and efforts in apprehending the robbers who infested the country.¹⁷⁰ Munro expressed his release from a considerable degree of anxiety regarding the tranquillity of Cochin. Colonel Munro has found that the coastal area requires a vigorous system of government to maintain a well-established system of law and order. Colonel Munro has extended his warmest thanks to Baber in the apprehension of Raman Nair, Eckunde Kurup, and Pulanand Nambootiri along with their associates.¹⁷¹ They highlighted the strenuous, eminent, and successful exertions of Baber in securing them. They had committed the greatest offenses and meditated further crimes as well. Colonel Munro has found that their apprehension was such a relief for the inhabitants of the Cochin country from the most dangerous threats. He has found it as an important effort taken by Baber to protect the interest of humanity.¹⁷²

Meanwhile, a letter to Baber on 15th June 1813 from D. Hill, the Secretary to the government pointed out the approval from the Governor in Council about the measures adopted by Baber in the apprehension of Cochin *banditti* as they had taken refuge in his Zillah.¹⁷³ This act of Baber was considered a fresh example of the advantage which was the result of his zeal, activity, and intelligence. Baber was appreciated for his excellent arrangements to preserve peace and good order in

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Extract of a letter from, Col. Thomas Munro, Resident of Travancore, 8th May 1813, jstor, p. 31.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Banditti* means a robber or outlaw belonging to a gang and typically operating in an isolated or lawless area.

that part of the country which is placed under his charge.¹⁷⁴ Baber was so compassionate and mindful of his fellow officials as well. One incident has been pointed out by Sir George Barlow on 11th June 1813 in a letter sent to Baber.¹⁷⁵ George Barlow has mentioned the positive sentiments expressed by Baber towards him on his removal from the government of Madras. It was like a sensible gratification from Barlow. He has found to be proud of being associated with Baber who according to him was a highly respectable character. Barlow has attributed a very high value to the conduct of Baber afforded by distinguished ability, integrity, and unwearied devotion to protecting interest.¹⁷⁶

In another letter from D. Hill, the Secretary to government on 21st February 1815, to Baber marked a clear acknowledgment from the Governor in Council regarding the attention taken by Baber for ensuring public interests.¹⁷⁷ D. Hill specifically mentioned Baber's efforts in reducing the expenses incurred for a jail with proper maintenance of the prisoners. Improvement of diet and the expedition of their examinations were ensured perfectly. Thus, the Governor in Council accepted the endeavors put forward by Baber and appreciated his activities and spirit which he often displayed. D.Hill in another letter to Baber highlighted the approval of the right honourable Governor in Council regarding the zeal and activity of Baber resulted in restoring the tranquillity in districts above the ghats. It provided for the permanent security of its peaceable inhabitants.¹⁷⁸ D. Hill has appreciated Baber's care for the public interest by ensuring the reduction of the contingent charges. Thus, it terminated corruption in the establishment which was sustained during Baber's predecessor's management.

Alex Read, the Principal collector of Canara appreciated Baber for his commitment to being a collector, judge, and magistrate through his letter to the

¹⁷⁴ Extract of a letter from D. Hill, Esq., Secretary to Government, 15th June 1813, jstor, p. 33.

¹⁷⁵ From Sir George Barlow, Bart., 11th June 1813, jstor, p. 33.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ From D. Hill, Esq., Secretary to Government, 21st February 1815, jstor, p. 34.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Board of Revenue on December 1815.¹⁷⁹ Baber heard and settled a vast number of revenue defaulters, the issue of tobacco and salt smugglers, thefts in the treasuries, and various other significant matters related to revenue. Alex Read has expressed his gratitude for the indefatigable exertions and the strongest inclination from Baber to assist him in the revenue affairs. He also admitted Baber's help in his private matters through advice and experience.¹⁸⁰

Thomas Munro in his letter to Baber on 20th February 1816 expressed that Baber himself was indebted for the promotion in service to his character and deeds. Munro has cleared that he did nothing in the advancement of Baber's career which he gained by his own talented, long, and zealous exertion as a public officer. He kept praising Baber for his solid merits bestowed on public services rather than for any officer in the company's service.¹⁸¹ In another letter written by Thomas Munro to Baber on 19th April 1824 expressed his desire to see Baber higher in the judicial line and also better to see him in charge of the revenue and police of the Province.¹⁸² Munro has mentioned the movement of many unpleasant things in the Professional life of Baber. He consoled him that they certainly would be overbalanced by Baber's remaining among the people who are so much in attachment with him from his unceasing exertions in their favour.¹⁸³

Thomas Munro in his letter to Baber on November 1824 mentioned Baber's hesitation in serving under Chaplin.¹⁸⁴ Munro has found appeasing Baber by pointing out the necessity of every civil and military officer of whatever rank should serve under him. There were indications about the unlike of Baber regarding appointments in higher posts according to seniority. Munro motivated Baber to render the most important services to the public and confer the greatest benefits

¹⁷⁹ From Alex Read, Principal Collector of Canara to the board of revenue, December 1815, jstor, p. 36.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ From Sir Thomas Munro, Bart., Governor of Madras, 20th February 1816, jstor, p. 36.

¹⁸² From Sir Thomas Munro, Bart, 19th April 1824, jstor, Pp 39.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁴ From Sir Thomas Munro, Bart, November 1824, jstor, p. 39.

upon the inhabitants of an extensive province.¹⁸⁵ Thus it would help Baber to distinguish and entitle himself to the highest honours of the state. Through the minutes of the president in council, Thomas Munro on 19th November 1824 had suggested the name of T.H. Baber as the Collector of southern Mahratta country, when the Governor in Council at Bombay asked for an eligible name. After considering the qualifications of the civil servants employed under the Madras Presidency, no one has appeared to him perfect on the whole to discharge the important duties of directing the affairs of southern Mahratta efficiently as Baber.¹⁸⁶ Munro has highlighted that T. H. Baber belongs to the judicial department but had excellent service in the revenue line in Malabar. He pointed out that Baber could suppress the disturbances of Pazhassi Raja, he is capable of unwearied application to business and zeal which ensured the welfare of the natives, and he possessed a long experience.¹⁸⁷

Thomas Munro further marked upon the talents of Baber in uniting an ardent zeal for the public interest along with indefatigable attention to business. Baber was a man of great personal activity and energy and possessed very conciliatory conduct towards the natives with full-fledged knowledge of their manners and customs. Thus Colonel Munro has established that Baber is the fittest person who could be selected for the position of Principal collector and political agent in the southern Mahratta country.¹⁸⁸ There was an incident mentioned by Baber regarding finding a deficit of sixty thousand rupees which was inconveniently used by Camara Hegadas who was the overseer of northern Canara. Baber has brought information and orders about it before the Principal Collector of Canara, Thomas Harris and he succeeded in putting a stop to those nefarious

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁶ Minutes of the president in Council, Sir Thomas Munro, Bart., K.C.B., 19th November 1824, jstor, p. 40.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ From Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay, Extracts of letter from Thomas Munro, December 1824, jstor, p. 40.

proceedings.¹⁸⁹ Thomas Harris wrote a personal letter to Baber and appreciated his conversation and zealous energetic principles towards finding a big deal.

There was a letter from H.S. Graeme to Baber on 3rd May 1822. It mentioned the efforts taken by Baber in the improvement of the province of Malabar. He denoted Baber's keenness in ensuring the arduousness and correctness of the criminal trials.¹⁹⁰ H.S. Graeme highlighted the experience and ability of Baber in helping a material expedite in the settlement of the province of Malabar. In a letter written to Baber by Thomas Munro on 28th February 1827, informed about the official plans to appoint Baber as the first judge of Malabar.¹⁹¹ Munro has found that Baber deserves every consideration for the position of being so zealous as a public servant. Baber always worked in favour of the independence, intelligence, and general good character of the natives of Malabar. H.S. Graeme, the acting Governor of Madras mentioned in a letter on 21st August 1827 that Baber always wished to raise the inhabitants of Malabar to the possession of all rights along with privileges and that might be consistent with due subordination to the government.¹⁹² According to H.S. Greame, it would add to their moral happiness and the zeal, ability, and concurrence of the presiding judge on the expediency of the measures would hold out the most rational prospect of its success.¹⁹³

T H Baber had introduced European looms in Malabar and manufactured numerous fabrics which were quite new to the people. Willian Chaplin found appreciated Baber for the progress of his cloth manufacture. Apart from this Baber also introduced silk worms and enabled European reels for winding the silk.¹⁹⁴ Chaplin appreciated Baber for the introduction of silkworms as a great source of

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Minute of Mr. Graeme, Third member of Council – 3rd May 1822, jstor, p. 45.

¹⁹¹ Extract of letter from Sir Thomas Munro, Bart, 28th February 1827, jstor, p. 48.

¹⁹² From the Hon'ble H.S. Graeme Acting Governor of Malabar, 21st August 1827, jstor, p. 50.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ From W. Chaplin, Esq., 18th July 1825, jstor, p. 52.

public benefit. He requested Baber to send him a small loom along with persons who understand the use of it apart from a reel for winding off the silk.¹⁹⁵

The letter from Ralph Rice, the judge from the Supreme Court of Bombay on 1st January 1827, appreciated Baber for his efforts in bringing up around hundred and fifty youths from jail at Dharwar and Hoobly through his schools and around twenty had gone off to public employments as well.¹⁹⁶ Baber was also found running numerous manufacturers like paper, canvas, carpeting, blankets, and so on all by means of the convicts.¹⁹⁷ Thus Baber took a prominent effort in redeeming virtues for the sins of conquest and ambition.

William Newnham, the Chief Secretary to the government wrote a letter to Baber on 17th January 1826, expressing the satisfaction of the Governor in Council regarding the favourable conclusion of the treaty with the Raja of Kolhapur.¹⁹⁸ The promptitude and decision of Baber during the proceedings were widely appreciated. The Governor of Bombay, Elphinstone in his letter on 15th January 1826, recognised Baber's energetic measures preceded for the proper engagement corresponds and which probably brought the Raja to submit so readily for such unpalatable terms.¹⁹⁹

The resignation letter of Baber from the post of Principal Collector and the political agent was acknowledged by the Governor in Council along with regrets upon Baber's impaired state of health²⁰⁰. John Dunlop, the government secretary then, mentioned in a letter to Baber on 17th February 1827 that the Governor in Council was upset initially and finally pleased to accept his resignation and will implement necessary measures for his relief at the earliest period according to the circumstances. The Chairman of the Court of Directors on December 1929

¹⁹⁵ From W. Chaplin, Esq., 25th September 1825, Jstor, p. 52.

¹⁹⁶ From Sir Ralph Rice, Puisne Judge, Supreme Court, Bombay, 1st January 1827, jstor, p. 56.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ From W. Newnham, Esq., Chief Secretary to government 17th January 1826, jstor, p. 56

¹⁹⁹ From the Honble Elphinstone Stone, Governor of Bombay, 15th January, 1826, jstor, p. 58.

²⁰⁰ From John Dunlop, Esq., Secretary to government, 17th February 1827, jstor, p. 58.

remarked that there is no individual in the company service who acquired a higher position in the estimation of the Court of Directors, than Baber for the honourable feeling and zealous conduct.²⁰¹ General C. Macauley on the 17th of April 1830, in a letter to Baber expressed his heartfelt thanks to him for the perusal of accompanying the most interesting and honourable testimonials. C. Macauley wrote that Baber continued the honest discharge of duties and was successful in the fulfillment of varied, delicate, and difficult measures. Finally, Baber could remove all such evils and rivet the British rule in India on the affections of the people.²⁰²

Baber's professional and personal approach towards the local inhabitants was explicated in one of the several addresses presented to him on his return to Malabar in 1827. The letter was written by the housekeepers, inhabitants, and merchants of Tellichery. They addressed him as worshipful sir and expressed their gratitude for his high sense of manifold and ponderous obligations conferred on the community as per his indefatigable exertions in the several stations of Malabar.²⁰³ Baber was appreciated for ameliorating the condition of those who approached him and was accessible to the meanest member of the population as well. They extended hearty congratulations to Baber for his accession to the senior judgeship of the western division and appreciated the upright discharge of the sacred trust reposed on him.²⁰⁴ Thus, it shows popular love and affection towards Baber due to his fair administration. Those official letters and reports clearly indicate the proficiency of Baber being a genuine servant under the East India Company. It also throws much light on the compassionate feelings of Baber towards common people.

²⁰¹ Extract of a letter from the Chairman of the Court of Directors, December 1829, jstor., p. 59.

²⁰² From General C. Macauley, 17th April 1830, jstor, p. 59.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

3.5.2. T.H. Baber and the Existence of Slavery in India.

There is a bundle of letters and extracts of letters in the possession of T.H. Baber related to the public services in the East Indies. But they were refused by both the Indian local government and the Court of Directors of the East India Company.²⁰⁵ So they are just printed then and not published yet. It provides much knowledge about the dark episodes of T.H. Baber's official life in India. It dealt in detail with Baber's perception of the existence of slavery in India and the efforts he addressed to abolish it.

The Commissioners for the affairs of India from London had prepared a set of questions to gain desired information on the extent and condition of slavery in the East Indies. Those questions were referred to T.H. Baber by one of the members of the board T. Hyde Villiers on request to provide answers under his experiences and observations.²⁰⁶ T.H. Baber was so obedient to the directions of the right honourable the President and Commissioners of the India board and he met with an opportunity of purchasing the volume of documents on East India slavery which laid before the President.²⁰⁷

T.H. Baber has explained the prevalence of both domestic and agrestic slavery in India during his thirty-two years of working experience in the country in every department of the public service like revenue, police, magisterial, judicial, and political. He especially noticed slavery in areas like the Bombay territories, the western division of the Madras territories, Malabar, and Seringapatam.²⁰⁸ Baber's official intercourses with the political residents of the neighboring states of Mysore, Coorg, Cochin, and Travancore, some of which related to slaves revealed that they were compelled to take refuge in the territories of Coorg or Mysore by the constant

²⁰⁵ *An account of the Slave Population in the western peninsula of India, especially on the coast of Malabar*, Jstor Primary Sources, 01.01.1833, T.H. Baber, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/60208125>, accessed on 28th January 2022, 11.00am, p. 2.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰⁸ Commissioner Chaplins Report, 20th August, 1822, Part 6, Vol. IV, Selected Judicial Papers, Jstor, p. 9.

ill treatment from their masters in Malabar. There were slaves who had been kidnapped in Travancore and sold to British subjects as well. The free-born children belonging to various castes of Hindus were also reduced to slavery in the Company's domains in Cochin and Travancore. Baber mentioned that they had been procured by extremely fraudulent and violent means.²⁰⁹ They lock them has been cut off then and put them to eat prohibited food and sometimes disguised and polluted them. The entire scene was experienced by Baber when he visited the adjacent districts of the state of Mysore, Coorg, Cochin, and Travancore.²¹⁰

According to Baber, there were many causes that transforms the individual to become slaves in the East Indies. Those persons who are the offspring of a free-born person captured at times of rebellions or wars outcastes Hindus who had been pushed into slavery, kidnapped persons from the distant inland states and sold into slavery, persons imported from other ports, children sold by their own parents during times of famine or great distresses, the offspring from illegal relations which generally between Hindus of different caste, persons in need for money or in the deliverance of security for debt payments, persons as bound themselves by a voluntary contract for servitude, etc., had been regarded as circumstances resulted for the birth of slaves in India by Baber.²¹¹ By 1827, Baber has found the existence of lakhs of slaves in India both in houses and fields.

T.H. Baber highlighted the full recognition of domestic slavery by both the Hindus and Muslims along with agrestic slavery. The general condition and the treatment of slaves in both domestic and agrestic fields necessarily depended upon the individual characters of their masters. The point of comfort, food, employment, clothing, treatment, provision for sickness, and other aspects related to the domestic character of domestic slavery was found to be known very little. The

²⁰⁹ Commissioner Graeme's Report, 14th January 1822, Part 54; and James Vaughan's Principal Collectors letter to the board of revenue, Part 5 and folio. 845, jstor, p. 10.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Colonel Welsh's Account in his '*Military Reminiscences*', Part III, Vol. II, Printed by Smith Elder and Co, Cornhill, 1830, pp. 20-22.

most numerous parts of domestic slaves were females and men were mostly employed in the agrestic sector.²¹² They had to deal with perpetual servitude when employed as menials and kept to save the greater expense of free labour. The great part of life was full of pain and sorrows which is as such as repugnant to humanity and morality to the Principles of British rule. Baber has found that there is nothing that can be more truly miserable and pitiable with respect to the condition of agrestic slaves except a portion of them residing in the vicinity of sea coast and large towns. The slavers in such areas were provided with a permit to work for themselves by their masters. Thus, they could manage to subsist by working for strangers, cutting, and selling grass as well as fuel along with serving as porters.²¹³

Baber has pointed out that the agrestic slaves were slavers who belongs to the remotest posterity and their servitude is considered as one of unmitigated severity. They were always agricultural labourers who were confined to manuring plowing, harrowing, hoeing, reaping, threshing, fencing, tending cattle, and watching crops, and even entrusted to carry agricultural products.²¹⁴ The slaves in fields have to toil from morning till evening with morning rice water and an evening meal. Later they had to keep watch at the fields by turns at night. They were obliged to erect their huts far from all other habitations on grounds of caste impurity. The slaves got allowances in kind for their services and were provided with clothes and other things during occasions like marriage, death, festivals, and all.²¹⁵ Baber has found that the female slaves belonging to Mappila Community neglect not to adorn themselves with necklaces of cowry shells, glass beads, brass bracelets, finger rings, and earrings. But their treatment of slaves was generally more liberal owing to being in better circumstances and having fewer ceremonies

²¹² *Ibid*

²¹³ Warden's evidence before Committee of House of Lords, Questions 1871 and 1903, jstor, p. 29.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Evidence before the Committee of House of Lords, Questions 1912, Circuit Report, Second Sessions 1821, Part 66, jstor, p. 31.

which were more frugal and industrious compared to their more generous and highly spiritual Hindu neighbours.²¹⁶

Baber has enquired about the causes of discontent that resulted from the disturbances in the mountainous area of Wayanad during 1812, the seizure of the slaves was one of the most significant parts. Once Baber was returning from Seringapatam in July 1820, he was blocked by hundreds of tribals. They reminded Baber about his promise that they should not be seized and made to serve as coolies, and they accompanied Baber to Tellichery to complain about those and other grievances. Baber has forwarded the petitions to the magistrates and asked them to take necessary measures to issue the most positive orders to the local servants.²¹⁷ Baber insisted to desist from pressing and seizing tribals or any description of cultivators and tried to cease demanding supplies of any kind from those inhabitants. Unfortunately, the collector justified the practice and treated to maintain it as a necessary evil.²¹⁸

Baber claimed that there is no exception made for slaves in the general regulations of point of law. There is no specific provision had been made for their better treatment and no effectual protection against the so-called kidnappers was done. Baber submitted a report to the Provincial Court in 1812 demanding the necessity of rules to put a stop to the slave trafficking that prevailed then.²¹⁹ Apart from this, Baber requested concern regarding the protection of slaves whether they are sick or well, at their ability or inability to work, a daily allowance of wholesome food, and a proper provision regarding clothes and habitation. Baber has identified the independent nature of domestic slaves in general and they owe a sort of obedience only to their master or his family. As far as the agrestic slaves on the Malabar coast are concerned, they are under bondage to all Hindu free-born persons related to caste distinctions and confined to other external marks of

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *East India slavery documents*, Part 12, folio 845, jstor, p. 33.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

inferiority as well. Baber has viewed it as a move of religious character than a civil obligation.²²⁰

Baber has mentioned the religious habits and morals of the slaves in Malabar and Canara. The Hindu slaves worshipped a variety of Gods and Goddesses in the form of rude stones, wood logs, and pottery. They were placed on the top of a pedestal or stool either in the open air or under cover. It was noted that some of the slave castes in both Canara and Malabar supposed were to commerce with evil spirits.²²¹ This indicated the great presence of superstition in the country and the slaves themselves believed that they possessed a kind of supernatural gift. Baber noticed that there was much less profligacy and depravity among them than among their more civilized countryman with aspect to the account of morals. The besetting sin of slaves was drunkenness, and the higher aims of gang or highway robbery were by no means common except pilfering on plantations and grain fields. Circumvention, chicanery, fraud, and Perjury were so common to all other natives, but they were hardly known to them. But the acts of ferocity and cruelty were so common as explained to Baber by one of the Provincial Court judges.²²²

Baber has denoted that the tribals with bows and arrows were treacherous and they had been the first to take up arms against the British in general. But he found them extremely faithful once they submitted to him. Baber tested their fidelity on numerous occasions and confirmed non-betrayal. Baber highlighted the tyranny of masters in prohibiting a female slave from living with her husband in the volume on *East Indian Slavery* presented before the parliament.²²³ The late Collector Vaughan examined that the master has a right to receive whatever slaves

²²⁰ Extracts of letters from T.H. Baber to Madras Government, 9th December 1814, Folio, 815, *East India Slavery documents*, jstor, P. 35.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² Mr. Commissioner Graceme's Report, Part 37, Folio. 915, *East India Slavery documents*, jstor, P. 37.

²²³ *Ibid.*

may acquire which was personally experienced by Baber as well.²²⁴ Baber has signified that the slaves had been sold at pleasure or according to the requirements of their masters to estates and other areas. They were separated from their families, and it was done in satisfaction of revenue arrears and execution of judgments by the authority. Baber invariably resisted all such acts and finally, the Board of Revenue issued orders prohibiting the process of the sale of slaves in Malabar on arrears of revenue on 13th May 1819.²²⁵ Baber's initiative also put an end to the sale of slaves in the southern Mahratta country by the Governor General in Council on 18th December 1819. Baber pointed out that the Hindu law never allow the ruling power the right to grant the manumission of slaves.

According to the depositions furnished by Vaughan, there is no local law to that effect, and it was either not usual or practiced.²²⁶ Baber denoted an incident of adopting a boy and a girl for the sake of their emancipation. Similarly, Graeme had purchased a family of slaves and liberated them. The letter from William Thackeray, the Chief Secretary to the Government on 29th May 1812, to Baber suggested that the Governor in Council has taken into consideration the most effectual means of stopping the nefarious traffic of slaves, which prevailed on the Malabar coast.²²⁷ William Thackery continued to acquaint the Governor with the Council's approval of Baber's inquiries and measures regarding the persons found in the state of slavery on his plantation. The Governor in Council approved the conduct of Baber and agreed to his thinking of the case of slavery as a proper subject of criminal prosecution. This was later noticed by Advocate General Anstruther who suggested that the exercise of mastership over slaves by the

²²⁴ Major Walkers Report, Part 3, Folio. 866, *East India Slavery documents*, jstor, p. 37.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ James Vaughan, Late Principal Collector and Magistrate of Malabar to the Board of revenue, 20th July 1819, Part 8, *East India Slavery documents*, Folio 845, jstor, p. 38.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

Europeans and British subjects is a senior matter under the consideration of the government.²²⁸

There were many unfortunate persons purchased by the person called Assen Ally in a very fraudulent as well as cruel manner at the time when he was taking care of the proceedings at Allisrey. Munro has received numerous complaints regarding the disappearance of children. But he could not find the causes for them. In this context, the zealous and indefatigable exertions taken by Baber helped in restoring so many children to their parents and homes.²²⁹ Baber put forward some of the principal occurrences in Travancore and Cochin which gained him immense respect and confidence of the inhabitants belonging to those countries. First of all, it's all about Baber's intimate knowledge of the language, customs, and character of the people. Most especially the regard he had uniformly shown to all their Prejudices. The second one was regarding his undeviating impartiality, justice, and humanity. More importantly his uncommon success in putting down the rebellious and establishing a powerful public authority upon the board based on the attachment of the people.²³⁰

Thirdly, Baber initiated providing asylum to many of the respectable as well as opulent natives of Travancore and Cochin when they suffered from a series of harsh and impolite measures. Those people fled from their country and sought refuge under his protection. Baber refused to give them up to the vengeance of Colonel Macaulay until every pledge was confined to Baber that they should not be sacrificed to partly feelings.²³¹ Fourthly, Baber took great effort in collecting information and constituting opinions about the history of the royal family of Travancore and their laws of inheritance and succession. It finally influenced

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *East India Slavery documents*, Folio 911, letter from the Madras government to the Honourable Court of Directors, 30th December 1825, jstor, p. 38.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ *East India Slavery documents*, Folio 898, Part 36, jstor, p. 40.

tremendously in the final decision of the Supreme Government in acknowledging the Ranee to the exclusion of the young Raja at Chingleput.

Fifthly Baber has exposed the unfounded or dishonest acts of the Travancore government regarding the alleged losses incurred by persons belonging to East India Company during the unhappy disturbances in 1809.²³² Sixthly a considerable number of both free-born and bonded men were liberated and restored to their friends and homes. They had been kidnapped in Travancore and Cochin and were mercilessly brought up and sold to unprincipled and human characters in Malabar. They gradually held in captivity for slavery.²³³

Baber has pointed out an incident revealing the plan laid by Douglas and his party to murder him in 1809. Baber was shot in the thigh and wounded in the left in the most unfair manner. This was an unforgivable chapter of his professional life²³⁴. On 9th October 1812, Francis Brown came into Baber's house. He was an officer at the eightieth regiment and was the son of Murdoch Brown, who came to Tellichery where he knew a report about the trial. Brown entered the room with a hat on his head along with a horsewhip in his hand. Brown firmly accused Baber of spreading defamatory stories and challenged him further to a dual and very quickly Douglas appeared. He was marched with a hat on his head and was armed with a stout stick.²³⁵ On the very next day, Thomas Gahagan entered Baber's house for threatening him and he demanded to fight a duel. But finally, they were declared as culprits. Douglas as the senior must suffer six months of imprisonment and three months for Gahagan. Six weeks of imprisonment was confined to Brown

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ Extract from Calendar, *East India Slavery documents*, Second Sessions 1818, folio, 828, jstor, p. 40

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ *T.H. Baber, Travancore and Cochin*, published by Parbury Allen and Co, London, 1833 copy, G/54, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

considering his youth. The unhappy Douglas has died in jail and the others completed their sentences.²³⁶

T.H. Baber was someone who strongly argued for the emancipation of the unfortunate slaves. He stressed that there should not be any excuse for confining the industry of slaves to any occupation and must stop the continuation of their present degrading thralldom. They must be provided with opportunities to participate in all the privileges their countrymen enjoy. They must be allocated honest occupations as per their inclination prompts and the capacity fits them. Baber criticised British Government for not taking adequate measures to abolish the State of Slavery in Malabar Court.²³⁷ He argued to produce an indisposition from the ruling authorities to adopt any specific measures to improve the condition of slaves and to extend them full protection. Baber mentioned ahe conflicting assertions and opinions on the official records in this regard and established his opinion in favour of the slaves.

Baber has always declared his sentiments in favour of an unqualified abolition of slavery. But he admitted his own inadequacy in the task of individually suggesting measures which effectually protect great objects along with the least possible temporary inconvenience to the slaves.²³⁸ At points, Baber disclosed in hopelessness to impart the confidence of the expediency and practicability of his own views. He explained that soon after the 1812 rebellion. Baber has established the authority of the government of introducing in the body a general political regulation to stop any future interruption. A few of its rules appeared beneficial to stop the terrible traffic of human flesh along with the amelioration of the condition of the slaves in general. It also initiated restricting their owners from selling them far away and stopped separating from their own families. The rules also ensured

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ Colonel Welsh account in his *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. II; Cornhill, 1830, PP. 112-116.

slaves' compulsory arrangements of food, clothes, habitations, and protection during all times and in all seasons.²³⁹

Unfortunately, those suggestions raised by Baber were not sanctioned as it was not supported by those who had the controlling authority over the acts of the executive administration. But Baber was concerned to contend against their systematic opposition because it was his province to bring public justice. The conspiracy formed against his life through the machinations of the principal slave-owner was according to Baber the consequences of all such hindrances against him had no effect in deterring him from persevering in that righteous cause.²⁴⁰ Since then Baber confined himself to occasional notices on the condition of the Malabar slaves as his public attention could draw to the subject. But very little or no benefit for the unfortunate slaves who continued to work as ever.

Thus T.H. Baber has done a significant role in bringing considerable attention to the system of slavery in India, especially on the Malabar coast. He could identify and highlight its negative sides rather than lines of human values. He continued focusing on lifting the prevalence of such a system from society without considering whether the government has initiated abolishing it.²⁴¹

3.6. Karunakara Menon and Pazhassi Raja

Kalpilly Pulapra Karunakara Menon entered in British service at a very tender age. He was appointed as a *gumasthan* under British Government in 1803. His honesty and commitment to work have brought him into higher positions so quickly.²⁴²

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ T.H. Baber, *Travancore and Cochin*, G/54.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Extracts from records relating to and copies of testimonials of Kalpalli Pulapra Karunakara Menon, Miscellaneous Records, Kerala History Archives, Department of History, University of Calicut.

Karunakara Menon accompanied T.H. Baber in the mission of apprehending Pazhassi Raja on November 1805 in Mavilamthod, Pulpally. It was Karunakara Menon who had blocked the flight of Pazhassi Raja when the latter fell from the British attack. Karunakara Menon astonishingly did it at the hazard of his life. Pazhassi Raja quickly put his musket to the chest of Karunakara Menon and called out in the most dignified and commanding manner to Menon not to approach and defile his person.²⁴³ However, Pazhassi Raja embraced death in the encounter. Karunakara Menon was widely accepted and appreciated for his courageous efforts in bringing Pazhassi Raja's death. Karunakara Menon was promoted as the *pymashi sheristhadar* soon after the death of Pazhassi Raja and had authority over the entire Malabar.²⁴⁴ That was a jealous post in Malabar and was a position to acquire many financial benefits.

T.H. Baber described Karunakara Menon for his bravery and intelligence. He was regarded as the most indefatigable, the most liberal Nair native of Malabar. Baber wrote about the courage of Karunakara Menon to higher officials during, Pazhassi Raja's death.²⁴⁵

T.H. Baber described Karunakara Menon immensely in the context of the 1812 rebellion. According to Baber, Karunakara Menon was a soldier at heart, though not by profession. He is someone who has been accustomed to such a service for a long time and helped Baber for many years in similar wars both in coastal areas and in Wayanad.²⁴⁶ Baber denoted him as clad in the plainest garb and while on March he was seen wearing a brown cloth as a waistcoat which buttoned over his white jacket. He always had an English hunting cap on his head.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Pymashi sheristhadar* was an official post under colonial Malabar when the person was entrusted with the duty of receiving and checking Court Pleas.

²⁴⁵ Correspondence Files, (transl.), T.H. Baber, Regional Archives, Kozhikode

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

He carried a single-barrelled fowling piece over his shoulder along with a sword by his side.²⁴⁷

Karunakara Menon played a very decisive role at the time of the *kurichya* revolt in 1812. Meanwhile, Karunakara Menon met with Colonel Thomas Welsh who was in Wayanad on the mission of suppressing the *kurichya* revolt. Welsh described Karunakara Menon as the most intelligent, brave, and someone with human values.²⁴⁸ He added that Menon was a Nair by birth and education. But he never had superstitious beliefs like his contemporaries. Welsh appreciated the purity of Menon's mind and attributed him to following Christian morality. Menon was described as an extremely tall person with a masculine body and denoted him as a warrior though he was not. Welsh mentioned the dressing style of Menon as simple. He wore a brown coat along with a white jacket over it and had a hat at the head.²⁴⁹

T.H. Baber highlighted the great effort taken by the Governor in Council in bestowing a Palaquin to Kalpilly Karunakara Menon along with the allowance of twenty *Pagodas per mensem*.²⁵⁰ He was the native registrar of Zillah Court and allowed with such recognition for a mark of the high sense entertained by the government for the integrity, courage, and fidelity of his meritorious services which had been eminently useful for the company.²⁵¹

In 1816, Karunakara Menon accompanied Colonel Thomas Munro during his duty as the commission in charge of Malabar and Karnataka. Karunakara Menon was praised by Thomas Munro that he had conducted himself to the entire satisfaction of his superiors during the whole service period.²⁵² He was active,

²⁴⁷ Home Miscellaneous, Vol. 438-466, Tamil Nadu Archives.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Selected Records, *A Collection of Treaties relating to British affairs in Malabar*, Serial No.25

²⁵⁰ *Mensem* denotes month.

²⁵¹ Extract from records relating to and copies of testimonials of Kalpalli Pulapra Karunakara Menon.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

zealous, and intelligent in the discharge of different obligations which had been entrusted to him.

In 1818, H.S. Graeme became appointed as the Commission in charge of Malabar and Karnataka. He was also helped by Karunakara Menon during survey measurement.²⁵³ Karunakara Menon was exempted to pay land tax as remuneration for his honest services. Menon continued his service under H.S. Graeme till 1823. Since then, he began to work under the new Principal Collector James Von till 1826. H.S. Graeme in a letter praised the hard work, intelligence, liberal thinking, honesty, and bravery of Karunakara Menon for his services in that capacity. Karunakara Menon possessed an intimate knowledge of the character and customs of the inhabitants of Malabar along with an in-depth understanding of the nature of the landed tenures and the revenue.²⁵⁴

H.S. Graeme was impressed at Karunakara Menon's quick and indefatigable business endowed with main independence in mind. This was never seen equaled by a native of India. He possessed personal intrepidity and loyalty which helped him to receive the palanquin allowance from the government H.S. Graeme has found Menon as a firm and generous advocate for the lower classes of inhabitants. He was viewed as an eminent official and his abilities and good conduct rank him very high in the estimation of the natives of Malabar. Graeme extended appreciation to Karunakara Menon's ambition is of a worthy nature and he has always been a valuable instrument in the hands of the government in any emergency situation.²⁵⁵

At the time of Baber's departure from India, he wrote a special letter to Karunakara Menon on 8th November 1828 to acknowledge his extraordinary merits,

²⁵³ Extract of the letter from H.S. Graeme to the Governor, Foreign and Political department consultations, 13th January 1822, No. 82, National Archives, New Delhi.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

especially on his distinguished services.²⁵⁶ Baber has appreciated Menon's acts of heroism and devotion under circumstances of great danger and difficulty. Baber admitted that those particular instances where Karunakara Menon has displayed those qualities of himself would be mentioned in government records. Baber stressed the assistance delivered by Karunakara Menon with super intelligence, gallantry, and zeal to put an end to the career of Pazhassi Raja being the very source of the rebellions and disturbances in Malabar. Baber has added his acknowledgment for the exertions undertaken by Karunakara Menon during the disturbances that broke out in Wayanad in 1812.²⁵⁷ Baber could not stop praising Menon for his ability, indefatigable application to business, ardor for the welfare of his countrymen, and concern for the prosperity of the British government.

William Sheffield, the Principal Collector of Malabar in his official letter on 7th February 1831 to Karunakara Menon has admitted the indefatigability and unremitting exertions of Karunakara Menon.²⁵⁸ According to Sheffield, Menon has helped him to bring the settlement of the Garden Survey throughout Malabar effectively. Karunakara Menon was so helpful to Sheffield in assisting during the inspection of the pepper vines with a view to reintroducing the pepper tax. He also helped him by accompanying him to every part of the district and even resided with him in Wayanad occasionally.²⁵⁹

The letter from Commissioner H.S. Graeme to the Madras government on May 1834 mentioned the dangerous activity Karunakara Menon had undertaken in the affinity of Coorg Raja. H.S. Graeme has appreciated Karunakara Menon for his same promptitude and cheerfulness which always distinguished his exertions for

²⁵⁶ Extracts of the letter from T.H. Baber to Karunakara Menon, Correspondence Files, T.H. Baber, 8th November 1828, Maharashtra State Archives, Mumbai.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Extract from the Minutes of Consultations, Miscellaneous Records, 2nd December 1834, Tamil Nadu Archives.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

the cause of the British government²⁶⁰. H.S. Graeme admitted the courage taken by Karunakara Menon for handling the considerable risk incurred in his Coorg operation. Menon was employed on the Coorg frontiers in obtaining information on what all going on in that country and regularly submitted reports to the government. But he was taken to prison by the Coorg Raja. H.S. Graeme expressed his sadness regarding the captivity of Karunakara Menon in Coorg. Graeme explained that Menon would deeply remember for his series of zealous, faithful, and valuable services through presenting a long career of public life and being accepted for providing ample provision for his family.²⁶¹

F. Clementson, the Principal Collector in his letter to the President and members of the Board of Revenue expressed the bad health condition of Karunakara Menon ever since his release from the captivity of Coorg Raja in April 1834.²⁶² Clementon has highlighted Karunakara Menon's administrative efficiency while working with officials like Graeme, James Vaughan, Baber, etc. Clementon requested the government for considering him as he was entitled to the fullest and most liberal services and should be allowed to retire from public service with an adequate pension. As a special case, Menon was suggested for a remission in land revenue as well.²⁶³

The letter from J.A.R. Stevenson, the Secretary of Revenue Board on 16th October 1834, addressed the letter from Karunakara Menon that he may be allowed to retire from the service on account of his ill health along with confirmation in perpetuity of remission of land which was granted already and a provision for future support to his family and personal adherents.²⁶⁴ The

²⁶⁰ Extracts of the letter from Commissioner Graeme to Madras government, Correspondence Files, May 1834, Regional Archives, Kozhikode.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Extracts of the letter from F. Clementson, the Principal Collector to the President and Members of Board of Revenue, Miscellaneous Records, Tamil Nadu Archives.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Extracts of the letter from J.A.R. Stevenson, the Secretary of Revenue Board, Foreign and Political department consultations, 16th October 1834, Serial No. 262, National Archives, New Delhi.

government permitted continuing the palanquin and an allowance of twenty *Pagodas per mensem* to Karunakara Menon once to his next heir in commutation. Karunakara Menon explained his request for the application for the provision to support his personal adherents. He owes them gratitude for protecting them from the hatred by the friends and relatives of Pazhassi Raja whom he has killed together with his adherents. Thus, it is indispensable that he had retainers to guard his person against attack.²⁶⁵

The minutes of consultation on 2nd December 1834 disclosed the grant of retirement for Karunakara Menon and allowed a pension monthly which is equal to his present salary.²⁶⁶ The government acknowledged his fair character and distinguished merits. Karunakara Menon performed his duties well and rendered services of the highest importance under the condition of peculiar difficulty and danger on several occasions. Usually, company servants were provided with a pension of half of their present salary. But the Governor General considered the service of Karunakara Menon in a special way and sanctioned the payment of a pension equal to his salary.²⁶⁷ The remission of land tax was already granted and that would be continued to his next heir as well. Finally, Karunakara Menon's pension was granted by the government.

There was a spread of a 'cursing' story in the life of Karunakara Menon during his mission at apprehending Pazhassi Raja and the Kudak Raja.²⁶⁸ The daughter of Kudak Raja helped Menon to escape from her father's detention. She also told him about the reasons for her father's victory without knowing the true intentions of Karunakara Menon. Finally, with his help, the British could easily defeat the Raja and confiscate his properties.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ The Minutes of Consultation, Foreign and Political department consultation, 2nd December 1834, No. 16, National Archives, New Delhi.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ Prema Jayakumar, *Karunakara Menonum East India Companyum*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2009, pp. 22-50.

This made the daughter of Kudak Raja commit suicide. Her desperate mother and the wife of Kudak Raja cursed Karunakara Menon for not having a girl child in his family. To dilute, the intensity of the curse, Karunakara Menon has a better amount of pension along with a palanquin and a sword. His land was also exempted from tax collection. Karunakara Menon has installed the soul of Pazhassi Raja along with his family deity and performed religious rites and rituals on time. Sometimes the soul of Pazhassi Raja became transformed into the soul of Kudak Raja who had been killed by the foul plays of Karunakara Menon.²⁶⁹

The young generation of Karunakara Menon's family rejects such stories. The fact is that Karunakara Menon accompanied Baber in apprehending Pazhassi Raja as part of his job. There he simply rendered his duty, and Menon has refrained from official duty for around four years since the death of Pazhassi Raja and that was due to some health issues²⁷⁰. Regarding the Kudak Story, there is nothing to prove that the Kudak ruler had a daughter. The ruler was so young when Karunakara Menon reached his palace. The ruler took him as a captive misunderstanding him as a spy. Menon was released soon and was gifted with so many things and properties by the ruler. Thus, such stories were discarded simply as nonsense.²⁷¹

According to T.H. Baber's official report, Pazhassi Raja had been blocked by Karunakara Menon in the context of the final confrontation: Pazhassi soon put his musket at the chest of Karunakara Menon and called out not to approach and defile his person.²⁷² The official record written by Karunakara Menon stated that he was shot by Pazhassi Raja three times while he blocked him. He escaped either at the vacuum of cartridges or its dysfunction. In the book *Karunakara Menonum East India Companyum*, the author attributes that Karunakara Menon blocked

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ Extracts from the records relating to all copies of testimonials of Kalpalli Pulapra Karunakara Menon.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² Inward in the public department from 31st December 1805 to 29th March 1806, Malabar Collectorate Records.

Pazhassi Raja from moving without knowing that it was him.²⁷³ Menon was one of the members of Pazhassi's Camp and one of the *kolkar* shot Pazhassi Raja when he attempted to shoot Karunakara Menon. Finally, they realised that it was none other than the most hunted Pazhassi Raja.²⁷⁴

Karunakara Menon applied for pension very soon since the death of Pazhassi Raja. Some oral knowledge says that it was because of the guilt he had over the death of Pazhassi Raja. But it is not true. Maybe he could be affected by the comment of Pazhassi Raja 'not to approach and defile his person' at the time of the latter's death. But Menon has returned home from official service due to malaria.²⁷⁵ In 1807, Karunakara Menon conducted a case against Palora Emman Nair and others as a Company representative. If Menon had been affected by guilt over Pazhassi Raja's death, then how could he be able to conduct a case against Pazhassi's associates? Thus, it truly proves a clear side from Karunakara Menon.²⁷⁶

In 1809, Karunakara Menon wrote a letter to the Company mentioning his worsened health condition due to Malaria and requested granting a pension and which was sanctioned by East India Company.²⁷⁷ The Assistant Collector of Malabar D. Hill in a certificate issued on 15th February 1809 mentioned that Karunakara Menon has retired from the post of Chief *sheristadar* from north Malabar as per his own demand.²⁷⁸ Karunakara Menon's illness was occasioned by a fever contracted during his Public duty in the wilds of Wayanad. However, very soon he came back to official services and was denoted as a 'native registrar' in company records. T.H. Baber accounts his visit of Madras along with Karunakara Menon to meet Governor Lord William Benedict. Menon has carried the musket that Pazhassi Raja placed on

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Foreign and Political Department Secret Consultations, 9th January 1806, No. 84-89, pp. 1-2.

²⁷⁵ Prema Jayakumar, *Karunakara Menonum east India Companyum*, pp. 32-72.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ Extract of the letter from D. Hill, Assistant Collector, Foreign, and Political Department consultations, 15th February 1809, No. 39.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

his chest at the time of the latter's death.²⁷⁹ The musket was interestingly looked at and touched by the Governor as quoted by Baber. The musket had a historical significance as well, as it was confiscated by Pazhassi Raja from Captain Davidson during Panamaram attack. However, Karunakara Menon was allowed to keep the musket with him along with the license.²⁸⁰

Pulapra Karunakara Menon was not a clown. He was someone who valued colonial positions and money. He was very cunning and performed his level best in colonial service and acquired as much as financial benefits. He served in the East India Company in a period when most of the natives have opted for company service under their authority. According to M.G.S. Narayanan, in such a way the acts and professional life of Karunakara Menon could not be considered under a seditious frame.²⁸¹

Karunakara Menon had been in public service for thirty-three years and his service papers show those peculiar and dangerous moves he had undertaken with difficulty.²⁸² He devoted the best energies of his mind and body to uphold the interests of East India Company.

3.7. Conclusion

The so-called original portrait or a picture of Pazhassi Raja is not available so far. Everyone gets to know about his physical and character image through the accounts of those who met Pazhassi Raja personally. British accounts provide a picture of Pazhassi Raja who is short with a thick beard and long hair. They all accept the presence of divinity on the face of Pazhassi Raja and the depth of popular support, veneration, respect, and love towards the Raja from all classes of people. Pazhassi Raja was quoted in British accounts as a notorious rebel with

²⁷⁹ T.H. Baber, *Travancore and Cochin*, 1833 copy.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ P. Ranjith, (ed.), *Charithravum Vyavaharavum: keralavum Bharathavum*, by M.G.S. Narayanan, Current Books, Thrissur, 2015, p. 195.

²⁸² Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassiraja Chamayangalillathe*, p. 154.

shallow intelligence. He was reminded as inexperienced to govern the country. However, Colonel Arthur Wellesley, the great militant officer could not subjugate Pazhassi Raja during his three years of hard struggle in Malabar. It clearly conveys the strength and intelligence of Pazhassi Raja. T.H. Baber in his official report has mentioned the unbeaten popularity gained by Pazhassi Raja during his political career. Baber has decided to give the right crematory process to Pazhassi Raja considering the charisma of his personality. Eventually, Pazhassi episode highlighted that the failure was celebrated more than the winners.

Pazhassi Raja helped Britishers during their infancy period in Malabar against Tippu Sultan and turned against them after realising their true motives. Thus its wrong to portray him as a pliant to the British. Those negativities attributed by the Britishers to the image of Pazhassi Raja could be considered as their purposeful move to blemish the heroic portrait of the ruler. British knew that those accounts marked by them would transmit knowledge to future generations. Pazhassi Raja episode has gifted them enormous loss in all forms. Thus, degrading the hero through presenting a weird image conception would be a planned move as part of character assassination.

Thus, the credibility of colonial accounts upon the image of Pazhassi Raja still comes under suspicious lines.

Chapter 4

Raja in Folk Literature

4.1 Introduction

Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja is one of the most debated historical figures in the history of Kerala. The history of Pazhassi Raja is remembered in the world today in multiple images created in different periods.¹ The image of Pazhassi Raja in folk literature is a unique part to be discussed and studied. Folk songs do not provide a proper sophisticated line of narration. But it has got a much more rigorous explanation of stories-driven themes from historical knowledge. The authors of folk songs are unknown personalities, but those centuries-old verses still remain in society recollecting our beautiful past memories.² The image of Pazhassi Raja is portrayed through folk literature would throw light on some known and unknown aspects related to him. Thus, it makes a quintessential part in the process of historical reconstruction.

4.2 Pazhassi Raja in Northern Ballads

O.K.Johny opines that there are no folk songs or traditional verses illustrating a decade-long fight between East India Company and Pazhassi Raja. There is no appreciation for the heroic deeds of Pazhassi Raja in the beautiful and imaginative old verses of *kurichyar*.³ There is a slight mention of the lifestyle of the people of Wayanad then as found in a few of the *kurichya* songs. However, it is interesting to note that they did not constitute any songs or lines about their

¹ K.P. Rajesh, *Vadakkan Malabar Samoohavum Charithravum*, Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 2014, pp. 48-78.

² *Ibid.*

³ O.K. Johny, *Wayanad Rekhakal*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2010, pp. 119-120.

source of admiration Pazhassi Raja.⁴ It could have been due to the realization of the danger to sing the admiring songs of Pazhassi Raja under his prominent colonial enemies. Also, the *kurichyar* could have coined songs about Pazhassi Raja and sung secretly as they are very capable of framing songs.⁵

There is a detailed description of the long rebellion between Pazhazzi Raja and the Company until his martyrdom as depicted in the northern ballad formulated in Kadathanad.⁶ It carries the story of Pazhassi Raja's political life with deviations from the proper history. Northern ballads could be regarded as an institution that gifted enormous achievements for the Malayalam language and literature. It introduced them to many unfamiliar words and phrases.⁷ It brings some emotional and thoughtful narration of historical events in a beautiful way into our ears. The influence of northern ballads in contemporary literary and artistic creations is not the least to be mentioned.⁸

Northern ballads could be regarded as one of the oldest and most significant compositions of verses belonging to the arena of folk songs with a north Malabar origin. The post-Tippu Sultan period in Malabar was the background for the northern ballads mentioning Pazhassi Raja.⁹ The content was about the matter of tax fixation and tax collection in Kottayam. Those lyrics began with discussing events since 1789. The hero was Pazhassi Raja and he was addressed as *kunjunni* by his uncle Kurumbranad Raja and as *thampuran*, *thambai*, and *arachan* by others as well.¹⁰

⁴ O.K. Johny, *Wayanadinte Samskarika Bhoomika*, Modern Books, Sultan Bathery, 1988, pp. 112-150.

⁵ O.K. Johny, *Wayanad Rekhakal*, pp. 120-122.

⁶ K.V. Thomas, *Vadakkanpattile Pazhassi Raja*, Lipi Publications, Kozhikode, 2015, 99.15-18.

⁷ Krishnan A. Payeri, *Pazhassi Raja – Vadakkan Patt*, Allied Publishers, Tellichery, 1972, pp. 2-10.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ M.C. Appunni Nambiar, *Vadakkan Pattukal*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1983, pp. 9-20.

¹⁰ Those words show respect and veneration towards the ruler from the people.

Northern ballads kept explaining that Baber provided sufficient gold to the *paniyar* and *kurichyar* in Wayanad and took information from them about the location of Pazhassi Raja. First of all, they captured his wife and later Pazhassi was found attacking them to get his wife released. But finally, he surrendered. Both Pazhassi and his wife were taken to Thalassery Fort which was so insulting to Pazhassi Raja. As per his request, both were taken into a home in Thalassery. But his broken dignity and self-esteem put them to commit suicide by swallowing a diamond.¹¹ There can we find some historical facts in northern ballads but the detention of Pazhassi Raja was simply fictitious. Whereas the mention of Pazhassi Raja's merchant friend Chovvakkaran Moosa in northern ballads has found historical validity. More of Wayanad was exhibited in northern ballads than in Wayanad songs.¹²

Northern ballads can be divided into three categories for readers' convenience. *Puthuooram* songs, *thacholi* songs, and single songs. Those songs written about a particular person or a particular incident at different periods come under the classification of single songs. The literary form of northern ballads is prevalent in the Kurumbranad, Kottayam, Chirakkal, and Wayanad areas of northern Malabar.¹³ So there is a wonder in having ballads about Pazhassi Raja.

Those ballads describing Pazhassi Raja began when the British handed over the rights of tax collection in Kottayam to Kurubranad Raja. It explains that Kurumbranad Raja could not collect taxes as per his calculations. Hence, he borrowed money from Thalassery Kunjimoosakkoyi for interest. A few verses in the ballads describe about the fight between Kaitheri Ambu and Pazhayam Veettil Chathu over Chanthu's significance in revenue affairs. Later it was compromised by Pazhassi Raja. At a point, Kurumbranad Veera Varma could not find any source to

¹¹ M.K. Panikkotti, *Vadakkan Pattukaliloode*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 1999.

¹² Mundakkayam Gopi, *Ariyappedatha Wayanad*, Sahya Publications, Kalpetta, 2002, pp. 120-161.

¹³ *Ibid.*

accumulate the required tax amount for the Company.¹⁴ As a final solution, Veera Varma asked his accountant Gopalan Warrior to write a letter to Pazhassi Raja asking him to give tax from the land of Kottayam. Otherwise, he would return the land to the Company. Raja entrusted *pattar* to hand over the letter to Pazhassi Raja. As soon as Pazhassi received the letter he said why should he pay tax for ruling his own land. He added that he would not give tax anymore and if his uncle wants to return the land then he can do that.¹⁵

Pattar returned with Pazhassi Raja's reply and Kurumbranad Veera Varma was seen sad at the response of Pazhassi Raja. Finally, he decided to return the power of Kottayam back to the hands of the British the very next day. He knew that it would make sufferings to Pazhassi then. However, he wrote one more letter to Pazhassi Raja for a meeting to take a decision on the matter.¹⁶ The second letter by Kurumbranad Raja made Pazhassi Raja angry. He shouted at the messenger and told him that he would not come for a meeting but if the Kurumbranad Raja wants to meet him in person then he can come and meet him at Pazhassi Raja's *kovilakam*. Meanwhile, Pazhassi Raja inaugurated a parallel tax collection system in Kottayam. He appointed eighteen men in the eighteen divisions of Kottayam for tax collection. Anyway, the disappointed Kurumbranad Veera Varma soon reached Thalassery fort and returned the documents assigned him the power over Kottayam after *pattar's* reply from Pazhassi Raja.¹⁷ Veera Varma finally declared that he would live under British rule being loyal.

Pazhassi Raja got informed of the presence of Kurumbranad Veera Varma in Thalassery Fort. Pazhassi wants to know whether have been any secret resolutions in the meeting. Thus, he thought about sending Kaitheri Ambu to Thalssery. But

¹⁴ K.V. Thomas, *Vadakkanpattile Pazhassii Raja*, pp. 24-48.

¹⁵ Raghavan Payyanad (ed.), *Vadakkanpattu Padanangal*, Centre for Folklore Studies, University of Calicut, 2000, pp. 15-60.

¹⁶ Krishnan A. Payeri, *Pazhassi Raja – Vadakkan Patt*, pp. 2-41.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Ambu was reluctant to go. Because Ambu angrily shot at the Thalassery Fort during its renovation process.¹⁸ A part of the fort collapsed then, and he tried to shoot again but was restricted by Pazhassi Raja. So many casualties did not happen for the Company. Thus, Kaitheri Ambu believed that the British might be angry at him. Thus finally, Pazhassi Raja send Pazhayamveettil Chanthu to enquire about the decisions of the meeting between Kurumbranad Raja and the Company.¹⁹ On the way, Chanthu met Kurumbranad Raja and he was asked to betray Pazhassi Raja which Chanthu nicely declined. Later Chanthu spoke with Company officials and finalized there is nothing wrong.²⁰

On the next day, Pazhassi Raja went to Thalssery with his army. British officials were already informed about it through spy work, and they set everything well to capture Pazhassi Raja. On his way to Thalssery, Pazhassi Raja visited Thiruvangad Temple.²¹ The Nambootiri at the temple was dizzled down and delivered some divine revelations. Accordingly, it was said that Pazhassi Raja would get into a trap and will be surrounded by militants. Pazhassi Raja soon envisaged some offerings and prayers to the *bhagavati* at Thiruvangad temple quickly then. Pazhassi continued his journey. But he was surrounded by the colonial army.²² But interestingly their eyes got tied naturally and soon Pazhassi Raja escaped. British officials understood that it happened by God's blessings. With this recognition, they too visited the temple and granted offerings and prayers to the deity. The major purpose behind their prayers was to get Pazhayamveettil Chanthu on their side.²³ Meanwhile, Chanthu was sleeping at home. He woke up suddenly and felt like burning his whole body. He then moved towards Thalassery and convinced

¹⁸ M.V. Appunni Nambiar, *Vadakkan Pattukal*, pp. 24-60.

¹⁹ M.K. Panikkott, *Vadakkan Pattukalilode*, pp. 25-80.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Krishnan A. Payeri, *Pazhassi Raja – Vadakkan Patt*, pp. 10-35.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ K.V. Thomas, *Vadakkanpattile Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 36-61.

Company officials about the infinite gold accumulation in the *kovilakam*. Soon they accompanied Chanthu to *kovilakam* and took the entire gold storage.²⁴

Later Chanthu asked the Britishers to capture Kaitheri Ambu as an essential step forward to put the entire Kottayam under control. Kurumbranad Raja also supported the move. Both Kurumbranad Raja and Chanthu met at Koothuparambu and decided to send seven hundred sepoy to bring Kaitheri Ambu. At a confrontation, Ambu killed them all. But finally, he was captured and presented before Chanthu and the Kurumbranad Raja. Kaitheri Ambu respected the Raja considering his position and status in the royal family and was seen bowing before him. But Kurumbranad Raja was reluctant to watch him, Kaitheri Ambu criticized Chanthu for his treacherous act.²⁵

Later Kurumbranad Raja and Chanthu reached Thalassery Fort and asked company officials to capture Pazhassi Raja at the earliest. Soon an army was sent by the company to capture him. Pazhassi Raja dug hard, formed a small tunnel, and concealed himself there soon after he informed about the colonial mission.²⁶ But he was forced to change the location when his enemies knew of his hideout place. Pazhassi Raja told his wife about moving to another place. But his pregnant wife insisted he bring her wherever he goes. Pazhassi Raja convinced her about the inconvenience of having delivery at the forest. He explained that they would be captured quickly if the baby cries after delivery. Whatever Pazhassi Raja told, his wife was unwilling to change her decision.²⁷ So along with his pregnant wife, Pazhassi Raja moved into the intense forest, and he took two diamonds in his hands as well. They walked along and reached a place called *palukaachikunnu*. Soon then Pazhassi Raja's wife delivered. Unfortunately, the colonial army could easily capture Pazhassi Raja by locating their place according to baby's cry. Finally,

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Krishnan A. Payeri, *Pazhassi Raja – Vadakkan Patt*, pp. 17-45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ M.C. Appunni Nambiar, *Vadakkan Pattukal*, pp. 65-70.

both Pazhassi Raja and his wife committed suicide by swallowing the diamonds in their hands.²⁸ Even the enemies could not see the tragic scene as they cried and returned after holding the baby. Later Kaitheri Ambu was found climbing the hills at the shock of his dears' departure.²⁹

Those Company officials who returned to Thalassery had a change of mind. They called Chanthu and told him that Pazhassi was a good person, but he betrayed him. So, they expect the same to them from him. Finally, they decided to kill him. Chanthu has been tied to feet and drowned in the sea.³⁰ Thus the story ended. The author of the ballad makes no clarity for the future activities of Kaitheri Ambu and ends up abruptly with the death of Pazhayamveetil Chanthu.

As far as northern ballads are concerned, exaggeration is the keyword that was seen in many parts of the verses. The demolition of the fort by Kaitheri Ambu in one shot and the killing of seven hundred sepoy are comes under exaggerative parts.³¹ The finding of a change in Chanthu's loyalty because of the power of offerings made to the deity was an interesting noting. Prominent characters like Edachena Kunkan, Thalakkal Chanthu, Aaralath Kutty Nambiar, Unni Moosa, etc. did not appear in the song.³²

Most significantly the poet never attempts to personify the character of Pazhassi Raja in anywhere. There is nothing to highlight about Pazhassi Raja leading a war or enduring any adventurous activity here.³³ Much importance has been given to the rivalry between Kaitheri Ambu and Chanthu. There is no evidence to show that the poet possesses any kind of grudge towards the British. But the

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ K.V. Thomas, *Vadakkanpattile Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 50-61.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Dr. Scaria Zackaria, (ed.), *Anjuru Varshathe Keralam Chila Arivatayalanga*, Association for Comparative Studies, Changanchery, 1999, pp. 70-95.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ K.V. Thomas, *Vadakkanpattile Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 15-18.

poet's disappointment could be seen in the failure of Pazhassi Raja because of the power of religious offerings made by the Company officials.³⁴ The poet here gives much importance to the close affinity of Pazhassi Raja with religious affairs. Another aspect highlighted here was Pazhassi Raja's image as a family person. His affection and care towards his pregnant wife were well depicted. In the initial lines, Pazhassi Raja's stubbornness at the non-payment of taxes was explained along with his non-co-operation with Kurumbranad Raja.³⁵

As far as the place names and incidents mentioned here, the poet who composed these verses is assumed to have had direct contact with the characters and the incidents mentioned through the lyrics. A few lines especially highlighted the depth of the poet's familiarity with the places mentioned here.³⁶ The poet is found to be someone who knows the method of using guns as he explains it well in the lyrics. Some other lines make it clear that the poet is proficient in *kalari* system.³⁷ Because it is evident in his description of some aspects using *kalari* terms and phrases. Anyway, northern ballads do not provide a description of the brave and heroic deeds of Pazhassi Raja. Maybe the details of the warfare driven by Pazhassi Raja and the team were unaware to the singers and composers.³⁸

Many scholars and writers wrote about the history of Pazhassi Raja and most of them were published in the post-independence period. Those writings projected Pazhassi Raja in different ways. A proper history is not yet come in full-fledged form due to a lack of proper sources and information. Thus, a unique version of the history of Pazhassi Raja was seen through northern ballads.³⁹ It does

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Krishnan A. Payeri, *Pazhassi Raja – Vadakkan Patt*, pp. 2-12.

³⁶ Raghavan Payyanad, (ed.), *Vadakkanpattu Padanangal*, pp. 65-130.

³⁷ Chirakkal T. Balakrishnan, *Kerala Bhasha Ganaggal*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2005, pp. 20-70.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ K.V. Thomas, *Vadakkan Pattile Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 2-10.

not provide a complete history of Pazhassi Raja but gives some useful knowledge about his historical episode.

4.3 The image of Pazhassi Raja in Villadichan Pattu

The *villadichan pattu* or *vill pattu* is one of the ancient forms of musical storytelling in Kerala. It narrates stories interspersed with music and this art form prevails in Tamil Nadu as well as northeast Sri Lanka apart from Kerala. The story has been presented with simple tunes and verses which helps the audience for an easy understand.⁴⁰ As far as the *villu pattu* artists were concerned, the *villu* (bow) which is an age-old weapon of warriors lends paradoxically itself to be used as a primary musical instrument at the time of presentation. The *villadichan pattu* received a special position among temple-related artistic forms.⁴¹ Once this art form acquired wide popularity and stuffed among the audience the essence of happiness and enthusiasm.

According to historical evidences, *villadichan pattu* prevailed in Kerala since the 10th century AD. This artistic form had much propagation and popularity in both central as well as south Kerala.⁴² The influence of Tamil over the verses in *villu pattu* as quite evident. Unfortunately, this artistic performance did not exist today or somewhere makes a nominal existence.

The unique presentation of *villadichan pattu* is very much in evidence in the temples of *Sree Muthumari Amma* (a form of Devi) and *Maadan* (a deity belonging to the lower order) during the Kota festivals.⁴³ This vocal art is normally performed by persons of the Nadar community who are aged thirty and above and they would

⁴⁰ Sreekumari Ramachandran, (transl.), *Kerala Samskaram Oru Thiranottam*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2012, pp. 12-60.

⁴¹ Krishna Kumar Kannothe, *Pazhassi Raja Villadichan Pattu*, Sreehari Books Publishers Group, Mavelikkara, 2010, 99. 4-40.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Prof. Aymanam Krishna Kaimal, *Keralathile Drishya Kala Sahityam*, International Centre for Kerala Studies, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006, pp. 110-125.

be cultivators or casual labourers by profession. The stage was converted into a small make-shift thatched structure and their materials were readied for *Ganapathi* worship.⁴⁴ The chief vocalist and his assistant who supports him were the two songsters and they play on a big ornamental bow by beating on the bowstring with small sticks in accordance with singing the appropriate songs. An orchestra service of at least five men aided them.⁴⁵ They sing compositions praising the Gods and heroes and also sing historical ballads. The *villadichan pattu* was performed either during the day or night.⁴⁶

Depicting the life of Pazhassi Raja through *villadichan pattu* is quite a unique experience to deal with. It portrays some pleasant aspects related to the image of Pazhassi Raja. The *villadichan pattu* gives much importance to the close connection of Pazhassi Raja with religion. It explains his training in *kalari* as well. The story progresses through the entire political life of Pazhassi Raja from his protest against the Mysoreans to colonial resistance and martyrdom.⁴⁷ The depth of Pazhassi Raja's love and affection for his people was well explained and his strong resistance against the Company's unfair taxation and drain of wealth was highlighted. Pazhassi Raja's personal life was mentioned a bit.⁴⁸ He was supposed to marry two women. The first was Kunjani Kettilamma and the second was Kaitheri Makkam. There was no idea about having a son for Pazhassi Raja.⁴⁹

Pazhassi Raja's personal adherence to religion and religious beliefs were specified in many parts of the *villadichan pattu*. One interesting story narrated was that Pazhassi Raja met his second wife Kaitheri Makkam at a festival in an

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Krishna Kumar Kannothe, *Pazhassi Raja Villadichan Pattu*, pp. 38-45.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-50.

⁴⁷ K.T. Ram Mohan, (ed.), *Kerala Padanangal – 5*, Chithira Publications, Kochi, 1995, pp. 98-140.

⁴⁸ Prof. N. Gopinathan Nair, *Mahatcharithamala*, Kairali Children's Book Turst, Kottayam, 1982, pp. 12-20.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Ayyappan temple and fell in love with her.⁵⁰ Rather than his love, it denoted how passionate Pazhassi was for religious festivities. Another incident mentioned was that once Pazhassi Raja moved from Thodeekkalam temple while the British tried to attack it in search of him. Pazhassi Raja during his final phase submitted himself before *Kottiyoor Perumal* and *Sri Porkkali Bhagavati* for sacred blessings for a strong fight.⁵¹ Thus, it all portrays the close affinity of Pazhassi Raja with religion. It could be regarded as an essential part of his livelihood.

The *villadichan pattu* suggests that Pazhassi Raja committed suicide after swallowing a diamond ring. Although he was depicted as a powerful hero with all chivalry like a lion. He had immense popular support irrespective of caste, class, religion, and financial background.⁵² Thus *villadichan pattu* portrays a heroic image of Pazhassi Raja. He was seen depicted as one of the greatest warriors of India. He stood for his people and land against British hegemony.

Apart from *villadichan pattu* and *vadakkan pattu*, there were *poora pattu*, *kolkkali pattu*, and *thottam pattu* describing the heroic deeds of Pazhassi Raja. Those songs have religious assimilation and highlight the powerful Pazhassi Raja suppressing his colonial enemies.⁵³ Thus, folk literature provides a new dimension to the image of Pazhassi Raja.

4.4 The Image of Pazhassi Raja

The main source of information that helps us to draw the picture of Pazhassi Raja on all grounds was the documents acquired from the East India Company. Native accounts on Pazhassi Raja are limited and thus the history of Pazhassi Raja still remains unfilled. Though British documents provide a one-sided

⁵⁰ Dr. K.S. Mohan, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, Indological Trust, Calicut, 2018, pp. 90-98.

⁵¹ Thekkumbhagom Mohan, *Pazhassi Thampuran*, Ascens Books, Kottayam, 2010, pp. 20-140.

⁵² C.M.S. Chancherla, *Poorakkali*, Saraswathi Press, Kannur, 1970, pp. 25-45.

⁵³ M.V. Vishnu Nambootiri, *Poorakkali*, Current Books, Kottayam, 1998, pp. 20-60.

version of history, it helps a lot to depict the ideology, personality, and political career of Pazhassi Raja to a certain extent.⁵⁴

Three or four major issues were addressed by Pazhassi Raja through his official letters to the Company. The palace robbery, the issues of murdering Muslims, higher taxation, and popular inconvenience brought by Pazhayamveetil Chanthu and Kurumbranad Veera Varma.⁵⁵ Most of the letters from Christopher Pilie discussed the same issues as well. The attempt for reconciliation could be analyzed by making a detailed evaluation of letters from both sides.⁵⁶

A devastated Pazhassi Raja was seen in his personal letters to Pazhayamveetil Chanthu on 26th April 1796. The letter does not throw much light on his capability as a ruler. But it shows how desperate he was at the *kovilakam* robbery by the British Company.⁵⁷ Pazhassi Raja's willingness for a reconciliation with the British was evident through his letter to the British Commander-in-Chief on 21st April 1797. Pazhassi Raja expressed the same opinion in his letter to Colonel Dow on 5th July 1797.⁵⁸ On 3rd November 1799, Pazhassi Raja complained to John Smee about the unavailability of the pension granted to him. Also complained about the insufficient protection of gods, Brahmins, and rulers ensured under British sovereignty.⁵⁹ On December 16th, 1799, Pazhassi Raja wrote a letter to Malabar Commissioner John Spencer that he is happy that Company would take necessary steps regarding matters related to him. Pazhassi Raja also stressed that he wrote to Mysore and Coimbatore that the tax collection of Wayanad must be

⁵⁴ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samara Rekhakal*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2004, pp. 119-162.

⁵⁵ Foreign and Political Proceedings, 28th August 1797, Political Department, No. 24, pp. 11548-11802.

⁵⁶ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2007, pp. 10-50.

⁵⁷ Public Department Consultation No. 32, 16th November 1796.

⁵⁸ Foreign and Political Proceedings, 28th Aug. 1797, No. 61.

⁵⁹ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, dated on 20th February 1800, Vol. 155, No. 2.

done through land. Again, he complained about the improper availability of pensions.⁶⁰

Each person possesses his own style regarding the matter of letter exchange. Kurumbranad Veera Varma used to send all prominent letters received by him to the Company. Pazhassi Raja never did so. This indicates the difference in their submissive approach to the Company.⁶¹ There find differences in the usage of words by Pazhassi Raja in his letter to the representatives of the Company and Pazhayamveettil Chanthu. It is interesting to note that Pazhassi Raja, the so-called rebel severely criticized Pazyahamveettil Chanthu who was on the British side in his letters to the Company. Pazhassi Raja reached the peak of criticizing Chanthu by encroaching on the boundary of complaints. This could be viewed as a tactful approach from Pazhassi Raja.⁶² The stand of Pazhassi Raja was that the Company totally believed in Pazhayamveettil Chanthu and he was the one who created enmity between the Company and him. Thus, Pazhassi Raja was either shown as a ruler who frequently urged for a cordial relationship with the Company or a rebel who questioned the activities of the Company. Even it suggests that Pazhassi Raja as a third person attempted in creating a rift between Pazhayamveettil Chanthu and the Company.⁶³

The age and relationship were concerned with addressing the mode of letters between *naduvazhis* apart from their position of authority.⁶⁴ Kurumbranad Veera Varma used words like *marumakan* and Raja to address Pazhassi Raja.⁶⁵ Whereas Pazhassi used the most respectful and dignified words like *thampuran*,

⁶⁰ Letter to John Spencer, President of the affairs of Malabar, dated 30th December 1800, Serial No. 2273.

⁶¹ Dr. Joseph Scaria and Dr. Scaria Zacharia, (ed.), *Pazhassi Rekhakal*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 2017, 99. 2-50.

⁶² Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakile Vyavahara Bhasha*, pp. 150-190.

⁶³ George Emmatty, *Pazhassi Raja*, H & C Publishing House, Thrissur, 2014, pp. 12-60.

⁶⁴ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, pp. 160-200.

⁶⁵ The word *marumakan* denotes son-in-law.

thirumanass, and all to address him. Kurumbranad Veera Varma was superior to Pazhassi Raja in terms of age and experience. But was an enemy to him. Pazhassi Raja never attempted to break the so-called practices and customs even being in a broken relationship with the latter.⁶⁶ Interestingly, Pazhassi Raja never kept this courtesy in his official letters to the Company.

Those letters written by Pazhassi Raja to the Company stressed his solid tone interrupting tax collection along with mentioning a reconciliation. So, there must be multiple explanations for the variations and contradictions seen in the letters of Pazhassi Raja.⁶⁷ Those who want to exhibit Pazhassi Raja as an extraordinarily great personality can take this as part of his diplomatic tactics. Because such a move is required while dealing with a powerful enemy. Those who want to bring down Pazhassi Raja from the image of a powerful personality can take these variations and differences in letters as a fake of his character. It could be otherwise regarded as his loyalty to the Company.⁶⁸ Here the presuppositions of the reader influence the analysis of the letters to become vivid if the concentration was given to the textuality of the letters because of subjectivity in the creation of textuality.⁶⁹

The imitation of textuality affects confining in the construction of subjectivity. However, that could be regarded as the image of Pazhassi Raja evident through *Pazhassi Rekhakal*.⁷⁰ On the one hand, there arises the image of a Kerala *naduvazhi* who had been under multiple pressure, thoughts, and exertions in different ways. The Pazhassi Raja image in *Pazhassi Rekhakal* has a glimpse of

⁶⁶ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, pp. 170-195.

⁶⁷ T.P. Sankarankutty, *A Tragic Decade in Kerala History*, Kerala Historical Society, Thiruvananthapuram, 1977, pp. 112-140.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, pp. 185-217.

⁷⁰ Dr. Joseph Scaria and Dr. Scaria Zacharia, (ed.), *Pazhassi Rekhakal*, pp. 15-160.

humanity when it was read together with his later history up to martyrdom after a long adventurous course.⁷¹

The image of Pazhassi Raja has been conceived differently by people. In colonial documents, Pazhassi Raja was portrayed as a short man with a beard and compared with an ape.⁷² According to O.K. Johny, except for some minor aspects, the British perspective of Pazhassi Raja is truly an attempt at character assassination. He found Pazhassi Raja as a Shakespeare tragic character and portrayed him as an eminent historical figure.⁷³ The head of Muzhakkunnu Pindali *kalari*, Raman Nambeesan attributed that Pazhassi Raja is a powerful man like a lion.⁷⁴ The same opinion was shared by many people. For the youngsters Pazhassi Raja is Mammooty. The present generation watched the historical figure Pazhassi Raja through the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*.⁷⁵

Novels, poems, dramas, films, etc. portrayed the heroic imagery of Pazhassi Raja. It's interesting to note that the majority of people don't know anything about the release of the movie *Pazhassi Raja* in 1964. For them, the 2009 released movie on Pazhassi Raja is the only Malayalam movie referring Pazhassi Raja.⁷⁶ Those ladies named Koyma and Chama from Parattimala colony in Pulpally don't even know who is Pazhassi Raja.⁷⁷ Keeri Raman, a *kurichya* from Jawahar Colony,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² K. Balakrishnan, *Pazhassiyum Kadathanadum*, DC Books, Kottayam, 2011, pp. 58-59.

⁷³ Interview with O.K. Johny held on 30th November 2021 at 2 pm at Pazhassi Tomb, located in Mananthavady, Wayanad, Kerala.

⁷⁴ Interview with Raman Nambeesan Gurukkal Pindali held on 21st November 2021 at 4.30 pm in his residence located at Muzhakkunnu, Kannur, Kerala.

⁷⁵ Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, *Chalachitra Patanangal*, Current Books, Kottayam, 2013, pp. 68-125.

⁷⁶ Mankada Ravi Varma, *Chithram Chalachithram*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp. 65-120.

⁷⁷ Interview with Koyma and Chama held on 12th October 2021 at 10.30 am in their residence located at Pulpally, Wayanad, Kerala.

Kambalakkad expressed that Pazhassi Raja looks exactly like Mammooty.⁷⁸ Interestingly Koruthi, Koppi, and Annan from Kumizhi colony in Kaniyambatta don't know Pazhassi Raja and Thalakkal Chanthu.⁷⁹ Thyru from Mooppanad Colony in Meppadi said that Pazhassi Raja was a Raja and that's it. He doesn't know where Pazhassi Raja lived and what he has done to society.⁸⁰ Palliyara Raman from *kurichya* family in Kalpetta accepted the British version of the image perception of Pazhassi Raja.⁸¹ However, the young tribal generation has heard about Pazhassi Raja but doesn't know a detailed history of him.

A freelance writer in history, Krishna Kumar Kannothe glorified the heroic image of Pazhassi Raja and attributed that Pazhassi Raja was a renaissance reformer as he joined people together without any discrimination.⁸² Krishnakumar has said that temples became the center for dispute settlement during the time of Pazhassi Raja. He mixed people belonging to two different poles together like the rich and the poor, landlords and tenants, Muslims and Nambutiris, etc., and perpetuated the concept of equality and socialism. According to him, the tribal community got recognition in society when Pazhassi Raja brought them into the mainstream. He severely criticized the British perception of the physical image of Pazhassi Raja. According to him, the British and Australians were tall by birth. Thus, compared to their height Pazhassi Raja was short and that is why they degraded him highlighting some negatives about his physical features. According to Krishnakumar, Pazhassi Raja was fair and had an appropriate height. He had a thick beard at the time of death by being on *mandalam vrata* and that could be

⁷⁸ Interview with Keeri Raman held on 18th October 2021 at 2.00 pm in his residence located at Kambalakkad, Wayanad, Kerala.

⁷⁹ Interview with Koruthi, Koppi and Annan held on 4th November 2021 at 4.00 pm in their residence located at Kaniyambatta, Wayanad, Kerala.

⁸⁰ Interview with Thyru held on 8th November 2021 at 4.30 pm in his residence located at Meppadi, Wayanad, Kerala.

⁸¹ Interview with Palliyara Raman held on 2nd December 2021 at 4.30 pm in his residence located at Kalpetta, Wayanad, Kerala.

⁸² Interview with Krishna Kumar Kannothe held on 22nd November 2021 at 2.45 pm in his residence located at Mattannur, Kannur, Kerala.

highlighted negatively by the British.⁸³ Krishnakumar continued that there is no single man in the Pazhassi family who carries the physical features attributed by the British to Pazhassi Raja for several decades. He was a powerful person as his sword is too heavy to handle and someone with intense strength only could handle it easily.⁸⁴

In paintings, statues, and other monuments a fair, tall, handsome Pazhassi Raja was presented along with *poonul*, or the sacred thread.⁸⁵ It is believed that Kshatriya men observed *upanayana* ceremony and received *poonul*.⁸⁶ The hair of Pazhassi Raja was seen tied on one side along with a beads chain and *sindoor* on the forehead.⁸⁷ Recently Pazhassi Raja's birthday was celebrated on January 3rd by a particular political party. Everyone knows that the exact date and year of Pazhassi Raja's birth is unknown. Thus, this could be an approach to establish his legacy and heroism by underlining those significant aspects of his life on imaginative ideas with a certain amount of political goals.

In a story speech titled *Pazhassiyude Pataval*, Pazhassi is described as a tall person with a well-toned body and neck, vast chest, long hands, fair complexion, sparkling eyes, and his face always carried a divine spirit.⁸⁸ Thus, the image of Pazhassi Raja has been conceived differently by people and other sources. Each arena gives various articulations toward the image of Pazhassi Raja. Native

⁸³ *Mandalam vrata* denotes the following of certain austerities for forty one days before visiting Lord Ayyappa at Sabarimala temple. It is not sure that the worship of Ayyappan and observing *vrata* was present in that time.

⁸⁴ Interview with Krishna Kumar Kannooh.

⁸⁵ *Poonul* is a flowery thread which was worn by upper caste Hindu's as part of their religious beliefs and norms.

⁸⁶ *Upanayana* is a Hindu ritual of initiation which is restricted to the upper caste Hindus. The male child wears a flowery thread when he enters upon the life of a student and indicates his acceptance as a full member of his religious community.

⁸⁷ A red pigment applies on forehead as a dot or in the parting of the hair of married Hindu women. It is not sure that whether the original Pazhassi Raja was doing this. The custom of applying *sindoor* is a latest origin and it was not observed by the landlords in the olden times.

⁸⁸ Sippi Pallippuram, *Pazhassiyude Pataval*, H & C Publishing House, Thrissur, 2017, pp. 56-60.

accounts and conceptions give heroic imagery for the character of Pazhassi Raja, and he was still remembered by everyone as a unique personality.

4.4.1 Pazhassi Raja and Communal Harmony

Historians rarely mention the Mappila presence in the Pazhassi revolt. Enough references are there to suggest that Elampilasseri Unni Moosa Muppan, Athan Gurukkal, and Chemban Pokker all joined with Pazhassi Raja and led their anti-colonial resistance independently.⁸⁹ They could succeed in maintaining sway over their own domains like Eranad and Valluvanad. It is to be noted that Unni Moosa had to claim sole authority over the eastern regions of Valluvanad just before and after Malabar was conquered by the British. Unni Moosa Muppan joined the Pazhassi rebellion in 1800 and had been fighting against the Company since the 1790's. It is believed that Captain Watson's *kolkar* army killed him in 1802.⁹⁰ The rebellion was helped by the supply of sufficient provisions, gunpowder, and arms in exchange for cardamom, pepper, and other commodities by the Muslim merchants of Kalliyat and Irikkur.⁹¹ When the Company was trying to establish its trade monopoly, this merchant community was indispensable to the maintenance of commercial activities. Pazhassi Raja organized his revolts with the joint support of people belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities. Pazhassi Raja could establish diplomatic military links with Tippu Sultan as his political strategy to strengthen anti-colonial resistances.⁹²

The active presence of Mappila merchants, peasants in South Malabar, and the dismissed militants from Tippu Sultan's army accelerated the spirit of Pazhassi revolts. A particular kind of emotion infused them to participate in these revolts

⁸⁹ Prof. S. Achutha Warriar, *Kerala Samskaram*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, pp. 68-112.

⁹⁰ *Kolkars*, the military force in Colonial Kerala comprises with native men.

⁹¹ G. Krishnan Nadar, *Historiography and History of Kerala*, published by the author, 2013, pp. 35-130.

⁹² C.A. Innes, I.C.S., *Malabar*, Gazetteer, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, pp. 140-250.

unlikely from the habit of feudal legacy. Perhaps this could have been their love for the country and its people or the indication of the lowest stage of the emotion of nationalism.⁹³

Ali Moosa was a prominent merchant from Thalassery who supported Pazhassi Raja immensely by providing essential commodities.⁹⁴ The *Malabar Manual* presented Unni Moosa as a robber like Hydros. But a letter written by Lord Wellington to Colonel Sir.Toriyas explains him as someone who brought subsistence for Pazhassi Raja and his team when they were in the forest.⁹⁵

Chovvakkaran Makki and Chovvakkaran Moosa were the two powerful merchants in feudal Malabar. They immensely supported Pazhassi Raja by supplying sufficient war equipment and food. The British officials discussed and wrote letters to the Principal Collector regarding the degree of criminality attached to Chovvakkaran Moosa. He was contracted with the government related to the supply of certain qualities of pepper. The British conceived rather than being a public contractor he was supposed to be held particularly responsible and pursue no measures which militate against the interest and the established laws of the Company government.⁹⁶ Moosa was known for the illegality of purchasing pepper from the declared enemies of the Company. He was suspicious of supporting the rebels directly and indirectly. There can exist no doubt of his guilt. He knows well about the sufficiency of Malabar resources in every district and was perfectly sensible to his agents that it could not have been procured for him in large

⁹³ Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, (ed.), *Kerala Samskara Patanangal*, Vol. II, Current Books, Kottayam, 2013, pp. 90-140.

⁹⁴ Dr. K.N. Ganesh, (ed.), *Exercises in Modern Kerala History*, Sahithya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd., Kottayam, 2013, pp. 45-70.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Charles Dias, (ed.), *Kerala Spectrum, Aspects of Cultural Inheritance*, Indo-Portuguese Cultural Institute, Cochin, 2006, pp. 90-120.

amounts. He could never be so ignorant about British jurisprudence by making indiscriminate purchases to hinder incurring the crimes in aiding the rebellion.⁹⁷

The words 'outrageous' and 'ruffians' were used in British records to refer to the interior agricultural Mappilas when they staunchly resisted the British.⁹⁸ Interestingly the term 'jungle mappilas' or 'jungle and robbing Mappilas' was used by the Joint Commissioners to address the rebels.⁹⁹ Apart from Unni Moosa of Elampulasserri, Athan Gurukkal of Manjeri, Hydros Kutty of Eranad, Pazhassi Raja was supported by Mappila leaders like Chalad Thangal, Haider Kunhikutty, Elampulen Kunhan, Vavantullan Kunhi, Kunhi Moideen Muppan of Elathur and other prominent persons during the course of insurrections.¹⁰⁰ Sources mention that the Athi Muppan of Kadathanad had brought around a hundred Mappilas from South Malabar in order to assist the forces of Pazhassi Raja.¹⁰¹

There were two incidents propagated by Britishers to establish that Pazhassi Raja was anti-Muslim. In 1793, the Mappilas constructed a mosque in Kottayam *bazar* without Pazhassi Raja's permission. Later the construction was destructed by Pazhassi Raja's men. Again, the Mappilas requested Pazhassi Raja for permission to construct the mosque. According to the rules of the country, Pazhassi asked them to provide *kanikka*. But they continued construction works without giving *kanikka* to the ruler as he was not in so-called power then. Finally, it led to the confrontation between Pazhassi Raja's men under Kalyat Emmen and the Mappilas. Thus, the Mappila leader Kuttyali Emmen was killed along with other six Muslim persons.¹⁰² There is an explanation of this incident in *Thalassery Rekhakal*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-140.

⁹⁸ Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram*, H & C Publishing House, Thrissur, 2017, pp. 60-110.

⁹⁹ William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol. I, Charithram Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, pp. 550-650.

¹⁰⁰ *Kerala Charithram*, Vol. I, prepared and published by the Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, 1973, pp. 600-750.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² William Logan, *Malabar*, (transl.), by T.V. Krishnan, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2014, pp. 250-400.

However, Pazhassi Raja was innocent in this matter. The second incident happened in 1795 where the British took up the issue of the death of two Mappilas who were convicted death penalty by Pazhassi Raja for the alleged crime of robbery in Kottayam. The Company issued a politically motivated arrest warrant against him.¹⁰³

In 1796, Lieutenant General James Gordon and troops conducted a raid in the Pazhassi *kovilakam* to arrest him.¹⁰⁴ But it failed as he had already been shifted to Wayanad and organized guerrilla warfare. Anyway, James Gordon and their team looted around seventeen thousand rupees and other precious properties from the *kovilakam*.¹⁰⁵

Pazhassi Raja's official letters clearly show that he was not responsible for the death sentence of Mappilas as proclaimed by the Company. It has been pointed out as a conspiracy made by his former tax collector and ally Pazhayamveettil Chanthu.¹⁰⁶ According to Joseph Scaria, the letter written by Pazhassi Raja to company superintendent Christopher Pilie is the best evidence to establish the innocence of Pazhassi Raja. Anyway, the British took up the issue very seriously and exaggerated things to implement their policy of divide and rule. They circulated an anti-Muslim image for Pazhassi Raja.¹⁰⁷ They planned that a rift in the amicability between Pazhassi Raja and the Muslim community would weaken the Pazhassi rebellion. Also, the British wanted to restrict the help rendered by Tippu Sultan to Pazhassi Raja. However British failed to implement their crooked tactics and nothing could break the communal harmony. Pazhassi Raja was immensely

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ S. Ramachandran, *Freedom Struggle in Colonial Kerala*, published by the author, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004, pp. 16-60.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-80.

¹⁰⁶ Dr. P.K. Narayana Pillai, (ed.), *Kerala Studies*, A Gopala Menon Commemoration Volume, University of Travancore, Thiruvananthapuram, 1955, pp. 100-140.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Krishna Kumar Kannooh.

supported by Muslim people throughout the rebellion and was a massive reply to the divide-and-rule policy propagated by the British.¹⁰⁸

4.4.2 Personal Life of Pazhassi Raja

According to *Mahatcharita Mala*, Pazhassi Raja was born in the 1750s. As a child, he left for Travancore at the time of Hyder Ali's attack on Malabar. He returned to Kottayam in his younger days and resisted the dominion of Tippu Sultan over his land. Pazhassi is explained as a brilliant person with great potential. He was proficient in artistic fields as well.¹⁰⁹ He was well-versed in Vedic literature and music. He was trained in *kalari*. He was a powerful person with a massive body. He was good-looking, and his face expressed divine rays which made everyone bow down before him. Pazhassi Raja was so compassionate and kind to everyone. He stood for justice. He was ready to sacrifice himself for people and companions. Even he behaved with gentleness and compassion at war culprits as well.¹¹⁰

There were many stories regarding the number of wives of Pazhassi Raja. Kunji Unni Amma was called the first wife of Pazhassi Raja. Later Pazhassi got married to two women and Kaitheri Makkam was his fourth wife. In those times, the rulers, feudal lords, and *naduvazhis* all had more than one wife. The situation and lifestyle were quite different then.¹¹¹

Pazhassi Raja lost peace of mind in his younger days. He led a peaceless life. All the time he was in direct or indirect confrontation with enemies or moving from one place to another or organizing requirements for his people and so on. Thus, he was totally under mental and physical pressure. He chose marital life to overcome

¹⁰⁸ G. Krishnan Nadar, *Historiography and History of Kerala*, pp. 18-25.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ E.A. Karunakaran Nair, *Pazhassiryude Priyabhoomy*, published by the author, Kottayam, 1992, pp. 15-30.

¹¹¹ P. Bhaskaranunni, *Pathompatham Noottandile Keralam*, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Thrissur, 2000, pp. 540-550.

such tensions. Pazhassi Raja was shuttling within the territory and had partners in each location. However, it was difficult to bring partners throughout the journeys. There is a story that at the time of Pazhassi Raja's death, Avinjatt Nair's niece was his wife, and she was with him along with a few female attendants.¹¹²

One story conveys that Pazhassi Raja had an alliance with a Nair lady from Manathana during the Mysorean invasion and had children. That was Kunjuni Amma. He brought her and the children into Pazhassi *kovilakam* on 1st October 1792. But most of the time they resided in Manathana.¹¹³ When British army GENERAL James Gordon conducted a military campaign at Pazhassi *kovilakom* on 1st April 1796, there was Kaitheri Makkam. But she left *kovilakam* a few days back before the attack with the children. When Thomas Warden and Colonel Macleod attacked Pazhassi Raja's settlement in Churikuni near Thrikkaippatta in Wayanad, there resided the third wife of Pazhassi Raja along with his daughters.¹¹⁴ His wife was the daughter of Kanthamangalath Kottayil Nair.

Some stories says that Pazhassi Raja had only two wives. One was Kaitheri Makkam and the second one was Kunji Nani (Kunjani) belongs to the Avinjatt Tharavad of Payyarmala *swaroopam*.¹¹⁵ In the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* (2009), Kaitheri Makkam was presented as the one and only wife of Pazhassi Raja.¹¹⁶ In the novel *Kerala Simham* by K.M. Panikkar, Pazhassi Raja was presented as having two wives. One was Avinjatt Kettilamma and the second was Kaitheri Makkam.¹¹⁷ The novel, *Prathikaram* written by Mekkunnath Kunji Krishna Nair (1969) introduces a character called Devamaji from Kudak as the wife of Pazhassi

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Dr. K.S. Mohan, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 50-112.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Thekkumbhagom Mohan, *Pazhassi Thampuran*, pp. 125-1350

¹¹⁶ M.T, Vasudevan Nair, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja movie Screenplay*, current books, Thrissur, 2010, pp. 54-80.

¹¹⁷ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2008, pp. 40-140.

Raja.¹¹⁸ In the drama, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* written by Kappana Krishna Menon has shown Avinjatt Kunjani as the wife of Pazhassi Raja.¹¹⁹ One interesting story reveals that Pazhassi Raja had a wife from a rich family called the Kottayil family while he was residing in Wayanad. He had a child as well. In 1848, East India Company confiscated the entire properties of Kottayil family on grounds of connection with Pazhassi Raja.¹²⁰

There are stories that Pazhassi Raja had only two wives apart from Makkam. His first wife was Kunjan Kettilamma and his third wife was Devamaji from Kudak. Myths tell that Kunjan Kettilamma opted for pilgrimage when Pazhassi Raja got married to Kaitheri Makkam. Devamaji later committed suicide.¹²¹

Anyway, there is no accurate and authentic information about the personal life of Pazhassi Raja. In some literary works, Kaitheri Makkam was presented as the sister of Pazhassi Raja.¹²² So, there are numerous stories regarding Pazhassi Raja and his marital affairs. But nothing is proven on the grounds of historical evidence. One thing is true there was a lady with Pazhassi Raja at the time of his death. T.H. Baber approves the fact in his official report.¹²³ But who was she is not specified.

4.4.3 Pazhassi Raja and Kathakali

It has been said that Pazhassi Raja never acquired proper education just like his contemporary rulers. He was keenly interested in literature, music, and all. Pazhassi Raja learned *kathakali* when he was a child. This was a practice applicable to all the kids in Kottayam *kovilakam* as part of martial arts training. Those who

¹¹⁸ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Trichur, 1986, pp. 200-250.

¹¹⁹ Kappana Krishna Menon, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, Mathrubhumi, Kozhikode, 1935, pp. 10-100.

¹²⁰ Thekkumbhagom Mohan, *Pazhassi Thampuran*, pp. 122-125.

¹²¹ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, pp. 225-230.

¹²² Kappana Krishna Menon, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 20-90.

¹²³ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samarangal*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, pp. 197-206.

showed much interest in *kathakali* got the learning opportunity for its complete study.¹²⁴ It was conveyed that Pazhassi Raja sang and enjoyed *kathakali* verses at Pazhassi *kovilakam* during the interval between the first and second rebellions. Even is believed that once he organized a *kathakali* performance at *kovilakam* and even performed prominent characters. Some scholars say that Pazhassi Raja was greatly involved in encouraging and enjoying artistic and literary creations including *kathakali* before the commencement of the Pazhassi rebellion. Some stories say that Pazhassi Raja conducted a *kathakali* performance at *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* temple during the war interval. People got fascinated and stunned by watching their *thampuran* performing epic characters like Arjun, Nalan, Sri Krishna, and others.¹²⁵ Some scholars wrote that Pazhassi Raja was proficient in writing *kathakali* verses and poems. They treated him as a multitalented personality. Anyway, there is no solid evidence to establish such opinions as historically valid. They merely make some exaggerations and prove nothing.

There were three important rulers of Kottayam royal family who have shown keen interest in *kathakali*. One was Kerala Varma who lived in the tenth century. He was attributed as the founder of Kottayam *kathakali* and the composer of *attakkathakal*.¹²⁶ But later it was found to be wrong. According to historical records, it was another Kerala Varma who lived in the 9th century is responsible for formulating *kathakali* in Kottayam style and wrote our *attakkathakal*. Two famous rulers belonged to Kottayam ruling family in the 9th century. One was Kerala Varma who wrote *Valmiki Ramayanam Kilippatt* and the other one was Vidwan Thampuran who wrote *attakkathakal*.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ R. Vinod Kumar, *Keraleeyam*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2011, pp. 68-110.

¹²⁵ Panditaraja Kaviratnam Attoor, *Kottayam Kathakali*, Geetha Press, Trichur, 1960, pp. 12-40.

¹²⁶ *Attakkathakal* are stories formulated in the form of verses for Kathakali performance.

¹²⁷ Vanidas Elayavuru, *Vadakkan Aithiyamala Randambhagam*, Kerala Folklore Academy, Kannur, 2012, pp. 110-140.

The rulers belong to Kottayam royal family and followed four names. Kerala Varma, Ravi Varma, Veera Varma and Sankara Varma. Thus, it created confusion in identifying the rulers. Also, most of the women of the royal family had the names Uma, Gopika, and Laxmi. It was believed that two *thampuratti* women were adopted from Vettath royal family. The author of *Valmiki Ramayanam* was the son of elder *thampurati* who had been adopted by the family. The *attakkatha* writer was the son of the young *thampuratti* as well.¹²⁸

Ulloor and Chirakkal T. Balakrishnan Nair considered that both Kerala Varma and Vidwan Thampuran lived in the first half of the 9th century. Those *attakkathakal* written by Kottayam Thampuran lived in South Kerala even before the birth of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja. One of the *attakkathakal* was composed by Kottayam Raja and was performed in the festivals at the Sreepadmanabha Swami temple in Thiruvananthapuram.¹²⁹

The Kerala Varma who wrote *kilippatt* had been an adopt to Travancore. He died in an encounter with enemies in 1696. There were myths that he submitted a war to *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavathi* being a strong devotee. Those temple documents of Padmanabha Swami temple in 1686 have shown details of Kottayam Kerala Varma being adopted to Travancore and named *Purali Vara Vanchi Kerala Narpalen*. He was also a capable warrior just like other Kottayam rulers.¹³⁰ He was a unique poet who sustained the legacy of the Kottayam rulers. He wrote around seven literary works including *Paada Sthuthi* to Kerala Varma's *Ramayanam*.

Ulloor quotes that two Sanskrit works called *Ragha Mala* and *Pathmanabha Keerthanam* belongs to the Kottayam Raja. Ulloor appreciated his potential in ruling Kottayam and writing *attakkathakal* at a time when he was residing in Travancore. Kottayam Raja also known as Vidwan Thampuran wrote four

¹²⁸ K.V. Babu, *Malabar Charithram Mithum Midhyayum Sathyavum*, Kairali Books, Kannur, 2018, pp. 40-90.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Panditarajaj Kaviratnam Attoor, *Kottayam Kathakali*, pp. 35-50.

attakkathakal altogether. They were *Bakha Vadham*, *Kalyana Soughandhikam*, *Kimmeera Vadham*, and *Kalakeya Vadam* based on *Mahabharatham* tradition. Also composed verses titled *Thodayam*, *Vandana Slokam*, and *Mangala Ganangal*.¹³¹ He constituted a new format for *kathakali* during the 1670s. The characters of *Kathakali* were represented as common people and added comedy into them. The Raja died in 1705.

Thus it can be stated that it was not Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja who wrote and performed *kathakali*. There is a poem that starts with the line *Jaathi Jaathanukamba bhava....* which was said to be written by Pazhassi Raja.¹³² But it's wrong. Maybe such an opinion was derived because of the mentioning of the name Kaitheri Makkam in it. Historians said that the mentioning of the name Kaitheri Makkam could be another person who might have lived in the Kaitheri family during the time of Kottayam Thampuran. So, it could be just a coincidence. But K. M. Panikkar in his novel *Kerala Simham* took it as seriously.¹³³

Malayalam language historian P. Govinda Pillai believes that it was Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja who wrote *kathakali* verses and stories. He widely propagated the mistake, and it was accepted by K.M. Panicker through his novel *Kerala Simham*.¹³⁴ The novelist projected the character of Pazhassi Raja in association of *Kathakali* and even presented him as a *Kathakali* performer as well. Aattoor Krishna Pisharody in his book *Kottayam Kathakali* explains this subject very well. With solid evidence, he established that Pazhassi Raja was born a century after the period of the *kathakali* writer Thampuran.¹³⁵

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Sardar K.M. Panikkar, *Kerala Simham*, pp. 140-160.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Desheeyathayum Samoohya Parishkaranavum Malayala Sahityathil*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 2014, pp. 30-90.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Apparently, the government of Kerala published certain standard textbooks and conveyed the mistake without conducting proper studies in regard.¹³⁶ According to an eminent scholar Prabhakaran Pazhassi, *Thalassery Rekhakal* doesn't mention anything about the relationship between Pazhassi Raja and *kathakali*. He said that Pazhassi Raja never attempted to write *Kathakali* verses while he was in long years of fighting with the British.¹³⁷ Alexander Jacob IPS opined that Pazhassi Raja was not in a state of mind to enjoy and perform *kathakali*. He was under tension, pressure, and frustration during the confrontation period.¹³⁸ Thus it could easily substantiate that the *kathakali* writer and performer Kerala Varma and our Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja were two rulers who belongs to the same royal family.

4.4.4 The Mystery of Pazhassi Raja's Death

There remains a mystery in the death of Pazhassi Raja. The British army under the leadership of T.H. Baber was responsible for the capture and death of Pazhassi Raja. Baber explained well about his entire journey towards finding Pazhassi Raja but did not mention how he had been killed. One opinion is that Pazhassi Raja committed suicide by swallowing the diamond on his ring. Either the diamond carried poison or it has got crystal cut sharpness.¹³⁹ Another story tells that he had shot dead by himself as he knew that it is impossible to escape. Some scholars believe that Pazhassi Raja left his sword upward and put his neck under it.¹⁴⁰ One interesting story describes that Pazhassi Raja escaped from the eyes of enemies by defeating them. He became a monk and led a spiritual life. Later he

¹³⁶ Malayinkizhu Gopalakrishnan, *Kerala Charithra Sakshyangal*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2011, pp. 40-70.

¹³⁷ Interview with Prabhakaran Pazhassi on 20th November 2021, Kannur at 3.00pm.

¹³⁸ Thekkumbhagom Mohan, *Pazhassi Thampuram*, pp. 180-200.

¹³⁹ Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassi Raja Chamayangalillathe*, Sahya Publications, Kalpetta, 2005, pp. 40-140.

¹⁴⁰ Prof. K.T. Narayanan Nair, *Wayanadum Nair Kudumbagalum*, Published by the author, Sulthan Batheri, 2010, pp. 30-35.

established an *ashrama* at Kannur and died after many years. There was a stone placed over his *samadhi* place called *sanyasi kallu*.¹⁴¹

Another story tells that Pazhassi Raja took his life by stabbing himself with his golden dagger.¹⁴² The member of Pazhassi *kovilakam* Gopika Amma and her son Ravi Varma said that November 30th was Pazhassi Raja's mother's death anniversary. He won't take or use weapons on that day. The British might have had information about that and they chose to get him on November 30th.¹⁴³ Karunakara Menon, one of the catchery servants of T.H. Baber has arrested the flight of Pazhassi Raja even at the hazard of his life. Pazhassi Raja had a musket. He put it at the chest of Karunakara Menon and commanded him 'not to approach and defile his person' in a very most dignified and commanding manner.¹⁴⁴ Pazhassi Raja was a religious person. He was on *mandala vrata* apart from special norms and customs prevailed on the day of his mother's death anniversary.¹⁴⁵ Thus he couldn't kill Karunakara Menon.

There were stories that if the company officials could not catch him on November 30th, then they never able to get him in the future. Because by 1805, the British empress was almost to direct company officials to stop their military operations to catch Pazhassi Raja. Because company officials and army persons were not trained in guerrilla warfare. They were unfamiliar with the character of Wayanad forests.¹⁴⁶ The very long warfare with Pazhassi Raja has gifted the company tremendous loss in the form of men, money, and dignity. So it was heard

¹⁴¹ Kattakada Divakaran, *Kerala Sancharam: Keralathe Samagramayi Ariyan*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2015, pp. 15-40.

¹⁴² K. Balakrishnan, *Pazhassiyum Kadathanadum*, pp. 50-80.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Raghava Varrier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram*, Part II, Vallathol Vidyapeetham, Edappal, 2012, pp. 240-300.

¹⁴⁵ The day was observed with purity of mind and soul.

¹⁴⁶ Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassi Raja Chamayangalillathe*, pp. 50-100.

that the Company was almost at a point to stopping their military operations to find Pazhassi Raja.¹⁴⁷

In the writings of Karunakara Menon, it was stated that Pazhassi Raja has attempted to shoot him three times with his musket. The musket didn't function either due to the vacuum of cartridges or due to technical complaints.¹⁴⁸ Karunakara Menon was unaware that it was Pazhassi Raja whom he blocked from shuttling. One of the *kolkars* shot Pazhassi Raja when he saw Pazhassi was shooting Menon. Krishna Kumar Kannothe opines that Pazhassi Raja might have been shot dead by *kolkars*.¹⁴⁹

However British was respectful toward the dead body of Pazhassi Raja. His dead body was taken into the palanquin of T.H. Baber and despatched to Mananthavady under a strong escort. They assembled Brahmins to perform all the required customary practices at his funeral. Baber has given all respect to the dead body of Pazhassi Raja one of the natural chieftains of the country.¹⁵⁰ Everyone knows what the British has done to the dead bodies of Veluthambi Dalava and Kunjali Marakkar. Thus, the respect towards Pazhassi Raja's dead body was an indication of the popularity of his unbeaten proliferate personality. Though company officials respected his dead body but destructed all physical remains of Pazhassi Raja. They demolished Pazhassi *kovilakam* and constructed Thalassery Mysore Road.¹⁵¹

T.H. Baber has got a golden dagger and a waist chain from the dead body of Pazhassi Raja. The former was possessed by Baber and the latter was presented to Captain Clapham, who accompanied Baber in the mission of capturing Pazhassi

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Prema Jayakumar, *Karunakara Menonum East India Companyum*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhiokode, 2009, pp. 20-95.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Krishna Kumar Kannothe.

¹⁵⁰ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Kerala Varmayude Pythrukam*, Deshabhimani, 27th November 2005.

¹⁵¹ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Raja Kalavum Jeevithavum*, Melinda Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, pp. 50-114.

Raja.¹⁵² Five elephants, a small quantity of sandalwood, and several copper pots were taken as properties of Pazhassi Raja. Baber is recommended for its immediate sale. The entire property of Pazhassi Raja and his companions was confiscated by the British government.¹⁵³ Thus they attempted to put an end to the chapter of Pazhassi Raja completely.

Similarly, there remain some uncertainties regarding the date of Pazhassi Raja's death. There comes so many questions in regard to the last days of Pazhassi Raja's life. A war centre must be the prime component of a ruler or the military head in both an open war or guerrilla warfare. Primarily the centre of the location must be protected from the eyes of enemies. This principle was the most important aspect of guerrilla warfare. Pazhassi Raja and his companions could escape from the enemies from Churikuni and Lakidi a few days back of his death due to receiving a warning message from the locals.¹⁵⁴ Later Pazhassi Raja shifted to the Kankara River in Karnataka Forest. Below ten persons were only there for the protection of Raja and his wife. English presence was already there in Pulpally a few days before the final attack with Pazhassi Raja. A small confrontation took place between company militants and Pazhassi Raja's supporters at Pulpally.¹⁵⁵ Mavilamthod was nearly Pulpally. There comes the question that Pazhassi Raja was regarded for his efficiency in both guerrilla warfare and in an open war. Then how does he locate himself in the British domains of Mysorean open forest by forming small huts along with almost ten ladies without sufficient people and weapons?¹⁵⁶ Another question arises that Edachena Kunkan and his team were

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samarangal*, pp. 100-212.

¹⁵⁴ Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassi Raja Chamayangalillathe*, pp. 100-150.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Thekkumbhagom Mohan, *Pazhassi Thampuran*, pp. 150-240.

there on the right side of the encounter place. Then why they didn't come back and fight for the protection of their Raja or at least for his dead body?¹⁵⁷

The death of Pazhassi Raja would be on 30th of November 1805 afternoon if it was as per the short message sent to Fort St. George on 30th November 1805 by the same date and from the same place, Pulpally.¹⁵⁸ That was a Friday. On the next day, December 1st Saturday, Pazhassi Raja's dead body was cremated as per Hindu customary practices at the hilltop in Mananthavady. However, as per the official declaration made by the Principal Collector Thomas Warden, Pazhassi Raja fell down on the 1st of December 1805 morning. The main source of information to make clarification these differences is the report submitted to the principal collector by T.H. Baber.¹⁵⁹ It has been stated that Baber got informed about the location of Pazhassi Raja by a few of his secret agents on 30th November 1805.¹⁶⁰ His hunt for Pazhassi Raja began at night at 9 pm on the same day. Baber and his entire team loitered in the forest at night completely until the next day morning at 7 am. They were stationed at a point around 9 pm to have food and rest. By then it was around twelve hours since they left Pulpally camp. They continued moving for one or two hours. They found Pazhassi Raja's gang at the Kankara River in Mavilamthode. The date was 1st December 1805 by then and was Saturday afternoon. T H Baber's fifteen hours of hardship in the forest finally came to an end.¹⁶¹

Thus the first report of Baber, the official declaration on 8th December, and the final report of Baber on 31st December prove that Pazhassi Raja died on 1st December 1805. In the first report, the date mentioned was 30th November along

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram – Dheera Samaranggalumayi Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, H & C Books, Thrissur, 2019, pp. 65-110.

¹⁵⁹ Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassi Chamayangalillathe*, pp. 110-160.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ P.A. Warriar, *Indian Swathanthrya Samaravum Keralavum*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2009, pp. 90-160.

with the place name.¹⁶² It could be considered a manual mistake. Because this could have been due to the physical and mental pressure of Baber. He was in an uncertain and unending search for Pazhassi Raja on the entire night of 30th November and might have gone for an emotional decline. So, the mistake in marking the exact date happened then. Baber stated that Pazhassi Raja fell down first at the attack of Cheran Subedar. But he was not severely injured then.¹⁶³ Maybe no wounds happened. That is why Pazhassi could react strongly to Karunakara Menon and put his musket on him. Thus Pazhassi got killed right in front of Baber, who shot him is a big question. Anyway, Baber did not shoot Pazhassi Raja. Because he would have been mentioned that if he got the opportunity to shoot him. Either Pazhassi Raja committed suicide or one of the *kolkars* shot him.¹⁶⁴

Thus the mystery regarding the date and death of Pazhassi Raja still remains unclarified. Though historians and scholars attribute different opinions nothing was finally accepted.

4.4.5 The Ghost of Pazhassi Raja

The famous Thrikkaikunnu temple belongs to Kottayam *kovilakam* and was supposed to renovate in 1963 by P.K. Sankara Varma Raja. The temple was kept unrenovated for a while. Astrologers came and found that Pazhassi Raja's soul still floating around the land unhappily. This was said by the chief *thantri* of Kottiyoor temple Nandhyar Valli Thrivikraman Nambootirippad.¹⁶⁵ Consecutive deaths of male babies and other unpleasant occurring in the family of Pazhassi Raja since his death had proven it. He said it's necessary to conduct *thilahavanam pooja* and

¹⁶² P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, Vol. 2, The Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1984, pp. 399-405.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Krishna Kumar Kannooh.

¹⁶⁵ Krishna Kumar Kannooh, *Sangeethanjanaya Rajavu Pazhassi Thampuram P.K. Sankara Varma Raja*, Pazhassi Raja Anusmarana Vedi, Mattannur, 2011, pp. 32-39.

happily install Pazhassi Raja's soul. Otherwise, temple renovation never going to happen.¹⁶⁶ There were many stories spread regarding the appearance of Pazhassi Raja's ghost. It was first visible before the members of Kottayam *kovilakam* when they visited Thrikkaykkunnu Temple near Koothuparambu.¹⁶⁷ The inhabitants of the temple land also witnessed the same.

Three eminent astrologers – Kaimukk Vydikan, Poonjar Mithran Nambutiri, and Edakkad Vijayan Nambiar spoke about the loitering nature of Pazhassi Raja's soul due to the absence of the exact crematory process from his family. Meanwhile the stories of the floating ghostly spirit of Kunjani Kettilamma and Kaitheri Makkam, the wives of Pazhassi Raja also a matter of talk.¹⁶⁸

The officials of East India Company have brought Brahmins and others to provide sufficient customary practices towards the dead body of Pazhassi Raja. But Pazhassi Raja's soul was dissatisfied with the crematory process organized by his enemies. Thus his soul began wandering unsatisfyingly for around one and a half-century. It was Pazhassi Thampuran P.K. Sankara Varma who ensured proper religious measures to Pazhassi Raja and let his soul rest in heaven.¹⁶⁹ P.K. Sankara Varma has been coronated as the Raja of Pazhassi *kovilakam* in 1963 after Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja. Sankara Varma took all such efforts to appease the soul of Pazhassi Raja and could succeed in the process.¹⁷⁰

The process of liberating Pazhassi Raja's soul comprised many complicated customary practices. It was not simple to detain the ghostly presence. Sankara Varma Thampuran remembers that there performed some special rituals to avoid

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Interview with K.P. Somasekharan Nambootirippadi, Meppally Ellam, Muzhakkunnu, on 2nd November 2021 at 11.00 am.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Sreedevi Antarjanam held on on 3rd November 2021 at 4.00 pm in her residence located at Muzhakkunnu, Kannur, Kerala.

¹⁶⁹ Krishna Kumar Kannothe, Sangeethanjanaya Rajavu Pazhassi Thampuran P.K. Sankara Varma Raja, pp. 50-108.

¹⁷⁰ Malayinkizhu Gopalakrishnan, *Kerala Charithra Sakshyangal*, pp. 120-125.

certain curses affecting the purity of Pazhassi Raja's soul. It is been said that Pazhassi Raja's twelve years of long warfare with the company caused pairing curses on him. The curse is regarded as *yatishapa*.¹⁷¹ Many times the revolts disturbed the meditation, peace, and prayers of the monk community. Although Pazhassi was a firm religious person and used to visit temples frequently. But company officials many times attacked temples in search of Pazhassi Raja. This has broken the spiritual life of monks. Thus, their sadness and grief converted into curses on Pazhassi Raja after his death.¹⁷²

Lokakhrosha was another curse poured on Pazhassi Raja's soul. Pazhassi Raja had great popular support throughout the phase of the revolt. People stood with him in all crisis times and realized that Pazhassi Raja's hardships is for their welfare and thus they left all their possessions and joined Pazhassi Raja's army. Finally, ladies, kids, and old people remained in Kottayam. The number of widows and handicapped were enhanced with the progress of the Pazhassi rebellion. The son of Kannavath Nambiar, Kannanunni was aged only sixteen when hanged by the company along with his father. Some loudly grieved the loss of their dear ones during the rebellion without realizing the importance of the warfare. Their mourning thus negatively affected Pazhassi Raja's soul after his death.¹⁷³ Finally, all required customary practices were performed to release Pazhassi Raja's soul into heaven. His soul was later installed in a small temple nearby Pazhassi Kovilakam in Kottakkuknnu.

4.5 Pazhassi Raja and Religion

Kottayam rulers were strong religious believers. They worshipped *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* along with *Bhadrakali*, *Sri Krishna*, *Siva*, and *Ganapati*. *Sri*

¹⁷¹ Interview with K.P. Somasekharan Nambootirippad.

¹⁷² Krishna Kumar Kannothe, *Sangeethanjanaya Rajavu Pazhassi Thampuram P.K. Sankara Varma Raja*, pp. 60-100.

¹⁷³ Kerala Kaumudi, 13th March 2011.

Porkkali (Chandika Devi) was the family goddess of Kottayam Rulers.¹⁷⁴ Uddanda Sastrikal explains in *Kokila Sandesham* that Chandika Devi themselves came into warfare and killed enemies. During the war treaty time, Pazhassi Raja conducted festivals and various other programmes at *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* temple. He was so keen towards protecting temples.¹⁷⁵

Pazhassi Raja took efforts to renovate and sustain the Mridanga Saileswari temple in Muzhakkunnu. Pazhassi initiated the performances of several cultural programmes in the temple, especially *koothu*.¹⁷⁶ He also renovated the Porkkali temple in the Thodiyil Kalathil. One of the letters of Pazhassi Raja to the Chirakkal ruler revealed the reason why he refrained from a fight near Kannavath. He wants to ensure the protection of the Thodikkalam temple which is situated near Kannavath.¹⁷⁷

Pazhassi Raja took the religious sentiments of persons in accelerating their part towards insurrections. He wrote letters to many local leaders in Kottayam requesting their assistance for his anti-colonial struggle before the commencement of the second phase of the rebellion.¹⁷⁸ Pazhassi Raja cleared his stand in a letter sent to Kunjemman of Kudali that he was going to fight against the British disregarding their power and military strength. Pazhassi Raja conveniently tried to attract landlords, peasants, and other classes of people into his movement by invoking their religious ideology and moral sentiments.¹⁷⁹ Pazhassi Raja organized many of his activities and movements around temple centres in Kottayam and Wayanad. Thus temples became under frequent attacks by the British as part of

¹⁷⁴ Dr. K.S. Mohan, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 92-120.

¹⁷⁵ *Veeram – Pazhassi Raja 211th Death Anniversary Supplement*, Mattannur Municipality, Mattannur, 2016, pp. 12-14.

¹⁷⁶ *Koothu* is an art form where the artist play song with dance and music through story telling the epics.

¹⁷⁷ Prof. N. Gopinathan Nair, *Mahatcharithamala*, pp. 45-50.

¹⁷⁸ Charles Dias, (ed.), *Kerala Spectrum, Aspects of Cultural Inheritance*, pp. 296-300.

¹⁷⁹ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, pp. 30-150.

their search for Pazhassi Raja. So he wrote to many about the necessity of taking revenge on the British for insulting the Gods of sacred temples and had nothing to do else.¹⁸⁰

Thus the appeal of Pazhassi Raja to the moral and religious elements of the traditional society became the foundation for his anti-colonial resistance. Pazhassi Raja thus attempted to legitimize his political activities by endorsing patronage of temples and ensuring the maintenance of religious ceremonies and rituals. Margret Frenz makes it clear that the main concern of Pazhassi Raja was to exercise his power, that is ensure the welfare of the people.¹⁸¹ This could be regarded as the goal of firmly following the traditional canon of duty for a king and this is what is called *rajadharmā* according to Frenz.

The postscript in a few of Pazhassi Raja's letters was *sreekrishnajayam*.¹⁸² It clearly explains how much Pazhassi Raja was adhesive to religious feelings. *Pazhassi Rekhakal* exhibits the existence of rigid beliefs and the practice of traditional customs that prevailed in Kottayam in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1797, Chirakkal Ravi Varma Raja left to meet Christopher Pilie, the Malabar superintendent to discuss the ranking of royal positions in the Chirakkal family. But he was supposed to meet Kolathiri Raja at Valapattanam to receive his acceptance regarding the position of fixation of the family members. The Chirakkal Raja has broken the tradition and decided to meet Pilie first. Unfortunately on the way, his tongue got stuck.¹⁸³ Then he moved to Thalassery and met company official Wilson. Raja was dumb again. Finally, he returned to Chirakkal and wrote a letter to Christopher Pilie that he intended to speak about many things but it was blocked

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samarangal*, pp. 100-142.

¹⁸² Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, pp. 50-230.

¹⁸³ Dr. Joseph Scaria and Dr. Scaria Zacharia, (ed.), *Pazhassi Rekhakal*, pp. 30-35.

by God.¹⁸⁴ This indicates the depth of the socio-cultural condition of Malabar that prevailed centuries back.

Another incident that happened was the death of the *kurichya*, Thondoor Chanthu, and his family members and cattle by smallpox. He was on the Company side and it was widely propagated that the entire tragedy happened due to the practice of witchery from their enemies.¹⁸⁵ There are mentions of many such incidents and events. Thus it all indicated the depth of religious influence on popular life. Pazhassi Raja exclusively nourished and protected his sacred beliefs and imbibed strength and confidence from Prayers and offerings.

4.5.1 Whether Pazhassi Raja Was a Little King

A proper examination of the brief recapitulation of the basic features of a little king helps to decide whether Pazhassi Raja can be considered a little kind. As far as a little king is concerned, he must be able to react independently when it comes to a matter of internal politics.¹⁸⁶ The little king would be the controller of the appropriate financial sources of income and has the means to assert his wishes by operating military force when necessary. He must be responsible for carrying out both political and ritual actions to legitimize his rule within the territory. The little king accepts an external ruler of superior standing who supports his higher status in political and ritual terms by military superiority parallel to internal autonomy. The little king is allowed by the system of ritual redistribution to share in the great king's power and he is thus dependent on the great king to legitimize his rule in the area of his territory.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Azeez Tharuvana, *Wayanattile Aadivasikal Charithravum Varthamanavum*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2020, pp. 15-40.

¹⁸⁶ Margaret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest, Transition to British Rule in Malabar 1790-1805*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, pp. 165-200.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

The question arises then to what extent does Pazhassi Raja match up to these criteria of a little king? The main sources of income of Pazhassi were derived from various forms of taxes, trade taxes, mint rights, cash punishments for culprits, and confiscation of property of those people who died without heirs. Also, people gave him gifts during festival times and ceremonies like *onam* and *vishu* along with royal prerogatives.¹⁸⁸ Thus an independent financial basis was guaranteed for the king. The officials of Pazhassi Raja – *naduvazhis* and *desavazhis* exercised similar authority in their areas just like what the king did at the highest level.¹⁸⁹

Pazhassi Raja was responsible to the judicial committee (*nattukuttam*) of his land.¹⁹⁰ It means that he could not take decisions at his discretion. Thus, it indicates that he did not enjoy the position of an absolute ruler. In the structure, the power of Kottayam is characterized as the center showing ideal sovereignty which is primarily ritual. The executive authorities were distributed to many lower sites of the prime structure where there prevailed multiple scaled-down replicas of the central king.¹⁹¹

Certain studies were done to examine whether Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja can be considered a little king. Pazhassi Raja legitimized his rule by performing religious actions. This is what is customary for a little king. Pazhassi Raja recognized this legitimation by extending his patronage to temples along with performing ceremonies in the Bhaghavati temples.¹⁹² Pazhassi Raja drew the sacral legitimation of his rule from the observance of religious ceremonies as a little king. For him, religious aspects had greater importance than any meeting with British officials. Pazhassi did his utmost to adhere to religious matters and found it as a significant component of his life. The entire network of temples extended over the

¹⁸⁸ Velayudhan Panikkassery, *Charithra Kavatangal*, pp. 50-110.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Ezhamkulam Mohan Kumar, *Pazhassi Raja*, Saindhava Books, Kollam, 2006, pp. 120-140.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram – Dheera Samarangalumayi Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 60-100.

entire kingdom of Pazhassi Raja played a prominent part in the legitimation of his rule. The temples of Kottayam and Wayanad formed a network that carried considerable importance for Pazhassi Raja's rule apart from performing their religious and ritual functions.¹⁹³

The network of temples played a crucial role by serving as the places of refuge and sanctuaries when Pazhassi Raja was forced to retreat into the jungle areas of his kingdom as part of the conflicts with the British.¹⁹⁴ The local people bestowed upon Pazhassi Raja gifts at the time of festivals like *onam* and *vishu* could be considered as the symbolic expression of the acceptance of Pazhassi Raja as a little king. Pazhassi Raja occupied the central position in the little kingdom of Kottayam on account of the sacral legitimation. Pazhassi Raja might be motivated by the source of *rajadharma* and he was well aware of his duties towards the local people.¹⁹⁵

Pazhassi Raja's embodiment of a sacrificial persona is more important for his kingdom than any decision he takes or makes. Pazhassi attached significance to all kinds of religious festivals and ceremonies being part of his sacral legitimation. He manifested his rule through public representations being the donor and protector of the religion of his kingdom along with the maintainer of cosmic order.¹⁹⁶ Pazhassi Raja was greatly supported by the senior Raja of Kottayam regarding matters associated with the practice of religious ceremonies. The construction of temples and shrines was supported by Pazhassi Raja and it manifested not only a sense of charity but was the display of his rule.¹⁹⁷

Apart from *onam* and *vishu*, Pazhassi Raja received symbolic representation of gifts from the local people during annually occurring festivities along with royal

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ K. Balakrishnan, *Pazhassiyum Kadathanadum*, pp. 26-33.

¹⁹⁵ *Rajadharma* denotes duty of the ruler.

¹⁹⁶ Thekkumbhagam Mohan, *Pazhassi Thampuran*, pp. 105-120.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

weddings and deaths. The close affinity between religion and politics in Kottayam has brought out the fact clearly that the rebels led by Pazhassi Raja consulted the oracle in the Bhaghavati temple at Manathana before they conflicted with the British in 1800 and they were gathered in Pulpally temple on other occasions as well.¹⁹⁸ The delivery of oracles on stated days throughout Malabar especially among the tribals played a significant role in popular life. The officiating persons on special occasions work themselves up to the highest pitch of frenzy. At a point he gets inspired which is regarded as the merging of God according to their beliefs. Later they started to shiver then to swell, and foam at the mouth. They gnash their teeth, tear their hair and cut their flesh. Throughout the process, they found to be thundering out words attributing calamities.¹⁹⁹ The *vellichappad* who delivers oracles universally resorted to Pazhassi Raja and other rebel leaders. They had the most powerful instruments in their hands and could overawe the people in general and able to work upon the imaginations of the natives.²⁰⁰

The huge stores raised by Pazhassi Raja by religious obligations have brought him into a conflict with the British who showed little understanding of the significance of the religious and ritual customs in Malabar. Pazhassi Raja gave much significance to the upkeep of religious and social obligations. He did it by the rights of a ruler for the welfare of the local people.²⁰¹ Pazhassi Raja observed that the British never going to comply with these obligations when they strove to obtain rule over Malabar. The discovery of the Raja created a sort of disappointment and fear resistance from 1796.²⁰²

According to Margret Frenz, Pazhassi Raja along with other Malabar rulers formed a circle of little kings and a little queen. They legitimized rule by performing

¹⁹⁸ T. Madhava Menon, (ed.), *A Handbook of Kerala*, International School of Dravidian Linguistics, Thiruvananthapuram, 2002, pp. 12-15.

¹⁹⁹ Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, (ed.), *Kerala Samskara Patanangal*, Vol. 2, pp. 65-100.

²⁰⁰ K.K. Nair, *By Sweat and Sword, Trade, Diplomacy and War in Kerala*

²⁰¹ T.P. Sankarankutty, *A Tragic Decade in Kerala History*, pp. 100-125.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

political and ritual acts after sharing in the superior great king's sovereignty.²⁰³ The little kings in Malabar characterized their relationship with one another either through blood relationships or by constantly changing alliances. The little kings of Malabar never considered themselves rebels in the context of conflicts. What they saw in themselves were legitimate rulers who were constantly redefining their sovereignty through battle.²⁰⁴

Pazhassi Raja imbibed another kind of legitimation from the so-called local elite groups of his country. In a letter, the noble people of Kottayam expressed that Pazhassi Raja committed himself to the welfare of the population amidst the chaotic condition that prevailed in Kottayam during and after Tippu's invasion. This is purely the act following *rajadharmā*.²⁰⁵ This was the scene where Pazhassi Raja being the little king enjoyed a proportion of the power that was exercised by the great king. Pazhassi was also able to use the same source to legitimize his own rule naturally to a lesser degree. Pazhassi Raja's correspondence with the British Shows the responsibilities taken by the ruler toward ensuring the welfare of his people.²⁰⁶

Another point indicates the depth of consciousness in Pazhassi Raja's traditional Indian concept of rule. It displayed in his constant reminders to the British that they reimbursed him for the state treasury which was looted at the Pazhassi palace in 1796.²⁰⁷ According to the traditional state doctrine, the treasury is one of the seven elements that form the nature of the Indian state. Thus, it's obvious that Pazhassi Raja enjoyed internal independence and could assert himself using military means when necessary, and was able to legitimize his rule

²⁰³ Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest, Transition to British Rule in Malabar, 1790-1805*, pp. 160-175.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Kerala Charithrapadanangal*, Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, Kozhikode, 1994, pp. 25-50.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-90.

²⁰⁷ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, pp. 55-137.

throughout his territory by operating political and ritual actions.²⁰⁸ He also initiated policies towards the local people which finalized the traditional concept of a ruler.

The mode of the little kingdom may be applied to the rulers of Malabar in its modified form. A new element should be included here. The great do not require to be living rulers. He can be there in the minds of those rulers who find them as little kings. Pazhassi Raja and other rulers in Malabar recognized Cheramaan Perumal as the rightful holder of the little of the great king.²⁰⁹ He recognized neither Tippu Sultan nor the British as supreme leaders.

Thus towards the end of the 18th century, Pazhassi Raja held the position of a little king in the Kottayam. He manifested and legitimized his rule by performing both political and ritual actions like the patronage of temples and conducting religious ceremonies. Pazhassi Raja's main concern was ensuring the welfare of the people. It was the prime goal as per the traditional canon of the duty of a king. His status was determined because of his ever-shifting relationship with the local authorities and with the great king. So, the concept of a little kingdom is applicable in the case of Pazhassi Raja in Kottayam after attempting certain modifications applicable to the region of Malabar.²¹⁰

4.6 The Kalari System and Colonial Fear

Kalari the national gymnasium is among the priceless heritage of Kerala to world culture. It must be reckoned as an institution that lives so long as mankind holds up the ideal of a sound mind in a sound body. In other words, it's an established institution that is remarkably alike to the lofty code of honour and has

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-150.

²⁰⁹ Mundakkayam Gopi, *Pazhassi Raja Chamayangalillathe*, pp. 15-65.

²¹⁰ Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, pp. 170-180.

lived up to the high standard of physical fitness it has stood for.²¹¹ *Kalaripayat* is a complete discipline that combines physical training with regulating mental tasks and self-discipline. *Kalaripayat* is not only a simple form of martial art but also a way of life. It inevitably leads to purity of body and mind and is a noble art. It brings out the unity of mind and body. The control of the body there goes hand in hand with the mastery of the psyche to move toward spiritual perfection.²¹²

In Malabar, *kalaripayat* was not often practised with weapons. The prime concern was fighting with the body. It uses the style of jumps and blows with the feet from a very high up with long strides. This makes a very compact on-guard stance and strikes and makes blocks with the arm with outstretched hands.²¹³ The term *kalari* was used to denote any institution used for teaching. For example, *nadaka kalari*, *kathakali kalari*, *rakshtriya kalari*, etc. The institution which taught martial arts was called *kalari* from the early days onwards. The term *kalari* is comprised of multiple meanings but in the direct sense, it is denoted as an establishment that trained warriors.²¹⁴

According to Brahmanical sources, there were temples and deities installed in the thirty-two Brahmin settlements by Parasu Rama. The centre of administration and power of each settlement or village was its temple. Around a hundred and eight *kalari* were constituted in association with temples.²¹⁵ Persons from the caste group of Panikkar and Kurup were the authority for *kalari* and they stayed nearby the *kalari* centre. Gradually the number of temples and *kalari* were

²¹¹ K. Vijayakumar, *Kalaripayattu Keralathinte Sakthiyum Soundaryavum*, Department of Cultural Publications, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp. 15-40.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Kaduthuruthi E.P. Vasudeva Gurukkal, *Kalaripayattu Keralathinte Thanathu Ayodhanakala*, DC Books, Kottayam, 2000, pp. 60-100.

²¹⁴ Baburaj Kalambur, *Keralathile Rajavamsangalum Bharanathikarikalum*, Sura Books Private Limited, Chennai, 2012, pp. 20-140.

²¹⁵ Aswathi Thirunal Gauri Lakshmi Bayi, *Glimpses of Kerala Culture*, Konark Publications, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 12-20.

enhanced together with population growth. Thus the culture of the *Kalari* system was spread widely into villages.²¹⁶

The *Kalari* centers provided proper training in martial arts to Nair youth for temple protection. Sangham literature mentions the existence of such training centers in that period.²¹⁷ Gradually *kalari* centers were proposed and training was started to provide for non-Nair caste groups as well. As far as Kerala history is concerned *kalari* centers proliferated in three periods. One was in the ancient period. The second was at the time of Perumals and the third was at the time of *naduvazhi* and local rulers.²¹⁸ The word *kalari* is derived from the Sanskrit word *khaloorika* which means a military training ground. The pit-dwelling character gives it a calm and cosy atmosphere. The southwest corner of the *kalari* was sacred to the presiding deity *kalari devata*. The place takes the name of the platform of flowers from the offering of flowers and *tulasi* leaves.²¹⁹ It formed a series of seven semi-circular steps narrowing towards the top. From the side of *puttara* towards the south where the *Guru's* seat is located and from there he could sit and watch pupils practice. The *guru* is the head of the *kalari* and the dispense of art and learning.²²⁰

The main weapons used in *kalari* for training were the *urumi*, sword, and spear. Along with training using weapons *kalari* provides training aimed at the suppleness of the body and agility of limbs, qualities which becomes essential in trials of strength.²²¹ Interestingly in medieval Kerala, people belonging to different

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Kaduthuruthi E. P. Vasudeva Gurukkal, *Kalaripayattu Keralathinte Thanathu Ayhodhanakala*, pp. 65-80.

²¹⁸ G.K. Panicker, (ed.), *Folk Plays and Dances of Kerala*, International School of Dravidian Linguistics, Thiruvananthapuram, 2018, pp. 70-90.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ Mukundan Kurup, *Kerala Charithram-Kalariyum Kalarupangalum*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2013, pp. 12-110.

²²¹ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Samooham Charithram Samskaram – Historical Essays*, Poorna Publications, Calicut, 1989, pp. 50-180.

castes and classes were trained in *kalari*. But were trained in separate centers.²²² Barbose points out that even women were also trained in *kalari* as well.²²³

According to Raman Nambeesan Pindali, the rulers belonging to Kottayam *kovilakam* were trained in *kalari* traditionally at Muzhakkunnu Mridhanga Saileswari temple. Pindali Nambeesans were the *kalari gurus*. There was a custom that prevailed back then that when the coronation of a new ruler in the Kottayam royal family comes, he must come to *kalari* and should perform certain customary practices. It includes respecting *kalari gurus* and receiving the traditional royal sword.²²⁴ The rulers of royal families were handed over a sword only when they finishes training in *kalari* and the sword received by Pazhassi Raja was still kept in the Muzhakkunnu *kalari* center. The eminent Portuguese traveller Tomporus who visited Malabar during 1512-1515 mentioned about the outstanding bravery and willpower of Kottayam rulers. He pointed out their proficiency in martial arts as well. Pazhassi Raja proved his legacy.²²⁵

British aware of the effects of *kalari* centres as a hindrance to their growth in Malabar. Thus, they articulated laws and punishments to stop the functioning of *kalari* centers. The Malabar Collector Robert Richards wrote a letter to Lord William Benedict on 20th February 1804 was good evidence proving it.²²⁶ The letter indicated the danger of people holding weapons and receiving training at *kalari* centers as one of the main reasons for the unrest in Malabar. Pazhassi Raja had a wide range of support from trained Nair warriors from *kalari* centers and was a huge threat to the British. William Benedict replied to the letter of Richards on

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ M.V. Vishnu Nambootiri, *Nadan Kalikalum Vinodhangalum II*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp. 10-80.

²²⁴ Interview with Raman Nambeesan Gurukkal Pindali.

²²⁵ Mukukndan Kurup, *Kerala Charithram*, pp. 20-50.

²²⁶ K.Vijayakumar, *Kalaripayattu*, pp. 200-250.

22nd April 1804 that those who keep weapons illegally must be banished from the state.²²⁷

One important thing to be noted down is that the British undertook India-scale disarmament in 1878 after the first war of Indian independence. Interestingly around seventy-four years back, they introduced such a law in Kerala inculcating the punishment of banishment.²²⁸ It shows how much they feared the *kalari* legacy, customs, and brave fighting spirit of Keralites. British conducted constant raids at *kalari* centers and seized all the weapons post-William Bendict declaration. It could be the reason for the secret functioning of the *Kalari* centers then and that is why those weapons failed to recollect later by archaeologists and historians.²²⁹ However feudal lords and *naduvazhi* people were allowed to keep weapons of hereditary values without the permission to use them. Special permission was required if any artistic performances were held making use of the weapons.²³⁰

However, *kalari* centers began declining in the 18th century as the result of British unlawful regulations. Most of such centers were later transformed into temples. For example, the Panthalayani Siva temple at Koyilandi.²³¹

4.7 The Image of Pazhassi Raja through the Causes of Revolts

Pazhassi revolts could be treated as the agglomeration of cordiality, betrayal, hatred, adoration, sycophancy, pressure, refrainment, confrontation, dehumanization of laws of administration, discontent, disappointment, and intelligence. The Company excluded Pazhassi Raja from the administration of Kottayam in 1795 and transferred the power to Kurumbranad Veera Varma. The exploitative and corrupted form of tax collection put the people in a miserable

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Shooranattu Kunjan Pillai, M.A., *Kalari Vidhya Keralathile Kalaripayattu Murakal*, Hastha Likhitha Grandhashala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1956, pp. 45-100.

²²⁹ K. Vijaya Kumar, *Kalaripayattu*, pp. 215-250.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ G. K. Panicker, (ed.), *Folk Plays and Dances of Kerala*, pp. 75-80.

condition. Pazhassi Raja was upset with popular suffering. The staff of Chirakkal Raja wrote to Jonathan Duncan that Pazhassi Raja cried when he left *kovilakam* after a failed settlement meeting with the British.²³² Probably it would have been the symbol of his agony towards considering popular sufferings caused by anti-colonial resistance.

Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja was well known for the challenges against the values of the cultural system which regulated the life of the people of Malabar after the establishment of British supremacy. So, he considered it his responsibility to protect the faith and culture of the people. The temple land was usually exempted from revenue assessment on the Malabar coast. But the company government has brought all categories of land under assessment and it paved for a different form of oppression.²³³ It appears like an insult to the people and their faith. British did not value indigenous beliefs and religious customs as well. In a letter, Pazhassi Raja wrote to his friend, "Consider my request for your assistance if you are influenced by Perumal and *bhagavati*. Time has arrived to sacrifice dear things. I will oppose the company government always as they insulted the Gods and faith of the people".²³⁴

The impolitic attitude of the company officials to challenge the cultural identity of the people raised their conscience against alien domination. Thus, it united the people with the ruler who declared the people war on the pretensions of the aliens. Thus, Pazhassi Raja become the "most intractable and unreasonable to all the Rajahs of Malabar" and "his conduct continued to be distinguished by a contempt for all authority."²³⁵

²³² P. Hareendranath, *India-Irulum Velichavum*, M C Appunni Nambiar Trust, Kozhikode, 2015, pp. 85-120.

²³³ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Kerala Charithra Padanangal*, pp. 25-90.

²³⁴ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Raja Kalavum Jeevithavum*, pp. 29.94.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-110.

The agricultural sector of 18th-century Malabar was closely related to the economic zone and cultural spheres. The agricultural relations sustained in Malabar were shaken by the arrival of colonialism and the Mysore invasion. East India Company has broken the cordial relationship that existed between the peasants and landlords in Malabar. The required number of *pattam* was more than the total amount of crops. Thus, it caused liabilities and disturbed peasants thoroughly. Some evidence indicates that peasants left their habitation place and fields at the failure of cultivation and tax payment.²³⁶ Thus there is nothing to get excited about in their joining the Pazhassi rebellion.

The peasants were not feared of the confiscation of their land and property. Some reports to the company stated that Nair lords and the local peasants took weapons against the company. The wrong monetary measures inaugurated by Macleod have enhanced the number of protestors.²³⁷ A.R. Desai pointed out that there was a general conception that Indian peasants were fate believers, obedient, and filled with superstitious imaginative beliefs. Pazhassi revolts cleared the baselessness of such a conception.²³⁸ Sham Nath Pattar finds the main reason behind the wide popular support of Pazhassi Raja as his involvement in popular grievances and happiness and being so kind to the peasants. This was the reason why the British could not catch Pazhassi Raja for many years even after declaring head price for him.²³⁹

Pazhassi Rekhakal expresses the intensity of Pazhassi Raja's grudge towards Kurumbranad Veera Varma and Pazhayamveetil Chanthu and it feels like he never had that much grudge towards the company. As per the information in *Pazhassi Rekhakal*, the robbery at Pazhassi *kovilakam* has worsened the relationship

²³⁶ S. Ramachandran Nair, *The State and Economy in Colonial British Kerala*, Lipi Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1998, pp. 16-95.

²³⁷ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samarangal*, pp. 118-190.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Grandha Lokam, January to June, 1996.

between Pazhassi Raja and the Company.²⁴⁰ Pazhassi wrote many letters to the Company demanding the return of the looted wealth from *kovilakam*. Pazhassi Raja believed that the *kovilakam* robbery was done at the instructions of Kurumbranad Veera Varma and Pazhayamveettil Chanthu. William Logan mentions that there was a huge difference in the list of properties looted from the *Kovilakam* prepared by Pazhassi Raja and James Gordon.²⁴¹

The history of the defeated was not a glorified chapter in history. But sometimes the defeated become more extensively glorified than the victorious. People like Pazhassi Raja, Edachena Kunkan, Thalakkal Chanthu, and various unknown thousands who were associated with the Pazhassi rebellion were belongs to the category of glorified history. On 8th December 1805, a Malabar Collector wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary of Madras that the death of Pazhassi Raja is a golden opportunity for them to acquire all wealth from Malabar as calculated before.²⁴² So the drain of wealth by the British was stopped by the rebellions under the leadership of Pazhassi Raja.²⁴³ This was the historical relevance of the Pazhassi rebellions.

O.K. Johny regarded the Pazhassi revolts as the failed attempt made by Pazhassi Raja to sustain the declining feudal system of Malabar due to colonial arrival.²⁴⁴ Company officials wondered and enquired how Pazhassi Raja could maintain a large army and how he could feed and maintain them properly. This is what shows the militant character of the group helped Pazhassi in the revolts.²⁴⁵ They participated in the revolts with available weapons and returned to normal life

²⁴⁰ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, pp. 15-25.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Inward in the public department, December 31st, 1805.

²⁴³ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samara Rekhakal*, pp. 123-126.

²⁴⁴ O.K. Johny, *Wayanad Rekhakal*, pp. 82-90.

²⁴⁵ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samara Rekhakal*, pp. 120-125.

when the mission was completed. But this group had its weakness as well and that helped the British to suppress the revolt step by step.²⁴⁶

According to the correspondences in Thalassery records, what ultimately helped the English in their victory was the disunity among the local rulers and their lack of state power rather than their arms and military prowess. Pazhassi Raja could end up revolting when he was suggested to his royal life with a pension. Governor General Mornington suggested it to the Madras government in 1800.²⁴⁷ But Pazhassi Raja rejected it. Samoothiri, Chirakkal Raja, and others received *malikhana* from them.²⁴⁸ Pazhassi Raja was so clear about his failure at the end of the second phase. Although he was unwilling to a reconciliation with the company. He firmly believed that he would fight against the British till his last breath.

Pazhassi Raja had a great love for his people. He seriously supported the process of cultivation and revived the peasant community. During the 1790s Pazhassi Raja borrowed money from the Thalassery factory and other sources and gave *thakkavi* to peasants.²⁴⁹ Pazhassi Raja Provided them with seeds and cattle to ensure the expansion of agriculture.²⁵⁰ No other ruler in Malabar has done this. Pazhassi Raja recognized the agricultural importance of Wayanad. He established Nair families in the major areas of Wayanad as part of his military and revenue purposes.²⁵¹ They were entrusted with administrative responsibilities as well. Pazhassi Raja removed their ancestral relations to restrict them from going to the plains. Each Nair family was allocated with the rule of each *desham* unit.²⁵² People belonging to other caste groups also migrated to Wayanad along with Nair families.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-160.

²⁴⁷ Foreign and Political Department Consultations, No. 38, dated on 5th June 1800.

²⁴⁸ *Malikhan* Refers pension.

²⁴⁹ *Thakkavi* is the word used to denote a kind of loan to peasants.

²⁵⁰ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *The Peasant Revolts in Malabar*, proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 141, (1980), pp. 682-688.

²⁵¹ Mundakkayam Gopi, *Ariyappedatha Wayanad*, Sahya Publications, Kalpetta, 2002, pp. 153-180.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

Pazhassi Raja has initiated various programs to bring *kurichya* and other tribal communities into cultivation. Those *desham* ruling Nair provided land, seeds, and cattle freely to tribals.²⁵³

Pazhassi Raja strongly reacted when the Company decided to divide Wayanad and attach each part with Mysore and Coimbatore after the death of Tippu Sultan. Thus, it resulted in the commencement of the second phase of the rebellion.²⁵⁴ Pazhassi Raja was an efficient administrator and could recognize the necessity of maintaining Wayanad as it is. Wayanad does have special considerations being a migrant land and a peculiar district by the geography today. This was foreseen by Pazhassi Raja centuries back.²⁵⁵

Thus Pazhassi Raja attempted to ensure the well-being of his subjects from exploitation and hardships through the rebellion. Pazhassi met with several opportunities for a safe life with all securities. But he declined all and stood for bringing peace and welfare to his people and that's the basic reason behind the unbeaten popularity of Pazhassi Raja.

4.8 Criticisms of Pazhassi Raja

A scholar called N.K. Jose by the name of 'Dalit Bhandhu' has written a book called *Pazhassi Raja Kerala Mirjafar*. Throughout the book, he criticized Pazhassi Raja on all grounds. Dalit Bhandhu attributed that Pazhassi Raja helped the British to establish their power in Malabar. Pazhassi captured the Kuttyadi fort of Tippu and seized ammunition and dislodged army persons from there.²⁵⁶ Pazhassi Raja played a decisive role in dislodging Tippu's army from Kottayam and that was mentioned by British military official Colonel Dow. Pazhassi took part in a private

²⁵³ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Kerala Varmayude Pythukam*.

²⁵⁴ A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithra Silppikal*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society Ltd., Kottayam, 1988, pp. 150-250.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Dalit Bhandhu, *Pazhassi Raja Kerala Mirjafar*, Hobby Publishers, Vaikom, 2001, pp. 15-50.

meeting organized by the Bombay Governor Major Amber Crombe in Thalassery to discuss dislodging the remaining Mysorean army from Kannur.²⁵⁷ He attributed that the third Anglo-Mysorean war was won by the joint ally of Pazhassi Raja and East India Company. It was not a sole victory from the British. The treaty of 1792 was a compelled treaty on Tippu Sultan by them. Malabar came under British control as per the 1792 treaty. That was also the outcome of Pazhassi Raja's sweat. The responsibility of tax collection from Kottayam was assigned to Pazhassi Raja as his remuneration.²⁵⁸

Dalit Bhandhu was criticized for not treating Tippu Sultan as a freedom fighter. He makes a comparison between both. Tippu is a Muslim and Pazhassi was a Hindu elite. Both died from the British attack. Tippu never helped the British secure their motives. Whereas Pazhassi helped them once. Pazhassi Raja considered the British servant Karunakara Menon as barbaric as he was on the British side. Pazhassi Raja never felt Britishers as bad people while he worked with them. They became bad to him since he broke up with them.²⁵⁹

The author attributes that Pazhassi Raja turned against the British when they transferred the power of Kottayam to Kurumbranad Veera Varma. In 1756 East India Company had direct trade relations with the local rulers of Malabar. They had treaties signed over buying pepper. But the English East India Company did nothing when Hyder Ali attacked Malabar by forgetting those treaties.²⁶⁰ This itself has shown the British policy of betrayal. Dalit Bhandhu asks that Pazhassi Raja doesn't know about this and he doesn't know about British supremacy in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Then how does he become a born leader?²⁶¹ Pazhassi Raja has been portrayed as a brave and powerful enemy by the British. Such an

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-90.

²⁵⁹ Grandha Lokam, January to June 1996.

²⁶⁰ Surendran Cheekkilod, *Kerala Charithravum Samskaravum*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2013, pp. 12-30.

²⁶¹ Dalit Bandhu, *Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 65-85.

exaggeration was done to show that they could defeat such a strong to highlight their strength and power. The author attributes that Pazhassi Raja is responsible for the British domination in Malabar.

British future in Malabar would have been changed if Pazhassi Raja does not send many armies to help them during the Mysorean's attack in Thalassery.²⁶² Pazhassi Raja got the rulership of Kottayam when the actual ruler Rama Varma left for Travancore in 1788 at the Mysorean attack by Tippu. So indirectly Tippu helped Pazhassi to gain power over Kottayam. Dalith Bhandhu argues that Pazhassi Raja was angry when the tax collection of Kottayam was assigned to Kurumbranad Raja. Thus his fight was basically against his uncle and not against the English or Tippu Sultan.²⁶³ The first treaty with Pazhassi from the British was a foreseen preparation done by the company officials. Much of the Company army belonged to Bombay. So appeasing Pazhassi Raja was essential for them to prepare for the fourth Anglo-Mysorean war. They need a peaceful movement of the army through Wayanad which they conceived by reconciliation with Pazhassi Raja.²⁶⁴ Thus with his help Bombay army could move towards Mysore peacefully through Wayanad. Apart from this, the British wanted to block Pazhassi Raja's movements towards allying with Tippu. So British urgently need to bring him down with a treaty.

Dalit Bhandhu attributes that the modern Kerala political elites intended to raise Pazhassi Raja as the freedom fighter of Kerala.²⁶⁵ Pazhassi Raja found his uncle Kurumbranad Veera Varma as his prime enemy. Whereas Tippu Sultan found the British as their prime enemy. If the British wouldn't give the right for tax collection to Pazhassi Raja's uncle, then Pazhassi would have been their ally forever. The author says that the Pazhassi rebellion allowed the British to differentiate their supporters and enemies of Malabar. They had realizations on

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ K.V. Babu, *Malabar Charithram*, pp. 15-80.

²⁶⁴ D. Dayanandhan, *Charithra Kauthukam*, Melinda Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2011, pp. 45-90.

²⁶⁵ Dalid Bhandhu, *Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 75-90.

future programs in strengthening their power in Malabar. Dalit Bhandhu compares Pazhassi Raja with Veluthambi Dalava. He said that Thambi has enhanced the annual tax of Travancore fixed by the British from four lakhs to eight lakhs only. But Pazhassi Raja has given the entire Malabar to them. Before the Pazhassi Rajas episode, the British had power over Thalassery only and there they never had solid political power. But after the death of Pazhassi Raja, the entire Malabar reached into their hands.²⁶⁶

Prema Jayakumar through her work *Karunakara Menonum East India Companyum* criticizes Pazhassi Raja. She said that it feels like Pazhassi Raja was the role model of a tragic hero during the end of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century. He had an amazing personality to bring forward warfare for many years which had the least chance of victory.²⁶⁷ His character was personified by his bravery and carelessness for personal security and could easily escape from the attack from the company in the intervals of Wayanad. Pazhassi Raja would not be a celebrated hero if he was captured alive and taken to jail.²⁶⁸

E.M.S. Nambootirippad criticized that Pazhassi Raja's wife mortgaged him to the British and that is why they could easily capture him.²⁶⁹ M.G.S. Narayanan severely criticized this opinion on the grounds of a lack of sufficient evidence to substantiate it. M.G.S. also criticized the communist tendency of distorting historical events which influences national movements like their demand and the need for rethinking and liberal writing. According to M.G.S., E.M.S. was either constructing his history or distorting historical facts.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Prema Jayakumar, *Karunakara Menonum Eastindia Companyum*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2009, 99. 25-40.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-60.

²⁶⁹ Dr. K.S. Mohan, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 2-8.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

According to A.S. Jayaprakash, a history scholar, once Pazhassi Raja was a *naduvazhi* under British Supremacy. He collected tax and gave the Company a ten per cent of commission. The grudge of Pazhassi Raja was against his British-sided uncle and that was misinterpreted as a freedom movement.²⁷¹ Anyway M.G.S. Narayanan rejected this statement on grounds of distortion of history.

Historical evidence proves that Pazhassi Raja treated his people equally. For him, their caste, religion, colour, financial position, gender, etc. doesn't matter. During his war days, Pazhassi Raja dined with *kurichyar* walked with them and slept with them.²⁷² At the time of Pazhassi Raja's death, the British servant Karunakara Menon blocked him from moving. Pazhassi shouted at him and said not to approach and defile his person.²⁷³ Critics attribute the incident to highlighting caste disparities possessed by Pazhassi Raja. But the fact was that being a native of Malabar Karunakara Menon was loyal to the British camp. So for Pazhassi, Menon was a disgusting personality and that's why Pazhassi couldn't accept someone like him even touching him.

The concept of Pazhassi Raja using horses was criticised by many historians. The availability of horses for the Malabar rulers was a doubtful question. If they had horses then it would have been mentioned by the member of the British Court of Directors Walter Ever.²⁷⁴ Thus it shows the scarcity of resources. Because horses had to be imported from Arabia. Meanwhile, other Prominent Indian rulers had horses and some literary accounts mentioned that Tippu Sultan provided horses and elephants to Pazhassi Raja apart from weapons.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ Dr. A.S. Jayaprakash, *Oru Cinema Charithrathe Njekki Kollunna Vidham*, Thelicham Masika, November 2009.

²⁷² Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram*, pp. 480-537.

²⁷³ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Samarangal*, pp. 122-125.

²⁷⁴ Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram*, pp. 485-535.

²⁷⁵ Dalit Bandhu, *Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 70-90.

K.K.N. Kurup attributed that some early Kerala historians considered Pazhassi Raja not as a freedom fighter but as someone who once helped the British and decided to fight against them when he lost power over Kottayam.²⁷⁶ One of the letters written by Pazhassi Raja to Kallyat Nambiar itself is the reply to such criticisms. In the letter, Pazhassi Raja expressed his willingness to die for his land and asked Nambiar whether he is ready for that.²⁷⁷ K.K.N. Kurup described Pazhassi Raja as an altruistic personality who put forward the interests of his country and subjects over his interests.²⁷⁸

According to Margret Frenz, Pazhassi Raja was well conscious about ensuring the welfare of the people and the freedom of his country. It was noted that it would be a personal failure for Pazhassi Raja if he declines to uphold the sovereignty of his kingdom.²⁷⁹ Prof. K.M. Bahavuddin pointed out several reasons for remembering Pazhassi Raja. According to him, he was a great patriot who fought against colonial power to safeguard the interests of his country and people.²⁸⁰

After the death of Pazhassi Raja, the Pazhassi family took refuge in the Krishna Mathilakam temple in a small hut. Later it was renovated as a *kovilakam* with financial assistance from William Logan, the Malabar Collector then. Logan was so compassionate to Pazhassi's family.²⁸¹ P.K. Sankara Varma, the ruler of Pazhassi *kovilakam* once visited the tomb of Pazhassi Raja at Mananthavady. He was excited and thrilled at the royal welcome received from Wayanad. It indicated the infinite love and respect rendered by people towards Pazhassi Raja.²⁸²

²⁷⁶ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Keralavarmayude Pythrukam*.

²⁷⁷ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *The Peasant Revolts in Malabar*, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ Margaret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest*, pp. 160-180.

²⁸⁰ Prof. S. Achutha Warriar, *Kerala Samskaram*, pp. 60-130.

²⁸¹ Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram*, pp. 485-535.

²⁸² Krishna Kumar Kannothe, *Sangeethanjanaya Rajavu Pazhassi Thampuran*, pp. 90-92.

Pazhassi Raja could have refrained from protesting the British and can have had a royal life. But he stood for people. Thus Pazhassi episode can be considered an epic heroic opposition to British supremacy in India. K. Rajayyan says that Pazhassi Raja became a rebel on account of the disregard shown by the East India Company for his rights. He rose above communal and regional considerations by organizing the different sections of people in Malabar. What he symbolized is the resolute of people being free and sacrificing their lives in defence of it.²⁸³

4.9 Conclusion

Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja could be regarded as one of the most towering personalities in Kerala history. The complete details about his life, career, and activities are not available. But those available details point out him as a man of outstanding ability and force of character. He was an intrepid freedom fighter and a born leader. He could be addressed as a man of iron with indomitable courage and imbued with lofty idealism.

The concept of Pazhassi Raja's image is a broad frame to be analyzed. Different sources project different images of Pazhassi Raja. However native accounts mostly have driven a heroic image representation of Pazhassi Raja. People conceived a powerful physicality to him and celebrated the spirit of patriotism through him. Folk literature mostly concentrated on envisaging the religious adherence of the Raja apart from his political achievements. There is no Pazhassi Raja without temples and sacred performances. Folk literature highlighted the significance of religious affairs in culminating the political journey of Pazhassi Raja. Though it doesn't exaggerate the physical image or the character personification of Pazhassi Raja but presents a colourful frame of Pazhassi Raja. In *villadichan pattu* and *vadakkan pattu*, Pazhassi Raja was portrayed as committing suicide by swallowing the diamond on his ring. It doesn't give many imaginary

²⁸³ K. Rajayyan, *South Indian Rebellion – The First War of Independence 1800-1801*, Rao and Raghavan, Mysore, 1971, pp. 90-99.

perspectives toward the life and death of Pazhassi Raja. He was presented as a normal ruler who loved and cared for his people and country. Though some criticisms were raised by some scholars and writers against Pazhassi Raja nothing could degrade him.

Chapter 5

Liberation, Literature, and the Lion

5.1 Introduction

There is a tremendous amount of literary works written on the historical figure Pazhassi Raja. It includes novels, dramas, poems, stories, story speeches, etc. Most of them were published in the background of Indian independence. Thus, the contribution and position of Pazhassi Raja in the revival of India's legacy of colonial protest receive a special mention. K.M. Panicker through his novel *Kerala Simham* endorsed the peculiar character of Pazhassi Raja and provided readers with the essence to construct an image of Pazhassi Raja on romanticist lines.¹ Each literary work on Pazhassi Raja gives different dimensions regarding his personality and image. The entire conceptualisation of his personal life and political career was viewed differently and conveyed with literary imagination. Thus it is quite difficult to frame the entire image perception of Pazhassi Raja within a single frame.

Pazhassi revolts were undoubtedly called as a protest form the people under the leadership of Pazhassi Raja against colonial exploitative measures. The revolts render the essence of patriotism and were truly an inspiration for the Indian national movement.² How far the ideology of Indian nationalism worked as the foundation thought for the Pazhassi revolts must be an enquired one. This chapter attempted to study the image construction of Pazhassi Raja through literary works and the concept of nationalism and how far applicable to the Pazhassi rebellion.

¹ Prof. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Keralavum Swathanthra Samaravum*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2016, p. 34.

² *Ibid*

5.2 Pazhassi Raja in Literature

Historical fiction brings readers to another time and place. It could be either real or imagined. A balance of research and creativity is required before writing historical fiction. The genre offers a fiction writer many opportunities to transport a wholly unique story while it often includes real people and events along with certain fantasy characters. The representation of historical figures through literature requires many steps and processes.³ The proper setting of prominent characters through writing is the prime concern. Secondly, the plot of historical fiction must be a moderate combination of real events and fictional events. The writer has got the freedom to invent different characters, place names, and events. But they all must make sense to the period. It should be convincing and convenient for the story line as well as for the readers. Thirdly the characters projected in the literary work can do anything, can speak anything, and can eat anything. But everything should be accurately confined within the reflected era. Fourthly the dialogues of the literary creation must be appropriate to the time. Their slang must be very careful to be noted.⁴

The writer must do proper research before attempting for writing. The writer must explore those mysteries or lesser-known stories about the historical figures or the period before commencing writing. The famous writer and critic Jonathan Dee 1999 regarded this process as “literary grave robbing.”⁵ The creative power of the writer brings limitations to their fiction. The hardest of the fundamental tricks a writer has to perform was on creating a character out of words and making the person more vivid and memorable.⁶ Thus the invigorating

³ <http://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-historical-fiction-definition-of-the-historical-fiction-genre-and-tips-for-writing-your-historical-novel>, accessed on 19th June 2019, 4.00pm.

⁴ <https://celadonbooks.com/what-is-historical-fiction/> accessed on 20th May 2020, 2.00pm.

⁵ *Ibid*

⁶ Lynda G. Adamson, *World Historical Fiction: An Annotated Guide to Novels for Adults and Young Adults*, Phoenix Ariz, China, 1999, pp. 11-18.

spark inside the writer brings colour and conviction to the presentation of historical figures through words.

5.2.1 Pazhassi Raja in Drama

The first book ever published on the life of Pazhassi Raja was the drama called *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* written by Kappana Krishna Menon.⁷ The focus point of the drama was on the chivalry of Pazhassi Raja with specifications upon his character principles and brave warfare. The drama has incorporated many characters together with some notable twists and turns. The drama was enriched with some rigorous components and intensified the whole spirit of warfare. It provides some untouched explorations on the image of Pazhassi Raja as well.

The first scene itself mentioned the wide popular support for Pazhassi Raja which is evident in the conversation between Kurumbranad raja's son-in-law Sankaran Varman and his assistant Appu Pattar.⁸ They continued to denote popular willingness to sacrifice their lives for Pazhassi Raja. Appu Pattar spoke about the intensity of Pazhassi Raja's anger and his efficiency in killing enemies. The very next scene was a settlement meeting conducted by company officials with Sankara Varman and Pazhassi Raja. In a talk, supervisor Green expressed his concern for Pazhassi Raja's stubborn character and the immensity of rage. The entry of Pazhassi Raja in the same scene was outstanding. A heroic entry was given to him which was so exciting and thrilling.⁹ Pazhassi Raja was blocked by the security staff of supervisor Green while entering the room with a sword. Pazhassi Raja was not allowed to get in with weapons and thus he was blocked. Pazhassi Raja angrily kicked him away and the entire spectators seen shocked to see that.

Supervisor Green criticized Pazhassi Raja's reluctance to drop the sword before entering the room. Pazhassi Raja cleared his stand that he would carry the

⁷ Kappana Krishna Menon, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, Mathrubhumi, Kozhikode, 1935.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-13

sword all the time except one day.¹⁰ Thus Pazhassi Raja's determination was quite evident in this response. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Pazhassi Raja's hindrances to tax collection from Kottayam by Kurumbranad Raja. Pazhassi replied bravely indicating his supremacy over Kottayam. He declared that he won't leave Kottayam to illegal hands and would fight with whoever brought problems to the people of Kottayam. Pazhassi Raja described himself as a born warrior and established his decision to stay back for his country until his last breath. At a point, Pazhassi Raja was seen stating his dark complexion to indicate colour disparities don't make any difference in fate.¹¹ Pazhassi Raja explained to supervisor Green that he fears nothing until the sword lays on his waist and told him about his careless attitude toward acquiring death. Pazhassi Raja repeatedly cleared his non-submission to the Company's terms and conditions like a slave. He wants to be the independent ruler of Kottayam. Otherwise, he would go for an open fight with the company. Pazhassi Raja was sure that until his death the Europeans won't be able to control the entire Kottayam land. However, he observes that it's all up to destiny if whatever happens after his death.¹² Thus the entry scene itself transmitted the bravery, stubbornness, power, and determination of Pazhassi Raja. A powerful image could be imbibed by going through the entry scene.

The character Neeli the women's head of *kurichya* was represented in the drama. The character has got more exposure rather than the central character.¹³ Many imaginary characters like Sankara Varman, the son-in-law of Kurumbranad Raja, Appu Pattar as Sankara Varma's assistant, Chanthu Kutty as Kaitheri Makkom's brother, Valiya Kunji Laxmi Kettilamma as the wife of Kurumbranad Raja,

¹⁰ Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram Dheera Samaranggalumayi Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, H & C Books, Trissur, 2019, p. 56.

¹¹ Kappana Krishna Menon, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, p. 16.

¹² Velayudhan Panickassery *Keralathile Rajavamsangal*, DC books, Kottayam, 2012, pp. 67-68.

¹³ Kappana Krishna Menon, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 26-28.

Cheriyā Kunji Laxmi Kettillamma as the daughter of Kurumbranad Raja, Sreedevi Amma as the wife of Kaitheri Ambu, etc. were added in the drama.¹⁴

Unni Mootha was depicted as a cruel robber in opposition to Pazhassi Raja but later changed his character and moved to Pazhassi's side. The relevance of divine revelations and religious spirit was stressed in between as the drama progressed. In a scene where the character of Pazhassi Raja communicated about sacrificing everything for sustaining a *Sri Krishna* idol from emerald. In many circumstances, Pazhassi Raja was seen pouring the blessing of God *Sree Krishna* upon his associates before they leave for any significant mission. Thus, Pazhassi Raja's bigger concern for religious beliefs was significantly highlighted.¹⁵

Pazhassi Raja was seen declaring that as far as a Kshatriya is concerned the prime God is one's own country.¹⁶ He stated that it is condemning to reap gold in a country that is under British control rather than working on the laterite stones under tranquillity and freedom. Pazhassi Raja admitted the submission of great rulers before British authority, but he was determined to fight until death. The character of Pazhassi Raja explicitly his manly reluctance for the Company's worse provisions and suggestions over a reconciliation. There was a scene intentionally added to the drama to show how brilliant was Pazhassi Raja in warfare in defending Kudak raja's settlement in Wayanad.¹⁷ Pazhassi Raja stated his compulsion in running the army right from the front and not from the back followed by dislodging Kudak raja's army.

Another incident that exhibited the chivalry of Pazhassi Raja was his brilliance in releasing Neeli from the camp of Unni Mootha. Pazhassi Raja was seen in the front instructing *kurichyar* ensuring the rescue of Neeli. Pazhassi Raja's

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁶ Kshatriya is a warrior category among Hindus. They stand for fights in order to protect their land.

¹⁷ Benjamin Lewis Rice, *Mysore and Coorg, A Gazetteer*, Vol. III, Mysore Government Press, Bangalore, 1878, p. 3.

preparation for an open war with the British was presented well in the drama.¹⁸ Pazhassi Raja was driven the entire planning for an attack along with adequate concern for each and everything. His diplomatic articulations of warfare tactics and co-ordination portrayed the image of an eminent leader who is well versed in war techniques.

Every significant move from the side of Pazhassi Raja was related to receiving God's blessing. He offered prayers to *Bhaghavati* before and after the course of events.¹⁹ Similarly, his associates also did the same. In a scene, Kaitheri Makkam observed Pazhassi Raja as a tremendous personality who is the agglomeration of chivalry and dignity of the entire brave men of Kerala. She recognized his willpower and denial to submit pride before the enemies. Some interesting scenes were added to the drama to make it more entertaining. Kaitheri Makkam was represented as the niece of Kaitheri Ambu and got married to someone called Gangadharan who belonged to the Parappanatt royal family.²⁰ Pazhassi Raja's wife and children were mentioned in the scene except for their names. Arthur Wellesley and Pazhassi Raja had an amicable relationship. Wellesley was presented visiting Pazhassi Raja at the forest and Pazhassi Raja gifted him a gold ornament as an acknowledgement of love after a cordial talk. Pazhassi was also seen gifting a gold ornament to Kaitheri Makkam on the occasion of her marriage. The main villain of the drama was Sankara Varman who was the son-in-law of Kurumbranad Raja.²¹ Weak and soft-spoken Kurumbranad Raja was projected in the drama who at once has shown his willingness to return the land of Kottayam to Pazhassi Raja.²²

¹⁸ Kappana Krishna Menon, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 76-80.

¹⁹ T. K. Gopala Panikar, *Malabar and its Folk*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 2006.

²⁰ Kappana Krishna Menon, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 140-145.

²¹ <http://www.geni.com/people/Kappana-krishna-menon/5017954106880048075>, accessed on 14th July 2021, 8.00am.

²² *Ibid.*

In one scene Pazhassi Raja exposed his anxiety about the sufferings of his subjects over British exploitation. He never wanted to have a luxurious life when people are suffering for livelihood. In the last scenes the character of Pazhassi Raja is found weak for warfare or to defend himself. He had foreseen his future end but was reluctant to accept failure. Pazhassi Raja was seen committing suicide by swallowing a diamond in his ring.²³ The climax of the drama was a normal one. Neither carried many extraordinary performances nor a powerful confrontation. Pazhassi Raja was seen advising Neeli to safeguard his *Sri Krishna* idol and change into a divine place and finally died with prayers on his lip.²⁴

The drama *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* written by Kappana Krishna Menon is pure fiction. It has nothing to do with history. It cannot be treated as the life story of Pazhassi Raja. Because the entire drama has been building upon imaginary notes. More than half of the characters were simply fictitious, and the story thread and explanation marked a total deviation from the facts.²⁵ The entry scene of Pazhassi Raja was cinematic like the arrival of a superhero in films. His dialogue, body language, and expressions communicated the image of an extraordinary person. Pazhassi Raja's principles in personal and political life were exposed well. He knew very well about the duties of a ruler and was keen to protect his country and people leading right from the front. But in the succeeding scenes, his character was found to be in a weak position. He was efficient in constituting warfare tactics and in killing enemies. But eventually was seen as fragile. Although he was not ready for a submission but exposed his tiredness towards the end of everything.²⁶ Other characters got much more importance in the drama rather than the

²³ Kappana Krishna Menon, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, p. 202.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

²⁵ Malayinkizhu Gopalakrishnan, *Kerala Charithra Sakshyangal*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2011, p. 124.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

protagonist. The total image of Pazhassi Raja was not exaggerated but the rest could not be equated with historical facts.²⁷

The drama called *Pazhassi Raja* written by Pirappankod Murali provides a simple and fine representation of Pazhassi Raja. The drama gives some comforting and light elements to read throughout. It never makes the readers tensed and anxious. The drama attempted to provide a soothing perspective towards the image of Pazhassi Raja.²⁸

The first scene in the drama represented a conversation between the two characters called Ravi and Radha regarding the personality of Pazhassi Raja. Radha was seen criticizing the British perception of constituting a wrong image of Pazhassi Raja. Ravi as the reply highlighted Baber's astonishing comments about Pazhassi Raja.²⁹ The character of Pazhassi Raja appeared before Ravi and Radha in the same scene and described himself as born in *padinjare kovilakam* and trained *kalari* under Pindali Gurukkal. The character of Pazhassi Raja said that he has grown up with music, *kathakali*, and drawing.³⁰ He revealed about finding his soulmate at Mridanga Saileswari temple and regarded her as a pillar of support everywhere.

The second scene also mentioned Pazhassi Raja's love for music and *kathakali* by two landlords during their chat. They also praised his efficiency in martial arts. Meanwhile, Pazhassi Raja appeared in Pazhassi *kovilakam* by riding a horse. He wore a silky cloth from the waist to his knee. His hair was tied well on one side, had minimal ornaments, and a sword on his waist.³¹ In the same scene, Avinjatt Kunjani was seen performing *mohiniyattam* before Pazhassi Raja and his

²⁷ Dr. Raja Warriar, (ed.), *Natakam Anweshanavum Apagradhanavum*, The state Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, p. 49.

²⁸ Pirappankodu Murali, *Pazhassi Raja*, Mathrubhumi books, Kozhikode 2010.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

³⁰ S. K. Vasanthan, *Nammal Nadanna Vazhikal – Kerala Samskara Charithram*, Malayala Padana Gaveshana Kendram, Thrissur, 2011, p. 268.

³¹ Pirappankodu Murali, *Pazhassi Raja*, p.22.

associates.³² He was impressed with her dance and as a reward, he offered her a saree and a diamond chain in a silver plate. That itself was a marriage proposal and with all consent, Pazhassi got married to Avinjatt Kunjani.³³

In the third scene, Pazhassi Raja was seen disguised as a monk along with Kaitheri Ambu in enquiring about the impact of the Mysorean invasion throughout Kottayam. In the fourth scene was seen the young Pazhassi Raja's intention and plan for defending the Mysorean force. He was asked to refrain from his decision to an attack by the elder family members and other *naduvazhis*. But Pazhassi Raja stood by his decision for the sake of his country and people.³⁴ Pazhassi Raja and his entire team came back from the battlefield victorious in the very next scene. Kannavath Nambiar appreciated Pazhassi Raja's intelligence and war tactics in defeating the Mysorean force.

In the next scene, Pazhassi Raja was seen advising Pazhayam Veettil Chandu about the necessity of reviving the agriculture sector of his country. He planned to borrow money to buy seeds and cattle and decided to distribute it among the peasants. Thus he ensured the prosperity and welfare of his country.³⁵ The Kurumbranad Raja in the 6th scene was talking with a *bhardari* over Pazhassi Raja's victory against the Mysoreans.³⁶ He described Pazhassi Raja as a lion. The next couple of scenes were all about Pazhassi Raja's planning for warfare with the company. He was seen as determined to safeguard the freedom of his country and the well-being of its subjects. A new character was introduced in the scene Kaitheri Ammu as the head of Pazhassi Raja's women's wing of the army.³⁷

³² *Mohiniyattam* is a semi-classical dance form from Kerala. The dance was performed by woman the enchantress Mohini in honor of the Hindu God in his incarnation *Vishnu*.

³³ Pirappankodu Murali, *Pazhassi Raja*, p. 22.

³⁴ Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram*, pp. 12-13.

³⁵ Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram*, H and C Publishing House, Thrissur, 2017, p. 566.

³⁶ Bhandari's were native colonial servants who does the job of translators between natives and colonial officials.

³⁷ Pirappankodu Murali, *Pazhassi Raja*, p. 57.

In the thirteenth scene, both Tippu Sultan and Pazhassi Raja were seen engaged in a chat. Tippu recalls his father's comment on Pazhassi Raja as the one and only hero of Malabar. Tippu appreciated Pazhassi Raja's unbeaten determination to defeat his enemies and recognized the purity of his personality. Tippu respected him for his poetic and artistic potential.³⁸ In the fourteenth scene, Pazhassi Raja was seen worshipping *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati*. He rendered heartfelt prayers before commencing the final warfare.³⁹ In the same scene, Kannavath Nambiar appeared under British custody. He appeared to be very serious and declared his willingness to die for a great personality like Pazhassi Raja. In the final scene, Pazhassi Raja was portrayed as shot dead by Babur.⁴⁰

At the gist, the entire drama represented Pazhassi Raja as heroic imagery. It neither exaggerated much nor romanticized events. The drama is more or less relatable to the real life of Pazhassi Raja but some aspects are drawn completely fictitious. The physical image of Pazhassi Raja was explained moderately and much concentration was given to the political life of Pazhassi Raja being a powerful warrior. His literary and artistic abilities and love for its enjoyment were highlighted in many parts of the drama.⁴¹ The role of *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* in fuelling strength to Pazhassi Raja was mentioned here along with his wide popular support and acceptance.⁴²

There are dramas written by Thikkodiyar, Reghu Kallor, Swami Brahmavathan, etc. about Pazhassi Raja.⁴³ All these dramas attempted to glorify the heroic image of Pazhassi Raja with adequate historical essence. The character

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59-62.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁴¹ P.K. Venukuttan Nair, *Malayala Nataka Vedyude Viksana Parinamangal*, Ragachetana, Thrissur, 2011, pp. 15-16.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Swami Brahma Vrathan, *Veera Sree Pazhassi Raja*, P.K. Brothers, Kozhikode, 1956.

representation of Pazhassi Raja was intensified through ups and downs. Thus, a total clubbing of emotions and imagination could be found.

5.2.2 Pazhassi Raja in Novels

Famous nationalist historian Sardar K.M. Panikkar was a famous novelist and poet. He took strong threads from history to propagate the ideology of nationalism. In 1941, K.M. Panikkar published his notable novel, *Kerala Simham*.⁴⁴ He weaved the plot of the novel into the context of anti-colonial protest in north Malabar. The prime content of the novel was about the Pazhassi rebellion from 1793 to 1805. The novel was the representation of a story from colonial history. Although K.M. Panikkar has made it a romanticist work comprising imaginative characters, incidents and components.⁴⁵ The entire life of Pazhassi Raja was not described in this novel. Being a historian and a novelist, K.M. Panikkar has attempted to induce patriotic feelings among Keralites against colonial authority along with promoting the feeling of nationalism.⁴⁶ He could propagate national movement in Kerala, especially in its final phase at a wider level. He advocated the message that people should get ready to follow the footprints of those freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for attaining the liberty of our country.⁴⁷

K.M. Panikkar in his preface to the historical novel *Kerala Simham* expressed the view that Colonel Arthur Wellesley could make a good stead in his campaigns against Napoleon Bonaparte in Spain through gaining experience in the guerrilla warfare against Pazhassi Raja in the wilds of Wayanad.⁴⁸ Both Pazhassi Raja and Napoleon Bonaparte enjoyed the unstinted confidence of their followers. Pazhassi

⁴⁴ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2008.

⁴⁵ Malayinkeezh Gopalakrishnan, *Keralam Charithrathiloode*, The state Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, pp. 214-215.

⁴⁶ Prof. S. Achutha Warriar, *Kerala Samskaram*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, p. 182.

⁴⁷ Grandha Lokam, Vol. 16, January to December 1964, pp. 661-663.

⁴⁸ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Desheeyathayum Samoohya Parishkaranavum Malayala Sahithyathil*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 2014, pp. 57-58.

Raja shared all the privations and hardships with common soldiers on the battlefield and inspired confidence in them. K.M. Panikkar extended his words to appreciate efforts taken by Pazhassi Raja for securing the freedom of his people and declined to bend his knee before the foreigners till his death.⁴⁹ He sacrificed everything to be a great patriot. K.M. Panikkar specified Pazhassi Raja for his remarkable potential for *kathakali* and proficiency as a poet.⁵⁰ Pazhassi Raja's true greatness was exhibited when he chose the wilds of Kerala towards accomplishing his unquenching love for liberty. K.M. Panicker in the preface of his novel praises Pazhassi Raja for his incredible capability in learning strategies. He also appreciated Pazhassi Raja for his honesty and brilliance in warfare. K.M. Panikkar criticised the lack of a proper biography on Pazhassi Raja in Malayalam.⁵¹ He attributed the position of Pazhassi Raja to eminent warriors like Raja Pratap Singh and Chathra Saal Bundela. The background for the novel *Kerala Simham* was the confrontation between Pazhassi Raja and Colonel Arthur Wellesley. The novel is neither a history⁵² nor a biography of Pazhassi Raja. It simply specified a bit about the life journey of Pazhassi Raja.

In the first chapter of the novel, the novelist highlighted the use of the word *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* through the characters.⁵³ It is itself the indication of the power and influence of religion over people then. One of the characters introduced at the beginning of the novel was Kammaran, who was addressed as Kammu Nair. He was presented walking through a dense lane with a sword in hand and a knife on the waist along with sister Unninagga. His physical appearance

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Pro. A. Sreedhara Menon, (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteers, Cannanore*, Published by Dr. C.K. Kareem, State Editor, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1972, p. 162.

⁵¹ Prof. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithra Silppikal*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2008, PP. 199-200.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, p. 13.

symbolized a warrior, Nair.⁵⁴ The character Kammu Nair was portrayed imagining Pazhassi Raja as a brave hero who abandoned everything for the sake of securing the freedom of his country. Both Kammu Nair and his sister Unninanga were on their journey towards a relative's house. They lost their siblings and home in the atrocities of Kurumbranad Raja. The novelist attempted to explain how much people respected and venerated Pazhassi Raja in the first chapter itself.⁵⁵ Kaitheri Ambu was introduced in the same chapter as their protector as well.

The character called Chandroth Nambiar was introduced in the second chapter. He was one of the powerful *naduvazhi* chiefs of the period and was seen in a conversation with Kaitheri Ambu, the close associate of Pazhassi Raja. Chandroth Nambiar established his prejudice that Pazhassi Raja will not surrender before the company even at the edge of failure because Nambiar considered Pazhassi Raja as an unbeaten personality.⁵⁶ He extended by opining that Pazhassi Raja is the only person to protect the dignity of Keralam from colonial penetration of power. He further viewed that the submission of Pazhassi Raja would be a humiliating experience for the entire Keralites. Their conversation throws much light on the immense help received by Pazhassi Raja from the merchants and land lords from north Malabar in the form of money and commodities. The help from Ali Moosa Marakkar from Thalassery was especially highlighted.⁵⁷

K.M. Panicker narrated the mass entry of Pazhassi Raja into the Political sphere of Kerala history in the 3rd chapter. He highlighted that the twenty-one-year-old Pazhassi Raja was the only one from the royal family who stood back in Kottayam to protect the life and security of his people and country. Pazhassi Raja's

⁵⁴ Dr. Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*. Vol. II, (transl.), by C.K. Karim, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁵ Pro. A. Sreedhara Menon, (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteers*, p. 161.

⁵⁶ Sardar K.M. Panikkar, *Kerala Simham*, PP. 18-25.

⁵⁷ Charles Dias, *Kerala Spectrum, Aspects of Cultural Inheritance*, The Indo-Portuguese Cultural Institute, Cochin, 2006, pp. 293-300.

fellow rulers fled to Travancore as refugees, but Pazhassi Raja declared it a cowardly act and showed his braveness in defending the Mysorean power.⁵⁸ The writer later described the events that led to the sprout of enmity between Pazhassi Raja and the East India Company. By then Pazhassi Raja was aged forty-seven and looked perfect. K.M. Panikkar portrayed Pazhassi Raja as the agglomeration of Kerala masculinity. He praised Pazhassi Raja for his amazing body shape, unbroken muscles, superb height, thick and fluffy well-toned neck, tallest shoulders and broader chest, knee length hands and altogether described him as the exact symbol of a powerful warrior.⁵⁹

The novelist continued attributing Pazhassi Raja for his wide forehead, eyes with reflections of masculinity, and lips indicating stubborn attitudes, and determination. In total, he has approved of imbibing a serious outlook on his face. K.M. Panikkar highlighted the unique eyes of Pazhassi Raja which according to him has felt like flames of penetrating potential.⁶⁰ In a nutshell, the physicality of Pazhassi Raja was exclusively appealing which generated an automatic flow of respect and devotion towards him. The novelist mentioned that Pazhassi Raja's capability in warfare, commanding power, chivalry, dignity, and diplomacy was famous outside Kerala as well. He stated that there is no wonder in venerating someone like Pazhassi Raja as a divine personality who had undergone severe difficulties and crises to protect the freedom Goddess of Kerala over twenty-five years. According to K.M. Panikkar apart from this, the significant reason which made people respect Pazhassi Raja immensely was his compassionate feelings for fellow beings.⁶¹ Everyone knows that Pazhassi Raja was willing to secure popular lives and interests without considering his safety. Interestingly robbers never attempted to encroach any of the habitations under the supremacy of Pazhassi

⁵⁸ Dr. Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries*, pp. 150-151.

⁵⁹ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, p. 31.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Inward in the public department, from 31st December 1805- 29th March 1806, p. 3.

Raja. Pazhassi Raja helped everyone who had approached him with their grievances.⁶² Above all, although a king, Pazhassi Raja was happily together with common people and warriors both in war fields and forests throughout their struggles and pains. Pazhassi Raja had dined, walked and slept with them.⁶³ He never kept aloof in a private space while living with tribals, associates and warriors. He never possessed any sort of discrimination over their caste, class, religion, race, or position. Thus, there is no point in wondering about people worshipping Pazhassi Raja as equal to God.

K.M. Panickar through the novel attributed that Pazhassi Raja was the hub of knowledge and proved himself efficient in literary performance.⁶⁴ He was also capable in music and dance and no one else was there to exceed or equate his proficiency except Rama Raja Bahadur Dharma Raja of the position of Kulasekhara Perumal.⁶⁵ The novelist finds Pazhassi Raja as the author of *kathakali* verses titled *Baka Vadham*, *Kala Keya Vadham*, *Kalyana Soughandikam*, etc. during his warfare phase.⁶⁶ The arrival of Colonel Arther Wellesley and the movement of Pazhassi Raja into the forest along with close associates and wife Avinjikkattu Kettilamma was discussed in the same chapter.

Pazhassi Raja's second wife Kaitheri Makkam was introduced in the fourth chapter. The relevance of temples and *kalari* centres in Nair families was mentioned here.⁶⁷ There is a scene indicating the gift of a handgun to Kaitherei Makkam by Pazhassi Raja which was gifted to him by an eminent official in the French army. Makkam was affectionately forced to stay back home by Pazhassi

⁶² E.A. Karunakaran Nair, *Pazhassiyude Priya Bhoomy*, Published by the Author, Kottayam, 1992, p.49

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ A. Sreedhara Menon, (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteers*, p. 162.

⁶⁵ K.P. Raveendran Nair, *Kerala Charithra Nayakar*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2011, p. 68.

⁶⁶ S.K. Vasanthan, *Nammal Nadanna Vazhikal*, p. 268.

⁶⁷ Mukundan Kurup, *Kerala Charithram – Kalariyum Kalaurupangalum*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2013, pp. 47-55.

Raja out of considering her tender age and non-bearance to a hard situations. He was accompanied by his first wife Avinjikkattu Kettilamma who declined his objections to accompanying him to Puralimala forest. Thus, the novelist marks Pazhassi Raja's love, care and concern for his wives.⁶⁸

The fifth chapter gives a glimpse at the settlement of Pazhassi Raja in the forest with a Bhaghavati temple. Much explanation was done on the warfare tactics and brilliance of Pazhassi Raja behind moving into the forest and coining careful plans in attacking the colonial power. It explicitly Pazhassi Raja's sharpness in intelligence and leadership quality. K.M. Panikkar glorified the greatness of Pazhassi Raja and denotes the depth of colonial fear in him in appointing Colonel Arthur Wellesley to cease Pazhassi Raja's victorious journey.⁶⁹ Arthur Wellesley was an eminent military person who killed Tippu Sultan in 1799. His potential was beyond the peak in 1815 as he could defeat Napoleon in the famous battle of Waterloo.⁷⁰ K.M. Panikkar explains Pazhassi Raja's attack on the colonial military camp at Manathana which killed them massively.⁷¹ It was narrated in detail in the eighth chapter to establish how fearless was Pazhassi Raja even at the powerful Wellesley. Captain Stuart fell with serious injuries during Manathana attack and he had been shifted to a safe place with adequate medical treatment ordered by Pazhassi Raja.⁷² This indicates his kindness towards enemies as well. Pazhassi Raja has shown respect to dead bodies by ensuring the proper crematory process. Pazhassi Raja was seen taking a bath followed by visiting and worshipping at a Bhaghavati temple after the Manathana attack. Later he was found sitting peacefully discussing his associates' future actions. K.M. Panikkar interestingly added the performance of *kathakali* when Pazhassi Raja returned to his forest

⁶⁸ Sardar K. M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, p. 33.

⁶⁹ *Kerala Charithram*, Vol. I, prepared and published by the Kerala History Association (REGD), Cochi, 1973, p. 694.

⁷⁰ A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charitha Silppikal*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 1988, p. 164.

⁷¹ Sardar K. M. Panikkar, *Kerala Simham*, pp. 63-65.

⁷² *Ibid.*

settlement from Manathana. Pazhassi Raja urged to watch *kathakali* almost every night for at least two hours. It was quite a routine for Pazhassi Raja to conduct *kathakali* after winning warfare.⁷³ It was performed by one of his military people. Meanwhile, Pazhassi did not forget to enquire about the well-being of Captain Stuart as well. Thus the writer tried to highlight the bravery, and compassionate feelings of Pazhassi Raja along with his adherence to religion and enjoyment of *kathakali*.⁷⁴

In the ninth chapter, the novelist mentions the journey of Kaitheri Makkam to the internal forest to meet her husband. Meanwhile, she was attacked by a cruel robber Kunjali Moitheen and a gang. But she had shadow protection from the *kurichyar* ensured by Pazhassi Raja.⁷⁵ Also, the novelist highlighted the fear and respect rendered by Kunjali Moitheen towards Makkam after knowing that she is Pazhassi Raja's better half. Thus, Pazhassi Raja's care for his wife and the fear of thieves on Pazhassi Raja was explained well in this chapter.

The tenth chapter witnessed the meeting of Pazhassi Raja's two wives. They had an interesting talk about their husband's writing skills for *kathakali*.⁷⁶ Kunjani Kettilamma has shown Makkam a few lines written by Pazhassi Thampuran about her. The novelist tried to envisage the literary skills of Pazhassi Raja along with his 'missing' feelings for Kaitheri Makkam. The saddened face of Pazhassi Raja was also highlighted when he know about the betrayal of his very close associate Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu.⁷⁷ In the very next chapter, the novelist exhibited the transformation of Pazhassi Raja's sadness into anger. The depth of his rage at the treachery from such a person was quite at the peak. In a scene, Pazhassi Raja was found terrifically angry with red eyes and twirling eyebrows at Makkam when she

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷⁴ Prof. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Keralavum Swathanthra Samaravum*, p. 34.

⁷⁵ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, pp. 74-75.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

disclosed Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu's planning to attack Pazhassi Raja with the Company army.⁷⁸ Pazhassi Raja was almost to swear some determination during an emotional outburst but was prohibited by his wife. Makkam was stunned and scared to see the change from a calm and quiet person to an extremely violent one. She knew that it would make a worse impact if Pazhassi Raja go for any decisions at the time of rage. She has brought his emotional condition down and prayed to *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* to console him.⁷⁹ Pazhassi Raja was seen thanking his wife for informing him about Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu's planning. He especially appreciated her for the effort taken to control his anger which according to him was not suitable for someone who believes in God Almighty.

In the thirteenth chapter, Pazhassi Raja was seen writing verses for *Kimmeera Vadham* and enjoying *kathakali* performances at night. Later Pazhassi Raja was found playing chess with Aaralath Nambiar, eating, sleeping and speaking in Kannada with his Karnataka friend Chokkarayan.⁸⁰ But meanwhile, Pazhassi Raja has conducted secret discussions and meetings regarding future activities and war tactics. In a scene, Pazhassi Raja was seen having a midnight visit to his wife Makkam at her Kaitheri home. Pazhayam Veettil Chathu summoned people in a misunderstanding that Makkam has invited someone else in the absence of Pazhassi Raja. But he was shocked to see that it was Pazhassi Raja himself. Once again K.M. Panikkar exhibited the edge of Pazhassi Raja's anger and stated his declaration that he will not defile the purity of the sword with the blood of a betrayal and dislodged him completely from home.⁸¹ This chapter is the exhibition of multiple aspects of the personality of Pazhassi Raja. On the one hand, he was seen enjoying his personal life with food, prayers, *kathakali*, chess and all. On the

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁷⁹ K. M. Panikkar, *An Autobiography*, Oxford, University Press, Madras, 1977, pp. 69-86.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Indu Menon, (ed.), *Keralathile Gothravarga Swathanthrya Samara Senanikalum Ezhuthapedathe Poya Charithrangalum*, Published by the Director, KIRTADS, Chevayur, 2019, p. 115.

other hand, a serious Pazhassi Raja was depicted drawing calculations for attacking and defending the Company army along with punishing the treacherous persons.

The fourteenth chapter gives a notable chat between Colonel Arthur Wellesley and Kannavath Nambiar.⁸² Wellesley was seen recognizing the intelligence, efficiency, and chivalry of Pazhassi Raja. While responding to Wellesley's questions, Nambiar declared that Pazhassi Raja does not have a life sacrificing his country and its freedom. Pazhassi Raja would agree on everything except the freedom of his land. Nambiar's brave response even made Wellesley respect Pazhassi Raja in mind. Thus, the writer could explicitly such venerating feelings from the strong opponent of Pazhassi Raja conveniently.⁸³

The hanging of Kannavath Nambiar was heartbreaking for Pazhassi Raja. A depressed Pazhassi Raja was portrayed in the fifteenth chapter.⁸⁴ Pazhassi Raja was seen engaged in routine activities like eating, writing, praying, playing chess, and watching *kathakali*. But lacked the presence of mind and concentration. He always carried a saddened face. The novelist here attempted to picturise how much Pazhassi Raja loved his associates and people.⁸⁵ Kannavath Nambiar was one of the prominent pillars of strength for him and he could not accept his death early. Thus, the sensitive face of Pazhassi Raja's image is envisaged here. Pazhassi Raja was doing nothing against the company since the death of Kannavath Nambiar. Baber, the Thalassery supervisor then regarded it as the transformation of Leopard into a hill fox.⁸⁶

K.M. Panicker took one entire chapter to explain the support of Pazhassi Raja from Ali Moosa, one of the most prominent merchants from Thalassery. He

⁸² Malayinkizhu Gopalakrishnan, *Kerala Charithra Sakshyangal*, p. 121.

⁸³ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, pp. 111-116.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-120.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ P.K. Gopala Krishnan, (ed.), *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, Part II, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, pp.68-70.

supplied Pazhassi Raja with sufficient essentials apart from money. It symbolized the wide support for Pazhassi Raja from every class of social structure.⁸⁷

In the nineteenth chapter, Pazhassi Raja had a conversation with Chokkarayan, his ally from the Mysore kingdom whom he tells the decision to stay in Pazhassi *kovilakam* for a short span. Chokkarayan found shocked to hear those words. Because the entire *kovilakam* was under the Company's supervision, and it would be a daring act according to him.⁸⁸ Anyway, Pazhassi Raja was determined and planned for a move when he completes forty-one days of *mandala vratham*.⁸⁹ Pazhassi Raja took it as a challenge against Arthur Wellesley before he leaves Kerala to exhibit his unbeaten power and courage. This chapter was used by the writer to highlight the heroic bravery of Pazhassi Raja with specifications on his adherence to religious beliefs.

The twentieth chapter was a dramatic one. Pazhassi Raja was seen disguised as a *kathakali* performer to visit his unwell wife Kaitheri Makkam.⁹⁰ The writer concentrated much on the lovable interaction between the husband and wife. Pazhassi Raja was picturised with immense love, care, affection, kindness, and softness towards his wife and consoled her for quick betterment.⁹¹ Thus, the novelist presented Pazhassi Raja's concern for his wife even during his hectic struggles, tension and pressure. Pazhassi Raja knew well about his entire duties being a ruler as well as a husband. He found time to accomplish each duty conveniently.

In the final chapters, Pazhassi Raja had a royal entry at his *kovilakam* in Kottayam after a victorious fight with the Company army. He arrived in style with

⁸⁷ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, pp. 137-142.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Mandala vratham* denotes the observance of strict austerity by devotees for a period of forty one days to visit Sabarimala Shrine.

⁹⁰ Sardar K.M. Panicker, *Kerala Simham*, pp. 151-153.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

all royal ostentations.⁹² He sat in a weird litter with a single bangle on his hands and an emerald chain on his neck. He was accompanied by landlords, Brahmins, and others on all sides. That was a happy moment for the entire population, and they had minds filled with happiness and excitement. The intelligence and cunning moves operated by Pazhassi Raja were widely recognized and appreciated for his royal victory and journey back to the palace.⁹³ Wellesley during his departure to Calcutta admitted the qualities and efficiency of Pazhassi Raja and believed that rebellion could not end if Pazhassi Raja was alive.⁹⁴

The novel *Kerala Simham* by K.M. Panikkar provides a heroic image of Pazhassi Raja. He was represented by a perfect masculine body with a divine face. His concern for the tranquillity of his country and people was highlighted very well. Pazhassi Raja was portrayed with amazing literary and artistic skills. He was seen writing *kathakali* stories, and verses along with his performances. Pazhassi Raja's keen interest in playing chess was also mentioned.⁹⁵ The frivolous side of Pazhassi Raja was focused when it comes to his personal life. Pazhassi Raja is portrayed for his anger at the betrayal from close ones. At the same time there exhibited the depressed and sensitive face of Pazhassi Raja at the death of his close associates as well. His compassionate feelings for fellow beings were stressed a lot. He was presented both as empathetic and sympathetic.⁹⁶ He treated everyone equally and never had any sort of discrimination. He considered himself as one among others. Thus, the novelist attempted to envisage the image of Pazhassi Raja as an incredible personality. His adherence to religion and rituals was specifically highlighted throughout the novel. In a nutshell, the novel does not have historical validity as it exaggerated many things, especially the character and image

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 171-173.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ P.K. Gopala Krishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, p. 402.

⁹⁵ Pro. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteers*, p. 163.

⁹⁶ K.V. Babu, *Malabar Charithram Mithum Mithyayum Sathyavum*, Kairali Books, Kannur, 2018, p. 162.

representation of Pazhassi Raja.⁹⁷ It could be viewed simply as a fiction work and nothing else is there that helps for historical reconstruction. Pazhassi Raja was adorned with all essentials of a powerful hero and symbolised a perfect ruler.

The readers primarily experience the mental frustrations of two eminent historical figures through the novel *Kerala Simham*. K.M. Panickar operated the storyline of the novel through romanticist ingredients in an entertaining manner.⁹⁸ The guerrilla warfare expert Pazhassi Raja and Colonel Wellesley who defeated Napoleon were presented in the novel with adequate imagination. Pazhassi Raja's eternal love for Makkam and his ability to find the progress of life concerning every minute aspect through enjoying *kathakali* were well explained by the novelist. He also focused on the peaceful character of Pazhassi Raja even having insane complications inside. All such articulations have raised the personality of Pazhassi Raja above from history.⁹⁹ The concept of equating Pazhassi Raja with the lion thus came meaningful. Colonel Wellesley was presented with moderate conversations and required acts.¹⁰⁰ The novelist never attempted to degrade him to enhance the dignity of Pazhassi Raja.¹⁰¹ The pairs like Baber and Chiruthakutty, Kaitheri Ambu Nair and Unninagga, Pazhassi Raja and Makkam were the components of relations added to intensify the romanticist atmosphere.¹⁰²

However, the novelist has given much significance to the love life of Thampuran and his wife rather than other combinations. The first chapter itself paved the seeds of Ambu Nair and Unninanga's love affair. But in the coming chapters, the novelist found moderate dealing with their love story. Anyway, that

⁹⁷ Purathur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram*, p. 565.

⁹⁸ Baburaj Kalambur, *Keralathile Rajavamsanggalum Bharanathikarikalum*, Sura Books, Chennai, 1996, p. 56.

⁹⁹ *Kerala Charithram*, Vol. I, Prepared and published by the Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, 1973, p. 694.

¹⁰⁰ Grandha Lokam, Vol. 16, January to December 1964, pp. 661-663.

¹⁰¹ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Samskara Deseeyathayude Chalachithra Padanggal*, Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2016, p. 126.

¹⁰² *Kerala Charithram*, Vol. I., prepared and published by the Kerala History Association, p. 695.

simply enhanced the purity of their relationship. Wellesley had thought that the rebels were bringing suffering to common people, and he openly declared that he would hang those who lives under the protection of the Company and engaged in activities against the government.¹⁰³ The novelist explains the escape of Unnimoosa from such a situation. However, the incident was unmatching Wellesley's intelligent moves. Thus, it could be a mistake from the novelist while bringing much fantasy into the novel.¹⁰⁴ The characters like Kannavath Nambiar, Thalakkal Chanthu, Edachena Kunkan etc. were mentioned in the novel. Thus, it has made a convincing feeling to the novel. It was criticised that the novelist could have been avoiding those unnecessary fantasy elements from the novel. The characters like Kammu Nair and Unninanga were not required for the plot. The novel could easily progress through the characters of Pazhassi Raja, Kaitheri Makkam, Kaitheri Ambu Nair and Wellesley.¹⁰⁵ However, the storyline and the characters of the novel brought true consciousness upon commemorating the brave life of Pazhassi Raja against the British. Though his failure was celebrated as a victory and the temporary happiness he had before the tragic end was glorified and propagated.¹⁰⁶

It was already stated that K.M. Panikkar has avoided the tendency of attributing negatives to the villain to uphold the positives of the hero. This opinion of K.M. Panikkar could be viewed in two ways. Either the novelist has attempted to establish himself as different from other writers or it could be regarded as the responsibility of the novelist being a historian.¹⁰⁷ It was attributed that through the novel *Kerala Simham*, K.M. Panikkar has attempted to communicate the

¹⁰³ S. Ramachandran Nair, *Freedom Struggle in Colonial Kerala*, Published by the author, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004, p. 28.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁵ T.P. Sankaran Kutty, *A Tragic Decade in Kerala History*, Kerala Historical Society, Thiruvananthapuram, 1977, pp. 12-14.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1986, pp. 214-219.

experiences of a historical period with romanticist historical explanations and objective formal ideologies. Whereas its debatable to attribute authenticity and consistency to the letters of Wellington which lacked or denied for *Kerala Simham*.¹⁰⁸ Because the documents of Wellesley are about power relations. Wellesley's attitude towards Pazhassi Raja was well evident through his letters. Those letters exhibit Wellesley's superiority of power.¹⁰⁹

K.K.N Kurup criticised K.M. Panicker's novel *Kerala Simham* that the character of Pazhassi Raja was presented by Panicker through the Kaleidoscope of romanticism.¹¹⁰ He presented Pazhassi Raja as someone who writes *kathakali* verses and enjoys *kathakali* in the forest. He also depicted Pazhassi Raja in compromise talks with Arthur Wellesley. These things do not have any historical validity according to him.¹¹¹ Historians and popular writers also found eulogizing Pazhassi Raja and his associates contrarily to British accounts.¹¹² Everyone knows that K. M. Panikkar has written novels and dramas. It has been criticised that his novels are not contributing to the world of Malayalam literature. Perhaps it could be denoted as a value in the arena of historical documents.¹¹³ There cannot find any artistic proficiency in the structure of the theme, character representation and the picturisation of class perceptions. However, it perhaps acquires relevance in historical reconstruction.¹¹⁴

The presentation of Pazhassi Raja as a character adherent to *kathakali* was widely criticized and rejected, maybe it was added to beautify and substantiate the responsibility towards the artistic instincts of the character. But it has romanticised

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ K.P. Raveedran Nair, *Kerala Charithra Nayakar*, p. 68.

¹¹⁰ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Raja Kalavum Jeevithavum*, Melinda Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, p.68.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹¹² Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Desheeyathayum Samoohya Parishkaranavum*, pp. 57-58.

¹¹³ Thekkubhagom Mohan, *Pazhassi Thampuram*, Ascens books, Kottayam, 2010, p. 182.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

the character of Pazhassi Raja at the peak point.¹¹⁵ K.M. Panikkar in his novel has added the verses, *jaathi jaathanukambhabhava deshayam... kayyuyarthum deshayam* as written by Pazhassi Raja for his wife Kaitheri Makkam.¹¹⁶ This might have been added by the novelist to show that his hero is accomplished with all qualities. But the critics severely criticized K.M. Panikkar for presenting Pazhassi Raja as a poet during his rebellion days. According to them, there doesn't have proper historical evidence to prove that Pazhassi Raja did any literary contribution.¹¹⁷ Because he was not in a condition to write such lines and lyrics. His entire journey was full of hazards that weakened him both mentally and physically. We would be always thinking about the next encounters, movements training, weapons and all. A literary creation needs peace of mind, patience, and the right atmosphere which Pazhassi Raja lost in his younger days.¹¹⁸

However, the novel *Kerala Simham* explicitly had multiple perspectives of the character of Pazhassi Raja which no other historical figure had gained. The novel indicated a serious period of the Pazhassi episode. It was neither the history of Pazhassi Raja's life nor his biography. A unique incident was presented beautifully throughout the novel.¹¹⁹ The novelist followed an impartial way throughout the novel. An impartial historian could only recognize the personality of Pazhassi Raja.¹²⁰ The mental frustrations and agony of two eminent fighters, Pazhassi Raja and Lord Colonel Wellesley were explained throughout the novel with romanticist elements. Pazhassi Raja's love for Makkam and his affinity towards *Kathakali* and preparations for warfare against enemies, etc., raised his dignity to a

¹¹⁵ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Desheeyathayum Samoohya Parishkaranavum*, p. 57.

¹¹⁶ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, Mathrubumi books, Kozhikode, 2007, p.23.

¹¹⁷ Panditaraja Kaviratnam Attoor, *Kottayam Kathakali*, Geetha Press, Thrissur, 1960, pp. 10-32.

¹¹⁸ Vanidas Elayavuru, *Vadakkan Aithiyamala Randambhagam*, Kerala Follore Academy, Kannur, 2012, pp. 39-41.

¹¹⁹ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Desheeyathayum Samoohya Parishkaranavum*, p. 58.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

higher level.¹²¹ The character of Wellesley was also presented with the required dignity. His style of talking, handling situations, and cunning planning envisaged a good character implication for the person.¹²² Thus rather than a historical recreation, the novel *Kerala Simham* could be regarded as a true entertainer with some ingredients to satisfy the entire readers.

The *Prethikaram* was yet another significant novel written about Pazhassi Raja by Mekkunnath Kunji Krishnan Nair in 1969.¹²³ The novel has introduced a different face of Pazhassi Raja. The novel comprehensively evaluated a careful ruler Pazhassi Raja through his journey of victory and failure. The novel introduces a Pazhassi Raja who convinces the people of Kudak against Tippu and induced them with the relevance of freedom.¹²⁴ The entire novel was the progression of the content related to the early history of Kudak, their fights with Kottayam rulers, the attack of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan on Kudak, the capture of Veer Rajan, the relation between Pazhassi Raja and Palora Annayya, the release of Veera Raja, the story of Kinggad Nadu and Ammathi Nadu, the story of temple construction, the revenge of Pazhassi Raja and some other minor aspects.¹²⁵ Some of the incidents explained in the novel carried historical significance and some others were merely derived from myths. The novel presented the very cunning and stubborn personality of Pazhassi Raja¹²⁶

At the beginning of the novel Pazhassi Raja was seen joining the character of Ponnayya who possess rage toward Kudak Raja. Pazhassi Raja himself was in hostility to the Kudak Kingdom and planned to undertake his revenge through the character of Ponnayya. Pazhassi Raja helped Kudak rulers to conduct the guerrilla

¹²¹ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 1986, p. 219.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 220.

¹²⁴ Indu Menon, (ed.), *Keralathile Gothravarga Swathanthrya Samara Senanikalum*, p. 306.

¹²⁵ Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 221.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

method of warfare against Tippu Sultan.¹²⁷ Thus Pazhassi Raja has got a friendly position in Kudak Palace. Pazhassi Raja was helped by the character Palora Annayya during his Kudak journey. The novel depicts the construction of a Siva temple by Annayya along with the help of Pazhassi Raja and the temple became famous by the name of *pookkalam*.¹²⁸ This scene mentions the close affinity of Pazhassi Raja towards religious affairs. There was an interesting scene explained in the novel. Once Pazhassi Raja was seen bathing in the pond of the newly constructed Siva temple and accidentally escaped a girl from drowning in the pond. That girl was the sister of Annayya and her name was Devamaji. According to Kudak legacy, if a man holds the hands of a woman, then she would be loyal to him. Thus, finally, Pazhassi Raja married Devamaji at the compulsion of Annayya.¹²⁹ Pazhassi Raja helped the ruler of Kudak Veer Rajan to get released from the custody of Tippu Sultan.

During a conversation with Veer Rajan, Pazhassi Raja revealed his real intention behind involving in the political affairs of Kudak. He reminded me that the ancestors of Kudak Raja have killed Veera Varma of Kottayam royal family at the place called Thomar. So as revenge, Pazhassi Raja either wants the head of Veera Rajan or the land where the blood of Veera Varma was shed.¹³⁰ Finally, Pazhassi Raja got the land he demanded. The novel exhibits the depth of Pazhassi Raja's cunningness rather than the edge of revenge.¹³¹

Interestingly in one scene, Veera Rajan conducted warfare at Pazhassi Raja with the help of Muthanna Naicker. Veera Rajan blocked Pazhassi Raja on his way to Ammathi Nadu and demanded his head as revenge for his two ancestral rulers'

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹²⁸ *Pookkalam* means adorning colour sketches on the grounds with flowers.

¹²⁹ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 224.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

¹³¹ Kadavil Sasi, *Malayala Natakam Nadukadathappedunnu*, India Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004, pp. 32-33.

death at the hands of Kottayam rulers in Wayanad.¹³² Finally, they makes some reconciliation moves regarding the authority over the acquired lands and settled everything. But Pazhassi Raja was not ready to calm his revenge upon Veera Rajan. He fought against Veera Rajan while the Kudak ruler was protesting against the domination of the Tippu Sultan. Meanwhile, the novelist explained the love life of Ponnayya with a character called Kunjakka in the nineteenth chapter of the novel.¹³³ Pemmaya was presented as the father of Kunjakka and he requested Ponnayya to marry his daughter. Ponnayya and Pemmaya fought with each other when Ponnayya rejected to Marry Kunjakka. Finally, the defeated Pemmaya committed suicide.¹³⁴

As the novel progress, Veera Rajan understood the trio friendship of Pazhassi Raja with Ponnayya and Annayya and he decided to punish Annayya. Devamaji, the sister of Annayya and the wife of Pazhassi Raja committed suicide due to the sufferings of Annayya caused by her association with Pazhassi Raja. Devamaji was pregnant while committing suicide. Pazhassi Raja decided to rescue Annayya then. Pazhassi killed the entire family members of Veer Rajan who resided in Kurichi for fear of Tippu's attack.¹³⁵ The character Annayyan was then seen embracing a spiritual life. Veera Rajan was seen completely lost at the death of his entire family. He met with a *vaalpayatt* with Ponnayya and the latter was intentionally reluctant to fight back.¹³⁶ Thus Ponnayya dies in the field. Kunjakka also chose spiritual life followed by the death of Ponnayya. Thus, the novel ends up with sadness.

The novel *Prethikaram* was a different kind of treatment and storyline towards the character of Pazhassi Raja. The novelist attempted to reveal some

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 224.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Vaalpayatt* is a thrilling duel fight to cut and thrust with a sword. The dual fighters operate defense moves with a shield as well.

mysterious sides of the personality of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja credibly. The novelist did not concentrate much on the relationship between Wayanad and Kudak. These two places come in the work *Valliyambha Rani* written by Kappana Krishna Menon as a fantasy explanation.¹³⁷ The novelist equates many historical aspects throughout the novel. The world of imagination was adherent to historical reality. The novelist attempted to implement factual interpretations of the main concerns of the novel. Thus, it provided a strong component for historical credibility.¹³⁸ Anyway, the readers might feel bad at the revenge-oriented relationship between Pazhassi Raja and Veera Rajan followed by the massacre of the latter's family members by Pazhassi Raja. Though it blemished the image of Pazhassi Raja as it was the technique used by the novelist to sustain the active presentation of characters in the historical representation.¹³⁹ The cruel and stubborn nature of Pazhassi Raja has been interpreted appropriately with human morality. The pain Pazhassi Raja exhibited at the loss of his unborn child and wife justifies the act of massacre upon the family of Veera Rajan.¹⁴⁰ Thus the readers could pardon the cruel act from the side of Pazhassi Raja. Thus, the novelist portrayed the peculiar character of Pazhassi Raja who is determined and consistent with decisions and shows a personality of complications. This novel was regulated by the over concern to restrict history from considering merely a myth.¹⁴¹

Historical novels usually provide social reality in two spheres. The first category includes identified facts related to socio-political structure, institutions, and laws. The second category comprised minute facts in association with moral

¹³⁷ http://www.geni.com/people/kappana-krishna-Menon/50179541_06880048075, accessed on 2nd July 2020, 7.00pm.

¹³⁸ K.M. Tharakan, *Malayala Novel Sahitya Charithram*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2005, pp.15-16.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁰ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 226.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

consciousness and perceptions. This novel gives priority to the second category.¹⁴² The rights and wrongs in the acts of Pazhassi Raja, Veera Rajan, and Ponnayya must be enquired on moral lines. Ponnayya had a character that evolved from the features of Kudak society. Naturally, his inborn rage and grudge are exhibited through aggressive masculinity. Pazhassi Raja on the other hand constituted political tactics not to love enemies but to destroy them completely.¹⁴³ The unbeaten power of Veera Rajan finally ended up with his revenge on Annayya. The novelist explains certain Kudak traditions and customs on the grounds of the marriage between Pazhassi Raja and Devamaji and the spiritual life of Kunjakka after a broken love life.¹⁴⁴ Altogether the novel provides a different conceptualization of the image of Pazhassi Raja.

The famous novel *Subedar Nair* written by K.P.S. Menon was a sneak peek at the life of a group of people who did not participate in the anti-colonial struggle of Pazhassi Raja.¹⁴⁵ The novelist mentions many historical events in the novel from the Panamaram attack of the Pazhassi rebellion to the martyrdom of Pazhassi Raja. Most of the characters depicted in the novel as Pazhassi Raja's relatives, companions, and British officials were real historical figures. The main incidents of the novel were driven by historical facts. But the notable aspect of the novel is concerned with how the novelist viewed it. The novelist tried to dignify the personality of Pazhassi Raja but he depicted him as a pesky character rather than a rebel.¹⁴⁶ Pazhassi Raja was seen as a ruler who stood for the attainment of his stubborn decisions by breaking the peace of the common people. In this novel, Pazhassi Raja was presented as a weak ruler who does not have the potential for

¹⁴² Dr. George Irumpayam, *Malayala Novel Pathonpatham Nuttandil*, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2012, pp. 22-23.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁴ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 226.

¹⁴⁵ John Rockwell, *Fact in Fiction*, Routledge and K. Paul, U.K. 1974, pp. 168-170.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-190.

political diplomacy and tactics.¹⁴⁷ The novelist wanted to establish that the Pazhassi rebellion was not a popular one. He pointed out that the companions of Pazhassi Raja were anti-Muslims and the ruler itself was not in co-operation with them.¹⁴⁸

The entire novel reflected the attempt of the novelist to make regional confrontations by highlighting the declaration of Pazhassi Rajas' companions in warfare regarding bringing victory without the help of the people from Kottayam. Altogether the novelist has given a cheap value to Pazhassi Rajas' episode of anti-colonial resistance.¹⁴⁹ However, the novelist has given dignity and respect to the character of Pazhassi Raja to a certain extent. The hero of the novel was an imaginative figure called Subedar Nair who accompanies Baber on the journey of Pazhassi Raja's capture. The character was inspired by the person Cheran Subedar in the Baber's camp at the Mavilamthode encounter.¹⁵⁰ Subedar Nair was portrayed as respecting Pazhassi Raja, but he was very honest and determined with official duties as well as being an employee under East India Company.

The character called Anandhan Nair was presented in the novel as a simple tax collector in the land of Kottayam. He declared his unwillingness to join in the Pazhassi rebellion even by sustaining veneration towards him.¹⁵¹ The niece of Anandhan Nair was Ammu and she was the widow of a warrior in the Pazhassi camp. Again, the novelist highlighted that she later married Subedar Nair, the company militant even possessing respect and dignity towards Pazhassi Raja. The novelist also explicitly the range of grudges possessed by Kannan Nair, one of the associates of Pazhassi Raja towards Subedar Nair for marrying his love interest

¹⁴⁷ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 227.

¹⁴⁸ Puruthur Sreedharan, *Kerala Charithram*, p. 502.

¹⁴⁹ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 228.

¹⁵⁰ Surendran Cheekilod, *Kerala Charithravum Samskaravum*, Mathrubhumi books, Kozhikode, 2013, pp. 75-78.

¹⁵¹ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 229.

Ammu. Interestingly in a situation, both Kannan Nair and Subedar Nair were met with mutual settlements as well.¹⁵²

In a nutshell, the novelist has never attempted to portray Pazhassi Raja as a rebel. The novel does not even recognize the Pazhassi rebellion as a massive and popular one contrary to historical perceptions. Thus, it's clear that the novelist followed the perception of P. K. Balakrishnan that Pazhassi Raja was a feudal lord who raised a rebellion against the British when he failed to get those promises of places and power from the British while helping them during the Anglo-Mysorean war.¹⁵³ Thus the novelist was found like explaining the opinion of P.K. Balakrishnan. The novelist mentions that the associates of Pazhassi Raja were not political diplomats. Persons like Emman Nair, and Ambu Nair and all were eminent warriors but they failed to advise Pazhassi Raja by recognizing the power of their enemies. Emman Nair was presented as a person who forces Pazhassi Raja not to accept the help provided by the Muslims.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the novelist firmly rejects the idea that the Pazhassi rebellion was participated by all categories of people.

In one chapter the novelist criticizes the lack of the potential of Pazhassi Raja in asking for Tippu Sultan's help indirectly and his failure to get that. In one scene, the novelist has portrayed a guilty Pazhassi Raja over the conversion of Unni Thampuram into Islam whom Pazhassi had sent to Mysore to meet Tippu Sultan.¹⁵⁵ The novelist portrayed Pazhassi Raja as cursing himself for the transformation of Unnithampuram as Ali. The novelist criticized Pazhassi Raja for undergoing unfruitful warfare by destroying the native's peaceful life. The novelist says that Pazhassi Raja would know about the failure of significant historical figures like Tippu Sultan, Katta Bomman, Dumdhaji, Oomadhura, Maruth Pandyar, and all from

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Raghava Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram*, Part II, Vallathol Vidyapeetham, Edappal, 2012, pp. 104-105.

¹⁵⁴ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 229.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, P. 230.

the colonial attack. But still, he continued an unnecessary protest just to safeguard his pride and dignity until his death.¹⁵⁶

The novelist did not even attempt to glorify the companions of Pazhassi Raja. A character called Iruvanatt Nambiar was presented with proposing to Ammu. Soon Ammu and her mother were abdicated by him when she declined to marry him.¹⁵⁷ Meanwhile, Kannan Nair also approached Ammu with a love interest. Both Iruvanattu Nambiar and Kannan Nair were the associates of Pazhassi Raja and thus the problems they created were confined within a circle and settled nicely by Pazhassi Raja. Ambu Nair was represented as a womanizer by the novelist. The death of Ambu Nair was presented in the novel as caused by betrayal from one of his lady companions.¹⁵⁸

The novelist presented the entire revolts organized by Pazhassi Raja as weak in planning, execution and functioning.¹⁵⁹ The novelist has given the least prominence to the protest organized by Pazhassi Raja in Pazhassi, Kathoor, Kootali, Pookkod, Anjarakandi, etc. Anyway, it is sad to see portraying the failure of the Pazhassi rebellion by focusing on frivolous war tactics. It is something unfair to history.¹⁶⁰

In the thirtieth chapter, the novelist depicted the final hunt of the British under T.H. Baber and Subedar Kunjraman Nair to capture Pazhassi Raja from the Pulppalli forest. Subedar got married to Ammu before this mission and that was a careful approach from the novelist to give a tragic diversion to the novel at his sudden death. The novelist portrayed that Karunakara Menon left the much venerated and respected dead body of Pazhassi Raja to see the fallen Subedar on

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.masterclass.com/articles/tips-for-writing-a-killer-plot-twist>, accessed on 9th April 2018, 3.30pm.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Surendran Cheekilod, *Kerala Charithravum Samskaravum*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁰ Dr. P.B. Salim IAS, N.P. Hafis Muhammed M.C. Vasisht, (ed.), *Malabar Pythrukavum Prathapavum*, Mathrubhumi books, Kozhikode, 2011, pp. 183-186.

the other side.¹⁶¹ The scene was truly a harassing moment not only for history but also for morality. The novelist might have added such a moment to make sure the marriage of Kannan Nair and Ammu in the imaginary story. However, there must be impartial interpretations in the accounts whether it is a historian or a novelist.¹⁶²

T.H. Baber quoted some praising notes on Pazhassi Raja while writing the report to the Governor.¹⁶³ Baber found Pazhassi Raja as a unique and incredible person. If such a dignified character was respectfully harassed by the novelist, then it would not be included in the category of historical criticism.¹⁶⁴ The novelist also portrayed the character of Thalakkal Chanthu negatively. He did not appreciate the efforts taken by Chanthu in supporting Pazhassi Raja through guerrilla warfare. The novelist has shown the silly, cowardly, and scared character of Thalakkal Chanthu while he was captured by the British.¹⁶⁵ Anyway, it is wrong to picturise Pazhassi Raja with baseless criticisms. It is unfair to distort history and misunderstand the facts of writing a novel. This novel was enriched with many historical events rather than those explained in other literary works dealing with Pazhassi Raja.¹⁶⁶ But the novelist rectified one mistake written by K. M. Panikkar in *Kerala Simham* that Pazhassi Raja was a *kathakali* verses writer apart from a performer.¹⁶⁷ The novelist however failed to establish the opinion of one of the characters in the novel Animangalath Nambootiri on praising the peak of masculinity obtained by Pazhassi Raja. The inability of the novelist to look up from the side of Pazhassi Raja was the reason caused such a failure.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶¹ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 231.

¹⁶² <http://www.historicalnovelsociety.org>, accessed on 12th April 2020, 2.00pm.

¹⁶³ Kerala Charithram, Vol. I, Prepared and Published by the Kerala History Association, (REGD); Cochin, 1973, p. 698.

¹⁶⁴ M.S. Nagarajan, *English Literary Criticism and Theory, An Introductory History*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 2006, pp. 12-18.

¹⁶⁵ Dr. K.C. Krishnakumar, *Keralam Jilakaliloode*, Mathrubhumi books, Kozhikode, 2010, p. 184.

¹⁶⁶ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 232.

¹⁶⁷ S.K. Vasanthan, *Nammal Nadanna Vazhikal*, p. 268.

¹⁶⁸ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 232.

Thus, the novelist could be regarded as a complete failure in providing proper recognition and relevance to the entire characters of the novel. The chief character Subedar Nair was presented in the novel as a machine who was seen as emotionless throughout the novel.¹⁶⁹ As far as the historical novel is concerned, it's not important to see the relevance of historical events and the opinion of writers towards it. The significant aspect stressed is establishing the in-depth experiences of the characters. The novelist in this novel presented the entire character according to his vision and likes. It meant that neither the novelist attempted to make a comprehensive study of Pazhassi Raja nor he ever wanted to glorify him.

The famous novel *Mamanka Rathri* written by Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair has provided a new perspective on the personality of Pazhassi Raja.¹⁷⁰ The novelist attributed that Pazhassi Raja never allowed playing over his pride whether it was Tippu or the British. Pazhassi Raja indeed helped the British during the Anglo-Mysorean wars. But he turned against them when they have broken all their promises to Pazhassi Raja and put the people in trouble.¹⁷¹ The novel begins with Pazhassi Raja's protest against the British and ends up with his Martyrdom. Some historical figures like Unnimoosa, Dharmothu Panicker, General Macleod, etc., are seen in this novel. But the novelist depended much upon the implication of imaginary characters regarding the perfection of the novel.¹⁷² The novelist highly stressed the unity between Hindus and Muslims by depicting the cordial relationship between the Memath family and the Dharmothu family.¹⁷³ The novel begins with the death of Saithali from the Memath family and Ambu Nair from the Dharmothu family because of a mutual grudge and enmity. The mutual hostility was found settled by the wife of Dharmoth Panicker. The local natives were

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, P. 233.

¹⁷⁰ Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair, *Mamankarathri*, Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2010.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-50.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 70-75.

¹⁷³ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 234.

arrested by the British force and were rescued by Memath Kunjali and their team. Kunjali at a point was seen as a refugee at the home of Dharmoth Panicker and where he witnessed the British move to capture Dharmoth Panicker when he opposed the British alliance with Samoothiri.¹⁷⁴ The character called Ooyunni was entrusted with the task of capturing Panicker. Ooyunni was the servant of Panicker and he pretended as loyal to the British to rescue his master from their capture.

The novelist explains that the wife of Kurumbranad Raja, Malikutty was the reason behind the close connection between the British and the Raja. Pazhassi Raja knew that his aunty was also dangerous. Even though he recognized her daring acts towards him. But did nothing against her by considering as his aunty.¹⁷⁵ One of the main characters of the novel was the son of Dharmoth Panicker, Vikraman. He was under Kunjali's custody at first and later taken by the Britishers. He was escaped by Pazhassi Raja. Pazhassi for the first time was seen deciding to kill his uncle at the loss of his favourite person Kathiramma whom he called Kayamma in a fight with the British that was caused by the acts of his uncle, Kurumbranad Raja.¹⁷⁶ The betrayal of Pazhayam Veetil Chanthu towards Pazhassi Raja was also depicted in the novel.

The novelist makes many misunderstandings throughout the novel. It might be for making an easygoing plot and to give a dramatic effect to the interpretation. In the climax of the novel, on a *Mamankam* night, both Kurumbranad Raja and the British attack Pazhassi Raja.¹⁷⁷ Pazhassi Raja was presented as 'overthinking' on many occasions in the novel. The novelist never attempted to bring Pazhassi Raja into the main course of the incidents. The character of Pazhassi Raja was presented on one side of the novel.¹⁷⁸ The novel never highlighted the so-called

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷⁵ Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair, *Mamankarathri*, p. 85-95.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Mamankam* was a celebrated duo decennial medieval fair which held on the banks of Bharathappuzha.

¹⁷⁸ Prof. Kalpetta Balakrishnan, *Charithra Novel Malayalathil*, p. 234.

bravery and adventurous activities of Pazhassi Raja. The novel carried unnecessary reiterations.¹⁷⁹ Anyway, the novelist was seen as careless in making serious writing,

Pazhassiyude Pataval was a historical novel written by P. Kunjiraman Nair about the political life of Pazhassi Raja¹⁸⁰. The prime character Pazhassi Raja was introduced in the third chapter. He was described as the emergent power amidst the Mysorean invasion of Malabar. Unlike fellow rulers, Pazhassi Raja stood back in Kottayam to safeguard, the life of his people and country¹⁸¹. The novelist highlighted Pazhassi Raja's incredible faith in *Sri Porkkali Bhagavati*, infinite love for his country, and recognition for strength as prominent factors worked in sustaining an adventurous life for the young Pazhassi then. He had great popular support for his political journey¹⁸².

At a point, Pazhassi Raja opted for a new method of guerrilla warfare like Shivaji and concealed himself in forests and hills, and attacked enemies. He expanded the warfare field into Puralimala, Wayanad hills, and Sahyadri when it was about attacking the East India Company. The novelist wrote about the alliance between Pazhassi Raja and East India Company in dislodging Tippu Sultan from Malabar¹⁸³. But Pazhassi Raja was strict with protecting the legacy, customs, and sovereignty of the Kottayam royal family. Pazhassi was promised to get back into position by Company after the failure of Tippu Sultan. But they broke their promise to Pazhassi Raja and enmity arose between them.¹⁸⁴

The novelist highlighted the brave Pazhassi Raja's anger at the Company's change of attitude and decided to dislodge them from his land as well. Pazhassi

¹⁷⁹ Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair, *Mamankarathi*, P. 96.

¹⁸⁰ P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pazhassiyude Pataval*, Kerala book depot, Kozhikode, 1955.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-30.

¹⁸² K.P. Raveendran Nair, Kerala Charithra Nayakar p. 67.

¹⁸³ Raghava Varrier and Rajan Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram*, Part II, p. 104.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

could not accept being treated as a slave in his land by company officials. He firmly respected one's pride and confronted them for the sake of self-esteem¹⁸⁵. Company officials knew very well about the potential of Pazhassi Raja. He was treated as a powerful opponent who neither can't be calmed down by warning nor brought on the safer side with gifts and promises.

The novelist highlighted the depth of popular love for Pazahssi Raja and his wide support from every category of people¹⁸⁶. Pazhassi Raja was loved for his qualities of compassion, honesty and affinity towards the country. Company officials stressed the incredible faith and respect of people for Pazhassi Raja irrespective of their caste, class, religion, and position. East India Company has thought about coining crooked ways to suppress Pazhassi Raja after recognizing his real strength and power. They knew the necessity of Pazhassi Raja's annihilation at the earliest to expand and secure their domination throughout India apart from Kottayam. Thus, the novelist introduced the arrival of the powerful military official Colonel Arthur Wellesley by the company with all power to destroy Pazhassi Raja completely¹⁸⁷. Meanwhile, Pazhassi was seen settled in a secret center at Puralimala deciding upon future actions. Wellesley on the other hand engaged in studying things and operating moves to tarnish his powerful enemy.

In the fourth chapter, the novelist explains a conversation between Pazhassi Raja and Thalakkal Chanthu. Pazhasi Raja established his stand upon operating a necessary warfare in a helpless situation. He does not prefer unnecessary warfare destroying popular lives and peace¹⁸⁸. Pazhassi could not accept the tarnishment of his country's freedom and forced people into slavery. It indicated the image of a lovable and caring Pazhassi Raja who valued the pride, dignity, and happiness of his

¹⁸⁵ Malayinkeezh Gopalakrishnan, *Keralam Loka Charithrathiloode*, p. 212.

¹⁸⁶ Edamaruk Joseph, *Kerala Samskaram*, Vidyarthi Mithram Book Depot, Kottayam, 1971, pp. 274-275.

¹⁸⁷ P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, pp. 26-30.

¹⁸⁸ P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pazhassiyude Pataval*, pp. 32-40.

fellow beings and country.¹⁸⁹ In the same scene, Pazhassi Raja delivered a notable reply to the comments of Edachena Kunkan. Pazhassi cleared that whoever struggling and joining together in the warfare is not for the liberty of their mother country. The interests of the ruler do not have any relevance and should continue with the mission even he departs. Thus, those words of Pazhassi Raja conveyed how much he loved and was obsessed with acquiring the freedom of his country.¹⁹⁰ An image of a true countryman rather than a ruler himself was portrayed here.

In the sixth chapter, Pazhassi Raja was seen enjoying *kathakali*. He wrote poems and *kathakali* verses along with his wife Kunjani Kettilamma¹⁹¹. In the same scene, he was found depressed and restless during the discussion about the betrayal of Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu. However, Pazhassi Raja was unwilling to kill him because he considered Chanthu as one of his subjects and declared enmity only against the East India Company. Pazhassi Raja consoled his fellow mates as they firmly believed that one-day Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu would recognize his mistakes and regret his deeds.¹⁹² Finally, Pazhassi Raja delivered a few hymns to *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* and rendered positivity to everyone.

In the same chapter, Pazhassi Raja was projected as out bursting while reading a warning letter from Colonel Wellesley at the remark of spoiling Pazhassi Raja's life and dignity. Pazhassi Raja in rage split up the letter and said that his sword would give a reply to this. Thus, the chapter picturizes Pazhassi Raja for his literary skills and love for *kathakali*¹⁹³. The broken heart of Pazhassi Raja at the treacherous activities of Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu has been conveyed here along

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Raju Kattupunam, *Kuttikalude Pazhassi Raja*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 2017, pp. 11-54.

¹⁹¹ Pro. A. Sreedhara Menon, (ed.), *Kerala District Gazetteers*, p.162.

¹⁹² P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pazhassiyude Pataval*, pp. 54-64

¹⁹³ S.K. Vasanthan, *Nammal Nadanna Vazhikal*, p. 268.

with his in-depth credibility and fondness towards fellow mates. The same chapter also marked Pazhassi's close affinity with *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* as well.¹⁹⁴

In the seventh chapter, Pazhayam Veetil Chanthu was seen pushing Colonel Wellesley to go to war with Pazhassi Raja. Chanthu knew very well that whatever ideas Wellesley operates, nothing stops people from supporting Pazhassi Raja. Meanwhile, Wellesley was not ready for an abrupt fight without fixing proper ways to defeat Pazhassi Raja by considering his immense popular support and understanding his previous warfare history with the Company.¹⁹⁵ So, Pazhassi Raja was a special enemy to him compared to other opponents of India.

The novelist highlighted the speciality of guerrilla warfare undertaken by Pazhassi Raja throughout the novel. A strange way of attacking enemies is by concealing themselves over caves, stones, thorns, cracks, and trees along with proficient *kurichya* with bows and arrows. So Wellesley was quite prepared for a planned attack and engaged in steps inculcating a victorious move.¹⁹⁶ Thus, the seventh chapter highlighted the image of a brilliant warrior Pazhassi Raja with infinite loyalty and faith in his subjects. The novelist pointed out the awkwardness of East India Company which is rich in ammunition in fighting with a person like Pazhassi Raja who is comparatively weak in equipment. Thus, an image of a capable and efficient Pazhassi Raja was portrayed stressing colonial weaknesses to capture him.¹⁹⁷

The eighth chapter explicitly Pazhassi Raja's declaration for an open war with the East India Company. He was seen ensuring pre-war preparations two days back since the official war declaration. What made Pazhassi for the quick commencement of war was his recognition of popular support and in-depth love

¹⁹⁴ P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pazhassiyude Pataval*, pp. 55-64

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-79.

¹⁹⁶ R. Vinod Kumar, *Keralathile Smarakangal*, DC books, Kottayam, 2012, p. 83.

¹⁹⁷ P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pazhassiyude Pataval*, pp. 75-79.

and respect for liberating his country. He submitted everything before *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* and has given instructions to his army heads.¹⁹⁸ The novelist explains certain qualities of Pazhassi Raja in this chapter. People considered him an astonishing personality. His close associates also admired him for his tremendous individuality. Pazhassi Raja never castigated his fellow mates and people. He never acted like a king or exhibited any peculiarities attributed to himself.

Pazhassi Raja never lived a royal life in the forest. He slept in the soil and walked on stones and thorns. Pazhassi could travel in litter and enjoys everything being a ruler. But he declined everything. He treated himself as one among others. He did everything together with his companions without possessing any kind of discrimination.¹⁹⁹ He treated all equally and everyone has got the right to remark their opinions before him. Pazhassi Raja valued all their comments and took relevant decisions. Pazhassi Raja was also seen appearing in disguise during warfare tactics. He firmly believed in diplomatic moves and self-confidence and was a proud king who was willing to lead his entire army right from the front.²⁰⁰ Thus, the eighth chapter purely indicates Pazhassi Raja as an outstanding personality on all grounds. The entire perception of Pazhassi Raja conveyed the image of a perfect person as well as a perfect ruler.

The final chapter witnessed the victorious Pazhassi Raja in his warfare at Kannavath against the East India Company. He was depicted as fully satisfied and peaceful. The flow of people to see Pazhassi Raja from different corners of the country was highlighted by the novelist. Pazhassi Raja met everyone including the children. He was overwhelmed by their loving regards. He even forgets to eat and drink. Meanwhile, Pazhassi Raja advised his army heads to ensure proper care for

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-92.

¹⁹⁹ Dr. Kumaran Vayaleri, *Kurichyarude Jeevithavum Samskaravum*, Pusthaka Bhavan, Payyannur, 2010, p. 21.

²⁰⁰ P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pazhassiyude Pataval*, pp. 85-92

the war captives²⁰¹. He instructed them to take care of the wounded without considering them as enemies.

At the end of the novel Pazhassi Raja was seen releasing Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu without giving any sort of punishment. He declared that Chanthu would get adequate punishment from *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati* and never wanted to defile his divine sword with the dirty blood of Chanthu.²⁰² Thalakkal Chanthu appeared before Pazhassi Raja and expressed his emotional outburst to kill Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu. But he was consoled by Pazhassi Raja and left everything for God's fate.²⁰³ Thus, the novel ended up with a positive thought.

In a nutshell, the novel *Pazhassiyude Pataval* by P. Kunjiraman Nair could be regarded as a fiction but justifies historical facts to a certain extent. Only a bit of Pazhassi Raja's political life was exhibited here. The novelist never added unnecessary exaggerations over the image of Pazhassi Raja. He was presented in a moderate way and conveyed all his positive qualities. His efficiency in warfare was also stressed on the other hand. Thus, established the reasons behind the wide popular support and love for Pazhassi Raja.

5.2.3 Pazhassi Raja in Poems

Those poems written by many leading poets in Malayalam in the first half of the twentieth century tried to promote nationalism which eventually affected social change in their contemporary society. The new trend of poetry had become a prominent force that subscribed to the growth of nationalism apart from introspection and self-criticism of the society.²⁰⁴ This situation has accelerated for strengthening of national sentiments and thus posed an action plan towards

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-96.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 97-99.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-104.

²⁰⁴ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Nationalism and Social Change – The Role of Poetry*, Sage Journals, 1st July 1999.

changing the entire social system. A good number of poets record the mellifluous melody and rich sonorous quality of poetry. Those Lyrics were widely read and evaluated by the new literature class which attempted to convert it into the religion of nationalism. In such a way nationalism has widened the scope of poetry and it generally inaugurated both romanticist and progressive ideas leading to realism.²⁰⁵ Poets like Asan, Ulloor, Vallathol, G. Sankarakurup, P. Kunjiraman Nair, Chaggampuzha Krishna Pillai, Vyloppilli Sreedhara Menon, N.V. Krishna Warrior, Balamani Amma, Pala Narayanan Nair, Akkitham and many others came up with their enlightened compositions celebrating the spirit of liberty.²⁰⁶

The poems of P. Kunjiraman Nair explicitly the beauty of romanticism and nostalgia. The poet used his poems to protest nature killings and the spread of pollution. P. Kunjiraman Nair since his younger days began writing inspiring songs inducing patriotic feelings among people. His poem *Pulliman* is a reflection of patriotism which was written based on the first letters written by Pazhassi Raja to Colonel Wellesley.²⁰⁷ The poem was confined as the final warning from the poet to Colonel Wellesley to restrict his attack on Pazhassi Raja and his people.²⁰⁸ However, the warning doesn't carry the poison of a grudge. It was conveyed through lovable words. Thus the revolution put forward by P. Kunjiraman Nair could be regarded with a creative face. At the same time, it highlighted the destruction of enemies as well.

P. Kunjiraman Nair Portrayed Pazhassi Raja as a person who had the blessings of *Sri Porkkali Bhaghavati*.²⁰⁹ The poet presented Pazhassi Raja as a brilliant warrior who could easily handle strong war equipment. He has got the

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ [http://www. Academia.edu/35987968/imagining – Freedom -Malayalam-poetry-during-the independence-movement](http://www.Academia.edu/35987968/imagining-Freedom-Malayalam-poetry-during-the-independence-movement), accessed on 24th September 2018, 4.00 pm.

²⁰⁷ P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pee Kavithakal*, DC Books, Kottayam, 2005, pp. 1157-1161.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Melath Chandrasekharan, *Kunjiraman Nairkkavitha*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 1993, pp. 124-125.

face of a powerful warrior with sparkling eyes like stars. He has got a moon-shaped *thilakam* on his forehead and a chain with *rudraksha* and golden beads.²¹⁰ There was a glittering diamond at his finger and embraced a divine face. The poet attributed the terrific version of *Kaali* to the freedom Goddess of Pazhassi Raja and pointed out the performance of ritualistic sacrifices before the Goddess as the obligation of time.²¹¹ The poem was strengthened by concepts like creation and annihilation which equally led to generating the consciousness of revolution. The poet kept praising Pazhassi Raja through *Puralimalayile Poomaram and Pulpallykattile Ponman* and uphold the message of national consciousness during the time of the national movement.²¹² The poet regarded Pazhassi Raja as a *Pulliman* through his poem *Pulliman*.²¹³ The poet described the roaring power of Pazhassi Raja even in the forest. Pazhassi Raja was depicted as enjoying *kathakali* without any tension and pressure in the forest. P. Kunjiraman Nair exaggerated the power of Pazhassi Raja and asked Wellesley to return from capturing Pazhassi Raja and remembers him to the point that it's impossible to get Pazhassi Raja as well.²¹⁴

Thus in a romanticist way of presentation, P. Kunjiraman Nair could glorify the heroic episode of Pazhassi Raja as a source to bring inspiration for people on patriotic lines. The poet never attempted to exaggerate the image perception of Pazhassi Raja but has brought some colourful lyrics stimulating a fine presentation of Pazhassi Raja.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ *Thilakam* Means a bright red pigment marked on forehead. *Rudraksha* is a dried stone fruit which used as prayer beads by Hindus. It was either fixed on chains or kept as it is.

²¹¹ Melath Chandrasekharan, *Kunjiraman Nairkavitha*, p. 126.

²¹² Raju Kattupunam, *Kuttikalude Pazhassi Raja*, pp. 30-32.

²¹³ Santhosh Manichery, *Vijayicha Purushan Parajithnaya Kamukan*, Current Books, Kottayam, 2015.

²¹⁴ P. Kunjiraman Nair, *Pee Kavithakal*, pp. 1116-1161.

²¹⁵ Dr. K.M. George, (ed.), *Adhunika Malayala Sahitya Charithram, Prasthanangaliloote*, DC Books, Kottayam, 1998, pp. 49-52.

G. Kumaran Nair wrote a poem called *Amar Jyothi* about Pazhassi Raja.²¹⁶ The poet described the entire history of Pazhassi Raja in a single poem. Pazhassi Raja was depicted as a popular hero who rendered rigorous opposition against colonial domination over Kottayam. The poet never glorifies the image of Pazhassi Raja. He presented himself as a simple person who sacrificed his life for safeguarding his country and people. The poet portrayed a Pazhassi Raja who didn't wear ornaments and royal attire.²¹⁷

There were many small poems written about Pazhassi Raja describing him as a powerful warrior who attempted to dislodge colonial power from his land. Thus, the poems in total projected a fine personality of Pazhassi Raja with heroic deeds, pride, and dignity.

5.3 Pazhassi Raja and Nationalism

The idea of nationalism was developed in India as a strong response to British rule. Many native rulers and people resented the arrival of the British in India as rulers before the 1857 revolt.²¹⁸ They all wanted to oppose and fight against the British presence in India. But at the initial stage local powers fought against the British individually, they did not come together or formed as one people. Different groups had different grievances against the British and thus they fought for the redressal of their specific grievances. The realization that all Indian people had a common nationality and that was in their collective interests to resist British rule.²¹⁹ This is what can be regarded as the essence of Indian nationalism. Thus, a combined opposition to British rule and the very strong desire to achieve national unity could lay at the heart of Indian nationalism.²²⁰ The objective

²¹⁶ A group of Authors, *Ranjwala*, Pazhassi Raja Smrithi Mandiram, Mattannur, 2015, p. 99.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, p. 401.

²¹⁹ K.M. Panikkar, *Indian Nationalism, Its origin, History and Ideals*, Life span publishers, New Delhi, 2020, pp. 7-10.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 11-60.

conditions which resulted in the development of nationalism were truly fulfilled by the arrival of colonial rulers and their purpose of penetration into Indian society as well as the economy. However, such conditions did not create awareness among people about nationalism. The consciousness of the idea of nationalism took a very long time to get mature and it gradually made its presence in the fields of culture, economy, and politics.²²¹

It remains a debatable question when considering the Pazhassi Rebellion in the conceptual framework of Indian nationalism for certain reasons. First of all, there are no accurate pieces of evidence to show that Pazhassi Raja had any idea of nationalism. Nationalism is a new political ideology that evolved in India post-Pazhassi Raja's period.²²² Secondly, Pazhassi Rebellion was backwards in political and ideological terms. The rebellion aimed at restoring the old orders like other anti-colonial revolts in contemporary India. Thirdly on certain occasions, Pazhassi Raja was ready for political settlement and peace with the British by sacrificing his motive to protect sovereignty.²²³ It was revealed by some of his letters. Although there had a common ideological foundation of anti-colonialism in both Pazhassi rebellion and India's national movement. So, the anti-British approach of Pazhassi rebellion is not sufficient to suggest that it can be described as nationalistic. But for sure it generated patriotic feelings at the bottom level and stood as a source of inspiration for all future liberation struggles.²²⁴ Pazhassi rebellion possessed a secular character as he arranged all his campaigns cutting across religion, caste, and cultural barriers of the region.

A host of historians glorify Pazhassi Raja as a patriot and addressed him as the very first 'freedom fighter'. They denoted the rebellions of India under the

²²¹ Pravin Kumar Sha, (ed.), *Nationalism in India*, Batham Enterprises, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 20-60.

²²² Dr. K.K.N. Ganesh, (ed.), *Exercises in Modern Kerala History*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 2013, P. 63.

²²³ Dalit Bhandhu, *Pazhassi Raja Kerala Mirjafar*, Hobby Publishers, Vykkam, 2001.

²²⁴ P.K. Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, P. 404.

leadership of Pazhassi Raja as 'national revolts' against the British government.²²⁵ They highlighted the point that Pazhassi Raja sacrificed everything for the freedom of his people and being a patriot, he rejected to bend his knee before the foreigners. He chose the wilds of Kerala out of his unquenching love for liberty. Prof. A. Sreedara Menon opines that Pazhassi Raja requires having a special place among the eminent freedom fighters of India for his heroic deeds for the cause of freedom.²²⁶ Prof. Rajayyan traced the roots of nationalism in the Pazhassi rebellion considering other South Indian revolts in his attempt to characterize the South Indian rebellion as the first war of independence.²²⁷ K.K.N. Kurup, who has done extensive studies on Pazhassi Raja focused on projecting him as a "Hindu peasant nationalist."²²⁸ His understanding was mostly influenced by the general perception that Pazhassi Raja's struggles expressed a nationalist consciousness. Pazhassi rebellion could be regarded as a confined uprising that further resulted in the agglomeration of political institutions and become part of a national movement.²²⁹

There arises some attempts to establish Pazhassi Raja not only as the first nationalist but also as the protector of Hindu *dharma*.²³⁰ Even some propaganda argues in favour of the support base of the Raja. But it has been purely on religious terms. This approach cannot be considered an aberration but is a highly dispensable part of an agenda of communication.²³¹ Both a section of the so-called secular historians and the adherents of cultural nationalism equally compete over depicting Pazhassi Raja as the first nationalist of Kerala. Those who raised such an

²²⁵ Marget Frenz, *From contact to conquest*, Transition to British Rule in Malabar 1790-1805, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, p. 163.

²²⁶ Prof. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithra Silppikal*. pp. 199-200.

²²⁷ K. Rajayyan, *South Indian rebellion: The First war of Independence, 1800-1801*, Rao and Raghavan, Mysore, 1971, pp. 90-99.

²²⁸ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Malabarile British Adhinivesham*, Mathrubhumi books, Kozhikode, 2019, pp. 67-70.

²²⁹ K. Damodharan and C. Narayana Pillai, *Keralathile Swathanthra Samaram*, The Director of Public Relations, Thiruvananthapuram, 1957, P.4.

²³⁰ Indu Menon, (ed.), *Keralathile Gothravarga Swathanthya Samara Senanikalum*, p. 251.

²³¹ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Samskara Deseeyathayude Chalachithra Padangal*, p. 194.

argument usually forget that Pazhassi Raja was once a strong ally to the British during their infant days in Malabar.²³² Pazhassi Raja had sent them arms and men during their battle against Tippu Sultan. As per evidence, he became a rebel when the British neglected to concede to him the political sovereignty that they had promised to him to transfer after their victory over Tippu Sultan.²³³ Pazhassi Raja lived in a period where modern concepts of nation-state and nationalism were absent. While historically moving, the traits of nationalism cannot trace back from the end of the eighteenth century until the latter half of the nineteenth century.²³⁴ Kathleen Gough found the insurrections raised by Pazhassi Raja as "restorative revolts."²³⁵ However, Pazhassi Raja's struggles would stand against the argument of new Cambridge historians that the Indians were giving consent to the British regime across the country without raising any signs of protest.²³⁶

It was regarded by some scholars that Mahatma Gandhi's idea of the village has derived from Pazhassi Raja's concern about the prosperity of village settlement and agriculture. Pazhassi Raja rigorously protested the exploitative tax system inaugurated by the British. Similarly, Gandhiji initiated his protesting moves through the non-cooperative movement and Satyagrahas. The former envisaged his actions through violence mostly. The latter opted for non-violence measures of protests.²³⁷ Some scholars find that both Tippu Sultan and Pazhassi Raja were the two prominent anti-colonial fighters of South India. Tippu Sultan possessed power, an army, and wealth. Whereas Pazhassi Raja was merely a ruler and had nothing.

²³² Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, (ed.), *Kerala Samskara Patangal*, Vol. 2, Current books, Kottayam, 2013, pp. 1809-1812.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Prof. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Charithra Silppikal*, p. 201.

²³⁵ <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25605731>, accessed on 26th October 2018, 10.30 am.

²³⁶ Barbara N. Ramusak, *The Indian Princess and their states*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. 2005.

²³⁷ Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *Nationalist Movement in India, A Reader*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 250-278.

He never possessed a trained army, wealth or any such resources to bring a stable resistance. Even though he continued to fight against the British.²³⁸

There constitutes a proper distinction between the freedom fighters of the twentieth century who fought for India's freedom and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rebels. The freedom fighters in the national movement fought against the established colonial power that had already penetrated a strong influence over them. But the Pazhassi rebels tried to prevent the British power from successfully gaining control over their country. It could be identified that the mode of the structure of the popular rebellion and movements in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries operated different categories of action driven by some laid principles.²³⁹ But together the prime concern of all groups is to resist colonialism. Thus, it is to be noted that the Pazhassi revolt was not a nationalist movement but the entire spirit of the revolt was anti-British in the context of its nature and objectives. It is justifiable to comment that the Pazhassi rebellion had both popular and secular characteristics and an anti-colonial approach exhibited as a prelude to Indian nationalism.²⁴⁰ It could be regarded that the Pazhassi rebellion acted as an active and stronger political force compared to the twentieth-century nationalist movement in Malabar. It came like a belated occurrence of sporadic events regarding the organizational coherence and intensity of resistance to colonialism.²⁴¹

5.4 Rebellions in India Parallel to Pazhassi Revolts

The English East India Company serially annexed or extended direct and indirect rule across India from 1757 to 1857. The battle of Plassey and Buxar were

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Barbara N. Ramusak, *The Indian Princess*, pp. 169-225.

²⁴⁰ Indu Menon, (ed.), *Keralathile Gothravarga Swathanthya Samara Senanikalum*, p. 251.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

the turning points in the history of British India.²⁴² It paved the way for the Britishers to establish their leadership over the administration in Bengal and eventually all over India. The major threat to British domination was raised by Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan in South India. It finally resulted in the Anglo-Mysorean War from 1767-1799.²⁴³ Meanwhile, Anglo-Maratha wars broke out in 1775. It came to an end with the second Anglo-Maratha War in 1805.²⁴⁴ It shows that East India Company was increasingly involved in Indian Politics, economics, and society from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. There were numerous local uprisings and popular protests were organized in different parts of India during the time of the Pazhassi rebellion.²⁴⁵ The culmination of such agitations accelerated the growth of nationalism and national movement in India.

The beneficial aspects of British rule on India and its impact have long been a common area of study in historical literature and Indian writers followed the beaten track. However, the British exploitation of India has been recognized but it simply remained as a footnote in standard histories. Thus, it indicates that Indian criticism of British rule in India is either too general or technically too economic.²⁴⁶ Even in the early days, British power in this country had to deal almost ceaselessly with resistance from many people from different parts and was not indeed unknown. However, this aspect of Indian history has not yet been dealt with adequately factually or concretely.

Those uprisings against the British have often enough been dismissed on grounds of the outcome of machinations by several dispossessed malcontented

²⁴² Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, *From Plassey to Partition and After A History of Modern India*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 2014.

²⁴³ P.K. Balakrishnan, *Tippu Sulthan*, Sahitya Parishath, Ernakulam, 1959, pp. 222-237.

²⁴⁴ Randof G.S. Cooper, *The Anglo-Maratha Campaigns and the Contest for India*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. 2007.

²⁴⁵ Sashi Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India – 1765-1857*, the world press limited Calcutta, 1955.

²⁴⁶ David Gilmour, *The British in India, Three centuries of Ambition and Experience*, Penguin London, 2019, pp. 220-350

individuals. But the question arose that where the following came from and why did people respond to the intrigues of the interested parties. It is recognized as a superficial view of history to remain happy by attributing all such disturbances to agitations.²⁴⁷ Thus it seems mature to hold that the British would meet with the same type of resistance which was gradually encountered by other imperial powers in other so-called 'colonial' countries.²⁴⁸

British rule was characterized by commercial adventuring on the part of a relatively small number of British expatriates in the early period. But their rule passed slowly into the second phase of development by the opening of the nineteenth century. After the suppression of the mutiny of 1857, Britishers began to disclose their expansionist tendencies which eventually ended up in the conquest of the whole subcontinent.²⁴⁹ Every conquest and rule of a foreign power wounds the spirit of the conquered country. It is not about the arbitrary power of a national sovereign. But in fact, subjugation by a foreign power would destroy the essence of national character and extinguishes the national spirit. In the case of India, the natural reaction of highly seasoned and mature people combined with the sense of subjection and humiliation against British rule.²⁵⁰ However, it doesn't mean that British rule in India was oppressive to the extreme. In the preceding period as well, Indian discontent was equally important.

5.4.1 Rebellions in North India

The *zamindars* who lived in the western part of Midnapur considered and made themselves independent. Lieutenant General Ferguson found their independence unsuitable and send an expedition towards the place.²⁵¹ Ferguson

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Dennis Kincaid, *British Social Life in India*, Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 2015, pp.344-380.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 383-390.

²⁵⁰ David Gilmour, *The British in India*, pp. 352-400.

²⁵¹ Syed Rasheed Ali, *Midnapore District: Company, Raiyats, and Zamindars, (1760-1885)*, K. P. Bagchi and Company, Kolkata, 2008, pp. 26-124.

reduced them to subjection. Ferguson could easily overcome the resistance from many *zamindars*. But the Raja of Dhalbhum or the *zamindar* of Ghatsila proved to be the very most obstinate as well as refractory one. He was determined not to admit himself a slave in his own country. He took all preparations to resist British infiltration by blocking their journey by felling trees and barricading all the narrow passes leading to Dhalbhum. He further strengthened his position by allying with another powerful figure Damodar Singh. Thousands of the levies of Raja harassed the forces led by Ferguson and they entrenched themselves behind a parapet to block them. Unfortunately, the fort of Ghatsila was taken under British custody on 22nd March 1767 and the Raja was forced to flee away from his land.²⁵²

The next *zamindar* was invested with his nephew Jagannath Dhal, and he agreed to pay a sum of money as an annual tribute. Jagannath never had the intention to discharge his financial obligations. Thus, the revenue amount fell into arrears. In June 1768, Lieutenant Rooke was sent to enforce that settlement, but Jugannath fled away. Later his brother Ninu Dhal was installed at the place of Jagannath Dhal. In July 1768, Captain Morgan was sent to Capture Jagannath, but he was sacred when the whole country stood up together against British authority.²⁵³ Thus it was not simply a resistance from a local *zamindar*. All the land chiefs of the country rallied together along with their festering masses. Morgan was finally subjected to extremely harassing jungle warfare. Enemies attacked him like small parcels of wasps and stung him with their arrows. Morgan in his official correspondence requested the government to restore the authority of Jagannath and should not countenance Ninu because that would be financially worse for the company. Finally, operations were suspended and Ghatsila was pacified by September 1768.²⁵⁴

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Sashi Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule*, pp. 54-60.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

In 1769, the inhabitancy in the hill areas between Ghatsila and Barabhum threatened the British over their unnecessary intervention in revenue and culture affairs. Meanwhile, Jagannath Dhal strengthened his opposition by bringing those disaffected elements to his side. By February 1773, he carried out a raid against company officials and as a reply, Midnapur Resident send a troop of sepoy against him and brought loss to the British camp. The situation grew worse gradually and Jagannath threatened the whole territory with grim destruction if he was not made the Raja. And after long attacks and counterattacks and a period of unavailing exertions, finally, Jagannath was reinstated in his estate which later settled permanently.²⁵⁵ This could be the best example of the baronial resistance towards the growth of British supremacy in Bengali. The entire operation of the movement was directed by *Zamindars*.

The seeds for the outbreak of Gorakhpur upsurges in 1781 were paved with the appointment of Colonel Hannay in the official service of Oudh in 1778 under the British Company. He threatened and cajoled the Rajas and *zamindars* with the aid of military force and thus usurped the whole of the government. His prime aim was the collection of money and does not bother with whatever the measures employed. Hannay exploited the people for enhancing revenue returns and led them to misery and desolation and lead to the broke out of upsurges in Gorakhpur in 1781. However, the insurrections ended up soon but they brought huge losses to the British camp.²⁵⁶

East India Company entered the process of revenue occupation in Rangpur and Dinajpur by allying with their agent Debi Singh. The Raja of Dinajpur died in 1780 and Debi Singh was appointed to manage the estate when the legal heir was a minor. Both the ryots and *zamindars* suffered from the oppressive revenue measurer by Debi Singh. Finally, rebellion against the Raja broke out in 1783 and

²⁵⁵ Syed Rasheed Ali, *Midnapore District*, pp. 126-260.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

was quelled by 22nd February 1783. Though the rebellion was not against the British but exhibited popular protest, oppression and exploitation.²⁵⁷

The rebellion at Bishnupur in 1789 was a dark episode for the administration of the English East India Company. The causes for the rebellion began evident with the famine of 1769. The land of Bishnupur severely suffered from the famine. Families were all ruined by famine and dispossessed by revenue agents as well. The Hunter Commission records in 1783 show that the cultivators in Birbhum together submitted a petition suggesting settling their grievances.²⁵⁸ Thus, Foley was appointed for it by the end of 1783. Meanwhile, Birbhum evolved as a stronghold of the freebooters and thus British necessitated considerable military execution there in 1784.

In 1787, Lord Cornwallis decided to unite Birbhum and Bishnupur as a British compact district and Paye was appointed in charge to resist the growth of lawlessness. However, the turbulence caused by marauding elements failed to check and thus Bishnupur was sacked by *banditti*.²⁵⁹ Later came Sherburne in charge and he ruled sternly. But the marauders sacked the treasury again and carried off an immense amount of wealth. The evils of heavy revenue assessment meanwhile operated through rigorous issues as well. The ryots turned rebels against colonial authority and began sacking the country in parties comprising hundreds of men. At a point, the complexion of the insurrection changed and became something more troubled. It became virtually turned out to be an explosion of the oppressed masses.²⁶⁰

By June 1789, the authorities placed military forces everywhere and the outbreak of monsoon helped the officials to maintain order for the time being.

²⁵⁷ Shashbi Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule*, pp. 60-65.

²⁵⁸ Pandit Sunderlal, *How India Lost her Freedom*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2018, pp. 38-42

²⁵⁹ <http://iasbaba.com/2022/01/role-or-bengal-in-the-freedom-movement-of-india>, 4.00pm.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

However, in November 1789, the conflagration became spread far and wide with the precarious position of the government. Rebels could control Rajnagar and that put a threat to the government headquarters in Birbhum. Rebels completely dominated Bishnupur. Thus, all traces of English rule faded away for the time being. But very soon the peasantry arose in sharp conflict with the insurgents whom they had welcomed merely a year ago.²⁶¹ The infuriated peasantry bands fell upon the marauders and mercilessly slew them without giving any quarter. Gradually the direction of the movement passed into the hands of peasants. However, in the end, they also left the field. Thus, it became easy for the government to control the situation. Finally, the inhabitants were forced to cooperate with the authorities by the beginning of 1790 and peace and order in the country was restored.²⁶²

The Chuar rebellion in 1799 was yet another massive civil protest against the Britishers. The stronghold of the Chuars was located in Manbhum and Barabhum. They followed a kind of feudal tenure in their land. The Chuara Community were the inhabitants under *zamindars* and were bred up as much for pillaging for cultivation and paid rent. Tax issues began arousing when the British occupied the country. The Chuar outbreaks in different parts of the country worsened the whole situation. Chuarsardars called Sham Ganjan of Dhadka, Subla Singh of Kaliapal, and Dubraj were attacked by Good Year and instructed to curtail strict revenue policies. By 1799 British Government suppressed the widespread rebellion through military force.²⁶³ At the same time, they suspended injudicious policies inaugurated on the revenue system as well.

Similarly, by 1765 itself the peace of the country Sylhet in Bengal was disturbed by various factors and the very most important cause was the evils of the

²⁶¹ P.N. Srivastava, *History of Freedom Struggle of India*, Bharatiya Kala Prakashan, New Delhi, 2019, pp. 55-72.

²⁶² Sashi Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India*, pp. 60-72

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Company's revenue measures. Thus, an open rebellion was broken out in 1787 under the leadership of Radharam. But soon he was arrested and taken to jail. By 1799, the British Government suppressed the rebellion.²⁶⁴

5.4.2 Rebellions in South India

The South Indian confederacy in anti-colonial resistance comprised Marudu Pandian of Sivaganga, Dheeran Chinnamalai of Kongu Nadu, Gopala Nayak of Dindigul, Krishnappa Nayak, and Dhoondaji of Mysore. The sharp and aggressive moves of the rebels brought loss to the British camp in different ways. Though they failed to defeat their enemies but could threaten a well-equipped force at a particular period.²⁶⁵

The revolt of Dhundia in Bednur (1799-1800) played a significant role in the South Indian rebellions at the end of the eighteenth century. The conquest of Mysore not immediately led to the pacification of the country. The British met with tackle many ambitious chiefs, military adventurers, and powerful communities whose resistance against British rule had to be overcome before the restoration of internal tranquillity. The revolt of Dhundia furnishes an instance of the magnitude of resistance to British rule in that part of the country. Dhundia Wagh was a Maratha adventurer. He had incurred the displeasure of Tippu Sultan for his usual incursions into his territories.²⁶⁶ At a point, Tippu Sultan captured him and forcibly converted him to Islam. Later Tippu entrusted him with military employment. But he seems to have incurred the displeasure of his master subsequently. After the fall of Seringapattam, Dhundia was discharged after the disbanding of Tippu's army. Later he moved to Bednur and there he collected a few cavalries and recruited a band of followers from the discharged soldiery from the Tippu's army. He also

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Sagari Chhabra, *In Search of Freedom: Journeys Through India and South -East Asia*, Harper Collins, New York, 2015, pp. 45-47.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

incorporated other elements that were adversely affected by the establishment of the British system.²⁶⁷

Thus, Dhundia became formidable by a force strengthened by a sufficient number. He then carved a small territory for himself by annexing some of the principal places of the neighbouring area. British forces were sent to check his career at this posture of events. Colonel James Dalrymple captured some of the forts belonging to the insurgents on the banks of river Thungabadra. He destroyed a marauding band of considerable strength. On 17th August 1799, in a stiff engagement, Dhundia himself was beaten at Shikarpur. However, he escaped and took refuge in the Maratha territory. His fort then reached into the hands of the British.²⁶⁸

Dhundia Wagh remained subdued for some time. But he renewed his operations in the early part of 1800 when the Surat affair was developing. He started operations by making predatory attacks on the Mysore frontier. The time he seems to have considerably elevated his position by making political affiliation with many dissatisfied chiefs under Company's territories. He invited them all by writing letters in his name to make a joint attack on the British territory of Mysore. Thus, he became the head of the political confederacy by allying himself with political interests for the time being. The famous British General Colonel Wellesley had to take the field against him and that indicates the nature of the danger confronted by the British rule.²⁶⁹

Dhundia utilized Maratha country as the base for his operations. The British government took the decision to trace him out there in his lairs and on 30th July 1800, Colonel Wellesley made a surprise attack on Dhundia and nearly succeeded in destroying him. Dhundia however escaped by leaving his baggage, elephants,

²⁶⁷ Sashi Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India*, pp. 116-120.

²⁶⁸ Mohibul Hasan, *History of Tippu Sultan*, Aakar Books, New Delhi, 1971, pp. 24-221

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

camels, horses, and all. He moved to the other side of the river Malaprabha and where he was closely watched and pursued. Later Dhundia entered the territories of the Nizam. But the British army under Colonel Wellesley made all such preparations for a well-concerted attack on his enemy.²⁷⁰ On 10th September 1800, Colonel Wellesley encountered Dhundia's army at a place called Conahgull. Wellesley had some considerable advantages in the position on the battlefield and utilized it well in driving an impetuous charge home into the rank of Dhundia's army.²⁷¹

In the end, the entire army of Dhundia was dispersed and scattered. Finally, Dhundia had been killed along with others. Dhundia was undoubtedly a leader of considerable ability. He resisted British rule with all his might in his way. He had tremendous political ambitions. Thornton believed that he might have been a second Hyder Ali. However, Dhundia's progress did not receive a timely check. Thomas Munro also shared the same view.²⁷² The short career of Dhundia forms a striking episode of the reaction of the ambitious elements of the country to the gradual expansion of British Rule.

The struggle of the *poligars* in Thirunneveli (1801) also deserves special consideration in this regard.²⁷³ The management and control of the whole of the revenues of Thirunneveli and Carnatic provinces were handed over to the East India Company by the nawab of Arcot by the land assignment in 1781. There was one condition that he should be allowed one-sixth part of the revenue for his personal use. But the *poligars* of the south who had preserved their independence for ages disliked this arrangement. They offered obstinate resistance to the company's imposition of rule. The *poligars* belong to Panjalankurichi in the

²⁷⁰ Sashi Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India*, pp. 121-124.

²⁷¹ D. C. Bakshi, *He kept the British Guessing*, Deccan Herald, 9th April 2012.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Polygar* was the feudal title for a class of territorial administrative as well as military governors who were appointed by the Nayaka rulers of south India by the 16th and 18th centuries.

Tirunelveli district and stubbornly reacted against British forces. Finally, a bloody battle took place between *poligars* and Colonel Fullarton and the latter could capture the *poligars* post in Sivagiri after a desperate contest.²⁷⁴ The collection of revenue from the people was not considered to be a happy experience then. As a result, the company surrendered its land assignment to the Nawab in 1785.

However, this experiment also proved wrong as Nawab's management did not improve matters. He failed to pay his share of company expenses even when intimidated. By 1790, the Company established a Board of Assigned Revenue to administer revenue matters. Finally, a definite treaty was concluded with the Nawab by which the Madras government undertook the responsibility to collect the whole of the dues of the *poligars* by July 1792.²⁷⁵ They allowed Nawab the credit for this amount in the contribution due by him to the company. This agreement destroyed the peace and prosperity of the country due to the dual control it created. The Company was ultimately responsible for collecting the dues but every section of the country especially the *poligars* recognized the ultimate sovereignty of Nawab. They took advantage of this anomalous position in their struggle against British power.²⁷⁶

Finally, a series of rebellions took place. The *poligars* Panjalankurichi was the leader of the rebel confederacy who controlled the whole eastern country. It was the first *poligar* group to join the insurgents on the outbreak of the insurrection at Ramnad in 1795. They could secure a strong following very soon. The *poligar* Kattabhomma Nayakkan killed Lieutenant. Clarke during the disturbances at the headquarters of Ramnad in 1797.²⁷⁷ Thus under Major Bannerman, an expedition was sent against Panjalankurichi in September 1799 and

²⁷⁴ Nicholas Dirk, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. 2007, pp. 19-24.

²⁷⁵ W. Francis, *Gazetteer of South India*, Vol. I, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1988, PP. 261-265.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ <http://www.livehistoryindia.com/strong/people/the-polygar-heroes-of-tamil-nadu>, accessed on 22nd March 2019, 6.00 pm.

it was a success. However, four European officers were killed. The rebels were pursued and the fort was stormed. Most of them were captured and executed.²⁷⁸ Kattabomma Nayakkan who moved to Pudukkottai was captured later and hanged in a conspicuous place. Later British followed retributory measures. The *palayam* of Panjalankurichi along with the estates of five other *poligars* of the eastern districts who joined the rebellion were confiscated. Some of the *poligars* were taken into jail and some others were executed.²⁷⁹

However, the smouldering discontent of the *poligars* led to an open revolt. It was categorically stated that those insurrections which took place in the southern *palayams* during 1801 were closely connected with another which at that period existed in Dindigal as well as Malabar countries.²⁸⁰ The *poligar* prisoners confined in the Palayamcotta fort made their escape by overpowering the guards by 2nd February 1801. They moved towards Panjalankurichi and arrived there by the next morning. Later small parties were sent to overtake the fugitives but they failed. Major Macaulay marched towards Panjalankurichi and reached there on 9th February 1801. He was surprised to see that the walls of the forts were manned by several hundreds of armed men. He abandoned the idea of an assault by the day due to the lack of battery guns.²⁸¹

Later a huge concentration of rebels compelled Macaulay to retire in the direction of Palamcotta. Gradually forts fell into the hands of the *poligars* one by one and Tuticorin was captured by them as well. Finally, the British attacked rebels with their good pieces of equipment. It led to the destruction of the forts and strongholds of *poligars*.²⁸² Meantime the loss on the British side was the death of forty-seven and around two hundred injured. Later measures for the recovery of

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Palayam* was given for valuable military services rendered by army individual under *poligars*.

²⁸⁰ W. Francis, *Gazetteer of South India*, pp.265-267.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² Nicholas Dirk, *The Hollow Crown*, pp.26-36.

concealed arms proceeded along with the prevention of the manufacture of weapons of offence by the Indians were adopted. Finally, the Nawab surrendered the exclusive administration of the city as well as military governments of the entire territories and dependencies of Carnatic to the company in perpetuity by 31st July 1801.²⁸³

The *poligars* of south India offered a desperate resistance to British Rule. The revolt episode of 1801 was nothing less than a war in which British arms suffered with heaviest casualties. The rebellious elements inflicted by the company were so huge compared with any other civil and internal disturbances of the pre-mutiny period. British took necessary steps to settle accounts and those people were absorbed into the administrative system by the early part of the nineteenth century. Otherwise, south India would have been another Oudh during the 1857 revolt.²⁸⁴

Similarly, the *poligars* who resided in the ceded districts were a class of heterogeneous character with semi-independent feudal barons.²⁸⁵ They ruled like princesses over their extensive territories. Thomas Munro found the *poligars* constantly in rebellion when they came to administer those areas. Munro understood the seriousness that the reduction of the *poligars* was equally dangerous to the country for a revolting *poligar* exacted contributions by every form of violence. Munro adopted a policy of Hyder Ali to curb their independence. He assessed them at the highest dues which they had paid either to Nizam or Hyder Ali and was backed up conveniently with his demand by military actions. This was somewhat against the policy of the Directors in England who were in favour of endorsing a temporizing policy of gradually weaning them from their so-called

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁴ Susan Bayly, *The New Cambridge History of India Caste, Society and politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. 2001, pp. 342-365.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

feudal habits and principles²⁸⁶. Finally, the country settled down under Munro's system but it caused disturbances and disaffection as well.

A letter delivered by the Court of Directors on 17th August provides an insight into the real state of affairs. It was stated that through military execution, peace and order had been established. But the country still engaged with armed men who doesn't have employment. Meanwhile, Munro mentioned that a pensioned *poligar* formed a plot to seize the Bellary fort in his letter written on 26th June 1804.²⁸⁷ With official commands, Munro became relentless in the pursuit of his rapacious antagonists who had put the country in a continued state of violence and rapine which eventually rendered the task of raising revenue extremely risky. Munro declared that to maintain an armed force or to the garrison, a fort has made punishable. He also announced that anyone defying this order would be considered a rebel and treated as such forever. This resulted in intensifying the conspiracies of the refractory chiefs.²⁸⁸ Munro cunningly traced out their lairs and hunted them out from place to place. In the end, *poligars* ended their career and were captured. Their property was confiscated and were finally confined to the fort of Ooty.²⁸⁹

Wellesley took over the administration of the Carnatic in 1801 from Azim-Ud-Dawla, the grandson of Muhammad Ali. It generated a legacy of serious troubles as the country was in a lawless condition, especially in the *palayams* of Chittur and Chandragiri.²⁹⁰ The first collector of north Arcot Stratton proceeded to raise their tributes and assumed the management of the police throughout the

²⁸⁶ Narayana Rao Velcheru, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, (ed.), *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka period in Tamil Nadu*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 345-349.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 349-352

²⁸⁸ Kumarasamy Rajaram, *History of Thirumalai Nayak*, Ennes Publications, Madurai, 1982, pp. 125-130

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁰ Sashi Bhushan Chaudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India*, pp. 139-140.

districts using depriving the *poligars* of their right to collect their traditional fee. Thus, they became hostile and began their old proceedings of plunder and rapine. In 1803, the peons of the Naraganti, one of the ten *poligars* residing in north Arcot plundered the village in Uttantangal. Naraganti *poligar* even planned to loot the government treasury and attacked a captain named Nuttall.²⁹¹ The Collector Stratton took Naraganti *poligar* under custody but soon released him at the promise of discharging the arrears. Anyway, the refractory attitude of this chief forced the British government to move a battalion towards Chittur on 17th July 1804 under the commandership of Lieutenant Colonel. Darley. Meanwhile, the Collector proclaimed that the rebellious *poligars* must submit to the government and pay their arrears.²⁹²

However, none obeyed the order. A battalion of the army marched towards Pennamari to invest the fort on 25th July 1804. The *poligars* made a drama of submission to Coonel Darley. But at night the poligars escaped with thousands of followers. Later the fortifications of Pennamari were destroyed by the Company's forces. The strongest of the *Palayams* was the fortification of Pallur which was destroyed by the Company army. Thus, the rebels lost much of their strength.²⁹³ However, those dispossessed *poligars* who were loitering in the densest part of the janglers scoured the country in bands as well as pillaged villages and later transformed as a menace to the safety of Tirupati and the pilgrims visiting its temples. Those isolated bands of sepoys were sent to check their depredations and became powerless to affect anything. Finally, the government changed its policy from one of retaliation to one of conciliation. The government appointed a commission on 22nd September 1804 to bring terms with the poligars by suspending all such measures directed against them. But *poligars* reacted negatively to it. They remained different from this proposal and continued their

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² D. Sreenivasalu, *Palegars or Factionalists, They Call the Shots in Rayalseema*, The Hindu (online), 24th January 2005.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

violent activities. The government initiated military measures under such circumstances.²⁹⁴

Lieutenant Colonel. Money Penny oversaw the troops of three thousand men against the rebels. Some of the chiefs surrendered but most of them continued the struggle. The *poligar* belonging to Yedaragunta exhibited himself as the most daring and desperate among the insurgent chiefs. He was joined by the dispossessed *poligar* of Charagallu who has suffered a term of imprisonment in the fort of Krishnagiri during the previous rebellion. That *poligar* escaped from the prison and at the head of the Yedaragunta peons attacked and captured the Peddanaididrug fort. Money Penny frustrated them. He was reinforced by levies drawn from Mysore and presented a formidable array against him.²⁹⁵ The rebel followers of the *poligars* made a desperate attack on the Mysore detachment under Captain Little with a brave charge. However, they were staggeringly defeated. Finally, the storm was reduced to perfect quiet. Some changes were permitted to reside in Madras and the rest were granted an allowance of eighteen per cent upon the total revenues of their estate. Those insurrections led by *poligars* took place at a time when the second Maratha war was going on and had a piquancy in the overall position of British rule in India.²⁹⁶

Those civil disturbances that took place in India during the period of Pazhassi Raja give us a clear impression of the nature of British rule in India. In some cases, the popular uprisings were presented with no specific symptoms of danger. They were generally limited to the removal of certain very unpopular intruders and the abolition of many obnoxious regulations of government.²⁹⁷ Resistance against authorities was provoked with the exceptions of some very

²⁹⁴ Kumarasamy Rajaram, *History of Thirumalai Nayak*, pp. 132-134.

²⁹⁵ W. Francis, *Gazetteer of South India*, pp. 280-284.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ J.C. Dua, *Poligars: Their Rise in the Ceded Districts*, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 33, Published by Indian History Congress, 1971, pp. 467-474.

formidable occurrences. A few disturbances of the period were not a subversive character.²⁹⁸ Though the materials of disaffection constituted to a certain degree the nucleus of danger.

5.5 Conclusion

The essence of literary works on historical figures is regarded as the otherness of the past. The artistic effort taken by the writer was to portray the past views and perceptions to the readers. The past was used as something parallel or similar or discarding to the present. History has both known and unknown spheres. Those who understand history comprehensively would erase the distinction between history and imagination. This tendency was extremely reflected in modern literary works on historical characters. Whereas imagination comes as an ingredient if the storyline was progressed by the model of a slot. Their deficiencies were turned into natural components for story interpretations. Imagination becomes necessary in historical recreations when it comes to dealing with miracle incidents, impersonation, abstract elements, and descriptions based on beliefs rather than facts. Imagination must be used in historical works not to make adulterations.

An intelligent writer on history would understand what history conceives and aims. Unfortunately, in our historical literature, it is evident that the writers did not possess sufficient 'mental morality'. But some exceptions are there as well. Ideologically speaking, the writers first should attempt to find factual analysis. They must commit to history and should check how those historical facts relate to reformation ideas. The intervention of the life of common people and the concept of stories for stories degrades the history within the historical literature. However, such stories for stories kinds of writings were mostly done in the background of Indian independence. On such a background the fiction of historical figures received wide acceptance. Those kinds of stories tried to introduce some role

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

models to common people. Thus, the writers could initiate the introduction and circulation of concepts like patriotism, religious harmony, unique values of Indian civilization, power relations and tactics, moral principles, etc. through their writings.

However, those historical works created by history writers do not have a general rational wave. It indicates that the writers had gone far beyond factuality. The personal differences in writers' perspectives and deficiency of historical insights cause a different representation of historical figures and society. Most of the writers focus on writing about a prime historical character along with certain imaginative characters. They considered that those literary creations are simply a way of speaking a story rather than an awakening call for the people. The concept of recreating the past through historical works inculcates some artistic issues as well. However, the thoughts on the contradictory forces in history have not led us into the artistic paves. The writers get pressured by the essence of fantasy on the one side and the confrontation of contradictory attitudes on the other side.

As far as the authors of historical literary works are concerned, they lack imbibing those contradictory future elements which agglomerate in confrontations or settlements in history. Thus, the readers miss the chance to know about certain significant aspects that enrich history. History finally ends up as simple as the account of some events. The writer must be a critic of history and criticizing history does not mean castigating historical characters. Those who praise history will not be able to accept those criticisms. The factual inquiry towards history on non-compromising considerations accumulates true criticisms.

The adventurous life of historical heroes gives colour to the romanticist attributes of their personal life. But it must be covered with historical frames to get the exact essence of history. However, it is to remind us that those literary works on history don't have a democratic structure. It reminds us of the existence of narrow perceptions rather than progress. True works on history and historical

figures are yet to come and that should make a comparative study of past and present considering human life their history, complications and depth, and spiritual evaluations.

There comes so many doubts and queries regarding considering the Pazhassi rebellion as part of a national movement. Nationalism is a new political ideology that evolved in India post-Pazhassi Raja's period. However, Pazahssi's rebellions could generate patriotic feelings among the people at the bottom level and could inspire future liberation struggles. Many local uprisings occurred in different parts of India against colonial rule parallel to Pazhassi rebellion. However, none turned victorious but they could bring immense impact and changes to colonial administration. All those uprisings were raised for consoling different grievances, and they never came together. Thus, every revolt ended up in failure in the direct sense.

Chapter 6

The Cinematic Portrayal of Pazhassi Raja

6.1 Introduction

Cinema could be regarded as a medium for common people to see their lives from a distance. Films not only declare the perspectives of the directors but also suggest how the audience views them.¹ The peak of emotions and imagination is the general formula for popular movies. It doesn't give much importance to logic and reality. However, those popular movies could give what society desires. The evolution of the Malayalam film industry was a gradual process.² It could produce fantastic movies by the second half of the twentieth century comprising different genres of films.

There were limited movies on historical themes released in Malayalam until now. Two movies came about the life and political career of Pazhassi Raja in Malayalam. This chapter attempted to evaluate the image implications of Pazhassi Raja through films.

6.2 The Evolution of Malayalam Film

Vigata Kumaran was the first film in Malayalam. It was a silent film produced and directed by J. C. Daniel. The movie was screened for the public by 1930.³ The second silent film in Malayalam cinema was *Marthanda Varma* and the movie was based on the well-known historical novel written by C.V. Raman Pillai. The producer of the film Sunder Raj of Nagercoil could not buy filming rights from the publishers of the novel M/S Kamala Book Depot and thus had to deal with legal

¹ Jinesh Kumar, Eramam, *Cinemayude Nilapadukal*, Insight Books, Kozhikode, 2010, pp. 12-30.

² G. P. Ramachandran, *Cinemayum Malayaliyude Jeevithavum*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 1998, pp. 25-26.

³ Vijayakrishnan, (ed.), *Malayala Cinema*, Samkramanam Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, pp. 15-30.

hurdles. The film was never shown to the public until 1974 when the National Film Archives of India attempted a negotiation with the copy right owners and hence restored the print.⁴ Sound films were on the progressive stage in Hindi and other Indian languages since 1931. But the first sound feature film from the Malayalam film industry, *Balan* came out in 1938. It was produced by T. R. Sundaram of Modern Theatres, Salem, and directed by S. Nottani.⁵ In the very next year a mythological film called *Prahlada* was attempted. Most of the early attempts in Malayalam cinema were done by Tamilians.⁶ They had flourishing Tamil cinema well set in Madras with large studios and such well-experienced technical personalities. Naturally, a Tamil atmosphere prevailed in such films.

It was only in 1948 a company based in Kerala produced a Malayalam film with Kerala Talkies *Nirmala*. In the same year the first major studio called 'Udaya' was established by Kunchakko and others in Alappuzha.⁷ The very next year, a Malayalam film *Vellinakshathram* was shot there. Many Keralite producers came forward to make films by injecting a certain amount of local writing and talent into Malayalam cinema at the availability of studio facilities within the state. But most of the directors and technicians were non-Malayali people who were trained and used in the 'Madras School' of filmmaking.⁸ So even when the Malayalam artists and writers were involved, the models adopted for those early films were Tamil as well as Hindi films and the formulae which found successful in such movies were easily used in Malayalam films as well.

Interestingly Malayalam cinema there had an interest to touch on social issues right from the early days. In those days, Hindi, Telegu, Tamil and English

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-40.

⁵ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Cinema Charithravum Kaalavum*, A.D. Shanti, Trissur, 2003, pp. 180-181.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-184.

⁷ Geetha, *Cinemayude Kayyettangal*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, pp. 9-20.

⁸ Dr. K.J. Ajayakumar, *Drishyakala Ezhuthum kazhchayum*, Insight Publica, Kozhikode, 2013, pp. 13-21.

films were regularly shown whereas it was only occasionally that a Malayalam film was screened to an eager audience.⁹ One of the very popular films of the era was *Jeevitha Nouka* (1951) which was made by Koshy and Kunchakoo Productions in Udaya Studio. The film heralded the making of the Malayalam film industry through its phenomenal success. The film itself contained all such ingredients to form the basis for future commercial productions.¹⁰

Another studio Merry Land was established near Thiruvananthapuram in 1952 where Malayalam films were frequently shot.¹¹ A section of those early movies could be classified as mythological, wildlife adventure, comedy and so on. The majority of productions were social films that vaguely touched the aspects of society. Most of these films had almost a similar structure but the storyline differed. In most of the films, there had invariable plots or inner dramas which contributed pretty little to plot development.¹² The style was purely the article along with painted backdrops. It had abundant frontal shots, endlessly speaking characters with music and sound effects running throughout the entire length of the film.

The first Malayalam screenplay writer was Muthukulam Raghavan Pillai. Other eminent screenplay writers of the period were Thikkurussi Sukumaran Nair, N.P. Chellappan Nair, Ponkunnam Varkey, Nagavalli R.S Kurup, T.N. Gopinathan Nair and others.¹³ On certain occasions, stories were devised by the story department of the production company.¹⁴ Also, stories were adapted from other language films or other languages as well. Interestingly a dozen of songs were

⁹ Chelangatt Gopalakrishnan, *Indian Cinemayude Charithram*, National Book Stall, Thiruvananthapuram, 2013.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

¹¹ Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala Samskara Patanangal*, Current Books, Kottayam, Vol. I, 2011, pp. 1012-1020.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 1021-1030.

¹³ Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, (ed.), *Chalachitra Patanangal*, Current books, Kottayam, 2013, pp.42-50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 51-53.

considered necessary for a film. Thus lyricists and music directors were greatly in demand.¹⁵

Malayalam cinema got national attention in 1954 by winning the President's silver medal for the movie *Neelakkuyil*.¹⁶ The movie was produced by T. K. Pareekutty of Chandrathara Pictures and scripted by the well-known novelist Uroob. The movie dealt with the subject of untouchability. The film was a big hit with the public. It was a time when the Malayalam film industry could not establish its own cultural identity and was hardly distinguishable from Tamil films of the period except for the spoken language.¹⁷ The very next year released the movie *Newspaper Boy*. The film attempted to portray the travels of an orphan boy realistically which is dispensed with romance and considered as an essential ingredient of Malayalam film. The film was bolder than *Neelakkuyil* in its rejection of the elements of the so-called box office formula.¹⁸ Chandrathara Pictures brought their first effort in filmmaking with *Rarichan Enna Powran* in 1956. Chandrathara hired Ramu Kariat, who was the coordinator of *Neelakuyil* for their next movie *Mudiyanya Puthran*.¹⁹ The film was celebrated for its histrionic levels reached and remarked for the extensive use of the location by camera person, A. Vincent.

Thus, it is easy to find that Malayalam cinema had no time to evolve on its own from its silent days while looking at these early developments. Sound arrived soon in Malayalam film after two silent films and there was no need for the makers to think of communicating through visual means.²⁰ Everything was spelled out through dialogues and the artists who came mostly from the stage could translate

¹⁵ P.K. Rajasekharan, *Cinema Sandarbhangal*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2019, pp. 137-145.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-150.

¹⁷ Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala Samskara Patanangal*, pp. 1010-1015.

¹⁸ G.P. Ramachandran, *Malayala Cinema Desham Bhasha Samskaram*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2009, pp. 1-8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.

²⁰ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Chalachithravum Samuhavum*, Readers Book Stall, Kozhikode, 1989, pp.45-70

their stage experiences into films. In those days the camera movement was minimal. While attempting to entertain different episodes were self-contained and they made social comments not only directly, but also obliquely. There were streams of storylines going in parallel as well. All such traits could be found in *Neelakkuyil*.²¹ Suggesting that there was not much pressure from the audience for a tight narrative. The viewers accepted an unhurried and leisurely pace and enjoyed individual moments of the film rather than a satisfying whole. Even though the story was of primary importance. This was clearly understood especially while cinema was attempting to displace the pastimes of an agrarian society and the very best way to do it was through maintaining a close equation of village fairs and festivals.²²

The practice of using literary materials as the raw material for film scripts became more often by the sixties.²³ Although Uroob and many other writers wrote screenplays and the *Randitangazhi* of Thakazhi had been adopted to film by 1958. Those well-known stories and novels which were mostly serialized in literary journals were transformed into films.²⁴ It automatically generated a lot of cultural aspects which were absent in Malayalam films during the fifties.

By the late sixties and early seventies, the practice of borrowing literary materials for filmmaking reached its peak. Thus, the cordial collaboration of writers and directors produced fruitful results on the Malayalam screen. The general standard of production was raised since most of the literary works were area specific. So the film had to be shot in actual locations.²⁵ This was unheard of at least in Malayalam cinema a decade back. In a film like *Neelakkuyil*, much of the

²¹ *Ibid*

²² K.P. Kannan (ed.), *Kerala in Transition – Essays on Economy, Polity and Society*, Laurie Baker Centre for Habitat Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 2018, pp. 175-176.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.176-177.

²⁴ Jeni Rowena, *Themmadikalum Thampurakkanmaaram*, Published by the author, Kottayam, 2011, pp. 45-50.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

difficulty in providing a realistic touch arose from its studio-bound interior shots. One of the best things which happened in Malayalam cinema during the sixties was the active participation of eminent writers in the process of film projects.²⁶ Ramu Kariat and Thoppil Basi for *Mudiyana Puthran*, Vaikom Muhammed Basheer and A. Vincent for *Bharghavi Nilayam*, M.T. Vasudevan for Nair and A. Vincent for *Murappennu* are some unique examples of such collaborative work.²⁷

The entry of short story writer and novelist M.T. Vasudevan Nair into the world of films in 1965 brought visual orientation to writing.²⁸ M.T. Vasudevan Nair was vividly exposed to the cinema when he began the process of scripting. Those films are based on the screenplay of M T Vasudevan Nair of that time. M.T. Vasudevan Nair's screenplay was effectively and conveniently used by the cameraman turned director A. Vincent in the movie *Murappennu*.²⁹

The 1966 released movie *Chemmeen* marked a landmark in a collaborative effort which won the President's gold medal for the first time for a south Indian film.³⁰ The movie looked at the fisherman of Kerala from a distance and received high-calibre publicity which was greatly aided by the gold medal secured by the movie before its commercial release. The technical flourishment of the movie made a great impact on the audience in both Kerala and outside.³¹

Iruttinte Atmavu was yet another landmark movie in Malayalam cinema. It was a low-budget film and its detailed screenplay was written by M.T. Vasudevan Nair. The film was so rich in culturally despite its large number of studio shots and overall theatricality. Many episodes of the movie became archetypes for

²⁶ K.P. Kannan, (ed.), *Kerala in Transition*, pp. 177-180.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ A group of authors, *Emptiyude Sargaprapancham*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, pp. 150-170.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-200.

³⁰ K. Muraleedharan, *Drusya Padhathile Anarga Silpangal*, Manolokam group Publishing Company, Calicut, 1996, pp. 12-60.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-72.

Malayalam filmmakers in future dealing with family drama.³² So, by the end of the sixties, several good films were produced by the traditional Malayalam cinema. Most of the films were based on eminent literary works by authors like M.T. Vasudevan Nair, Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, Parappurath, K.T. Muhammed, Takazhy Siva Sankara Pillai, Malayattoor Ramakrishnan, P. Kesavan Dev, and Toppil Bhasi.³³ The prominent directors of the period included P. Bhaskaran, Ramu Kariat, A. Vincent, and K.S. Sethu Madhavan. Those film makers of the sixties turned out to be mere translators than true authors of their respective movies. This was quite evident in the uneven quality of their productions.

P.N. Menon made a remarkable film *Olavum Theeravum* in 1970 with the active participation of scenarist M.T. Vasudevan Nair and cameraman Mankada Ravi Varma.³⁴ The film expressed immense visual appeal to the story of an innocent Muslim girl from Malabar. The film was marked as the first authentic statement of the way of life of Malabar Muslims. The film serves as an important link to the new decade when Malayalam cinema transformed from verbal to visual communication methods. Efforts were made in the mid-sixties to create conditions conducive to the survival of artistic cinema in Kerala.³⁵ By then a group of film enthusiasts had established a film society called Chitralkha in Kerala which was a trend setter in the state. It conducted screening of international claims apart from organising seminars and discussions on films.³⁶ It constantly encouraged the formation of other film societies throughout the state.

³² Dr. Sajan Palamattom, *Cinemayude Rasathanthram*, Book Media Publications, Kottayam, 2009, pp. 70-120.

³³ G. Vijaykrishnan, *Malayala Cinemayude Katha*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2004, pp. 25-68.

³⁴ Raveendran, *Cinema Samooham Prethyaya Sasthram*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, 2007, pp. 20-60.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-140.

³⁶ Jinesh Kumar Eramam, *Cinemayude Nilapadukal*, pp. 50-60.

Chithralekha Film Co-operative Society was gradually formed as an offshoot of the film society and they attempted their first feature film *Swayamvaram* in 1972. The film altogether dispensed with the cliches of traditional cinema particularly songs until then it was considered an essential ingredient in feature films.³⁷ However, the film was built on a weak narrative but was much ahead of the Malayalam film of the time in its cinematic qualities. The movie won four national awards including the one for best film.³⁸

Nirmalyam came up in 1973 with the screenplay of M.T. Vasudevan Nair. He was quite hesitant to shed all the existing conventions but could provide a brilliant work that still came to grips with the medium. The film received the President's best film award to Kerala for the second consecutive year.³⁹ The well-known cartoonist G. Aravindan made his first film *Utharayanam* in 1974. He was well exposed to visual arts even not having formal training in filmmaking. He also received exposure to international cinema through film societies. Aravindan truly demonstrated an extraordinary sense of visual expression as well as composition in his very first attempt. He got great support from the writer Thikkodiyam.⁴⁰ The film remarkably fetched a national award at the silver jubilee of Indian independence.

Malayalam cinema had different genres of movies like social, historical, wildlife, comedy, political crime thrillers, musical documentary drama, fantasy, and so on. But among them, the most favoured one was social. The social category was meant to appeal to different communities and was made at regular intervals.⁴¹ Sometimes there had simultaneous releases of devotional, mythological, and other

³⁷ K. Velayudhan, *Cinemayum Samoohavum*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2014, pp. 36-112.

³⁸ P.J. Cherian, (ed.), *Essays on the cultural formation of Kerala*, Kerala State Gazetteers, Vol. IV, Part II, Published by the Kerala State Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, pp. 350-360.

³⁹ A.D. Raveendran, *Kala Vimarshanam -Marxist Manadhandam*, Nila Publications, Kochi, 1983, pp. 10-30.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-60.

⁴¹ Chelangat Gopalakrishnan, *Indian Cinemayude Charithram*, pp. 80-84.

kinds of films with similar themes produced by different studios. Different films used the same sets and properties effectively. The genre of the movie doesn't matter here. Because many of those movies had only the resemblance of a genre.⁴²

There would be many songs as well as sentiments scenes in *Vadakkanpattu*-based action films like *Unniarcha* and the same could be seen in wildlife films as well. In political films and comic scenes, devotionals exhibit formula elements.⁴³ Adequate attention to pace was found to be absent due to the compulsions of adding comic scenes, songs, dance numbers, subplots and dramas. Till the seventies, song scenes were considered a must-factor.⁴⁴ During the fifties, the average number of songs in a film ranged from a dozen and it became half by the seventies. Interestingly the very first sound film *Balan* had around twenty-three songs in total.⁴⁵ As far as historical films are concerned, they paid very little attention to period recreation and behavior patterns of the time. On the other hand, the dialects of different regions were ignored conveniently except for those comic effects. The most acceptable form of language was the written style of the Thiruvitamcore region and the widest cross-section of people understood a film through it. Most of the early scriptwriters of Malayalam movies from the south of Kerala and in the milieu were not properly established in social films.⁴⁶ Gradually these two factors sometimes made jarring notes in films based on the north Malabar social structure. Some films dealing with the labour movements were made in the sixties and absorbed the political ferment of the time.

⁴² Geetha, *Cinemayude kayyettangal*, pp. 10-24.

⁴³ K.P. Kannan, (ed.), *Kerala in Transition*, pp. 180-182.

⁴⁴ A.D. Vijayakrishnan, *Malayala Cinema*, Samkramana Prakasanam Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1982, pp. 18-35.

⁴⁵ Karoor Soman, *Cinema Innale, Innu Nale*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2017, pp. 48-112.

⁴⁶ Dr. Daya Nand Gautam, (ed.), *Cinema and Society its influence and importance in different Spheres of Human Life*, Regal Publications, New Delhi, 2016, pp. 1-8.

The late seventies witnessed the emphasis on soft porn movies.⁴⁷ The goal of many filmmakers was surrounded by the presentation of everyday life and its problems without any further insight or psycho-social analysis. The audience was found content with such banality and judging from the popularity of such films. Soft porn was then treated indirectly more at a subliminal level in many of such movies with a realistic exterior.⁴⁸

The eighties marked a boom in the pulp of literature in the state and films made out of serialized stories of those journals found for a ready market. Several such adaptations were set in middle-class families and cleverly mixed melodrama and violence on the home front.⁴⁹ Thus, it succeeded well at the box office. Such films always propagated sexist bias and gender use became very offensive to women. The money accumulated in private investment companies began to be diverted for filmmaking of this nature then. Monopolistic tendencies began to be seen in production as well as distribution and made huge investments without any regard to the returns made on the commercial viability of an average film at the stake level.⁵⁰ The filmmakers like I.V. Sasi and Hariharan who made sex and violence-oriented films in the seventies changed their course by making family dramas on the other side of the commercial spectrum.⁵¹ They received the screenplays written by M.T. Vasudevan Nair and Padmarajan. Thus, it ensured the commercial success of the film. Both were tremendously prolific in their output. Those films based on their screenplays maintained a peculiar standard level well above that of the commercial productions in the rest of the country.⁵² Meanwhile, a sizeable majority of the popular films dealt with predictable subjects and very few

⁴⁷ K.P. Kannan, (ed.), *Kerala in Transition*, pp. 181-183.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ G.P. Ramachandran, *Malayala Cinema Desham Bhasha Samskaram*, pp. 2-6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

⁵¹ P.K. Rajasekharan, *Cinema Sandarbhangal*, pp. 140-150.

⁵² Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, (ed.), *Chalachitra Patanangal*, pp. 45-50.

of them explored certain alternative subjects like tribal life, pollution, performing arts, gulf migration, biography, issues of women, and filmmaking itself.⁵³

Thus, while making an overall estimation, the total production of Malayalam movies was mere seven in the first twenty years of the journey. The average production in a year was around six by the 1950s. A steady increase in the output was evident from the sixties. It was discernible with the average production which rose from about twenty to an all-time high of one hundred and twenty-four films in the year 1978 which was surpassing the output of even Hindi films.⁵⁴ Malayalam film only constituted a mere three per cent of the entire national output in 1951 and gradually it reached a peak of twenty per cent by 1978. The average output remained at around one hundred and fifteen in the eighties. Although there had signs of decline too. By the nineties, the average annual production remained almost at the same level. The total number of cinema theatres was about thirty in 1938 and it reached about thousand six hundred by 1988. So, altogether it registered for a fiftyfold increase within fifty years.⁵⁵

As a result of Gulf remittance, several permanent and semi-permanent cinema houses mushroomed throughout the state. The increased wage prevailing in villages and the proximity of theatres enhanced the tendency to be movie-going. At the same time, television and videos have made inroads into urban and rural areas as well. The infrastructure facilities for filmmaking in the state were augmented with the setting up of the Chithralekha Studio in the co-operative sector in the mid-seventies along with the Chithranjali Studio of the Kerala State Film Development Corporation in the government sector.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Dr. Daya Nand Gautam (ed.), *Cinema and Society*, pp. 9-20.

⁵⁵ K.P. Kannan, (ed.), *Kerala in Transition*, pp. 184-186.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

More films began to be made in Kerala because of the aid from the subsidy scheme of the government from 1977 onwards and the inflow of Gulf money into filmmaking. Location shooting became very popular and the significance of realism even in commercial production was well evident. More local artists, technicians, and writers contributed immensely to flourishing the distinct Malayali flavour of many films. The state government introduced a few well-meaning schemes with limited resources at its disposal like the annual film awards from 1969 onwards, tax exemption subsidy, and package scheme.⁵⁷ Thus, all such factors contributed to the growth of filmmaking in the state.

6.3 Film Science: An Overview

Cinema has been a powerful force in Indian society's cultural and national life throughout history. Cinema has a tremendous power to influence the thinking of society. It can change society and social trends. Cinema to a certain extent helps to create national consciousness. It helps to utilize the energy of the young generation in the process of social reconstruction and national building programmes. Cinema brings out good morals, and guides and inspires public opinion by introducing popular sentiments. Cinema is also a powerful source of publicity and advertisements due to audio visual mass appeal.⁵⁸

Cinema signifies a powerful instrument for culture, education and propaganda. Jawahar Lal Nehru in a speech at the United National Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, marked the influence of Indian films on society which is greater than newspapers and books combined.⁵⁹ A collective experience of the range of emotions through cinema provides a safe environment. At the same time, cinema has got some disadvantages as well. Some films depict scenes of

⁵⁷ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Chalachithra Samskaram*, Cinevisions, Thrissur, 1996, pp. 47-55.

⁵⁸ Adoor Gopalakrishnan, *Cinemayude lokam*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2017, pp. 1-14.

⁵⁹ V. Mohanakrishnan, *Cinema Kaanum Deshangal*, Chintha Publishers, 2017, pp. 1-4.

moral degradation and violence which conveys a negative impact on the viewers.⁶⁰ Such movies easily catch the attention of young minds.

Cinema has attained a wider mass appeal with great potential to influence society. Being an audio-visual media, cinema is said to be the reflection of society but at the same time, society is influenced by cinema as well. Cinema thus evolved as a popular subject. It becomes a significant factor that generates, promotes, and visualizes smothering national feelings based on national societal endurance. Cinema can accelerate the economy and can increase the efficiency of social progress⁶¹.

Cinema is both a means of communication and entertainment. However, cinema over the years lost its educative and social aspect. It has become a commercial object. The producers and financiers are primarily concerned about the commercial value of the films. Thus, they attempt to include the ingredients like sex, violence, action, etc. into movies which leads to the decline of moral values of the society.⁶²

According to Gilles Deleuze, cinema is not merely about presenting images. It surrounds them with a world. Cinema constitutes an area of serious cultural enquiry being a popular art form of immense reactions.⁶³ A film could be regarded as the agglomeration of literature, music, dance, performance, and painting. It becomes an integral part of the human life. Cinema influences the lifestyle patterns of people. It is the best media used for the distribution of ideas.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

⁶¹ Naveen Kishore, *City Flicks*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2002, pp. 2-8.

⁶² Anirudh Deshpande, *Class, Power and Consciousness in Indian Cinema*, Primus books, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 14-18.

⁶³ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I – The Movement Image*, Bloomsbury, England, 2013, pp. 62-64.

As far as a film is concerned, the script is considered as its blueprint.⁶⁴ The script assimilates and disappears in the movie. The structure of the script is the total outcome of the filmy frames, content, and their mutual relation. Scriptwriting is very complicated than writing a story. It demands the writer's intelligence, efficiency, imagination, and hard work. It is not easy to write a screenplay for media like film. A speculation script was done first. The later extended script was done.⁶⁵ The guideline for cinematography was provided by the shooting script. The script writer works on a story thread and organizes scenes according to the order. The final form of the script included instructions for cinematography and other directions. Thus, the technical part also joins in script writing.

The script writer and the director must be very careful in selecting persons for appropriate characters. Their age, physical appearance, mannerisms, etc. are concerns behind casting actors.⁶⁶ As far as a script is concerned, it must be very concise, clear, and swift. Rigorous writing must be solid and that would be very strong. The scriptwriter must be vigilant in adding the facial expression, thoughts, and emotions of characters. Thus, if a film is defined as stories, then scripts would be the structure.

The institution called realism which considered the prime objective of art is to copy the world and life as it is. The institution sprouted in the first half of the twentieth century and concentrated on presenting events or things like watching directly⁶⁷. It shot scenes in familiar places and copied the common life exactly onto reels. The so-called neorealists in films preferred to present the original in films. In

⁶⁴ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Thirakkatha: Cinemayude Blue Print*, Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society, Kottayam, 2010, pp. 27-29.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-35.

⁶⁶ P. Sakeer Hussain, *Thirayum Kaalavum*, Green books, Trichur, 2017, pp. 65-80.

⁶⁷ V.K. Cherian, *Chalachithra Vicharam*, D. C. Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2016, pp. 35-75.

Indian films, Satyajit Rai could bring the feathers of realism to a certain extent and it was not much promoted due to commercial aspects of films.⁶⁸

The majority of Indian films were shot following some formulas. No Producer prefers financial loss. The formula suggests the culmination of categories like stunt, sex, crime, glamour, violence, melodrama, songs, etc. This was followed to entertain the different tastes of the audience. Sometimes movies were done focusing on one aspect of the entire formula. The audience welcomes those movies which maintain a standard value and renders social relevance. The success of a movie is bound with conquering the hearts of the audience and the category of movies doesn't matter to them.⁶⁹

6.3.1 Film Scholars

The rise and development of cinema was one of the most outstanding social phenomena of the twentieth century. It has occupied a unique position in our everyday social life. The cinema is an immense force whether good or bad. It moulds the opinion of millions in the course of its subtlety of natural superficial business of merely providing entertainment.⁷⁰

Film and film studies became more popular and gained a measure of academic respectability in India. Nowadays people becoming more conscious of how cinema has shaped their consciousness. Massive attendants of people in theatres and the high sale of books related to cinema tend to suggest that both viewers and readers are relating to the cinema like never before. In this context, it become very interesting and productive to contemplate the impact of cinema popularity on social, personal, and cultural history. Visual narratives have

⁶⁸ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Samskara Deseeyathayude Chalachitra Padangal*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2016, pp. 9-18.

⁶⁹ P. G. Sadanandan, *Cinamayude Vyakarna Bedhangal*, Keral Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2021, pp. 80-100.

⁷⁰ Malayala Pathanasangham Kalady, (ed.), *Samskara Padanam – Charithram Siddhantham, Prayogam*, Vallathol Vidyapeetham, Publications, Sukapuram, 2011, pp. 25-90.

increasingly dominated the cultural landscape of our modern world since the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷¹

Understanding and deconstructing a written text is similar to analyzing a film. On the other hand, a film offers a mixed visual treat to its audience regarding editing, music, dialogue, scenes, background, and foreground for acting and carries substantial differences. Cinema has been treated as an important invention that in one day will change the face of the world's civilization which is far more than the discovery of gunpowder, electricity, and continents.⁷² Cinema does create possibilities for all men on the earth to know one another by approaching and loving each other. It was advocated that cinema would eliminate divergences of views among men and prove invaluable components in realizing the human ideal. Thus, everyone should accord cinema the importance it deserves.

The vulnerability of individuals to visual narratives depends upon their ability to deconstruct as well as challenge the so-called prevalent discourses on society, culture, and politics. Gradually this vulnerability of individuals in turn could depend upon the capability of guiding the course of their life through both ideological and material conditions of their problem-ridden social existence. This is the point where education and consciousness come in.⁷³ Individual response to the visual narrative is informed by the social availability of alternative histories and modes of thought. This is what impinges upon a person's existence in a so-called globalized modern world. The development of critical thinking and the role of science education gives a crucial wave to social responses generated by visual narratives along with the fashioning of alternative and often radical modes of learning.⁷⁴

⁷¹ S. Theodore Baskaran, *History through the Lens Perspectives on South Indian Cinema*, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad, 2009, pp. 11-20.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 21-24.

⁷³ Chelagat Gopalakrishnan, *Indian Cinemayude Charithram*, pp. 1-14.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

In many significant ways, visual narratives help to form our shared experiences as men, women, children, and regional, cultural, and linguistic beings in whatever these terms may mean in different contexts. These narratives do possess a large hegemonic universe. Thus, there come enough growing evidence to suggest that the collusion being made between globalizing forces and the Indian state in creating certain conditions in their education would fail to empower the popular responses to the vagaries of capitalism and its visual narratives.⁷⁵ In a context that is informed by the declining critical thinking motivated the visual narratives that are said to play an ever-increasing hegemonic role towards in favour of the globalizing forces.⁷⁶

It has been assumed that people maintain a healthy distance between the ideologies rendered by visual narratives and their mundane existence. This was referred to frequently as an escape from reality argument. But there are responses to suggest that this may not necessarily be true. Because the radio, cinema and television cannot merely be dismissed as items on the list of modern methods of relaxation⁷⁷. It also can't be consigned to a section on culture and the arts portrayed in standard textbooks of history and social science.

As far as a film historian is concerned, he should be familiar with the nature of cinema, with the exclusive properties associated with cinema, its potential as well as possibilities. A film historian views films and writes about them just like a historian of literature has to read literary works and write about them.⁷⁸ Films are more difficult to read, analyze and interpret unlike inscriptions, archival materials or conventional data collection instruments like questionnaires. Being a visual medium, the film has to be seen by the historian to get the exact idea about it. A

⁷⁵ John Riber, *Writing and Producing for Television and Film*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

⁷⁷ V.K. Joseph, *Cinemayude Sneha Sancharaggal*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2020, pp. 90-170.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

film historian has to be sensitive to the properties of cinema since the language of moving images contains complex expressions and codes which are very different from written language.⁷⁹

One of the very significant features of cinema is its reproduction. Cinema could be mass-produced being a technically mediated art form and could reach a large number of people rather than confining to an exclusive few. Being a product of technology film marks the technique of reproduction which detaches the reproduced object from the traditional domain. It further substitutes a plurality of copies rendered for a unique experience.⁸⁰ The technological development of cinema is an important dimension of film history. In the silent era of film making where films were shot in the open air, in available light, and oblivious to environmental noises. The shooting shifted to indoors once sound was introduced, their shooting was done in soundproof studios under artificial lighting.⁸¹ Gradually, filmmaking embraced technical progress in all aspects.

As far as a film historian is concerned, cinema plays the role of achieving at two levels. First of all, every film contains the visual information recorded by the camera. Some achieve this deliberately and for others, this becomes just incidental. At the second level, when popular films are concerned, they reflect the aspirations, dreams, and concerns of people who thoroughly support them by buying tickets and watching them.⁸²

The very important problem for the film historian is handling a feature film. Studying films and utilizing them in historiography could be done through familiarity with the nature of cinema and semiology.⁸³ A feature film cannot be

⁷⁹ Moorkkoth Kunjappa, *Cinema*, Mangalodayam Limited, Trichur, 1951, pp. 20-25.

⁸⁰ Dr. T. Githesh, *Chalachithra Sidhandhangal*, The State Institute of Language, Thiruvananthapuram, 2014, pp. 13-60.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-70.

⁸² S. Theodore Baskaran, *History through the Lens*, pp. 20-24.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

used as direct evidence. Ironically on the other hand this is the characteristic that makes it valuable. Feature films mark as a mass entertainment medium that offers a unique source of insight into the culture of a society.

Popular attitudes were reflected in feature films and it could indicate the values and concerns of the people for entertainment which it created in the first order. The majority of filmmakers attempt to develop an audience image.⁸⁴ It can be described as an internalized notion with anticipated attitudes and preferences of the people who would see the finished film. The filmmaker handles subjects that are largely acceptable to a mass audience while considering film as a product meant for commercial use.⁸⁵

Cinema literacy plays a significant role in understanding and evaluating films. One has to learn how to look at films and how to develop the ability to study them. People must be familiar with the semiotics of films and should be able to recognize the codes and symbols of films as well.⁸⁶ It perpetuates the encountering images through visual literacy. Thus, films play a decisive role in moulding our ideas, thoughts, and emotions. It influences the process of social reconstruction and becomes an inevitable part of our entertainment life.

6.4 Treatment of the Past in Malayalam Films

Cinema has always been searching for those symbols and representatives of national entities for shadow construction. The gradual reflection of nationality in movies was not happening accidentally. Those representative models from periods derived for the initiative. Cinema has made the places and time part of emotional consciousness through internalizing national identity.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Chalachithra Prasthanangal*, Cine Visions, Thrissur, 1992, pp. 48-49.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

⁸⁶ V.K. Joseph, *Desham Powratham, Cinema*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2010, pp. 10-17.

⁸⁷ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Charithravum Chalachithravum – Deshyabhavanayude Harshamulyangal*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2010, pp. 70-74.

In the Indian context, nationalism is a plural structured discourse. But the reflection of the movement of nationality from diversity to contradiction makes a limitation within the film sphere.⁸⁸ Cinema advocated for a non-colonial land of India through its symbolized and disguised language. Converting those cultural investments of the past into reels could be regarded as a chapter in the long history of national cinema. The subject of Indian films embraced various components while entering from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century. Thus, romantic hero tales of historical characters were generated.⁸⁹ However, all such movies took the stand of an anti-colonial outlook. They stood for their mother country and self-rule.

Cinema always recreated the past by equating it with contemporary political conditions. They stressed national identity rather than explaining the process of colonialism. It was supported by romantic realism in the interpretation.⁹⁰ Historical movies immersed certain future perceptions into romantic depictions of places and time. Though it was merely an imaginative construction but could accomplish the right to self-rule.

There are dual aspects to the interpretation of historical movies. It has to deal with parts of historical interpretations and with symbols constituting film studies equally. In the first stage, it has to trace the assumption of historicising the occasion. For this purpose, cinema contemporise those symbols representing the past. The historical representation in films gets complicated by realising the possibility of reconstructing the past free from the inducements of physical circumstances.⁹¹

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

⁸⁹ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Chalachithravum Samoohavum*, pp. 12-16.

⁹⁰ M.C. Rajanarayanan, *Cinema Verittavazhikal*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2015, pp. 25-27.

⁹¹ Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala Samskara Patanangal*, pp. 1023 – 1025.

The research in the search for the contradiction between past and present is how far acceptable in the film industry as a commercial venture is a matter of debate. However, the film has always been compelled to agglomerate and equate those so-called contradictions.⁹² This is the stand usually reflected in movies based on historical events and persons. Film cooks history well within the media grounds. As far as the film industry is concerned, it can't survive without dealing with the day-to-day requirements and demands. Thus, this approach could not be attributed simply on grounds of distorting history.⁹³

Cinema inaugurates multiple opportunities for the unique period covering all spheres. By the 1920's the heroic stories of the great Maratha Warrior Sivaji had been filmed by Babu Rao Painter and that too in consecutive years.⁹⁴ Though Sivaji protested against Mughal domination his movies were observed on grounds of anti-colonialism. It was repeated during the post-colonial period as well. The films like *Shahid – E – Asam*, *Bhaghat Singh*, and *Prison of Golkonda* released in 1954 quoting the life of Bhaghat Singh were not only aimed to criticize Britishers but also attacked Nehruvian rulership as well.⁹⁵ Thus, both movies were hurdled under censorship. It exhibits the after-effects of transforming historical periods into movie frames. It indicates that the historical representation would be incomplete without dealing with contemporary discourses. Thus, it becomes obvious – that film can accomplish the historical 'reality' concerning contemporary socio-economic and political attributes.⁹⁶ So how can someone expect facts and impartiality in films which now merely turned into a myth in historical writing? Thus the concern gets more for the extent of recreating the past in the filmy

⁹² Raveendran, *Cinema, Samooham Prethyaya Sasthram*, pp. 8-18.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁹⁴ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Samskara Deseeyathayude Chalachithra Padanangal*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2016, pp. 122-130.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Palod Divakaran, *Malayala Cinema, Annum Ennum*, Sreshta Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 2020, pp. 22-120.

version of history. Cinema constitutes history by making use of contemporary orders within the frame of its requirements.⁹⁷

Historical movies transfigure the accomplishment of the past into inspirational entertainment for the present. It has marked trading on certain received ideas of continuing national as well as cultural consciousness. When the reconstruction of historical periods into reels there comes, the 'utopianizing effect' of cinematic aesthetics according to Jane Gaines.⁹⁸ Certain cinematic forms, and techniques, specifically the panorama, the magnification of scale, the widescreen proportions, and the epic magnificence were the major components through which the 'utopianizing effect' as per Gaines is conveyed. When historical figures become the heroes, then emerges the question of 'ideal subject' passion.⁹⁹ The protagonist has been selected according to the adherence of his body to the 'ideal subject' appeal of the period. The utopianizing aspect has more to do with this ideal effect concept which can be regarded as the dominant heroic imagery mood of the films.¹⁰⁰

Cinema recreates history by making use of the opportunities of the contemporary period in parallel to marketing values. For example, the movie *Mughal -E-Asam* by K. Asif released in 1960 attempted to rectify the administrative period of Akbar with the values of the contemporary period¹⁰¹. The movies like *Marthanda Varma* (1931) *Ummiinthanka* (1962), *Veluthambi Dalawa* (1962), *Pazhassi Raja* (1964), *Kunjali Marakkar* (1987) etc. have upheld the significance of individual failures rather than victory of humanity.¹⁰² Those popular art forms like

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ A. Chandra Sekhar, *Cinema Oru Dhrishya Prasthishtapanam*, Don books, Kottayam, 2020, pp. 20-80.

⁹⁹ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Charithravum Chalachithravum*, pp. 75-77.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Perunthanni Balachandran Nair, *Malayala Cinema Innale Innu*, Yavanika Publication, Thiruvananthapuram, 2009, pp. 104-110.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

films, drama, and other representations were part of the agglomeration of the process of Kerala state formation that continued since 1956. Those theatres and stage performances have to address the regionality and new civil society that evolved in the background of nation-state formation.¹⁰³

The remembrance of historical figures through recovering from the archaeological remains of myths and orals happens at a particular moment of cultural formation. Such a redemption process occurs in every sub-civilization. The political structure in Kerala during the 1960s has shown a rupture in ideologies and the democratic system.¹⁰⁴ The films like *Veluthambi Dalawa* and *Pazhassi Raja* got released in such inconsistent political conditions. Those films put forward the basic idea regarding the state along with stressing the significance of political morality. Those films communicated the indirect symbolization of enemies existing in our land while confronting British characters. *Veluthambi Dalawa* has cut down the fingers of Mallan Pillai for giving concession in tax collection and *Pazhassi Raja* also has cut down the hands of the treacherous Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu conveyed indirectly about the existence of enemies within the country.¹⁰⁵ Those films exhibited the desire to establish a new system of administration together with popular interference rather than going back to the so-called royal administration. The desire to establish a consistent administrative system was evident in their resistance.¹⁰⁶ Those films recognize the massive protest against unfair taxation in northern Malabar under *Pazhassi Raja* and the declarations by *Veluthambi Dalawa* throughout Venad against the British as the pillars of popular resistance.¹⁰⁷

Many experiments have not yet been done in the stream of historical films in Malayalam. In the film *Swathi Thirunal* by Lenin Rajendran, much importance

¹⁰³ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Thirakkatha : Cinemayude Blue Print*, pp. 27-34.

¹⁰⁴ Chelaggat Gopalakrishnan, *Indian Cinemayude Charithram*, pp. 84-90.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Vijayakrishnan, (ed.), *Malayala Cinema*, pp. 17-30.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

had been given to the mental pain and sadness of the protagonist under the pressure of external forces.¹⁰⁸ The film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* (2009) carries some fundamental features which can't be identified by comparing with the historical character played by the actor Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair in *Pazhassi Raja* (1964). The content of melodrama was less in the film compared to its early models but carries a romanticist essence throughout.¹⁰⁹ But more than that, the film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* could massively create popular interest and enthusiasm. Thus it opened a new popular arena in the process of historical reconstruction. Since the release of the movie, channels, printed media, and fan clubs audiences were all attempting to find historical facts about the story of Pazhassi Raja. Thus, those academic publications on Pazhassi Raja became in demand.¹¹⁰

M.T. Vasudevan Nair once opined that “there should not be adding when the script is based on a historical event. The fantasy of a writer could bring at the personal life of Pazhassi Raja and I took that freedom only.”¹¹¹ As far as the statement of M.T. Vasudevan Nair is concerned the wide range of imagination is the only attributed defect of the scriptwriter as the scale of liberty. In a historical story, historical facts and equalizing the factual representation require prior consideration rather than imagination. Thus, the scriptwriters of historical films have to wear the role of both a writer and a historian.¹¹² It applies to Thikkodiyan who wrote the screenplay for the 1964 released *Pazhassi Raja* directed by Kunchakko and the 2009 released *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja's* scriptwriter M. T. Vasudevan Nair. Without proper research work and homework, no one can write a ‘historical’ text or a Script. M.T. Vasudevan Nair stated that he has written history

¹⁰⁸ Prof. Panmana Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala Samskara Patanangal*, pp. 1022- 1024.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ V.K. Cherian, *Chalachithra Vicharam*, pp. 20-80.

¹¹¹ Star and Style, *Malayala Cinemayude MT*, Mathrubhumi Books, Kozhikode, August 2021, pp. 8-40

¹¹² A group of authors, *Emptiyude Sargaprapancham*, pp. 12-40.

through scripting for the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*.¹¹³ The script of M. T. Vasudevan Nair comprised popular memories, desires, written evidence and literature. The interpretation of a film and its script is derived from the agglomeration of literary documents including stories, novels, dramas, films and others related to Pazhassi Raja.

The film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* helped in transforming those participants of the Pazhassi rebellion from oral sources to written documents.¹¹⁴ The film has both influenced and provocative the disunity of history. Different stories have given different perspectives of Pazhasse Raja. It is difficult to differentiate between what is wrong and what is right. There are variations in the explanation and appearance of Pazhassi Raja. However, every story has one opinion that Pazhassi Raja was a celebrated hero who died after fighting against the colonial power. The film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* helped the audience to understand a historical period accessible through contemporary power relations and social discourses¹¹⁵. The representation acquired by Edachena Kunkan, Thalakkal Chanthu and others is the reflection of the contemporary social equations. The film could not be done without considering the role of tribal community and that was accepted by Hariharan and M.T.¹¹⁶

Contemporary cinema has to be studied segregating from the history of films to consider those changes it creates in different periods. There is unanimity in the formulation of complicated films' entertaining perspectives. The experiences of modernity could be viewed in each segment but nothing happens in the internal core of interpretations. Films receive the output of modernity by giving significance

¹¹³ K. Jayakumar, *M.T: Kala, Kaalam, Vykthi*, DC books, Kottayam, 1998, pp. 17-60.

¹¹⁴ M.T. Vasudevan Nair, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja – Screenplay*, Current Books, Thrissur, 2010, pp. 2-24.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27.

¹¹⁶ Dr. K.J. Ajayakumar, *Drishyakala Ezhuthum Kazhchayum.*, pp. 17-19.

to a particular aspect.¹¹⁷ Films always aim for the implementation of a true entertainer using all technical aids rather than perusing the originals.

There are three kinds of historical studies regarding films. First of all, it is about the history of the technical and commercial growth of films. Changes and progress in the technical department, use of well-equipped cameras, changes in the patterns of shots taking, makeup and costumes, action scenes and VFX, reformation in theatre set up, use of digital technics, growth of fan clubs, labour issues in the film field, etc. comes as research issues in the first category¹¹⁸. The second category refers to films as sources of historical studies about the period in which the film got produced. The changes in lifestyle patterns, changes in fashion and makeup, food patterns, daily use products, vehicles, constructions, changing geography, rural and urban areas, language style etc., all come under study materials for the second category¹¹⁹. The third category is all about the film representation of written history¹²⁰. Historical figures, incidents discourses, etc. were the main focuses of historical films. The audience of historical films belongs to two categories in general. One group has a good knowledge of the particular theme of the film. Whereas the second group doesn't have much knowledge about it.

Usually, a movie based on history would be taken after conducting detailed research on the subject along with consulting historians about it. In Hollywood movies, there must be a special panel of historians when a movie was taken on historical grounds¹²¹. Anyway, the pattern of research followed by researchers and historians on a historical theme will be the same at the beginning. But the outcome gives birth to two kinds of historical interpretations. The thesis of a historical

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-22.

¹¹⁸ S. Theodore Baskran, *History Through the Lens*, pp. 17-20.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

¹²⁰ A. Chandrasekhar, *Cinema Oru Drishya Prathishtapanam*, pp. 20-98.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-140.

researcher confines within a book itself. Whereas film creates a fantasy world that appears before an audience for two to three hours.¹²²

How historical material was read by a historian and a film writer would be almost the same way. But the history recreated from historical material by them would be in different ways. Serious and genuine historical work or thesis is prepared for those who are interested in history and for those who possess seriousness towards history and historical books. Whereas film was not aimed at a small section.¹²³ The film aims at business and it has been produced for a huge number of viewers.

As far as historical film is concerned, it must be presented in a simple way that is easily understandable for the audience. Those complicated historical aspects and proceedings should be as much as simplified through the platform of films. Otherwise, it would be a flop.¹²⁴ Whereas a book or a thesis on history is concerned, it must contain all such relevant and complicated incidents, discourses, and chronology of history. The historian or the researcher doesn't need to simplify it. Because a book is made not for any commercial purpose. The readers who read the particular book need to read those difficult portions again and again until to get understand. In theatres, the film must be played once at a time. So, the viewers can't ask for a repeat play at the same time.¹²⁵

In the film industry, there are different kinds of films being made. Comedy films, tragedy films, and films on dance, music, family, love, and so on. In the end, movies in general aim to entertain people and to make a good business at the box office. Thus, the filmy representation of historical themes brings a cinematic history of events¹²⁶. Pazhassi Raja was portrayed as committing suicide by swallowing a

¹²² Vijayakrishnan, *Malayala Cinemayude Katha*, Poorna Publications, Kozhikode, 2017, pp. 62-64.

¹²³ K. Muraleedharan, *Drusya Padhathile Anarga Silpangal*, pp. 113-116.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-120.

¹²⁵ G.P. Ramachandran, *Cinemayum Malayaliyude Jeevithavum*, pp. 4-10.

¹²⁶ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Charithravum Chalachitravum*, pp. 73-80.

diamond in the movie *Pazhassi Raja* (1964). In the 2009 released film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, the hero was projected as shot dead on the battlefield. But the hero never fell. He stood on the field by clinching his sword even while suffering from pain. Thus, both representations could be regarded as revenge and have given enthusiasm to the audience.¹²⁷ Cinematic revenge was done through it which is not possible for historical works and history researchers. Thus, a historical film not only represents a theme from history but also historicizes happiness, fear, love, grudge, enmity, compassion, affection, and all.¹²⁸

6.4.1. Image Perception through Films

Cinema is the cultural product of visual images. Those visual images and their interpretations of how appears in the cultural representations of society is a significant aspect to be discussed. It's also to note how those visual images represent the life of a particular population in inducing the production and destruction of political and cultural values. It operates for the understanding of primary inquiries regarding the reflection of visual images in the external space from within film interpretations. Thus the study of the history of films becomes the study of the existence and movement of images¹²⁹. The period which has shown in films becomes history and the place exhibited becomes the background. Thus, the cultural formations of ideologies are constituted by going through the places and periods shown in movies imbibing different experiences of visionary. Those actors we see in films become liberated from their physical entity and transform into different ideas, symbols, and images born from different places and times. Those mainstream films released post-independence in India highlighted the progress, aims, and principles of social order along with parallel films.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Chalachithravum Samoohavum*, pp. 104-107.

¹²⁹ Dr. K.J. Ajaya Kumar, *Drishyakala Ezhuthum Kazchayum*, pp. 5-10.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-14.

Cinema possesses a very strong communicative power. Cinema at the beginning itself indicated as a form of 'language'. Cinema always influences the perspectives of the audience. The same image portrayed in films creates multiple experiences for audiences belonging to different cultural backgrounds. Each person could accept and relate to images easily. Audiences even could interpret those simple images in different ways.¹³¹ This image reading is incorporated with different dimensions. The way audience views images and imbibing them are purely mental activities. Images could be given two mutually correlated meanings. The image on the one hand conceived as a structure with different kinds of changes. Also, it carries a mental experience. It denotes the creation of new ideas by the assimilation of images in the brain.¹³²

In the process of film exhibition, the audience is part of an intellectual activity rather than simply consumers. Broadly, the three significant components of films are the filmmaker, the film, and the audience. Cinema differentiates itself by finding its language. The peculiarities of art, script, and cinematography bring changes in languages, attire, and the context of scenes different from a normal interpretation into brilliant heights.¹³³

The significance of image as far as films are concerned, comes up as a picture produced by a camera, artist, mirror or whatever rather than a reproduction or imitation of the form of a person or thing. A period-oriented image projection makes more connection with psychological aspects. The audience experiences an image through visual as well as psychological activities. The concepts like image, imagery, imaging, and imagination purely happen on internal discourses of personal acquaintance.¹³⁴ The film appears within a particular

¹³¹ John Riber, *Writing and Producing for Television and film*, pp. 4-10.

¹³² Mankada Ravi Varma, *Chithram Chalachithram*, The State Institute Language, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp. 62-64.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-67.

¹³⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I -The Movement Image*, pp. 65-70.

framework. It creates differences in meanings at the joining and dissolution of various components.

Those images and imagery derived out of images and imaginations normally come in individual perceptions and propagation moves unintentionally. That is the point where the natural reproduction of images and imagery happens.¹³⁵ Each cinema accepts the ideology of representing culture. In such a way cinema becomes the reflection of society. The politics of film is associated with society and life. The marketing and propagation interests of films make unusual entity formulations and creations of superheroes.¹³⁶ As an art form, cinema has many obligations towards society which is subjected to change according to the imaginations formed in each period.

Images are imbibed as the ability of the audience to recognize and understand ideas conveyed through visible actions or pictures. The concept of visual literacy gives a new perception of individual articulation of celebrity images.¹³⁷ Visual literacy represents a profound shift from a text-driven definition of literacy to a view of literacy like active transformation by texts rather than consisting of old ideas with a new name. Both visual literacy and image perception are closely connected.¹³⁸

The filmmaker must have some visual imagination while transforming literary works into films. Rather than explanations, the concentration of content must be stressed while making a film based on a book.¹³⁹ Unnecessary facts and exaggerated words need to be cut down in the filmy process of literary works. Those parts disliked by people and which brokes the language of a film should be

¹³⁵ Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*, London and New York Publications, London, 1996, pp. 24-110.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-140.

¹³⁷ Dr. T. Githesh, *Chalachithra Sidhandhangal*, pp. 82-90.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹³⁹ Anirudh Deshpande, *Class, Power and Consciousness in Indian Cinema*, p. 12.

avoided and might have added new scenes. Thus, dramatization and conceptualization always come up with complications. The imaginative personification of the central characters becomes an essential part of the mesmerising presentation of the theme as acceptable to the audience.¹⁴⁰

Thus, the film's commercial purpose adds essential ingredients to establish the heroism of the protagonist. Though it conveys a sophisticated image construction among the audience but gives the platform to recall those forgotten heroes. A film stands for entertainment purposes and presents heroism even at tragic ends. So, an extraordinary image line of the hero could be viewed through reels.¹⁴¹

6.5. 'Pazhassi Raja' and the Art of Image Construction

The 1964 released movie *Pazhassi Raja* takes the audience back to the 18th century. The film was produced and directed by Kunchakko under the banner of XL Productions at Udaya Studios.¹⁴² The film was probably regarded as the second historical movie in Malayalam. The first historical movie in Malayalam was *Veluthambi Dalawa* (1962) which was a box-office hit.¹⁴³ The role of Veluthambi Dalawa was played by Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair and he was selected to play the central character of Pazhassi Raja as well. The movie *Veluthambi Dalawa* was directed by Kunchakko as well. The 1960s was a period that brought competition between Udaya Studios and Neela Productions. Neela came up with their film *Karutha Kai* five days after the release of *Pazhassi Raja* and the movie *Karutha Kai* was a big hit.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-20

¹⁴¹ Michael Ryan, *Cultural studies – A Practical Introduction*, Wiley – Blackwell, UK 2010, p. 136.

¹⁴² Edamaruk Joseph, *Kerala Saskaram*, Vidyarthi Mithram book dippo, Kottayam, 1971, pp. 586-588

¹⁴³ Vincent Kiraloor, *Malayala Cinemayude Naduvazhi*, Green books, Trichur, 2021, pp. 148-150

¹⁴⁴ Malayalam movie *Pazhassi Raja*, directed by Kunchacko, released on 21st August 1964.

The entire movie *Pazhassi Raja* was shot at Udaya Studios. Thus, some scenes like the war sequences lacked technical perfection. The film required lavish sets being a historical movie which the studio could not provide.¹⁴⁵ Thus film historians had the opinion that the result of the film would have been different if the movie had been shot outdoors. The very famous Malayalam play writer P. Kunjanandan Nair popularly known as Thikkodiyar wrote the dialogues for the film.¹⁴⁶ The title role of Pazhassi Raja was played by Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair and it was excelled by the tremendous performance from the actor.¹⁴⁷ His commanding voice was a huge plus for the character. Other prominent characters were played by Prem Nazir, Sathyan, S.P. Pilla, Satyapal, Rajashree, Pankajavalli etc. The film added some comic scenes through actors S.P. Pillai, Manavalen Joseph and Nellikkodu Bhaskaran. However, they failed to evoke the desired response.¹⁴⁸

The movie got released on 21st August 1964. The music of the film was done by R.K. Shekhar, father of A.R. Rahman. It was his debut film as a music director.¹⁴⁹ The film comprised twelve songs penned by Vayalar Rama Varma. Though the movie was a big flop the music was widely accepted and appreciated by the audience.¹⁵⁰

The movie begins in the background when the East India Company was attempting to establish their control in almost all parts of Kerala. The role of Kurumbranad Raja was played by actor Nanukuttan. He has surrendered before the company. But Pazhassiraja fought against the company. Kurumbranad Raja's niece and nephew took refuge at the palace of Pazhassi Raja.¹⁵¹ Tippu Sultan attacked Malabar to bring those areas surrendered to the company under his

¹⁴⁵ Perunthanni Balachandran Nair, *Malayala Cinema Innale Innu*, pp. 5 – 100.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-120.

¹⁴⁷ G. Vijayakrishnan, *Malayala Cinemayude Katha*, pp.10-25.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-40

¹⁴⁹ Vincent Kiraloor, *Malayala Cinemayude Naduvazhi*, pp. 8-60.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ <http://www.hindu.com/MP/2009/12/14/stories>, accessed on 20th may 2019, 10.30am.

control. East India Company could not fight with the ferocious troops of Tippu Sultan. Thus, they formed a treaty with Pazhassi Raja and with his support they hoped to defeat Tippu Sulthan. Finally British succeeded in defeating Tippu with Pazhassi Raja's support. Later Pazhassi Raja's uncle Kurumbanad Raja convinces the East India Company that he is capable to collect taxes in Kottayam and declared himself as the real heir to Kottayam. Pazhassi Raja strongly opposes this move. The role of Wellesley was played by actor Satyapal.¹⁵² Wellesley invited Pazhassi Raja to his bungalow to discuss the issue. Later the niece and nephew of Kurumbranad Raja convey to Pazhassi Raja the treacherous plans of the East India Company.

Finally, Pazhassi Raja challenges the British. So, the Company officials attempted to arrest him. But that was blocked by *Kurichya* archers of Pazhassi and they rescued their king. Later British troops captured Pazhassi Raja's palace. Pazhassi Raja and his military commandants and attendants like Kaitheri Ambu (Dr Chandra Guptan) Unni Moosa (Sankaradi), Kannavath Nambiar (Prem Nazir), and the *kurichya* leader (Vincent Chacko) were escaped to Wayanad forest. From there, they begin guerrilla warfare against the East India Company.¹⁵³

The role of T.H. Baber was played by Sathyan. Baber was seen reaching the hideout place of Pazhassi Raja with the help of Pazhayam Veettil Chandthu. The role of Pazhayam Veedan was played by Kottayam Chellappan¹⁵⁴. Anyway, both Baber and Chanthu were beaten up and sent back with a warning. Finally, it led to the commencement of a bitter fight between the Company and Pazhassi Raja. Meanwhile, Pazhassi Raja was seen recapturing his palace. At the same time, Baber took Pazhassi Raja's wife Kaitherimakkam, and their infant son under custody. The role of Makkam was played by Sreedevi.¹⁵⁵ Later the war becomes

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ B. Vijayakumar, *Pazhassi Raja* (1964) A Study, *The Hindu*, 14th December 2009.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Perunthanni Balachandran Nair, *Malayala Cinema*, Yavanika Publication, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006, pp.4-90

intensified. East India Company was seen trying all kinds of nasty tricks to defeat Pazhassi Raja. They even set his palace on fire. In the final war, all men on the side of Pazhassi Raja were beaten up. The hero of the movie, Pazhassi Raja was pictured swallowing the diamond on his ring and committing suicide. Thus, the movie ends with this¹⁵⁶

The image of Pazhassi Raja was picturized in the movie with the complete look of a King. He was in royal dress, a royal crown with feathers and beads, and gold ornaments like chains, bangles, and rings along with chappals.¹⁵⁷ He was beardless and had a serious look. Pazhassi Raja had the physicality of a perfect ruler through Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair. His fairness, masculinity and handsome look with his husky voice enriched the heroic representation of Pazhassi Raja. Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair was the right choice for the character of Pazhassi Raja in the 1960s. He had a big acceptance in those times as a mainstream actor.¹⁵⁸ Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair also performed the role of Kunjali Marakkar in the 1967 released movie *Kunjali Marakkar*. Thus, the actor was a prolific personality who performed so well on screen whether it is Pazhassi Raja, Veluthambi Dalawa or Kunjali Marakkar¹⁵⁹. Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair has won two Kerala State film awards. He won the best actor award in 1970 for the movie *Aranazhika Neram* and received the second-best Actor award in 1969 for the movie *Koottukudumbam*.¹⁶⁰

Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair was always been popular for his outspoken and Stubborn character. He was a short-tempered person and once walked out of the set of *Aranazhika Neram* due to some disputes with the filmmakers.¹⁶¹ Similarly, he performed mostly serious characters on reels. He could be equated

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 91-170.

¹⁵⁷ G.P. Ramachandran, *Malayala Cinema, Desham, Bhasha, Samskaram*, pp. 10-190.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁹ Pradeep Kumarapilla, *Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair, Abhrapaliyile Nadana Vismayam*, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2020, pp. 12 – 200.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁶¹ Karoor Soman, *Cinema Innale Innu Nale*, pp. 60-65.

more or less with Mammooty on both characters and acting-wise was the best choice for presenting Pazhassi Raja on screen.

6.6. Image construction in the movie 'Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja'

The movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* was released in 2009 and was based on the life of the eminent historical figure Pazhassi Raja. The movie was directed by Hariharan and the screenplay was done by M.T. Vasudevan Nair.¹⁶²

At the beginning of the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, British army General James Gordon's encroachment on Pazhassi *kovilakam* was picturized. Gordon was seen entering the bedroom of Pazhassi Raja and wearing a red hat used by Pazhassi Raja. Gordon commented that there is nothing fancy about the room which indicates how simple the character of Pazhassi Raja was.¹⁶³

In the introduction scene of Pazhassi Raja, he was seen appearing before Kurumbranad Raja post company's attack at his *kovilakam*. The physical image of Pazhassi Raja was uniquely presented in the movie. He appeared with a long chain full of beads along with a locket of *Sriporkkali Bagavati* emblem, a small golden chain with *rudraksha*, big bangles, *Kadukkan* on ears, round golden chains on the upper hands, long hair tied on the side, a Shawl was worn around the neck, a *sindoor* on the forehead, worn chappals and *poonul*.¹⁶⁴

A very lovable husband Pazhassi Raja was seen pampering his wife Makkam at the abortion of their child. Pazhassi Raja was seen sad but consoles his wife at their loss. Pazhassi Raja's affinity to *Sri Porkkali Baghavathi* was clearly shown in the movie. His prayers and concern for religious beliefs are explicated through some *Bhagavathi* praising verses. The movie projects that the liberation of the

¹⁶² P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Samskara Deseeyathayude Chalachithra Padanangal* pp. 122-124.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Movie, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, Directed by Hariharan, Released on 16th October 2009.

country and the sustainment of existing beliefs and practices were the declared aims of Pazhassi Raja behind his anti-colonial resistance.¹⁶⁵

In the movie, Pazhassi Raja, Edachena Kunkan, and Ambu Nair were portrayed riding horses. Pazhassi has also been seen chewing betel leaves. T.H. Baber and his fiancée Dora were taken under the custody of Pazhassi Raja while their journey to Thalassery through the wild forest of Wayanad. Pazhassi treated them well and released them quickly. It indicates how respectful was Pazhassi even towards his enemies.¹⁶⁶ When they back to Thalassery Fort, Dora Explains to British officials that Pazhassi Raja was a gentleman and not a wild man.

In the first half of the film, there was a scene of *vaalpayatt* between Pazhassi Raja and Edachena Kunkan as a fun moment. The scene was intentionally added to enrich the heroic spirit of the movie along with showing the brilliance of Pazhassi Raja in martial arts¹⁶⁷. In another scene, Pazhassi Raja was at Kaitheri to meet his wife Makkam. There he was attempted to capture by the British force under Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu. Pazhassi defeated them with his *urumi* and the scene itself highlighted the heroic representation of Pazhassi.¹⁶⁸ At the settlement meeting in Thalassery Fort, everyone presented at the venue stood together including Britishers when Pazhassi Raja arrived. Pazhassi Raja was accompanied by a huge amount of tribals and warriors outside Thalassery Fort. That has shown the intense popular support and power of Pazhassi Raja.¹⁶⁹ He was very much concerned about ensuring the peace of people at the settlement meeting. After

¹⁶⁵ M.T. Vasudevan Nair, *Kerala Varma Pazassi Raja - Screenplay*, pp. 50-55.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-76.

¹⁶⁷ *Vaalpayatt* denotes sword fight. It trains warriors to cut and thrust with sword together with the shield.

¹⁶⁸ *Urumi* is a kind of sword with a flexible whip-like blade. Prior knowledge is required before using the weapon.

¹⁶⁹ M.T. Vasudevan Nair, *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja-Screenplay*, pp.80-90

signing the treaty, Jonathan Duncan appreciated Pazhassi Raja saying “he is a wise man.”¹⁷⁰

In one scene Edachena Kunkan meets Unni Moosa and clears all his doubts regarding the rumours over Pazhassi Raja’s Muslim killings.¹⁷¹ Pazhassi Raja also appears in the scene and both Raja and Moosa hug each other for a good friendship and cooperation.

Pazhassi Raja was seen beardless at the beginning of the movie. But in the second phase of Pazhassi’s revolts, he appeared with a beard. Pazhassi was making a solo entry at the British party post the death of Thalakkal Chanthu.¹⁷² Pazhassi Raja was alone amidst British resistance with guns and swords. The scene was added to give a superheroic outlook for Pazhassi Raja. He got only a gunshot in the shoulder. But he has killed almost all the British officials and army thereunder only. But he killed almost all the British officials and army there. As revenge, Pazhassi hanged the British official who hanged Thalakkal Chanthu.¹⁷³

At the climax, there was a fight between Edachena Kunkan and Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu. The scene was supposed to be added to give commercial value to the film. The scene was a thrilling experience for the audience. Those powerful dialogues from Kunkan at the time of the killing of Pazhayam Veettil Chanthu were widely appreciated by the audience¹⁷⁴. In the climax scene, Pazhassi Raja knew that he would be defeated in the end. However, he decided to fight back even at the surety of his death. Emman Nair asked him for a reconciliation with the company which Pazhassi Raja denies. He said that his blood would mark the real owners of the land. Pazhassi Raja was on horseback at the battlefield with limited men on his

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-110

¹⁷¹ Dr. Joseph Scaria, *Pazhassi Rekhakalile Vyavahara Bhasha*, Mathrubhumi books, Kozhikode, 2007, pp. 60-240.

¹⁷² <http://www.malayalam movies.org/Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja>.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ G. Vijaykrishnan, *Malayala Cinemayude Katha*, pp. 110-125.

side.¹⁷⁵ Karunakara Menon blocks Pazhassi Raja from proceeding the war. Pazhassi shouted at him and asked him to leave. British could easily shoot Pazhassi Raja at the progress of the war but Baber restricts it because the authority wants him alive.

At the climax, Pazhassi Raja led a solo fight with the *kolkar*. Then it became a group attack. But finally the British shot him dead.¹⁷⁶ Baber took the dead body of Pazhassi Raja into his palanquin and saluted him. Baber said, “he was our enemy but was a great man, a great warrior. We honour him” The movie ends with this dialogue.¹⁷⁷

6.6.1 Criticisms and Discussions on the Film

Dr. K.K.N. Kurup criticized the presentation of Pazhassi Raja in films. According to him, Pazhassi Raja was presented as a romantic hero with feudal characters.¹⁷⁸ The real-life of Pazhassi Raja is not what has been seen in films, novels, and all. Company documents and reports show light on the character of Pazhassi Raja. Though the reflection of the personality of Pazhassi Raja found in British writings including military consultations are not in complete form. But it's informative to a certain extent. *The Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* (2009) movie presented Mammootty as the central character which is contrary to British perceptions of Pazhassi Raja. Critics argue that the scriptwriter of the movie, M.T. Vasudevan Nair should have much responsibility towards writing a script based on a historical theme¹⁷⁹. The movie is regarded as far away from historical realities. In the movie, Pazhassi Raja was presented as an English-speaking personality who ride

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Mammootty, *Chamayanggal*, Current Books, Trichur, 2011. pp. 78-100.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-120.

¹⁷⁸ Dr. K.K.N. Kurup, *Pazhassi Raja Kaalavum Jeevithavum*, Melinda Books, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, p. 67.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

horses and fighting. Those tribal ladies are also picturized as fighting with weapons. All don't have any connection with history.¹⁸⁰

According to M.G.S. Narayanan, the release of the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* (2009) has allowed people for a discussion once again about Pazhassi Raja's period, colonial tactics, and national movement. The fiction of Pazhassi Raja's suicide by swallowing a diamond in the 1964 released movie *Pazhassi Raja* was questioned. Many historical facts were distorted in the movie. Similarly, there were many distortions were added in the 2009 released movie on Pazhassi Raja.¹⁸¹ For example, the death of Kannavath Nambiar and his son happens in history after the death of Tippu Sultan. In the film, the fact was flipped. Edachena Kunkan committed suicide after the death of Pazhassi Raja. But in the film, he was seen committing suicide before the death of Pazhassi Raja. This was probably to give a heroic representation of the character of Pazhassi Raja. Otherwise, Kunkan would grasp the entire attention¹⁸². Similarly, the character Karunakara Menon was presented as a middle-aged person through the actor Jagathy Sreekumar. He was seen travelling in Palanquin as well. In history, Karunakara Menon was at a younger age during the time of Pazhassi Raja's death and he was gifted with palanquin allowance only after the death of Pazhassi Raja.¹⁸³ Again, tribal traditions say that tribal women were not trained or participated in the Pazhassi rebellion. The film shows the opposite.¹⁸⁴ The love life of Neeli and Thalakkal Chanthu has nothing to do with history as the character of Neeli itself assumed as an imaginative figure.¹⁸⁵ Thus, the movie contains enormous contradictions with history.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ P. Ranjith, (ed.), *Charithram Vyavaharam: Keralavum Bharathavum* by M.G.S. Narayanan, Current books, Thrissur, 2015, pp. 187-188.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

¹⁸³ Prema Jayakumar, *Karunakara Menonum Eastindiacompaniyum*, Mathrubhumi books, Kozhikode, 2009, pp. 25-90.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Palliyara Raman, Kalpetta, On 2nd December 2021 at 4.00pm.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Several historians opined that Pazhassi Raja never ruled his country. Because the elder member becomes the ruler in the *naduvazhi* system. Pazhassi Raja never met with such an opportunity. He was only a member of the Pazhassi royal family. He never had a country or a royal army¹⁸⁶. He never wore ornaments. More importantly, never had the opportunity to undertake warfare by riding horses. He led no war¹⁸⁷. It was stated that the film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* is not exact history. The film simply used certain historical names to entertain people and accumulate profit. According to Walter Ever's diary, Pazhassi Raja always wore a single *mundus* and was a short person. How the actor Mammooty matches the physical description of Pazhassi Raja in Colonial accounts is contradictory. History doesn't speak about Pazhassi Raja's soldiers wearing modern dresses and speaking refined Malayalam¹⁸⁸. History did not mention anything about Pazhassi Raja's direct relationship with Kaitheri Makkam. She was regarded as one of the wives of Pazhassi Raja. He had around three or four wives altogether and which wife was with him at the time of his death is still unknown.

The movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* is regarded as one of the biggest hits in Malayalam Cinema. The historical cinema garnered rave reviews. The moviegoers widely opined that the role was tailor-made for Mammooty and no other actor could play the role better than him. However, the film met with several criticisms as well. Pazhassi Raja's family raised some objections to the film.¹⁸⁹

According to P. K. Sankara Varma, a member of the Pazhassi family, there were severe historical discrepancies in the movie. Varma said that there is very little of Kannur, Wayanad, and Pazhassi in the film. The film did not show Ezhimala, the place where war strategies were laid out by Pazhassi Raja against the British.

¹⁸⁶ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Samskara Deseeyathayude Chalachithra Padaggal*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2016, pp. 131-140.

¹⁸⁷ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Charithravum Chalachithravum*, pp. 82-84.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁸⁹ Dr. Kuttamath Kunniyur Narayana Kurup, *The History Twisted*, Kaumudi online, 9th July 2019.

The film didn't specify the Pazhassi Madam temple to which Pazhassi Raja was closely attached. Sankara Varma added that the climax of the movie was historically inaccurate. Varma also complained that the movie never attempted to make any references to the road that the British constructed through the middle of the palace after Pazhassi Raja's death. The director of the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, Hariharan replied clearly to all the criticisms against the film. He said that around ten books were referred well before getting into the project and he is least interested in controversies as well.¹⁹⁰

The Kurichya Vikasana Samiti conducted a press meeting on 20th October 2009 disliking some scenes of the film. They criticised how the death of Pazhassi Raja and Thalakkal Chanthu was presented as against their beliefs. They considered that Pazhassi Raja died by swallowing a diamond ring during an encounter. In the movie Pazhassi Raja was portrayed dead by a gunshot from the Britishers and Thalakkal Chanthu was hanged in public. The Samiti members argued that Chanthu was shot dead while fighting with the British. The opinion of Kurichya Vikasana Samiti was based on their centuries-old belief system.¹⁹¹ Their arguments were supported by the drama *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* written by Kappana Krishna Menon, the movie *Pazhassi Raja* (1964) and many other stories and folk songs. The film was also criticised for not adding a single shot of Pazhassi Raja's tomb in Mananthavady. Their representation of Edachena Kunkan in the movie was severely criticised by Edachena Nair Samajam. They stated that Kunkan was a rich landlord and possessed everything so flourished. But in the film, he was represented as an orphan and poor.¹⁹² He was picturised as a coward who committed suicide. Though he committed suicide but was never a coward.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Roopa Namboodirippad, *The Real Story*, the Hindu, 23rd November 2009.

¹⁹¹ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Charithravum Chalachithravum*, pp. 78-82.

¹⁹² Prof. K.T. Narayanan Nair, *Wayanadam Nair Kudumbangalum*, published by the author, Sulthan Bathery 2010, pp. 34-35

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

Film historian Robert Rosenstun opines that in historical films some additions in the script come both as right and wrong. If certain scenes were added appropriately to the historical occasion, then it would be right. If something were added to the scene for nothing then it would be wrong.¹⁹⁴ Nathali Zemon Devis argues that cinematic imagination was made in film as part of enhancing the credibility of history shown on the screen. The prime content of the movie would be there but some kind of fantasy contribution is required to make the film more reachable to the audience.¹⁹⁵ Many people would opine that both cinema and history are two. However, no one has got the right to distort history. Film influences generations. The future generation would think the history of Pazhassi Raja is simply as what has been depicted in the film until a new movie on Pazhassi Raja comes. It was said that writers' freedom should not be exploited for a box office hit.¹⁹⁶

As far as the Malayalam film industry is concerned, the concept of converting history into cinema has not yet received wide initiative. Because historical movies require an in-depth knowledge of historical facts and immense efficiency in filmmaking apart from a huge amount of production.¹⁹⁷ The necessity of the recreation of the dressing pattern, language, customs, traditions, rituals, architecture, festivals etc. of the particular period in an appropriate manner with a detailed understanding of minute things. It requires an adequate imaginary vision from the filmmaker and its implementation with technical help.¹⁹⁸

It is very careful to adapt and present the principles and behaviour of the historical figures as it is before the camera. Interestingly the question arises that how many filmmakers justify bringing the exact history on reels. Thus, it is right to

¹⁹⁴ S. Theodore Baskaran, *History Through the Lens*, pp.20-24.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, PP. 25-35.

¹⁹⁶ Dr. Sajan Palamattom, *Cinemayude Rasathanthram*, pp. 4-15.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-22.

¹⁹⁸ Dr. T. Githesh, *Chalachithra Sidhandhangaal*, pp. 18-60.

disclose that only entertaining movies or commercial movies of the historical genre were created in Kerala by exploring the popularity of certain historical figures or incidents.¹⁹⁹

6.6.2 Mammootty as Pazhassi Raja

There are many ideas to be communicated with the social circumstances and conditions regarding the heroic imagery in the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*. The film self imposes as a historical film. Interestingly the designs, as well as colour shades used throughout the posters of the film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, possess striking parallels to that of similar genres from Hollywood.²⁰⁰ One prominent aspect to be noted down is that the nuclei formula of representation has been followed in the film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*. It constitutes aspects like separation, initiation, and return as reflected in some of the historical films of Hollywood.²⁰¹ So in many dimensions, the film offers a global experience. The typical portrayal of the male body is regarded as one of the significant features of Hollywood films of historical characters. It exhibits to viewers the pleasure of watching male 'existence' like walking, moving, riding, and fighting through landscapes and cityscapes.²⁰² The projection of the male body in the lead role is very much shown in the film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*.

The *vadakkan pattu* genre films of the early period carry a similar way of portrayal of a male body and concomitant hero image in the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*. The *vadakkan pattu* genre movie casting was done with multiple heroes who were prominent actors in the film industry.²⁰³ Above all such films paid much concentration upon the 'heroic deeds' where the lead actor engaged and

¹⁹⁹ V. K. Joseph, *Desham, Powrathvam, Cinema*, p. 64.

²⁰⁰ G.P. Ramachandran, *Malayala Cinema: Desam, Bhasha, Samskaram*, pp. 12-62.

²⁰¹ Johny Luckose, *Abhimukam Nayakar Gayakar*, Manorama's books, Kottayam, 2021, pp.40-68.

²⁰² Soumya Dechamma CC and Elavarthi Sathya Prakash, (ed.), *Cinema's of South India: Culture Resistance and Ideology*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010, p. 198.

²⁰³ Pratheesh T.S., *Avagananakalkkethire oru charithra veeragatha, Chithrabhumi*, 2009.

immersed in participatory performances in fulfilling his heroic image. As far as the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* was concerned the body of the hero preponderates in every heroic deed visualized in the film. This aspect could be noted down right from the beginning of the film with the arrival of the hero, his movements were evident in song sequences, his armed exercises exposed his superior masculine body, sporting arrows on targets and almost every scene of the movie in which the hero indulges in.²⁰⁴

The heroic imagery in the film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* offers a vivid experience when compared with similar genres of Hollywood films. As it marks the sink of both the character Pazhassi Raja and Mammootty in person in the experience of the film. There either comes a continuation of various Mammootty stardom-oriented films or the representation of the image ascribed to him by the masses in several plots of the film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*.²⁰⁵ Jean Baudrillard used the term 'hyper realism' being one of the key factors facilitating this process in the Malayalam speaking space.²⁰⁶ According to this term, nostalgia assumes its full meaning in the context and the reality is no longer what it used to be. It suggests a proliferation of myths of origin and upholds signs of reality which gradually pushes for a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential. In the broad sense of hyperreal, the difference between simulation and the real get imploded.²⁰⁷ Both the 'real' and the 'imaginary' perspectives continuously collapse into each other. This fundamentally does not suggest that people can no longer tell the distinction between fiction and reality. In some significant ways, the difference between the two has become lesser in terms of importance.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Dr. Daya N. and Gautam, (ed.), *Cinema and Society - Its influence and Importance in Different Spheres of Human Life*, pp. 95-200.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ John Riber, *writing and producing for Television and film*, pp. 70-180.

²⁰⁸ V.K. Cherian, *Chalachithra Vicharam*, PP. 48-68.

The perceptivity of film output generated by the influence of television is regarded as one of the major factors that led to the emergence of the hyperreal experience in Malayalam-speaking space. It is significant to note the observation made by Raymond Williams in 1973 about films broadcasting on television in Europe and America. He finds that the distribution of films through the media of television networks is a different and unique kind from their distribution through theatres.²⁰⁹ As far as the present situation is concerned, this film repertory of television has resulted in the creation of a paradigm of its own in the mode of the viewing experience. Some studies show the wide acknowledgement of some films received through their television transmission than what it got early from the theatre's exhibition. As far as profit appropriation is concerned, the channel rights on films play a significant role now.²¹⁰ Thus television broadcasting comes as a source of profit return for the producers rather than its business at the theatres.

Malayalam television programmes are stuffed with the broadcasting of films as well as complementary programs. So, in formulating a hyperreal experience, the intrinsic value experience of these programs plays a significant role. Many aspects influence a person in moulding an image concept through their television experience. The programs like star talks, their appearance in advertisements, campus shows attended by the film stars for the promotion of their new release, news about film locations, film reviews, programs named after film actors, trailer shows of films, songs on-demand programs, and some reality shows attended by the film stars, etc. are few to list in this regard.²¹¹ These television experiences of films are happening on the grounds of what Baudrillard calls the dissolution of television into life and the dissolution of life into television.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies – A Practical Introduction*, pp. 137-150.

²¹⁰ John Riber, *Writing and Producing for Television and Film*, pp. 2-40.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-60.

²¹² Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I – The Movement-Image*, pp. 80-140.

Thus, the exposure of new film experiences has been created out of the frequency of the character of the film along with its promotional programs on television. So, it is thus obvious that the film experience through television along with other aspects has played a prominent role in boosting the stardom of the actors. The formation of various fan clubs for the actors in the industry could be regarded as an evident form of the externalized expression of this aspect.²¹³ Apart from appreciating actors' performances in the film, the fan clubs play a decisive role in the interplay of hyperreal conditions facilitated by the influence of television and other prominent mediums.²¹⁴

The sinking of Pazhassi Raja and Mammooty in the arena of heroic imagery could be better understood from this background. Mammooty played the lead role of the character Pazhassi Raja in the movie who is a superstar in the Malayalam film industry since the late 1980s. The actor could successfully team up with different directors and writers and produced hits in the career of various genres over time.²¹⁵

As far as Mammooty's joining with several directors and writers in the earlier days is concerned, he was proved to be a key variable sustaining the changing trends over time. This evident endurance of the actor from the period communicated that the 1990s was facilitated more or less by the interplay of hyperreal aspects discussed earlier here. It is to be highlighted that different features such as aristocracy, chivalry, anger, spontaneity, male dominance, dignity, masculinity, husky voice and the position and appreciation which the actor gained through various box office hit for movies portraying powerful characters.²¹⁶

²¹³ Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*, pp. 210-230

²¹⁴ Selvaraj V.D., *Pazhassi Raja Aathmahatya Cheythilla*, Interview with Mammooty, *Kalakaumudi*, 2009.

²¹⁵ K.M. Muraleedharan, *Tharapadangalil*, Paridhi Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 2013, pp. 17-30.

²¹⁶ P.S. Radhakrishnan, *Charithravum Chalachithravum*, pp. 131-140.

Mammootty could perform the character of an elite stream incredibly. He was found repeatedly in uniform and expressed story characters in family dramas as well as sentimental films. Mammootty engaged in a string of highly popular crime movies during the 1980s with *CBI Diary Series and Inspector Balram*.²¹⁷ In these movies, he played the role of a sharp investigating officer. Apart from this he played the role of a powerful military officer in movies like *Nair Sab, Koodevide, Kandukonden Kandukonden* etc. and portrayed the notable character of an IAS Officer in the film *The King*. Mammootty was widely appreciated for taking the roles of tough character, family man and stubborn personality. He proved himself excellent in playing the roles of a repentant son, a tragically widowed father, and an acceptable brother. Young male fans asserted the virtuosity of his abilities in playing the characters of the responsible elder brother, policeman, and administrative officials. It all indicates the aspect of Mammootty in establishing the affinity with roles implying a powerful and respectable man of status in control.²¹⁸

Mammootty is always explicit and embodies performances that allude to a familiar style of masculinity for the audience. Mammootty was repeatedly seen on reels as a man of action or a phallic hero who is either in a military or police uniform playing with a gun while standing in a hard pose. He was seen pointing an accusatory threatening finger at the co-actors fact by standing erect and aloof with the gun. It exhibits the image imbibed in the chivalry and courage of the hero.²¹⁹ Mammootty always carries some instinctive 'manly' features which appeal to the audience's wishes for a powerful hero.

Mammootty is not a good dancer. He is not a good comedian. But still for several decades now he determines the dreams of the audience. His amazing acting skill of Mammootty still places him in the mainstream of the Malayalam film

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-145.

²¹⁸ Muhammed Facrudeen Ali, *Tharashareeravum Deshacharithravum*, Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, pp. 27-35.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-42.

industry. In Malayalam, the category of art films was popularised by Mammooty. He performed unique roles gifted by Adoor Gopalakrishnan and TV Chandran.²²⁰ Movies like *Ponthanmada*, *Mathilukal*, *Vidheyam*, etc., are a few examples. Many movies sustained only the presence of Mammooty. The film *Kaazhcha* was a good example. Mammooty is an established actor in the Tamil film industry and also appeared in Hindi and Telugu movies. He deserves a special position in the history of Indian cinema with valuable national as well as state awards.²²¹

Mammooty is considered the protector of the value perceptions of the Malayalis. He could be regarded as someone who waded roles in between the capitalist economic system and the semi-feudal socio-cultural background. This way Mammooty is regarded as the essence of masculinity, politics, and cultural peculiarities of the Malayalam film industry which was confined within the boundary of melodrama earlier.²²²

Thus the heroic image projection of the character of Pazhassi Raja through Mammooty becomes more sensible to understand from this perspective. The early observed preponderance of the body of the hero is exposed in the scenes of the movie through Mammooty. A much more externalized vision of the image projection can be sighted from some of the movie sequences though this aspect was embedded throughout the film experience. There are examples of the external imagery shown in the movie through its sequence of posters and attire, the way of communication with the heroine, the solo heroic deeds, and the lengthy English dialogue delivered at the climax. At some points, one can read the film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* on account of a global experience according to the

²²⁰ Manoj Bharathi, *Mammooty: Bhashayum Deshavum Mathrubhumi books*, Kozhikode, 2012, pp. 15-110.

²²¹ N.P. Sajesh, *Purushaveshangal*, Fabian books, Alappuzha, 2006, pp. 53-80.

²²² *Ibid.*, pp. 81-100.

existing or perceived body in the projection of heroic imagery of the film is always that of the actor Mammooty.²²³

6.7. The Concept of Stardom and Film Marketing

The concept of stardom is one of the prominent threads sustaining the film industry. The peculiar word 'star' was used to denote a particular phenomenon related to films.²²⁴ An actor becomes a star after receiving constant super hits. Among 'stars' itself have the demarcations like superstars, megastars, popular stars, action stars, etc. The star has or should have the ability to attract people to theatres. The main part of the production goes to the remuneration for such stars. Some films become successful only because of the presence of 'stars'.

As far as an actor is concerned, his potential is associated with the establishment of the character he had played rather than the number of films done. If the actor is proficient in acting, then he could bring new personalities by presenting each character. An actor must go for solid preparation and homework before getting into a character. He must have proper observatory skills and high potential to exhibit the best in him by portraying characters.²²⁵ Multiple factors decline the growth of the film industry in Kerala, such as deficiency in the number of theatres, the backwardness of capitalist investment, reluctance to consider film as a commercial venture, limited marketing facility, limited activities of the fan clubs, etc. However, the heroes of the Malayalam film industry are all-stars. A film star was exposed as a person openly interacting with the socio-cultural conditions. Malayalam film stars received an attractive and authoritative position in society apart from the world of films. They establish star value by endorsing various products and appearing in advertisements.²²⁶

²²³ Refeek Ali, (editor), *Mammooty Times*, 2009.

²²⁴ Naveen Kishore, *City Flicks*, pp. 120-180.

²²⁵ P.K. Rajasekharan, *Cinema Sandarbhangal*, pp. 20-22.

²²⁶ Moorkkoth Kunjappa, *Cinema*, pp. 18-20.

The term celebrity is also associated with 'star'. Celebrity is a recent invention and had a long-standing feature of human life. It is made by the communication media that can both inspire and maintain the ongoing interests upon aspects like eagerness, fascination, discussion, and attachment with particular people. Fame and celebrity status were usually regarded as the result of one's possessing an extraordinary ability or quality that sets one apart from others and those who are not capable to make similar achievements or who don't have many distinguishing features which make them stand out exclusively. The progress of visual media and other factors resulted in the emergence, development and change of concepts like fame and celebrity.²²⁷

There were multiple heroes acted in one movie during the sixties, seventies, and eighties. The actors like Ratheesh, Mammooty, Sankar, and Mohanlal became popular in the eighties. Ratheesh and Sankar left the mainstream frame by the second half of the eighties. Thus, the control of Malayalam cinema became concentrated on the shoulders of Mammooty and Mohanlal. The nineties were a flourishing period for the Malayalam film industry²²⁸. At the same, it had defects by surrounding two heroes massively. This phenomenon was much influential in the historical way of Malayalam cinema. Because the film industry is a commercial venture and star is an essential component of it. The entire economic structure of the film world both encourages and restricts the unique status of stardom. The star value of actors was marketed at the time of film production itself and gradually transforms into a consuming commodity according to its acceptance.²²⁹

The stars accomplish the responsibility of carrying and establishing prominent class perspectives as well. They never discomfort the existing system. They strengthen the power relations in the treatment and protection of solid values in the film field. They also undertake the responsibility of hiding the

²²⁷ Michael Ryan, *Cultural Studies – A Practical Introduction*, pp. 150-160.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ K.P. Kannan, (ed.), *Kerala in Transition – Essays on Economy*, pp. 180-185.

audience from the fundamental issues or refrain them from indulging in them. An actor becomes popular when he addresses the audience's ideological queries, anxiety, and demands by providing entertainment and enjoyment. The opinion of stardom represents the desires and requirements of the mass audience from society.²³⁰ If the film stars completely different and better than regular human beings in daily life then the audience would soon be tired of them. But they are not so and this flawed humanity is certainly what keeps them interesting and accepting.

We must consider all the materials that circulate the stardom including interviews, biographies, product endorsements, and public appearances at award ceremonies if the part of the star's lustre is extended beyond their on-screen performances.²³¹ Thus all these elements must be taken into account if the audience considers what a particular star means. Richard Dyer through his book *Stars* established this approach which combined literary semiotics with sociological and cultural studies. Dyer could set up the idea of stars. According to him, it combines a star's performance on and off the screen being an actor and as a celebrity.²³² Thus as a whole, star images can work within or against the broader meanings of the film. It could be explained through marking the example of Tom Cruise who was battling the invading aliens in the *War of the Worlds* (2005).²³³ So the audience would likely think about his widely publicized status as a Scientist and someone with holding a rather different relationship with extra-terrestrial forces.

Just like the films themselves, the star image accumulates meanings over time and conveys different things to different audience members. The star image could be conceived as bigger than the star itself. It operates within societies at the

²³⁰ James Cateridge, *Film studies for Dummies*, Oxford Brookes – University, UK, 2015, pp. 47-56

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-60.

²³² K. Muraleedharan, *Drusya Padhathile Anarga Silpangal*, pp. 110-112.

²³³ *Ibid.*

level of commonly held knowledge or even myth. This film star could be regarded as symbolic of particular debates or points of conflict.²³⁴ Dyer mentioned the example of Jane Fonda. She was an actress who combined the elements of a tomboy and a political activist. Thus, her image becomes more complex, contradictory, multi-layered, and hence rich in meaning for the audience and society at large.²³⁵

The concept of stardom makes film stars living and breathing commodities. Stars make a way to sell their personalities and exposed them to make a living. Their private lives belong to everyone apart from professionals and whatever they touch from clothing to cars enhances in value to their fans and the public at large. Thus interestingly the biggest film stars get seriously rich as a result. As far as a film star is concerned, the primary economic value of the film comes from their apparent ability to mitigate the risk for the producers. The wisdom goes by making many chances for profit accumulation through casting a star.²³⁶ There are risk factors surrounding the economics of the film industry. Nobody can ever be certain whether a film is going to be a hit before its release despite decades of market research, focus groups and test screenings. So, whatever the means followed towards moderating this risk is extremely valuable. The best of increasing the possibility of success was either through creating a movie based on pre-sold intellectual property such as a best-selling novel to cast the biggest stars.²³⁷

The studios and independents usually packaged each film as a one-off deal in today's film industry. Here the stars have greater negotiating power than they had during the studio era at times when they worked under contract. Their clout was reflected through extravagant remuneration packages. Some recent research studies suggest that the real economic value of stars is not as high as their pay

²³⁴ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Chalachithra Samskaram*, p. 122.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, PP. 123-125.

²³⁶ Jeni Rowena, *Temmadikalum Thampurakakkanmarum*, pp. 14-22.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

suggests. Studies across extended periods disclosed that the presence of stars has an inconsistent effect on profitability.²³⁸ Other factors like the quality which is based on reviews and awards, release date and whether the movie is part of a franchise or a sequel etc. are much more reliable in determining and predicting success. The stars and their agents are well known for the power of the franchise and it makes the latest comic book hero role in a very attractive and lucrative position. Stars continue to command such obscene salaries because they appear to be so valuable, regardless of whether this value turns into actual profit.²³⁹ Stars are always been the first element attached to a project due to this reason. They provide credibility at this vital stage as well. Stars associates rigorously during the promotion of films upon release. Acres of column inches and visibility for forthcoming projects could be provided in a rare interview from a big star. Stars thus do sell films rather than selling tickets.²⁴⁰

The very most adjective used frequently in conjunction with film stars is of course 'glamorous'. Star's turned glamorous and they look fabulous in style quoted films. They exhibit glamour at award ceremonies by appearing in the latest couture. They were photographed while holidaying in beaches and ski resorts. They make ooze style, sophistication and class. To be a film star glamorous, people tend to forget that you also must be ambitious, influential, and just plain rich. But most non-film stars prefer to concentrate on the idea of glamour.²⁴¹ It's probably because of doing to allow people to feel less uncomfortable about wanting the lifestyles that many stars conspicuously flaunt. Thus, the image renders desirable success that film stars project lies upon the heart of the consumer society and it makes the stars the perfect vehicles for advertising.

²³⁸ Dr. Aravindan Vallachira, *Chalachithra Samskaram*, pp. 45-60.

²³⁹ Naveen Kishore, *City Flicks*, pp. 140-175.

²⁴⁰ P.K. Rajasekharan, *Cinema Sandarbhangal*, pp. 12-28.

²⁴¹ Dr. Sr. Mini Mol Mathew, *Cinemayude Lavanya Sasthram*, Manipal Technologies Limited Manipal, 2018, pp. 126-128.

The benefits of movie stars' endorsements of products and their advertisers are quite obvious. Such deals can also extend the visibility and reach of the stars. However, the principal benefit of the stars is financial. The stars are much conscious about endorsing the products. The image of a star can suddenly be deemed incompatible with that of an endorsed product. Recently Bollywood star Akshay Kumar endorsed a tobacco product which invited much criticism from the actor. Finally, he retreated from the endorsement and apologized to the audience for committing carelessness.²⁴² Audience desires defines their relationship with film stars. The audience wants the stars to succeed in their on-screen quest for love and success. They want to look like the stars or better be more like them. The audience wants to do some naughty things with them as well. Thus, such wants show different levels of desires and the great power of the stars lies in the fact that you can never truly satisfy these desires no matter how much you try.

Finally, by some incredible turn of events, you will find out that they are regular people like everyone else. As far as the audience is concerned, they do have a favourite film star. The star always convinces them to get out of the house and catch their latest film on the big screen. Thus, the audience finds an emotional connection to the star. The audience attempted to make a connection with the character while watching a film. If the viewer identifies with the protagonist, then he or she can imagine themselves in that person's place. Thus, it heightens the feeling of tension, suspense, and relief.²⁴³ The audience does not necessarily feel an in-depth connection with the actor or the character. Because the film itself is efficient in helping the audience to suspend disbelief or to buy the reality of the story world.

Some film theorists argue that identifying with a character on screen is comparable to the fundamental psychological processes of identifying formation at

²⁴² P.K. Parameswaran Nair, *Chalachithra Patanangal*, P. K. Parameswaran Nair Memorial Trust, Thiruvananthapuram, 2008, pp. 28-125.

²⁴³ V. Raja Krishnan, *Kazhchayute Asanthi*, The State Institute of Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 1987, p. 129.

a more complex level. The famous French Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's concept of the 'mirror stage' described this condition in detail.²⁴⁴ However, some people relate to stars and shows and care about their idols. There is devotion and worship of stars by their families. The fandom even attempts to imitate and copy the hairstyles, clothing, and walking styles of their admired stars. Certainly, it brings escapism when the fans forget themselves and become completely lost in the film's moment. Today's superstars of the Malayalam film industry were ready to do unglamorous roles as well. The role played by Mammooty in *Mrigaya*, *Ponthanmada*, *SooryaManasam*, etc. is an example. The role of Suresh Gopi in *Pannuchami*, Dileep in *Kunjikkoonan*, Mohanlal in *Uncle Bun*, etc. also come across here. It is not about glamour it is all about the potential to play different roles.²⁴⁵ The basic obligation of an actor is to reflect the personality of the character assigned to him or her rather than reflecting their personality.

A good actor must listen to the director's instruments and should add his conceptualizations of the characters in person. The actors must use all their abilities to bring the best. The actor must be willing to observe, study and evaluate life at any time and anywhere. He also must be able to conceptualize that imbibed knowledge as well. The merge of the actor into the character itself brings success.²⁴⁶ A true actor must be ready to handle many roles and honestly represent them before the camera. Thus he is not imitating or acting, just living life and that is what widely influences the audience's conceptualization of the concept of images.

6.8. Conclusion

Once history is turned into a movie, storytelling takes on a cinematic style. A beginning, middle, and end should be included in every tale. There must always be a villain and a hero in a movie's narrative. Such implications are not necessary

²⁴⁴ K. Gopinathan, (ed.), *Film and Philosophy*, The Publication Division, University of Calicut, 2003, pp. 24-50.

²⁴⁵ Dr. Thomas Scaria, *Janapriya Cinimakkal Padavum Porulum*, Ascend Publications, Kottayam, 2012, pp. 66-128.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

for a historical thesis or work. The majority of historical films focused on the personal lives of the characters. By narrating historical events via the experiences of specific people, the director tried to simplify the historical process. As a result, the spectator can very clearly understand the filmmaking process. The way history is narrated in books and movies varies. The fictional explanation of events is more adaptable in cinematic imagination. A concise, and closed historical communication is always preferred in a movie narrative.

There is no way to redo the entire movie. The audience must decide whether to accept or reject the film's final product following censorship. Historical films can do what historical books cannot. They emotionalize, personalize, and exaggerate history. The movie discusses delicate subjects without using proper syntax, citations, or references. It amplifies sentiments via the use of emotions, music, and sound. In movies, the method of representation is different. The character of Pazhassi Raja was shown as committing suicide by ingesting a diamond on the battlefield in the 1964 released film, *Pazhassi Raja*. While in the 2009 released film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja*, the British soldiers shot and killed the hero while he was fighting for his country. He was, however, spotted gripping the blade tightly and preventing himself from tumbling. As a result, the filmmakers attempted to give Pazhassi Raja a heroic image through both narratives of his death.

Whatever the case may be, movies are never made without an eye towards making a profit, and this one isn't even a documentary. So the film should emphasize heroic deeds. Meaning would be added to historical films by the responsible historical imagination of the director through simple interpretation of the events and complex processes depicted onscreen. Because the film is grounded entirely in fiction, or what might be called hyper-realism. There's no issue with different accounts of Pazhassi Raja's demise emerging when the actor Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair and Mammooty portrayed him, but only one version can be shown on screen. For this reason, film theory proposes stitching together three

elements: narrative, context, and creativity. Although evidence and analysis are essential in interpreting historical texts, imagination also plays a role. Audience enjoyment depends on active participation from the community. Images were portrayed in this way because they were liked and appreciated by the masses; the movie's financial success was prioritized over realism.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This research study was a long journey towards finding the essence of the so-called aspects constructing the image perception of Pazhassi Raja. He is one of the most celebrated historical figures in Kerala's history. The image of Pazhassi Raja has been framed differently through different sources. Thus, it has resulted in an endeavouring toil to pursue the exact image of Pazhassi Raja.

Pazhassi Raja became a celebrated figure in colonial and post-colonial Kerala, and he was represented with various images though his original photograph or painting is not available yet. Thus, we reconstruct the image of Pazhassi Raja with the help of colonial records, oral ballads, vernacular literature, films, and all. Images are thought to be peculiar entities that exist in human minds. The most imperative aspect in every case is that people build up an image according to their mousetrap. Thus, the language of popular culture contributes much towards moulding image concepts. The concept of popular ignorance suggests misleading events, persons, or things due to individual fear, embarrassment, illiteracy, or social inhibition. It hinders persons from contributing the right observation on images as well.

An image evaluation in popular culture does connect with text and context. The text releases a set of possibilities both for the constitution of cultural objects and the subsequent understanding of their significance on a wider range. The text could not be considered as an object which can be computed. This should involve space, time, and resistance. The so-called socio-economic, political, and cultural ideas of the period generate certain values and opinions. It influences the content of the text and thus leads to the progress of image conceptualization and formation. The time in which the text got released is bound to all such influences of impact. The context gives a crucial base for the period along with recognizing those

ideas eventually generated in popular culture. Perceiving an image is thus subjected to time and context.

Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja entered the political scenario during the Mysorean invasion of Malabar. Initially, Pazhassi Raja helped the English East India Company to dislodge Mysorean forces from Malabar during the third Anglo-Mysorean war. Soon he turned against the British when they betrayed the faith, he had reposed in them. As far as British official records are concerned, Pazhassi Raja had been written as a man of shallow intelligence and acknowledged by himself uniformly and unequivocally. Pazhassi Raja was treated as inexperienced and unfit to govern. The British found that the behaviour of Pazhassi Raja was not always unambiguous. They addressed Pazhassi Raja as the most intractable and unreasonable Raja when he refused to pay the sum of money demanded by them in October 1792.

In British accounts, Pazhassi Raja was depicted as a short person with long hair, a beard, and a moustache. Sometimes he had worn a red turban and carried a shining face all the time. They compared the physicality of Pazhassi Raja to an ape. Colonial records stated that Pazhassi Raja and his companions were nude except for a piece of cloth worn from the waist to the knee. Pazhassi Raja was described as notorious and a dangerous rebel. It was highlighted that Pazhassi Raja neither accepts company laws nor respects them. Pazhassi Raja was treated as a rebel, and he was not willing to be accommodated. Thus, he indulged in desperate acts according to colonial perceptions. Colonel Arthur Wellesley admitted that everything would be quiet in Malabar if Pazhassi Raja was defeated. The same opinion was shared by T.H. Baber as well.

Thus, Pazhassi Raja was a highly threatening enemy to the British. They met with a huge loss in the form of men, money, and dignity while confronting Pazhassi Raja. Colonial records projected a foolish image of Pazhassi Raja at the peace settlement meeting in Chirakkal. They marked him, being begged to get inside the

meeting room with his sword. British attempted to create a rift between Pazhassi Raja and the Muslim community as part of their divide-and-rule policy. However, their crooked moves failed. Pazhassi Raja's unbeaten popular support was recognized by British officials like T.H. Baber, Walter Ever, Christopher Pelie, English, etc. Baber has found a decided interest in regard and respect towards Pazhassi Raja from all classes of people and the popular veneration of Pazhassi Raja does not even efface by his death according to Baber.

Thus, a mixture of opinions regarding the personality of Pazhassi Raja could be seen in British accounts. His image was portrayed negatively by them. At the same time, his power and popular support were indirectly accepted by them. Who killed Pazhassi Raja and how he had been killed remain unsolved questions. The truth was concealed by T.H. Baber. Similarly, the real image of Pazhassi Raja would have been a hidden one.

Those negatives attributed by the Britishers to the image of Pazhassi Raja could be considered as their purposeful move to blemish the heroic portrait of the ruler. British knew well that those accounts marked by them about Pazhassi Raja would transmit knowledge to future generations. Thus, degrading the hero through presenting an unpleasant image conception would be a decisive move as part of their policy of character assassination. Thus, the credibility of colonial accounts upon the image construction of Pazhassi Raja still comes under suspicious lines.

Those letters written by Pazhassi Raja to company officials stressed his solid tone interrupting unfair tax collection along with an approach for a reconciliation at the beginning. They have multiple explanations for the variations and contradictions seen in the letters of Pazhassi Raja. Those who want to exhibit the Raja as an extraordinarily great personality can take this as part of his diplomatic tactics. Those who want to bring down Pazhassi Raja from the image of a powerful personality can take those variations and differences in letters as a fake of his

character. Here the presupposition of the reader influences the analysis of the data.

Thus, those letters written by Pazhassi Raja to the East India Company exhibited his thoughts, pressure, exertions, and all in different ways. Pazhassi Raja was very much concerned about the welfare of the people. He ensured his country's prosperity when he was in power. He never wanted to put them in trouble. Thus, Pazhassi Raja tried his level best to avoid a revolt with the Company. He treated people equally and never kept any kind of disparities. In such a way Pazhassi Raja inaugurated the principles of socialism. Thus, he could embrace huge popular support throughout his life which lasts even today. People never betrayed him during the revolt until T. H. Baber's crooked plans. It is right to admit that the tribal community from Wayanad got social recognition since their upbringing by Pazhassi Raja. Native accounts give heroic imagery for the character of Pazhassi Raja.

The image representation of Pazhassi Raja through folk literature could be considered exaggerated and fictitious. Many events and incidents explained in folk literature do not convey historical factuality. The most significant aspect is that the folk songs never attempted to glorify the character of Pazhassi Raja. But it unnecessarily exaggerates non-facts while describing the stories of Pazhassi Raja. There was nothing pointed out about Pazhassi Raja leading a war or enduring any adventurous activity. It gives much importance to the strong affinity between Pazhassi Raja and religion. Those poets highlighted Pazhassi Raja both as a strict ruler and a fine family person. Thus, a pleasant image of Pazhassi Raja was seen in folk literature. The political career of Pazhassi Raja was explained more rather than his personal life. Pazhassi Raja's association with *kalari* and religion were much highlighted along with his infinite popular support.

A powerful warrior image of Pazhassi Raja has always been portrayed in statues found in different parts of northern Malabar. Similarly, a fair complexioned

Pazhassi Raja with a masculine body and adequate height was seen in indigenous paintings as well. Thus, it all provides a perfect hegemonic representation of Pazhassi Raja which symbolized a typical Indian ruler with all so-called elite features.

The image representation of Pazhassi Raja through indigenous works is the clubbing of both imagination and facts. Imagination becomes essential in historical recreations when it comes to dealing with miracle incidents, impersonation of abstract elements, and descriptions based on beliefs rather than facts. It indicates that the writers had gone beyond factuality. They attempted to give a colourful representation of the Raja with extraordinary physical image and character perfection. Those writers even attributed both artistic and literary skills to the ruler apart from establishing his capability as a strong efficient warrior. The personal differences in the writer's perspectives and deficiency of historical insights caused the framing of different representations of historical figures.

A heroic representation of the image of Pazhassi Raja is well evident through literary works in a nutshell. The concept of recreating the part through historical works inculcates some artistic issues as well. The writer gets pressured by the essence of fantasy on the one side and the confrontation of contradictory attributes on the other. The authors of historical literary works lack imbining those contradictory future elements which agglomerate in confrontations or settlements in history. History thus ends up as simply as the account of some events.

The adventurous life of historical heroes gives colour to the romanticist attributes of their life. But it must be covered with historical frames to get the exact essence of history. Those literary works on Pazhassi Raja do not have a democratic structure in general. It reminds us of the existence of narrow perceptions rather than progress. Thus, true works on history and historical figures are yet to come. It should make a comparative study of the past and present considering human life, its complications, and reality in-depth.

There were many questions and doubts aroused about whether the Pazhassi rebellion could be framed under the arena of the Indian national movement. Pazhassi rebellion cannot be treated as part of the national movement because nationalism was a new political ideology that evolved in India post-Pazhassi Raja's period. However, Pazhassi Raja could contribute immensely to the generation of patriotic feelings during the phase of Indian nationalism. It's interesting to note that a Hindutva political agenda is being raised to capture Pazhassi Raja as their representative. They created a birth date for Pazhassi Raja and celebrated all over to substantiate his legacy towards strengthening their political motives. Pazhassi Raja was born into a royal family. He was adherent to Hindu religious beliefs and practices. But he never stood for the interests of a particular category of people. He treated everyone equally and stood for them forever. Thus, saffronizing the legacy of Pazhassi Raja must be defended to protect those secular ideas raised by Pazhassi Raja throughout his life.

Meanwhile, Pazhassi Raja has met with many criticisms from some local writers and thinkers as well. They all criticized him for his motives towards the commencement of the rebellion against the British and questioned his support to the British during their infant days in Malabar. Amid such criticisms what must be conveyed is that Pazhassi Raja once helped the British without knowing their real motives. He turned against them when the British began exploiting the people in the form of unfair taxation. Also, Pazhassi Raja valued the legacy and heritage of his country with infinite purity. He never wanted to lose its divinity at the hands of the Britishers. Pazhassi Raja was hurt at the *kovilakam* robbery by company officials. He valued those articles plundered by them much.

Pazhassi Raja tried to avoid an open fight with the Britishers considering popular sentiments. But the non-co-operative approach from the British side has pushed him to fight to protect the purity and sovereignty of his land. Pazhassu Raja met with many chances to put an end to the rebellion in the final days. But he

declined and was determined with the purpose to dislodge the Britishers even assured of failure.

Visual images mark everything more vivid than words and sounds. Historical movies need attempts to contemporize the symbols of the parts to ensure popular acceptance. Thus, non-factuality and hyper-real aspects assimilate into the entire plot and its characters. Thus, it inculcates many fantasy and commercial elements in the process of filmmaking. A historical movie not only represents a theme from history but also historicizes happiness, fear, love, grudge, enmity, compassion, affection, and all.

The political structure of Kerala during the 1960s has shown a rupture in ideologies and a democratic system. The movie *Pazhassi Raja* (1964) got released in such an inconsistent political condition. Thus, the movie put forward the significance of political morality. The content of melodrama was a bit high in the movie and it was a flop at the box office. The character of Pazhassi Raja was played by the actor Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair. He was one of the mainstream actors then and played central roles in historical movies like *Veluthambi Dalawa* and *Kunjali Marakkar*. The character of Pazhassi Raja appeared in full-on royal attire. He was beardless and stubborn. The fairness, masculine serious look and husky voice of Sreedharan Nair enriched the image of Pazhassi Raja. The actor was widely accepted as the image of Pazhassi Raja then.

The popular image of Pazhassi Raja changed since the release of the movie *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* in 2009. Malayalam film actor Mammooty performed as the central character in the film, and it was a super hit. Again, the tall, fair, masculine, and stubborn person like Mammooty was chosen to play the role of Pazhassi Raja. Unlike the former movie, Mammooty never appeared in full-on royal dress in any of the scenes. Mammooty was presented as Pazhassi Raja in minimal gold, with a shawl and *mundu*. Mammooty has beautifully played characters of the elite stream and commanded power through different roles.

Thus, the figure of Mammooty was adequate to play the role of Pazhassi Raja. Because the movie aimed at business and never wanted to impart a historical orientation to the audience. In such a way the movie carried the essence of romanticism throughout the plot. Thus, both Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair and Mammooty played the role of Pazhassi Raja in different periods. Both recreated the image of Pazhassi Raja through their physicality and people framed the image of Pazhassi Raja through them in respective times.

Thus, it must be noted down that images are not real. It is purely contextual. Each image appeared to the taste of the time in which it was produced. Those who never know history still believe the image of Pazhassi Raja as Mammooty. It would change until someone else plays the role of Pazhassi Raja and a new movie gets released on that actor.

That is why it is so easy to just say that those pictures evolved across time and place. It is completely unrelated to actual events. People's preferences, opinions, and attitudes shape the personalities of the images they personify. In this way, the past and the present can engage in ongoing conversation throughout history.

Glossary

<i>arachan</i>	:	A word of respect and veneration towards the ruler from the people.
<i>ashrama</i>	:	Habitation centres for monks
<i>attakkatha</i>	:	Stories of themes for <i>kathakali</i> performance
<i>ayyappa</i>	:	A Hindu God
<i>bandari</i>	:	Translators in Colonial Malabar
<i>banditti</i>	:	Robber
<i>bazar</i>	:	Market place
<i>bhavathi</i>	:	A Hindu Goddess
<i>desham</i>	:	Subdivision of the land of Kerala in the form of organisational units before colonialism
<i>devata</i>	:	Hindu Goddess spirit
<i>ganapati</i>	:	A Hindu God
<i>gumasthan</i>	:	Clerikal Post under colonial Malabar
<i>guru</i>	:	Teacher
<i>kadukkan</i>	:	Earing
<i>kalari</i>	:	A gymnasium or training space for martial art
<i>kalaripayatt</i>	:	A martial art designed for the ancient battlefield with weapons and combative techniques
<i>kathakali</i>	:	A major form of classical Indian dance which is a story-play genre of art
<i>kathakali kalari</i>	:	Centre for learning <i>kathakali</i>

<i>kilipatt</i>	:	A genre of Malayalam poems in which the narrator could be a parrot, a bee, a swan and so on
<i>kolkkali patt</i>	:	A ballad is sung in praise of Hindu Gods
<i>kolkar</i>	:	Policeman in colonial Malabar
<i>koothu</i>	:	A temple art form
<i>kovilakam</i>	:	The principal manor, estate, or palace of a princely ruler
<i>kshatriya</i>	:	Warrior category of the Hindu religion
<i>kunjunni</i>	:	A pet name shows love and affection
<i>kurichya</i>	:	A matrilineal tribe of Kerala distributed mainly in Wayanad
<i>Maadan</i>	:	A deity belonged to the lower order of the Hindu community
<i>mahabharatam</i>	:	One of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India in Hinduism
<i>malikhana</i>	:	Pension is given to feudatories by the colonial government
<i>mamankam</i>	:	A duo decennial medieval fair
<i>mandalam vrata</i>	:	Forty-one days austerities to visit God <i>Ayyappa</i> at Sabarimala temple
<i>marumakan</i>	:	Son in law
<i>mensem</i>	:	Month
<i>mohiniyattam</i>	:	A semi-classical dance form from Kerala
<i>mundu</i>	:	Traditional garment worn around the waist in South India
<i>Muthu Mari amma</i>	:	A Hindu Goddess

<i>naduvazhi</i>	:	Feudal lords, chieftains, or descendants of royal households
<i>nataka kalari</i>	:	About dram club designed for students to learn more about the aspects of drama's
<i>nattukuttam</i>	:	Judicial Committee
<i>onam</i>	:	An annual harvest festival celebrated predominantly by the people of Kerala
<i>padinjar</i>	:	West
<i>pagoda</i>	:	A unit of currency
<i>palayam</i>	:	That centres given to army persons for their valuable military services under <i>poligars</i>
<i>paniya</i>	:	An ethnic group of India and the single largest scheduled tribe in Kerala
<i>pattam</i>	:	A portion of lands income has been given to the authority by the ryots either in the form of cash or crop
<i>pattar</i>	:	A Hindu caste group of Tamil Brahmins who have settled in Malabar
<i>pookkalam</i>	:	Color sketches on the grounds with flowers
<i>poonul</i>	:	The sacred thread is worn by Brahmins
<i>poorapattu</i>	:	Ballad sang in praise of Hindu Gods
<i>poottara</i>	:	A small upwardly tapering seven, five or nine-tiered structure stands at the south-western corner of the <i>kalari</i> centre
<i>puthooram pattu</i>	:	A branch of northern ballads
<i>pymashi sheristadar</i>	:	An official post under colonial Malabar where the person is entrusted with the duty of receiving and checkin court pleas

<i>rajadharmā</i>	:	A Sanskrit term for the duty of the ruler
<i>rashtriya kalari</i>	:	Platform for learning politics
<i>rudraksha</i>	:	A dried stone fruit
<i>samadhi</i>	:	Death
<i>sindoor</i>	:	A red pigment on the forehead
<i>sri krishna</i>	:	A Hindu God
<i>srikrishna vijayam</i>	:	Victory of God <i>Sri Krishna</i>
<i>swaroopam</i>	:	The name given to the area under the dominion of a cheiftain
<i>thacholipattu</i>	:	A branch of northern ballads
<i>thakkavi</i>	:	A kind of loan to peasants
<i>thambai</i>	:	A word to show respect and veneration towards the ruler by the people
<i>thampuram</i>	:	A title given to the kings of the Malayalam kingdom
<i>thampuratti</i>	:	Princes or queens of the Malayalam kingdom
<i>thantri</i>	:	The authority on the rites and ritual's of the temple
<i>thilakam</i>	:	Bright red pigment on the forehead
<i>thirumanassu</i>	:	A word of respect and fidelity
<i>thottampattu`</i>	:	Invocative ritualistic songs sung in temples
<i>upanayana</i>	:	A Hindu ritual confined to upper caste
<i>urumi</i>	:	A kind of sword with a flexible whip-like a blade
<i>vaalpayatt</i>	:	Dual fight to cut and thrust with the sword
<i>vadakkanpattu</i>	:	Northern ballads
<i>velichappadu</i>	:	Revealer of light and the mediator or oracle between a deity and devotees at a Hindu temple in Kerala

- Vellippanam* : A kind of monetary means which prevailed in colonial Malabar
- Villadichan pattu* : One of the ancient forms of musical story telling in Kerala
- villu* : bow
- vishu* : A cultural festival celebrated during one of the harvest seasons of Kerala
- vrita* : Austerity measures followed for religious purposes

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Sl. No.	Name	Age	Place	Date
1	Annan	73	Kaniyambatta	04.11.2021
2	Chama	78	Parattimala	12.10.2021
3	Keeri Raman	65	Kambalakkad	18.10.2021
4	Koruthi	70	Kaniyambatta	04.11.2021
5	Koyma	80	Parattimala	12.10.2021
6	K.P. Somasekharan Namboothirippad	90	Muzhakkunnu	02.11.2021
7	Krishna Kumar Kannothe	50	Mattannur	22.11.2021
8.	O.K. Johny	65	Mananthavady	30.11.2021
9.	Palliyara Raman	80	Kambalakkad	02.12.2021
10.	Prabhakaran Pazhassi	55	Kannur	20.11.2021
11.	Raman Nambeesan Gurukkal Pandali	85	Muzhakkunnu	21.11.2021
12.	Sreedevi Antajanam	88	Muzhakkunnu	03.11.2021
13.	Thyra	62	Meppadi	08.11.2021

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Appendix



Appendix 1. The wall around the Thiruvangad temple at Thalasseri, Kerala constructed under the direction of T.H. Baber.

Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 12th May 2019 at 9.30 am (Personal Collection)



Appendix 2: Memorial Stone Plaque in the name of T. H. Baber on the wall of Thiruvangad temple at Thalasseri, Kerala.

Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 12th May 2019 at 9.30 am (Personal Collection)



Appendix 3: The statue of Pazhassi Raja erected at Mavilamthode, Wayanad, Kerala
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 20th November 2021 at 11.30 am
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 4: The Pazhassi Raja statue at Mavilamthode, Wayanad
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 20th November 2021 at 11.30 am
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 5: The portrait of Pazhassi Raja in Mavilamthode, Wayanad
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 20th November 2021 at 11.30 am
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 6: The Pazhassi Tomb erected at Mananthavady, Wayanad
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 30th November 2021 at 10.30 am
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 7: A sword believed to be from during Pazhassi Raja's period.
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 30th November 2021 at 10.30 am
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 8: The Pazhassi Raja Death Anniversary Commemoration held near the Pazhassi Tomb., Mananthavady on 30th November 2021 at 10.15 am
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 13th June 2021 at 3.20 pm
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 9: *Kunkichira*, at Kunjom in Wayanad District
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 28th November 2021 at 2.00 pm
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 10: Thalakkal Chanthu Museum, Panamaram, Wayanad
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 28th November 2021 at 9.30 am
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 11: The *kalari* associated with Pazhassi Raja at Muzhakkunnu, Wayanad
 Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 12th December 2021 at 4.30 pm
 (Personal Collection)



Appendix 12: The Statue of P Pazhassi Raja in Mridanga Saileswari Temple, Muzhakkunnu
 Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 12th December 2021 at 4.00 pm
 (Personal Collection)



Appendix 13: The Mridanga Saileswari temple, Muzhakkunnu
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 12th December 2021 at 4.00 pm
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 14: Sri Porkkali temple, Pazhassi, Kannur District
Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 12th December 2021 at 5.30 pm
(Personal Collection)



Appendix 15: The statue of Pazhassi Raja in Pazhassi Smriti Mandiram, Pazhassi, Kannur Dt.

Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 11th December 2021 at 3.00 pm (Personal Collection)



Appendix 15: The Pazhassi Smriti Mandiram, Pazhassi, Kannur Dt.

Source: Photo taken by the present researcher on 11th December 2021 at 3.30 pm (Personal Collection)