

WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE IN MALABAR
1900-1957

Thesis
Submitted to the University of Calicut
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

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This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**WOMEN IN PUBLIC LIFE IN MALABAR 1900-1957**” submitted by **VASANTHI. V.**, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in History** by the Calicut University is her original work and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title and it represents wholly her independent work.

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INTRODUCTION

The present work entitled 'Women In public Life In Malabar 1900-1957' is an attempt to analyse the role played by women during the period concerned and to place them in the proper perspective in a colonial situation. Though the study focuses mainly on the colonial period, in the socio-political perspective, the study extends to a later period due to historical reasons. The focus is on Malabar because none of the earlier studies have touched on the women's role in the public life in Malabar. Of course serious studies were made on the subject regarding women at the national level and in Travancore by various scholars.

Geographically Malabar rests in the south west corner of Indian sub continent and is bounded by the Western Ghats in the east and by the Arabian Sea in the west.¹ Alberuni(970-1039 AD) appears to have been the first to call the country Malabar² From the very beginning of the historic period itself this region had contact with the outside world and this was culminated in the British colonial rule. By the treaty of Sreerangapattanam (1798) signed between the British and Tippu Sultan of Mysore, the whole of Malabar

¹ The Malabar Proper extending from North to South along the coast, a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles and lying between N.Lat.10° 15' and 12° 18' and E. long.75° 14' and 76° 56'. William Logan, Malabar Manual (1887), Asian Educational Services, New Delhi reprint 1989, Vol. I, p.1

² C. A. Innes, Malabar Gazetteer (1908) Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala Trivandrum re print, 1997, Vol.I, p.90

(except Wynad) came under the British sovereignty. As a part of the British Empire Malabar experienced each and every minute change which occurred in the general Indian context. In the present study the word Malabar stands for the territory lying from the present Kasaragod District to Palghat District (except Wynad). A few women who hailed from outside this area are included because their area of activity was Malabar.

Due to the limitations of the study the list of women which is taken for serious study in this research work is not an exhaustive one. The study does not cover the social reform movements of Kerala which improved the status of women and the resultant condition of women of Malabar. This is because other scholars have studied various aspects of this problem.³

In this study, larger gender issues are not taken in to consideration. Throughout the study a thematic approach is followed. In this context, the social background of women of the nineteenth century saw a period of transition which enabled the entry of women in the public life of Malabar. The nineteenth century Kerala society practiced various customs and most of them affected women adversely. The society presented a complicated structure due to social inhibitions, feudal obligations, agricultural

³ J.Devika, En-gendering Individuals: the Project of Nambuthiri Brahmin Reform in Kerala, V. Kunhali, (ed) Journal of South Indian History, Vol.I Issue 2.March-August 2004, Calicut University Publication Division
K.M.Sheeba, From The Kitchen To The Stage And Back : Continuing Forms of Women's Exclusion in Keralam, K.N. Ganesh(ed),Journal of South Indian History,Vol.I. Issue 2. March 2006.

indebtedness and arbitrary evictions of tenants, agrestic slavery and evil administrative policies. Even under the matrilineal system⁴ in which women theoretically enjoyed freedom, they suffered a lot.

The socio- religious reform movements of the nineteenth century did a lot to improve the condition of women in the society. Further all leaders of the reform movements fought against extravagant expenditure incurred in the name of marriage and many other social customs. Such reform movements are omitted in this work. This makes the study necessarily selective. There were many women who appeared in the field of drama and other art forms. Nilambur Ayisha opposed conventions of the community, broke the social taboos and became a leading drama artist in Kerala⁵ But her case has not been included in the study. Cultural domain is another subject of study to be undertaken separately in a full fledged manner. I hope to do this after the completion of the present project.

The present study is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter efforts are made to study the theoretical aspects of public life. Here the theories put forward by various scholars are discussed in brief. It was in a civil society that was formed between the family and the government that women could become a part of the mainstream of society.

4. For a detailed study of the topic see P.V. Balakrishnan, *Matrilineal System in Malabar*, Satyavani Prakashan, Sumana Kannur, 1981.

5. Personal interview with Nilambur Ayisha on 20 April 2007 at her residence, Nilambur. For a detailed study of the life of Nilambur Ayisha See. Nilambur Ayisha, *Jeevithathinte Arangu* (Auto biography), women's imprint Trivandrum, 2005.

In the colonial situation where women were circumscribed by various restrictions and were often marginalized, women remained 'invisible'. This was altered mainly during the national movement. The high rate of women literacy was an important factor which empowered women. The establishment of girls' schools under the initiative of the Basal Evangelical Missionaries and western educated natives furthered this. Women education led to the creation of a 'reading public' and it led to changes in the status of women.

The formation of women's organizations emboldened women to come out of the clutches of tradition. The organizations provided a platform for women outside their home to express themselves. Through these organizations, they worked a lot to awaken women from the age old ignorance. Even during the last decades of the nineteenth century there were several magazines published in Malayalam and many of them argued for women education, freedom for women and so on. They often dealt with events happening outside India. Thus women's magazines and journals of this period widened the mental horizon of women.

Due to many reasons, the freedom movement in Kerala was confined mainly to the Malabar region. This political situation motivated women to enter the public life. Ideologically, Gandhism immensely influenced the women of Malabar. Regarding the role of women Gandhi followed 'thus far

and no further' policy. Due to this women faced no protest from the family and their participation became socially acceptable. All these positive factors led to the creation of a 'new woman' in Malabar. It was this new woman who participated in the political and social movements of the period which continued even later. Women thus became more 'visible'

The second chapter deals with women's participation in the political movements of the period. Here the participation of women of Malabar in the National Movement at the clarion call of Gandhi during the Non-Co-operation Movement is mentioned. Gandhian ideology could be imbibed by them due to their particular family background. Here also we find exceptions. At least some of them could enter the public life due to their own personal interests and dedication to the Nation. We have instances of women entering the public life during this period not as leaders but as instrumental agents to raise funds towards Gandhi's Constructive Programme.

Gandhi's incorporation of domestic imagery with the political discourse enabled women to come out in to the public sphere. It was only due to this that the act of breaking the salt law appealed to their imagination.⁶ Thus women began to participate in the public life of Malabar remarkably with the Civil Disobedience Movement. Most of them were simultaneously involved in the social service activities also.

⁶ Suruchi Thapar- Bjorkert, Women in the Indian National Movement. Unseen faces and Un heard Voices.1930- 1942,Sage Publications New Delhi 2006 p.104

Though there were a large number of women who participated in the National Movement, the chapter deals with a select few whose contribution to the nation was substantial. In this chapter a separate section is assigned to the participation of Basal Mission women. They entered the public life of Malabar at a time when their community at large was not involved in the National Movement anywhere else in India. The BEM trio who are studied in this section were attracted by Gandhian ideology.

The post CDM period saw a diversion in the course of events with the formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934. This radical growth acted through various means- Teachers' Movement, Karshaka Sangham and so on. An important feature of the radical movement was that it enlisted the participation of the people at grass root level. Women found enough space within the radical movement. Women in large numbers entered the public life due to the influence of communist ideologies which sprang up after 1935. They played role other than that visualized by Gandhi. In chapter III different stages of this process are analyzed and evaluated.

Apart from political participation combined with social service, women of Malabar found an independent space for social service activities. Chapter IV analytically studies the role of various women personalities in the social service scenario. They were also the product of modern education and were influenced by one of the reform movements of the nineteenth century like that

led by Sree Narayana Guru, the Theosophical Society and so on. All of them were politically conscious and believed in Gandhian ideology but were not involved in any act of the national movement directly.

The socially conscious women of Malabar awakened during the National Movement mainly through women organizations. Through these organizations they could communicate among themselves and the organizations became training centres for social services. There was no space for caste discrimination which was an important trait of the traditional Kerala society. All the women personalities who are studied under the topic never worked for one or other group of women but for women of the society as a whole.

There were many problems in the prosecution of this study. North Malabar is known for *Smaranikas* (Commemorations). But these are published only in honour of male leaders of the National Movement. There is not a single *Smaranika* honouring any female leaders of the same period. The situation is the same in the case of public Memorials also but with an exception of 'Cheriyamma Smaraka Vayanasala' at Nedungom village, Kannur. This made women 'invisible' in the society and made it too difficult for the present generation to know about women leaders. The original sources were very difficult to locate as most of them were destroyed due to ignorance

or due to calamities. This was to an extent augmented by collecting oral evidence.

The present study does not claim to be an exhaustive one. For example the change in the apparel of women during this period is not included even though the researcher is aware that it has a lot of social relevance. There is also scope for larger gender issues raising their inequality, women as decision makers or as makers of history and such problems are not taken in this study. This can be done separately.

Sources of this study were collected from various archives and libraries. I have visited National Archives, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Indian Council of Historical Research Library, Indian Council of Social Science Research Library, Centre for Women Development Studies-all located in New Delhi; Centre for Development Studies Library and Sakhi Documentation Centre in Trivandrum ; Kerala Sahitya Academy Library and Appan Thamburan Smaraka Library in Trichur; Regional Archives, Mathrubhumi News Paper Office, Desabhimani Office, Chandrika Office Kozhikode Public Library and Research Centre, Municipal Reference Library, Eranhipalam, Desaposhini Reading Room and Public Library, Vidya Vinodini Vayanasala, Zamorin's Guruvayurappan College Library- all located in Calicut; History Department Library and C. H. Mohammed Koya Research Centre at Calicut University; Nayanar Smaraka Sanchara Library,

Tanur and Moyinkutty Vaidyar Smaraka Library, Kondotty; Potujana Vayanasala, Subhash Mandiram, Paral, Kerala Chandrika Vayanasala, Kotilyeri, Sporting Youth Library, Eranjoli, Sree Narayana Matam library, Chokli, Azad Momorial Reading Room and Library, Sree Jagannatha Temple Library-all located in Tellichery ; Patyam Gopalan Smaraka Research Centre, District Congress Committee Office, Yuvajana Vayana Sala, Marakkar Kandy, Potu Jana Vayana Sala, Irinavu, Potu Jana Vayana Sala, Velam, Mayyil, Sree Jata Veda Guru Memorial Vayana Sala and Deseeya Granthalayam, Kandakkai, Bhgat Singh Library, Malappattam, Pappinisseri Panchayat Library, Sanjayan Smaraka Library, Payyannur- all located in Kannur. I have drawn materials from these libraries and repositories for preparing this Thesis.

CHAPTER I

FROM A TRADITIONAL SOCIETY TO MODERN: WOMEN ENTERING PUBLIC LIFE

The entry of women in the public life of Malabar can be understood only in a wider colonial national spectrum. It is the result of much stress and strain by men and women. In the global context women who constitute half of the world's population have been demanding equal wages, equal opportunities and equal 'status' with men.¹

Traditional society observed an ideology to keep women away from the power systems through the construction of 'private' and 'public' realms for women and men respectively. For example Rousseau in the eighteenth century France and Vivekananda in nineteenth century India emphasized the need to keep private sphere and family unity by legitimizing the role of women in their private life and men in the public.²

The traditional society ascribed certain roles to women and those roles were ratified with the help of scriptures, custom and law. Such a society stereotyped women as passive and dependent while men were treated as

¹ Aleyamma George, "Status of Women and Education", *Role and status of women in India*, collection of articles, Calcutta, 1978., p. 98.

² Bharati Ray, et.al., *Early Feminists of colonial India*, Oxford, 2002., p. 37.

active and independent. We find even in Gandhi this kind of an established belief though he has been credited with bringing women in to the mainstream to join the nationalist movement.³

In the nineteenth century traditional Malayalee society, women were refrained from social mobility or social freedom.⁴ Moreover there were caste barriers within and among various castes and women were the worst-hit group of the society irrespective of the caste-hierarchy. In a society characterized by vertical hierarchies of caste, gender relations take different forms and these signified varied roles for women.⁵ The society presented a multiplicity of customs and practices as a result of the diverse religions, castes and so on. They were confined to their 'feminine' world, performing duties in and around their domesticity.

The transition from a traditional Malayalee society to a progressive one saw drastic changes – political, social, economic etc. Simultaneously a shift from private to public is seen in the life of Malayalee women. In this context, an analysis of the 'Theory of Public Sphere' propounded by Jurgen Harbermas seems to be inevitable and applicable. To him "this sphere is a realm of social life where people can bring up matters of general interest

³ Gandhi's ideal woman was the mythical Sita who suffered exile, ordeal of fire to prove her chastity. See Geraldine Forbes, *women in modern India*, Cambridge, 1998, p.124 and also see Bharati Ray, *op.cit.*

⁴ K.K.Indira, *Kavitayum Samoohya Parivartanavum*, (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1992., p.27

⁵ Meera Velayudhan, "Changing Roles and women's Narratives", *Social Scientist Vol.22*, November 1-2 January- February, 1994., p. 64.

where they can discuss and debate these issues without recourse to custom, dogma and force and where they can resolve difference of opinion by rational arguments.⁶ The public sphere is not the state. It is rather the informally mobilized body of non Governmental discursive opinion that can serve as a counter weight to the state.⁷ Taking these in to consideration, Habermas' theory mainly stands for political organizations which is applicable to, in a way, the entering of women into the main stream in Malabar.

In order to understand the public life of women in Malabar a probe into the concept of civil society is essential. Habermas considered civil society as a site where public opinion is formed through discourse in which private individuals forge a common understanding about public goals and exercise scrutiny over the state. He restricted the label of public sphere to the reason based solidarity. Civil society is the arena of community meetings and street corner activity, clubs, churches, *sabhas* and *samajams*, professional associations and unions, social movements and community actions groups.⁸ Civil society is presented as 'the voice of the people'. From 'green' protestors to self –help groups, the message of civil society can be equalized to hope, well being and reform in many regions of the world.⁹ Partha

⁶ Jonathan H.Turner, *The Structure of Sociological Theory*, Jaipur 1987., p. 190

⁷ Carolyn M. Elliot, (ed) *Civil Society and Democracy*,. A comparative Review Essay, New Delhi 2003.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹ Rajesh Tandon, and Ranjita Mohanty (ed.), *Does Civil Society Matter? Governance in Contemporary India*, NewDelhi, 2003., p. 59

Chatterjee identified civil society with modernization and civil society as a site of post-modern creativity. To him modernization began in the first half of the nineteenth century because of the penetration of western ideas.¹⁰

The introduction of modern political practices to non western society started as a result of the combination of colonialism, liberalism and capitalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rather than attributing it to the sole universalizing force of capitalism. The impact of these forces can be found in the politics of Indian nationalism. It showed all the marks of “civility” with rare purity, the development of organizations, respect for a certain kind of legality. With the colonial state a general politics of restraint accommodation and rule – following even a great predominance of lawyers in the Indian nationalist elite.¹¹

To understand the entry of women in public life, observations made by some scholars are worth mentioning. Tanika Sarkar assigned the entering of women in the public domain to the Gandhian Movement. Gandhian Movement was perceived by every socially conservative nationalist family as an inevitable part of it. Gandhi intended participation of women in non

¹⁰ Modernization was due to the strenuous efforts of social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswara Chandra Vidya Sagar and so on. See, Partha Chatterjee, “The Nationalist Resolution on the Women’s Question”, in Kunkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, (ed.), *Recasting Women, Essays in Colonial History*, New Delhi, 1989, p.234.

¹¹ Sudipta Kaviraj, “In Search of Civil Society”, Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khil Nani, (eds.), *Civil Society History and Possibilities*, Oxford, 2001., pp. 287-333.

violent modes of action.¹² Women in a tradition bound society began to question their confinement in the families without giving any public role to act, with the emergence of the National Movement.

Visalakshi Menon in her work, *Indian women and Nationalism- the UP Story*¹³ found education an important factor which made women politically conscious¹⁴. She found the role of women to be substantial one in UP during the national movement. Of course women could enter the public sphere due to the national movement-even before the Civil Disobedience Movement. Women in the congress had made considerable progress in the 1940's and participated in three or four mass movements. In such a period also Gandhi adopted a "thus far and no further attitude" towards women. Though their traditional roles were not redefined due to the Gandhian movement, they returned to their homes as different women.¹⁵ Gandhi sent women to handle situations of extreme violence and the experience thus they got made them confident to face all kinds of situation even in the post-independence period.¹⁶ Visalakshi Menon concludes that the Independence would have been a slower one, if women had not participated in the national movement.

¹² Tanika Sarkar, "Politics and women in Bengal-the conditions and meaning of participation," J.Krishnamurthy (ed), *Women in Colonial India, Essays on Survival, Work and the State*, Oxford University press, Delhi 1989., p.237

¹³ Visalakshi Menon, *Women and Indian Nationalism-the UP Story*, Sakthi Books, Delhi 2003.

¹⁴ *Ibid* p.45

¹⁵ *Ibid* p.171

¹⁶ *Ibid*

Devika assigns the emergence of the concept of “public sphere” to the latter half of the nineteenth century. An important development which took place during the period was the emergence of an English educated class which began to review the existing social order, ideas and institutions in a sharply critical way.¹⁷ Those who were educated on modern lines and those who were in touch with modern ideas and institutions found their own space in the public sphere¹⁸. But gender discrimination was present in the anatomy of this public sphere. Accordingly the social space is classified as ‘public’ and ‘domestic’ and was ascribed to man and woman respectively.¹⁹

The late nineteenth century saw the emergence of a reading public and the functioning of ‘reading clubs’ and ‘debating societies’. These were the groups of modern educated men gathering to discuss matters of ‘general interest’²⁰ and ‘public interest’ became the key concern²¹. The last decade of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century saw the publication of women magazines and journals published from various parts of Kerala for women and by women. *Keraleeya Sugunabodhini*(1887) was the

¹⁷ J.Devika, “Imagining Women’s Social Space in Early Modern Keralam”,working paper.329,Trivandrum August 2002,Introduction.p.1

¹⁸ Mini Sukumaran and J.Devika, “Keraleeya potumandalathil Streevada Rashtreeyathinte Sadhyatakal”,J.Devika (ed),Anarasu Nattile Kazhchakal, Kottayam, 2006, p.10.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.p.11

²⁰ J.Devika, Imagining Women’s Social Space in Early Modern Keralam,working paper.329,Trivandrum August 2002,Introduction.p.1

²¹ J Devika and Mini Sukumaran “Making Space for Feminist Social Critique in Contemporary Kerala”. Economic and Political weekly, October 21-27,2006.Vol.XL1 No.42,p.4469

first women Magazine published in Kerala.²² This was followed by a series of women magazines like *Lakshmibai*, *Vidyavinodini*, *Mahila*, *Mahila Ratnam*, *Sreemathi*, *Vanitha*, *Mitavati*, *Murali*, *Unni Nambuthiri* and so on, which were edited by men and women as well. These journals and magazines which were the sites for the formation of public opinion formed a, nascent 'public sphere' in Kerala. This pre-supposes the prior transformation of social ties, their convergence to form new institutional arrangements, which reshaped the entire context of social community.²³

An important topic dealt with by the women magazines was women education. Women education was considered as an instrument to make efficient house wives²⁴. Devika analyses the role of women's magazines in changing the attitude of the society. The early decades of the twentieth century saw the expansion of civil social institutions in Malayalee society which also followed the gendered lines and *Stree Samajams* became more and more numerous. They were concerned with articulating the interests of women as equal citizens.²⁵ The most popular form of women's civic associations were those largely organized around their familial roles as

²² Keraleeya Sugunabodhini, 1894 July, Introduction p.V

²³ Devika, *op, cit*, p.2, and also see Devika (translated from Malayalam and (ed), *Herself*, Early Writings on Gender by Malayalee women. 1898-1938.

²⁴ Devika. 'Modernity with Democracy'? Gender and Governance in the Peoples Planning campaign, Keralam' W.P series No.368, February 2005, p.11.

²⁵ *Ibid*

mothers, wives and home makers and those geared to integrate women in to active agents of social development.²⁶

Devika, while analyzing the project of Nambuthiri Brahmin Reform in Kerala, identified the modern individuality as a gendered individuality. In all the varied versions of their movement towards ‘liberation’ the Nambuthiri women were advised to acquire the skill to become ‘useful’ at home, outside or in both spaces at the same time.²⁷ Without rejecting gender differences in inclinations, abilities etc. the radical reformers²⁸ maintained that women needed to be actively integrated in to modern spheres of life, public and domestic, in order to be liberated.²⁹

By the 1930’s many women had begun to emerge in the public domain as active and able participants and the reform movements saw the emergence of personalities like Muthukulam Parvathi Amma, Arya Pallam, Parvathi Nenmenimangalam, Devaki Narikkattiri and many writers, political figures etc.³⁰ In the political struggles, Gandhian Nationalism was accompanied by

²⁶ *Ibid.* p.13

²⁷ J.Devika, ‘En-gendering Individuals: the project of Nambuthiri Brahmin Reform in Kerala’, *Journal of South Indian History*, Vol.1.Issue.2 March –August 2004., Calicut University, p.80

²⁸ Radical reformers refers to Sahodaran Ayyappan and V.T.Bhattathiripad and his circle.

²⁹ J.Devika, “Beyond *Kulina* and *Kulata*. The critique of gender differences in the writings of K.Saraswati Amma”, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*. Sage Publications New Delhi Vol.X No.2.May-August 2003., pp 206-207

³⁰ J.Devika, *En-gendering Individuals-A study of Gender and Individulisation in Reform-language in Modern Keralam.1880’s-1950’s*.(un published Ph.D thesis), Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 1999., p.179.

remarkable participation of women as activists, speakers and organizers.³¹ When women entered the main stream of the political life the feminist observations and the related ideologies raised challenge to the established thought.³²

The transformation of the Malabar society was not a spontaneous one. It was the sum total of various internal compulsions and external forces. In Malabar, women's participation in 'public life' dates back to the early decades of the twentieth century. They could step out of their homes through various ways and means. Women were restrained thoroughly in the traditionally ordained society. In such a society education was denied to them. The domestic role of women fostered a belief that education for girls was a waste as it could not be put to any financial gain³³. Besides, under colonial rule the basic objective of the education policy was to prepare the young men for white collar jobs. In such a condition, women's education was ignored and so mass illiteracy among the female population was common.³⁴

³¹ *Ibid*

³² J.Devika,*Streevadam*, DC Books, Kottayam 2000.p.14

³³ Meredith Borthwick, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal*, Princeton University press, Princeton, New Jersey 1984., p.61

³⁴ Andal. N.,*Women and Indian Society. Options and Constraints*, Rawat publications, Jaipur 2002., p.40. And also see Indian Horizons, Special Issue Vol.50, No.1-4, 2003, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi.p.23

Women Education

When the first missionary of the Basal Evangelical Mission Society arrived in Malabar in 1839, the condition of women of Malabar was very miserable. Her birth right to education was restricted by certain evil customs and practices prevalent in the tradition bound society. Evangelization for Christ was the only aim of the Missionary Societies and for that they wanted to educate the women also.³⁵ A conversation in the novel *Sukumari* between the two characters Manikkam and Chiranjeevi reveal that education was considered a ‘forbidden fruit’

The first school of the BEMS for girls was established by Julie Gundert in `1839 in Tellichery. Later girls’ schools were established in different places in Kannur, Chombala, Palghat, Calicut, Manjeri, Kodakkal and Vaniyamkulam. In the girls’ schools, besides teaching Bible, they taught English, History, Geography, Knitting, Sewing, Embroidery etc. Joseph Mooliyil in his novel *Sukumari* gives a detailed description of the system of education in the Missionary school(*Sala*) at Chirakkal, Kannur.³⁶ The Missionaries appointed lady teachers in the schools in order to attract girls.³⁷

³⁵ R.J.Hepzi Joy, “History and Development of Education for women in Kerala”(1819-1947), Seminary Publications K.U.T. Seminary, Trivandrum(1995)p.206

³⁶ Joseph Mooliyil, *Sukumari* (1897),Haritham Books, Kozhikode Reprint 2003., Chapter 6

³⁷ R J Hepzi Joy,opcit.p.210

The activities of the missionary attracted all sections of the society without any discrimination.³⁸

The Missionary activities in the field of women education have brought about tremendous changes in the society of Malabar. As a result of vocational education imparted by the missionaries, the number of employed women who earned an income increased every year. This enhanced the status of women economically and socially.³⁹ The missionary work could change the attitude of the society towards girls' education. Society began to consider education as a necessary step to help the women to be an enlightened, wife and mother. An educated woman would be an efficient house wife with her knowledge of health and hygiene. Besides, she would be better equipped to bring up her child.⁴⁰ The hard and fast caste rules and regulations of the society were loosened to a great extent because the BEMS schools admitted girls of all castes and religions. As a result women got opportunities to study in the education institutions along with men, to work and hold responsible positions outside their homes and to participate in various educational, economic, social and political activities.⁴¹

³⁸ P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charitram*, Kerala Bhasha Institute Trivandrum, 1974., p.508

³⁹ *Ibid.*p.212

⁴⁰ Hema Sundaram, "A Struggle for Space", Leela Gulati, Jasodhara Bagchi (ed)A Space of Her Own-Personal Narratives of twelve women, Sage publications, New Delhi 2005., p.91

⁴¹ *Ibid.*p.216

Education has made tremendous progress during the second half of the nineteenth century and has kept pace with the growth of population.⁴² It was recognized as the most important means of improving the status of women.⁴³ This fact is well expounded by Joseph Mooliyil in his work *Sukumari*.

“Look at the condition of women of various castes around you. There are rich as well as poor women but none of them has education which is very essential for their livelihood on this earth”.

“A house is like the woman of that house and like the social progress and the education system of the ‘sala’ aimed at this motto”⁴⁴

The above comments made by the European in charge of the orphanage at Chirakkal is a clear indication of the fact that women education and social progress are closely related, rather inseparable. The social condition of Malabar of the 19th century is very well reflected through these comments. Women empowerment through education is a social necessity, though empowerment is a multi dimensional process. It includes greater access to knowledge and resources, greater autonomy in decision making, etc.

⁴² CA Innes, Malabar Gazetteer (1908), Trivandrum, 1997., Vol. I: p.296

⁴³ Aparna Basu, Bharati Ray(ed), Women’s Struggle A History of the AIWC.1927- 2002, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 2003.p.18.

⁴⁴ Joseph Mooliyil, *Sukumari*, (1897) Kozhikode, 2003, pp. 53-54.

Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known⁴⁵ and women of Malabar were not an exception to this general concept.

The essentiality of women education was felt and expressed by the writers of Malabar towards the end of 19th century. The early novels like *Indulekha* (1889) *Meenakshi* (1890) *Sarada* (1892) and *Sukumari* (1897) have contributed much towards this.

Even before the publication of *Indulekha*, the first social novel of Malayalam, serious efforts were done by Appu Nedungadi, the author of *Kundalatha* (1887)⁴⁶ who was a pioneer of social progress in Malabar. There was no area of activity which was not touched by him. He visualised a happy and prosperous society. He was instrumental and contributed much towards the education of women in Malabar. Appu Nedungadi, a product of western education was a loyal colonial subject. He was an admirer of *white man's justice*, efficiency and other qualities. Though he lived in an era of nationalism and anti-colonial movements in Malabar, he remained aloof. He was not influenced by the nationalist movement unlike many of the members of the educated elite and prominent colonial subjects.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ S. Ram (ed) Education and Empowerment of Women, *Encyclopedia of Women and Social Change*, New Delhi, 2003., Vol.1, p. 309.

⁴⁶ *Kundalatha* was published in 1887 but it is not considered as a full fledged novel.

⁴⁷ K.K.N. Kurup and Sankaran Raveendran, *Appu Nedungadi, The man, writer and Banker*, Calicut, 2000, p. 23.

Appu Nedungadi was very much aware of social progress through education, especially women education⁴⁸ on western lines. In the beginning of the twentieth century when non-Christian girls were not admitted in the convent school at Calicut, he founded the 'Society for the Promotion of Education of Women' (SPEW) at Chalappuram and an English school was started⁴⁹ for girls in 1906. The school was opened to girls of all castes and religions.⁵⁰

The school was later handed over to the corporation of Calicut and is at present known as Achuthan Girls' High School at Chalappuram. The school was constructed with the help of Rarichan Mooppan, a rich man of Calicut and the financial support from various persons. As in the case of any other social reformer his efforts were met with criticism. The school was constructed in a place where once there had been a pond. Even though people said that the students might suffer from rheumatic complaints Appu Nedungadi did not close down the school. He appointed European ladies Ellen Frank Koria and Elizebath as teachers of the school. He arranged *jeduka*

⁴⁸ *Mahat Charitha Mala*, (Mal.), 2005, p. 12.

⁴⁹ Ulloor S.Parameswara Iyer, *Kerala Sahitya Charithram*, (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1990, Vol.V, p. 278.

⁵⁰ Personal Interview with I.K.K. Menon at his residence, Calicut on 28 December 2006.

(cart) for the teachers. It showed his keen interest in the development of the school.⁵¹

Appu Nedungadi admitted girls of his own family to the school which inspired others also to admit their children in the school and the number of girls considerably increased. Thus the first indigenous girls' school was founded by Appu Nedungadi in Malabar irrespective of caste barriers, symbolizing the impact of liberal ideology in the true sense of the term. He was an innovator of social systems through women education within the colonial perspective.

Indulekha, the first full-fledged novel in Malayalam authored by O. Chandu Menon represents *colonial modernity*.

Both colonialism and nationalism directly figured in the literature of the pre- independence era. The first major novel in Malayalam, *Indulekha* is in fact about colonial modernity and its impact on the newly emerging middle class. A fairly lengthy discussion on the intellectual influence of the west and the indigenous response to it is reflective of the complex and contradictory ways in which Indians were trying to come to terms with the new situation engendered by colonialism. Such

⁵¹ I.K.K.Menon, 'T.M.Appu Nedungadiyum Kundalathayum', Preface to *Kundalatha* (1887), Calicut, 1999, p. VIII.

sensitivity was not limited to the novel, which is often considered a colonial creation but to other genres of literature as well. They all formed part of the emerging anti-colonial and national consciousness and thus heralded the process of intellectual and cultural decolonization.⁵²

Indulekha, the central character of the novel is a product of western education and she shows ‘individualism’ in every stage. She was made fit for life through her English education and her financial security which she could avail within the family setup, that too due to her *Karanavar*. Only a self-reliant individual could think about freedom and this aspect was reflected very much in the life of Indulekha.

Indulekha was not only conscious about her own freedom but she was aware of all women of Kerala.⁵³ She was very much conscious about freedom of women on all occasions. When Madhavan accused women of Kerala on not observing *Pathivrata Dharma* and were freely accepting and rejecting their husbands, Indulekha retorted⁵⁴ and asserted that.

⁵² K.N.Panikkar, “Novel as Imagined History”, in P.P.Sudhakaran and Kesavan Veluttat, (ed.), *Advances in History*, Essays in memory of Professor M.P. Sreedharan, Calicut, 2003, p. 317.

⁵³ M.Leela Kumari, *Streesangalpam Malayala Novalil-Patanam*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 2000, p. 79.

⁵⁴ O. Chandumenon, *Indulekha*, (Mal.), (1889), Kottayam, 20th Edition, 2005., p. 55

The women of Kerala are observing *Pathivrata Dharma* as any other women of India”. In this context she acted as the defender of Nair women who are educated and social. “We, the Nair women are not living as *Antarjanams* who are not educated and not talk with other people of the society. That doesn’t mean that we are prostitutes or are not observing *Pathivrata Dharma*. If you are thinking so it is absurd. Think about the women of Europe, America etc. There education, knowledge and freedom are equally given for men and women irrespective of their gender... A woman can mingle with other men without losing her *Pativratahood*.⁵⁵

She continues,

In my opinion bringing up women like animals without giving freedom leads much to prostitution.

Here, Indulekha highlighted the ideals of educated women and the role of such women towards social progress by taking examples from various other advanced countries of the world. Education equipped her to decide her

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

own personal matters and she overcame all the hurdles in life because of this education.⁵⁶

Indulekha's individualism is revealed in the conversation she had with Soori Nambuthiripad.⁵⁷ As an educated lady on western lines, she was ready to talk with him even though she never wanted to have *bandhavam* with him. Even though she was willing to play piano for him the moment he declared 'I always wanted to live with you', she retorted, 'I never want to be your wife in this life time'⁵⁸ and the term *jnan*⁵⁹ might have shocked the Nambuthiripad as this was against custom⁶⁰.

In *Indulekha*, Chandu Menon visualised a woman not as an instrument of pleasure for a wealthy man but as a person who has her own rights and 'individualism' to decide her way of life. Whenever there was an attack towards individual freedom she defended herself and the media. *Indulekha* was not a reality of the period but it was the vision of Chandu Menon about how a 'modern' woman should be. He made attempts to accomplish this distant dream in his next novel *Sarada* (1892).

⁵⁶ Renjini. D., *Nair Women Today, Disintegration of Matrilineal System and the Status of Nair Women in Kerala*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 89.

⁵⁷ M.Leela Kumari, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

⁵⁸ O.Chandumenon, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

⁵⁹ *Jnan* stands for *I*.

⁶⁰ M.Leela Kumari, *op.cit.* Caste hierarchy was maintained through strict observance of customary practices in word and deed in daily life. A Nair was not expected to say the 'I' to a Nambuthiri. She was required to demean herself by saying 'my humble self'.

The Kalliani Amma of *Sarada* is a rebirth of Kalliani Kutty of *Indulekha*.⁶¹ Kalliani Amma protested the *Sambandham* arranged by the *Karanavar* for her with an ugly and idiotic land lord. Then she went out and got the ‘man’ she wanted to marry after a considerable period of wandering. This was possible because of her education and courage. Here the visionary in Chandu Menon was trying to establish the fact that Kalliani Kutty of *Indulekha* also could have become a Kalliani Amma of *Sarada* if the former had enough courage.⁶² Here courage is an aftereffect of education and financial self-reliance. Chandu Menon’s writings represent the ‘renaissance’ of Malayalam literature. The ‘renaissance’ always carries the age along with it. And the literary culture of the period was ‘Horizontalisation.’⁶³ The continued relevance of *Indulekha* is something unique.⁶⁴

“Is she having any *Sambandhakaran*? Hasn’t she finished her school education? Teaching the girls English and *Paranthiris* is very bad.”⁶⁵ Puruhuthan ask to Kittunni, a servant of Kanakamangalam Tarawad in the novel *Meenakshi*. This novel was written by Cheruvalath Chattu Nair. We

⁶¹ M.Leelakumari, *op.cit.*, p.81.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Sukumar Azheekode, “*Chandumenonte Sahitya Darsanam*”, *Samayam Masika*, (Mal.), 1 April 2004, Kannur, p. 22.

⁶⁴ Nagendra, K.R. Singh, *Encyclopedia of the Indian Biography, Vol.II*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 83.

⁶⁵ C. Chatu Nair, *Meenakshi*, 1890, p.83, *Meenakshi* comes third in the list of Malayalam novels, the first two being *Indulekha* (1889) and *Indumathi Swayamvaram*, (1890) by Ammavan Raja.

find the contradiction between the thinking of educated progressive Nair and the traditionally bounded Nambuthiri. The theme of the novel is the realisation of the love of English educated Meenakshi and Kunhisankara Menon. Through out the novel we find the clash between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity.’⁶⁶ The tradition bound people believed that an important reason for undesired social change is women education and they wanted to stop it at any cost. “What is the use of educating women? That would make them prostitutes without obeying their husbands and other men-folk in the houses.”⁶⁷

This traditional concept was opposed by Gopalamenon, Meenakshi’s uncle. To him such allegations against women education were the result of ignorance and jealousy. He considered English education as very essential for women.⁶⁸ This essentiality of women education was well maintained through out the novel.

In order to educate women ‘Kanakamangalam Female Middle School’, an English school was depicted in the novel. In this institution, apart from academic matters, needlework, music, Sanskrit etc were taught and more than

⁶⁶ ‘Tradition’ stands for a body of customs, through practices, belonging to a particular society without change over a relatively long period of time. ‘Modernity’ has emphasized more upon structural changes than attitudinal ones. For details see, Pushpa Tiwari, “Traditional Modernity as Determinants of Women’s roles and Status; Romance and Reality”, Chandrakala Pandia, (ed.), *Feminism, Tradition and Modernity*, Delhi, 2002, pp. 235-239.

⁶⁷ C. Chathu Nair, *opcit* p. 27.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

sixty girls attended the school.⁶⁹ The beginning of modern education of women in India can be traced to the schools started by the missionaries⁷⁰ in the nineteenth century. In Malabar the essentiality of women education was well accepted and well placed by the novelist in *Meenakshi*.

The novel *Sukumari* ranks fourth in the list of early Malayalam novels. This novel also insists on female education but that was on the missionary style of education.⁷¹ “English education is good but it should not vulgarize our native language.”⁷² This shows that English education was well accepted but with some sort of precaution. Instead of rejecting modern education the society was preparing for the change with some precaution. The four novels of early Malayalam literature focus on modern education for girls though with certain restrictions. The essentiality of female education was well considered as the first step for social progress. The spread of education produced a new educated class of professionals and many of them became teachers.⁷³ Teaching provided a path into male dominated society.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷⁰ A.R. Kamat, “Women Education and Social Change in India”, *Social Scientist*, Vol.V, August 1976, p. 3.

⁷¹ *Sukumari* was published in 1897 by Joseph Mooliyil.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁷³ “Western education and Indian Nationalism”, *Indian Horizons*.opcit.p.24

⁷⁴ Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, women and well being – How Kearala became 'A model'*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi,1992p.157

WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS

The formation of women organizations in India had started in the mid nineteenth century since the Brahmos took charge of women education in Bengal.⁷⁵ But it was only during the Indian freedom movement that women themselves began in large numbers to agitate for change and created their own organizations and publications. All these were aimed at reforming the society⁷⁶ and these were started within a span of ten years and culminated in the formation of All India Women's conference(AIWC).⁷⁷ The umbrella organization , AIWC though established in 1927,became influential after 1930.⁷⁸

AIWC met to discuss women education, without any intention of forming a permanent organization. It initially perceived education as a kind of panacea for women, family and society.⁷⁹ But women found that they could not discuss education ignoring the social problems of Purdah, slavery, child

⁷⁵ Sonia Bothla, *Women, Democracy and the Media – Cultural and Political Representations in the Indian press*, Sage publications, New Delhi, 1998, p.78.

⁷⁶ Katherine K.Young, “Women and Hinduism”, Arvind Sharma(ed),*Women in Indian Religions*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, p.20

⁷⁷ The women Indian Association was started in 1917 by Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinaraja Dasa and Annie Besant and was linked with the British movement for women's suffrage. The National Council of Women in India was founded by Lady Tata and Lady Aberdeen in 1925 and was the Indian branch of the International Council of Women. The AIWC was formed in 1927, initiated by Margaret Cousins. see Rajkumari Amrit Kaur (translation to Malayalam),”*Stree Prasthanam Indiyil, The Sthree*, Book 1, 1108 edavam.,pp.1-2

⁷⁸ Neera Desai, *Social Construction of Feminist Perspective and Feminist Consciousness: A Study of Ideology and Self awareness Among Women Leaders*. Project, ICSSR, New Delhi, 1998, p.40.

⁷⁹ Maitrayee Chaudhari, *Feminism in India*, Kali for women, New Delhi 2004, p.118.

marriage and that these could not be separated from the political issue of Indian subordination to Britain.⁸⁰ In order to mobilise women for attaining equality, for developing consciousness among women for their rights and to carry out welfare programmes for women and children, the AIWC organized state level and urban and rural branches through out the country.⁸¹ Thus it was the first mass Indian Women's organization that came into being.⁸²

AIWC had branches in Malabar and many women who entered the public life during this period worked actively in these associations. At the regional level, women organizations named *Mahila Samajam* were started by 1930's in and across Malabar under women leadership and initiative. There are references to women organizations called *Stree Samajams* in Malabar even earlier. The content of the *Stree Samajams* were published in the women's journal called *Sarada*. *Sarada* was started under the initiative of T.B. Kalliani Amma, T. Ammukutty Amma and C Kalliani Amma. In Tellichery, a *Stree Samajam* was formed under the initiative of Karayi Damayanthi during 1890s. She conducted a Mobile Library for women along with various other social activities.⁸³ Such activities stimulated the concept of

⁸⁰ AIWC File No. 710 and also see. Joanna Liddle and Rama Joshi, *Daughters of Independence-Gender, Caste and Class in India*, Kali for women, New Delhi 1986 p.35

⁸¹ Neera Desai, Co-ordinator, *A Decade of Women's Movement in India*-collection of papers presented at a seminar organized by Research Centre for Women Studies, SNDT University, Bombay, Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay 1988 p.4

⁸² Tara Ali Baig (ed), *Women of India*, Government of India, New Delhi, first edition 1957, p.16

⁸³ Manjula.K.V., *Streeyum Samoochavum*, Kairali Books, Kannur, 2005 p.76

education in women. We have references of the formation of a *Stree Samajam* in Kozhikode in September 1902. For that a meeting was convened by European women like Mrs. Macre at *Brahmana Balika Patasala* in which many women of Kozhikode were present. The meeting was convened without any distinction of caste or creed. Mrs. Macre in the meeting read an article titled, 'Benefits of Harem speeches and contacts between European women and Hindu women'. The aim of the presentation was to develop cordial relations between the European and Indian women.⁸⁴ Mrs. Barlo who was an active member of *Stree Samajam* in Calicut went to Palghat and she took the initiative to start a *Stree Samajam* in Palghat in February 1904. The first two meetings of the *Samajam* were held in Victoria College. During this period there were no *Stree Samajams* in Travancore and Cochin.⁸⁵ Through these associations women could come out of their homes and could channelise their social activities. In spite of their involvement in social activities women did not ignore their basic responsibilities.

During the post- First World War period more women organizations were formed in Malabar. Under the initiative of Margaret Cousins, a branch of women Indian Association was started in Calicut. Annapoorni Ammal was the first President of the association.⁸⁶ The association aimed at creating consciousness among women regarding their capacities, educating women

⁸⁴ *Sarada* Book 2 No.7 1906, pp. 138-139

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* pp.139-141

⁸⁶ *Manasi*, women Indian Association, Calicut, 2005, p.11

and helping the poor and the disabled. This association worked efficiently under the able leadership of women like Pattathil Devaki Amma, Yamuna Bai, Manjeri Kamalambal, K.E.Sarada Teacher, T.M.Narayani Kovilamma and so on.⁸⁷

Women who entered the public life of Malabar during the National Movement worked in this association. When AIWC started its branches women worked in these associations also. The important women associations which had contributed much towards fulfilling the needs of the time through various capacities were the Mahila Samajam (Mahe-Tellichery), Muslim Mahila Samajam (Tellichery), Mahila Samajam (Kozhikode), and Mahila Samajam (Ottapalam). All these associations were started during the 1930s and worked through out the national movement and after. Women who entered the public life of Malabar during this period worked in either one or other of these associations in order to accomplish the political and social aims of the period.

In North Malabar women met at Aroli school for the first time under the leadership of P.Yesoda teacher and K. Kalliani teacher and formed the Pappinisseri Mahila Samajam.⁸⁸ This was followed by various organizations. All of them culminated in the formation of an all India women organization

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁸⁸ Details are discussed in chapter 3

called Desiya Mahila Federation.⁸⁹ All women organizations participated in the political and social activities of Malabar. They had contributed a lot for the upliftment of the society in various ways and fought against British imperialism in India. The women organizations provided a platform for women to work and they also paved the way for the entry of women in to public life.

Women's Journals and Magazines

An important development which took place during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century was the publication of journals and magazines. The content of these was mainly the women's issues and other matters concerning women. These publications had an important role in changing the position of women in Malabar. Though many news papers and magazines were published in Kerala all of them were male centered. For the first time a magazine for women was published in 1887 named *Keraleeya Suguna Bodhini*.⁹⁰ This was followed by the publication of many magazines published by men and women as well. In this section a brief sketch is made about the important relevant topics published in these magazines which enabled women to be self conscious and helped women to come out of their homes. Women dependence, education, monogamy, chastity, ideal woman hood, man-woman relationships within

⁸⁹ C. Unni Raja (ed), *Communist Party Keralathil*, smaranika Kannur 1990.p.199

⁹⁰ *Keraleeya Suguna Bodhini* July, 1894, preface p.V.

marriage, the purpose of a woman's life etc. formed the core of women's narratives.⁹¹

Life of Hindu women was idealised in certain magazines in order to make women stereotyped. A true Hindu woman was depicted as a sublime combination of patience, obedience, contentment and unselfishness and a Hindu woman was not considered free by birth itself.⁹² Such writings stressed the Hindu ideal of *Stree Dharma*.⁹³ They tried to teach women to become an ideal mother, giving much emphasis to nurturing children with utmost perfection.⁹⁴ And they also insisted that women should know child caring scientifically.⁹⁵

Certain articles published in the magazines fought against evil customs of the society like child marriage, prohibition of widow marriage neglect of women education. I Devaki Amma, the first woman writer who has written articles in *Lakshmi Bai* stressed the position of women.⁹⁶ In the article, *Ippozhathe Streekal*, the writer argued in favour of the changing position of women, He commented, 'without the proper growth and development of

⁹¹ Meera Velayudhan, 'Changing Roles and Women's Narratives', *Social Scientist*, Vol.22 Nos .1-2 Jan/Feb 1994 p.67

⁹² Rugmini Amma, 'Sakshal Hindu Stree Jeevitham', *Mitavadi* B.2.No.7, July 1914

⁹³ T Ramalinga Pillai, 'Pracheena Bharatiya Stree Dharmam', *Athma Poshini*, Vol.VI, 1915, p. 66

⁹⁴ Changanassery Parameswaran Pillai, 'Mathavu', *Sreemathi* Special issue 1935 p.1

⁹⁵ K.C.Kochukutty Amma, 'Mathrutwa Mahima' *Sreemathi* Special issue 1935

⁹⁶ I.Devaki Amma, *Lakshmi Bai*, B 10, 1905, pp.112-113.

women folk who formed half of the world no complete development is possible, for every thing in the world, they are the people.⁹⁷

In order to raise the position of women many articles were published in the magazines and all of them considered education as an important necessity. In an article published in *Kerala Chintamani*, stated ‘since the women of Asia are not destined to have education and are bound to spend their life inside their house like caged parrots they could not do their duty as a wife and at the same time men were unable to enjoy their ‘married life’.⁹⁸ So freedom is an essentiality for women because only in a free atmosphere one can develop self respect.⁹⁹

Many articles were published to ascertain the role of women in public life. Mrs. Kumaranasan writes, ‘women had played important roles from the puranic period itself. Subhadra drove the Chariot. Smt. Sarojini Naidu led the congress. In education, arts, science etc. women were prominent.¹⁰⁰ In every aspect ‘womanliness’ is not lower than ‘manliness’. This was well recognized and accepted by women.¹⁰¹ When we take the biography of any hero or any great man there is a woman behind his fame-that may be his

⁹⁷ C.S.Subramanian Potty, *Ippozhathe Streekal, Sumangala*, B 1 No.9 and 10, 1916.p.267

⁹⁸ Puthezath Raman Menon, ‘*Pourastya Vanihtakal*’, Kerala Chintamani B2 No.7, July 1914.p.22.

⁹⁹ Dr. L.A.Ravi Varma, ‘*Streekalute Innathe Samrambhangal*’, *Sreemathi* Special issue, 1935 p.18

¹⁰⁰ Mrs. Kumaranasan, ‘*Karyeshu Mantri*’, *Sreemathi* opcit.

¹⁰¹ C.S Subramanian Potty, “*Anatham, pennatham*” *Ibid*.p.21

mother, wife or sister.¹⁰² To establish this 'womanliness' women should be educated.

The magazines of the period also published articles concerning the economic independence of women, a gate way towards the freedom of women.¹⁰³ For this industrial training should be given to women. To enable and equip women, educated women must enter the field and give leadership.¹⁰⁴

Some articles published during this period raised their voice for the self sufficiency of women. In the article, '*Streekal Adukkala Upekshikkarutu*', Devaki Narikkattiri argued that women are capable of doing any work and occupying any position of power. But she should not abandon the kitchen because no reform will last longer if the same was not started from the kitchen. She considers the kitchen as the basis of the society and the people instrumental in this are women. She further states that women could do any social activity without leaving the kitchen.¹⁰⁵

The women's magazines published in Kerala during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century stood

¹⁰² Mrs. Thankamma Cheriyan, "*Stree Vidyabhyasathinte Avasyakatha*", *Vanitha Ratnam*, Vol.1.No.7-8,1926.p.208.

¹⁰³ From the speech made by the Maharani of Travancore in the AIWC meeting convened at Travancore in 1936, *Mahila*, Vol.16(1)1936.p.7

¹⁰⁴ K.Priyamvada Amma, '*Streekalum Vyavasaya Pariseelanavum*', *Sreemathi*, opcit.p.47.

¹⁰⁵ Smt. Narikkattiri Devaki Antarjanam, '*Streekal Adukkala Upekshikkarutu*', *The Stree* issue 1933.p.24.

for the development of women educationally, economically, socially and politically. They had an important role to play in bringing women to the mainstream of Malabar.

There were some women who entered the public life of Malabar through their writings in women's magazines. The most prominent among them was Theravath Ammalu Amma(1863-1936) who had started the journal called *Sreemathi*. She had no formal education but was self taught. She has published a lot of articles in the early Malayalam women magazines like *Sarada*, *Lakshmibai*, *Vanitha Kusumam* etc. An important subject of her writings was women education.¹⁰⁶ In the article titled "Oru Prasangam"¹⁰⁷ which she read in the meeting of Kalpathi Stree Samajam she emphasized the need of women education and freedom for social progress. Regarding the mode of women education she insisted that the primary education should be imparted in mother tongue. But after primary education, it can be continued on western lines. At the same time she says that girls should be taught Sanskrit along with training in various matters like home management, child

¹⁰⁶ Theravath Ammalu Amma, *Jnanam*, *Sarada* 1082 Chingam.B 2.No.10 :*Jnanam*, *Sarada* 1082 Kanni,B 2 No.1: "Vidya", *Lakshmi Bai*,1083 Dhanu: "Vidya" *Lakshmi Bai*,1083 Makaram, B2 No.10: "Vidyagarvam" *Lakshmi Bai*, 1083, Medam: "Adhunika Stree Vidyabhasam" *Vanithakusumam* 1103 Chingam B.1

¹⁰⁷ Theravath Ammalu Amma, *Oru Prasangam*, *Lakshmi Bai*, 1092 Medam, B 13 No.1

caring, helping the poor and needy etc.¹⁰⁸ In her view the educated woman's life would be bright and prosperous.¹⁰⁹

Through her writings Theravath Ammalu Amma touched every aspect of human character and life. In the articles, *Sahavasam*¹¹⁰ and *Vivekam*,¹¹¹ she spoke about the character formation and social life in an individual's life. In *Mokshopayam*, she speaks about the spirituality of individuals in the context of social life.¹¹² In 1919 the Cochin Government decided to honour Theravath Ammalu Amma by giving the title *Sahitya Sakhi*. But she declined that by saying that all such luxuries are not suited to her simple and spiritual life.¹¹³ In 1924 she spent some months in Chidambaram and there she had scholastic discussions with Tamil and Sanskrit scholars.¹¹⁴ She translated *Sree Sankara Vijayam*, a Tamil work to Malayalam in 1928. This was done as per the request of the disciples of Kumbhakonam Sankaracharya swamikal and she was very particular not to disclose the translator's name.¹¹⁵

Theravath Ammalu Amma published a lot of works, apart from articles in the magazines. In 1907 she published *Bhaktamala* and in 1908 she translated *Siva Bhakta Vilasam* from Sanskrit to Malayalam. In 1911 she

¹⁰⁸ speech made by Theravath Ammalu Amma in the annual celebrations of Chittoor Girls' High School. see Theravath Ammini Amma, Theravath Ammalu Amma (Biography) 1 ed.1937 p.89

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*.p.103

¹¹⁰ Theravath Ammalu Amma, *Lakshmi Bai*, 1084 Chingam pp. 196-199

¹¹¹ Theravath Ammalu Amma, "Vivekam", *Atma Poshini*, 1915 Vol.5 No.3 pp.72-73

¹¹² Theravath Ammalu Amma, '*Mokshopayam*', *Lakshmi Bai*, 1085 Karkkitakam B.6 No.4

¹¹³ Theravath Ammini Amma, opcit p.30

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*.p.47

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*.p.52

translated *Leela*, a Tamil novel to Malayalam. She wrote a story named Leelavathi.¹¹⁶ She translated the English book 'Light of Asia' to Malayalam as *Buddha Gadha*. She also wrote a novel called *Komalavally*¹¹⁷

She was invited to preside over the meeting of the Kerala Sahitya Parishat at Trichur in 1927. The speech she made in the meeting was published in Lakshmi Bai. She considered the occasion of honouring her as part of honouring women and encouraging women in the literary activities.¹¹⁸ In her speech she made a request to establish a 'reading room' to honour Manorama Thamburatty, the writer who lived in the Kizhakkekovilakam in the Zamorin's family.¹¹⁹ The *Mahila Bharata Sangham* honoured Theravath Ammalu Amma on 28 January 1935 for the contributions she made towards literature.¹²⁰

A lovable episode in her life was the hospitality and the absolute protection she rendered to the Travancore deportee Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai and his family. The touching kindness they got at her

¹¹⁶ This was published as a series of articles in various volumes of *Lakshmi Bai*, - 1084 Midhunam No.3 :Karkkitakam No.4: 1085 Chingam B 5 No.5:1085 Kanni B 5 No.6 : Thulam B 5 N0.7: Vrischikam B 5 No.8 : Dhanu B 5 No.9: Makaram, B 5 no.10: Kumbham B 5 No.11: Meenam B 5 No.12.

¹¹⁷ Pattom G. Ramachandran Nair, *Nair Samudayathinte Ithihasam*, Sahitya Vedi Trivandrum 1987, p.478.

¹¹⁸ Theravath Ammini Amma, opcit.p.104

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*,p.145

¹²⁰ *Ibid*,p.174

hands has been immortalised in *Vyazhavatta Smaranakal*¹²¹ and *Ormayilninnu*.¹²² Written by the wife and daughter respectively of Ramakrishnapillai.

K.M. Kunhilakshmi Kettilamma (1877-1947) was a Sanskrit and Malayalam scholar of Malabar who entered the public life of Malabar through her writings in early women magazines. The important articles she published were ‘Azhvancheri Thamprakkal’ in *Kavana Kaumudi*, ‘Kelan’ in *Atmaposhini*, ‘Elakkan Koran’ in *Samudaya Deepika*, ‘Oru Aitihyam’ in *Sarada*, ‘Oru Atbhutavritam’ in *Dakshinadeepam*¹²³ and ‘Streekalum Sahityavum’ in *Mahila Ratnam*.¹²⁴

In “Streekalum Sathityavum”, Kunhilakshmi Kettilamma portrays literature as a way to win freedom for women. She is of the view that if women are granted more social freedom they might enter the literary field easily.¹²⁵ She was the editor of the women’s journal *Mahilaratnam*, which was published from Trivandrum.¹²⁶ Her major work in Sanskrit is *Prarthananjali* and in Malayalam she wrote *Kausalya Devi*, *Puranachandrika*, *Gokarna Prathishta* and *Kadamkottu Makkam*. Through her writings, she

¹²¹ B. Kalliani Amma, *Vyazhavatta Smaranakal* (Mal.) (Auto Biography), D C Books, Kottayam, 1 pub, 1916.

¹²² K. Gomathy Amma (ed), *Ormayilninnu* (Mal.), Memoirs of B.Kalliani Amma, Kottayam, 1964

¹²³ Ulloor S.Parameswara Iyer, *Kerala Sahitya Charitram* (Mal) Trivandrum 1990, Vol.V p.150. And also see *Chokliyute Innalekal* Tellichery, 2005, p.30

¹²⁴ J.Devika, *Herself*, p.48

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p.50

¹²⁶ *Chokliyute Innalekal*. opcit.

speaks about the progress of women by entering the field of literature. She herself was an example.

Kadathanat Madhavi Amma (1909-1999) was another woman personality rose to fame in Malabar through literature. She had her formal education till the eighth standard at a time when women education was not encouraged.¹²⁷ She began to publish her poems from 11 years of age. Though she had written poetry she showed interest in the writing of prose literature mainly due to the influence of Moyarath Sankaran, a freedom fighter who was also the editor of *Kerala Kesari* published from Vatakara. At the age of nineteen she published the historic novel *Thacholi Othenan*. The publication of the book by a woman was a unique event in the society.¹²⁸

Kadathanatt Madhavi Amma edited the magazine called *Murali* which was published from Kannur in 1933.¹²⁹ She wrote many articles and poems in various volumes of *Murali*.¹³⁰ Through her writings she fought against inequality, casteism and dowry which were existed in the society as a hindrance for social progress.¹³¹ She used her pen to write about women. She has drawn the picture of the cruelties of the society towards women in her

¹²⁷ *Mathrubhumi*, 20 Jun 1999

¹²⁸ B.Indira Devi, *Kadathanatt Madhavi Ammayute Kavyalokam*, Trivandrum, 2001, p.8.

¹²⁹ Chambatan Vijayan, “Vatakke Malabarile Pathrapravarthanam Swatantryaprapthikku *Munpu*”, *Smritichitra*, Tellichery, 2005 p.145.

¹³⁰ Kadathanatt Madhavi Amma, ‘*Paschathapam*’, *Murali*, October 1933; *Dharmasankatam*, *Murali*, September 1933; “*Virahi, Murali*”, February 1934; and so on

¹³¹ B.Indiradevi, *opcit*.p.7.

poem '*Katapparavakal*'.¹³² She admired the working women and she considered them as *gramasreekal* and appreciated them proudly.¹³³

Though Kadathanatt Madhavi Amma did not participate in the national movement directly, she imbibed the spirit of the time and exhibited her sentiments through her writings. When we analyse the role of Kadathanatt Madhavi Amma we find in her a strong nationalist and an advocate of freedom of women. She was an admirer of women's role in the society in various capacities. For her an ideal woman is an epitome of motherhood.

Though there were many women writers who entered the public life of Malabar, the contributions of Theravath Ammalu Amma, Kunhilakshmi Kettilamma and Kadathanatt Madhavi Amma are prominent. The role of women magazines and journals and women writers who appeared through them was a considerable one in bringing women out of their homes during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Gandhism and women

In Malabar, women entered the public life during the national movement mainly with the ascendancy of Gandhi. The congress became a dynamic organization under Gandhi's leadership. He made it a democratic

¹³² Kadathanatt Madhavi Amma,(*Katapparavakal, Kadathanatt Madhavi Ammayute Kavithakal*,1990

¹³³ '*Gramasreekal*', Gramasreekal, Kozhikode. She called them *manninte makkal*(Children of the earth),1955

and a mass organization.¹³⁴ It is not possible to have a mass movement without the participation of women. It is in this juncture that women could enter the public life.¹³⁵ The mass participation under Gandhi's leadership gave women a sense of equality with men – an equality which was unheard of in the tradition-bound Indian society.¹³⁶

Women's political participation in the national movement started with the Non Co-operation Movement (1920-1922). Women's participation and representation in political spheres may be difficult to accomplish in an outright manner.¹³⁷ During the non co-operation movement women of Malabar participated in a subdued manner and their role in the movement was the result of their fathers, brothers, husbands or sons being involved in the political struggle. Hence women did not participate in the political programmes directly, but through the 'Constructive Programme' of Gandhi.

During this period women involved themselves in the movement indirectly through spinning at home in *Charka*, by wearing *Khaddar* and such activities. Women went to *Charka* class in order to learn spinning and weaving. Each and every student of the class received a *Charka* and they

¹³⁴ Jawahar Lal Nehru, *The Discovery Of India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1981, p.360

¹³⁵ Veena Majumdar, "Women's Studies in Indian Perspective", Maitreyi Krishna Raj (ed.), *Women's Studies in India-Some Perspectives*-Bombay Popular Prakasam, Bombay, 1 pub., 1986, p.26.

¹³⁶ Andal N, *opcit.* p.40

¹³⁷ Rainuka Dagar (ed), *Manual on Women's Development and Gender Justice*, Institute for Development and Commercialization.(IDC)Chandigarh .Government of India, 1998, p.152.

returned home with that.¹³⁸ After their training in the *Charka* classes they sat in their homes and participated in the national movement through *Charka*.¹³⁹ Thus *Charka* became a symbol of women's entry in the public life in the initial years of the Gandhian era.

The next area of activity in which women of Malabar were involved was raising funds towards the implementation of Gandhian Constructive Programme. Women like Thathakutty Amma who was the president of the 'Ladies Wing' at Calicut worked a lot for raising funds for the 'Harijan Welfare Programme of Gandhi. Thathakutty Amma (1880-1944) was a social worker. Her real name was Mookambi Amma. She was the mother of M.Gopala Menon and M. Govinda Menon who were actively involved in the national movement in Malabar.¹⁴⁰

Kaumudi teacher represents another group of women who entered the public life of Malabar during the Gandhian era of the national movement. An important programme of Gandhi was the upliftment of Harijans. In his own words, "We have been oppressing the Harijans for centuries. We have to purify ourselves from this trait of untouchability immediately and take the

¹³⁸ Personal interview with E.LakshmiKutty Teacher, at her residence, Keezhariyur, Quilandy on 23 August 2006

¹³⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁰ Personal interview with Mrs. Susheela Menon (87),D/o. Thathakutty Amma, on 27 November 2007

Harijans to our bosom.¹⁴¹ To spread this message Gandhi toured all over Kerala in January 1934 and made speeches to make people conscious about the Harijan cause. Along with that he raised funds towards the implementation of the programme. As a part of that Gandhi asked women to donate their gold ornaments to the fund. On 13 January 1934 Gandhi visited Vadagara and during the meeting he appealed to women to donate their ornaments. At this, Kaumudi, a girl of sixteen donated her gold bangle to Gandhi and asked for Gandhi's autograph.¹⁴² Gandhi reminded her that she will not have the ornaments replaced.¹⁴³ She resolved not to wear ornaments there after.¹⁴⁴

Kaumudi teacher is a Gandhian who considers Gandhi as a 'Karmayogi'. She was born as the daughter of Ramavarma of Kadathanad Kovilakam and Devaki Kettilamma of Chirakkal Kovilakam. Her father was a true Gandhian who had a big library of Gandhian literature. This helped Kaumudi teacher to read a lot about Gandhi. She remembers that during the Civil Disobedience movement many congress leaders like K. Kelappan, Kozhipurath Madhava Menon, and A.V.Kuttimalu Amma used to visit her

¹⁴¹ *The Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi* Vol. LV1, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Ahmedabad, 1973, p.480.

¹⁴² *C.W.M.G.* Vol.LVII.pp.18-19

¹⁴³ Mahatma Gandhi, "Kaumudi ki tyag" *Harijan* 19 January 1934.and also see *C.W.M.G.* Vol.63,p.10

¹⁴⁴ Personal interview with Kaumudi teacher at her residence, Peralassery, on 18 April 2006

house.¹⁴⁵ All these made her a nationalist and a true Gandhian and she desired to meet Gandhi on 13 January 1934. Though there were many women in Malabar who had contributed their ornaments to the Harijan fund, 'Kaumudi's Renunciation' stands unique in history. She participated in the Gandhian Constructive programme by involving in the Khadi activities. By profession, she became a Hindi teacher and worked in the Government Girls' High School, Kannur. She is a writer who used her pen to expose the evils of the society.¹⁴⁶

Moyarath Sankaran, a nationalist leader of Malabar invited Kaumudi teacher to inaugurate *Souhardaposhini Samajam Vayanasala* (Subhash Mandiram), Paral on 9 September 1934. This was one way of honouring a true nationalist by her own people. On the occasion she made a speech about the necessity of reading rooms in the country. The reading rooms are the true guidelines towards spiritual and material progress.¹⁴⁷ Kaumudi teacher was a Gandhian who has imbibed the true spirit of the age and has contributed a lot in her own way.

On the whole Gandhian leadership attracted many women during the Non Co-operation Movement (1920-1922), Civil Disobedience Movement (1931-1934) and Quit India Movement (1942). In Malabar the Quit India

¹⁴⁵ Dr. Arsu, *Mahatmavinte Karma Pathangal*, Poornodaya Book Trust Gandhi Bhavan Cochin, 1 pub.2005 p.32.

¹⁴⁶ V.Kaumudi, *Apoorna Hridayam*, S.K.Balakrishnan (pub), *Satya Kahalam Oru Visishta Grantham*, Vidyatmika Press, Tellichery, 1937, p.140.

¹⁴⁷ *Desabhimani* weekly, 23 March 2003.p.13.

Movement bitterly divided the communists and congress workers.¹⁴⁸ Under the auspices of communist movement peasant struggles were organized in North Malabar. In this anti-imperialistic and anti-feudal struggles women also participated. Women, in large numbers entered the public life of Malabar during this period.¹⁴⁹

The entry of women in the public life of Malabar presents a multi faceted picture. The role of women took shape in the period between the 1920's and the 1950's. Amidst the dissolution of old Kerala¹⁵⁰ Women education proved to be the powerful key to progress and paved the way for women's socio-economic transformation.¹⁵¹ Further education equips an individual to think about the issues of the society and provides courage to face the realities of life.¹⁵² Education of various types, women employment, women magazines, Gandhian movement and finally the communist movement created a space in public for women of Malabar.

¹⁴⁸ Robin Jeffrey, *opcit.*p.139. This was because of the adoption of the People's war policy by the CPI which coincided with the Quit India Movement.

¹⁴⁹ Details are discussed in chapter 3

¹⁵⁰ Robin Jeffrey, *opcit.*p.217

¹⁵¹ Pratima Asthana, *Social Transformation of UP Women,1900-1947*, Agra, 2001, p.117

¹⁵² Renjini D. *opcit.* p.81

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN MALABAR

The freedom struggle in India is one of the few liberation movements in the world, where women had participated in great numbers. Ever since the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, women participation in its activities grew steadily but slowly.¹ The role played by women in the national movement is praise worthy. Women who were leading a life of the “lifeless” for centuries broke the chains and came to the public life along with men. They worked very actively in the political and social scenario² and Malabar was not an exception to this general rule.

Though many strove hard for the attainment of freedom in every stage of its activity along with men because of the limitation of the research project here detailed study is made only of A.V.Kuttimalu Amma, Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma and Kamalabai Prabhu as representative individuals. They played a prominent role along with many other women who participated and courted arrest. Among them mention could be made of the following:

¹ Niraj Sinha (ed.), “Empowerment of Women through Political Participation”, *Women in Politics*, New Delhi, 2000., p.56.

² V.C. Haris, *Stree*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 1986., p. 97.

1. Margaret Pavamani (Calicut)
2. E. Ammukutty Amma (Quilandy)
3. E. Narayanikutty Amma (Calicut)
4. Mrs. Samuel Aron (Kannur)
5. T. Ammukutty Amma (Chalappuram, Calicut)
6. C. Kunhikkavu Amma (Calicut)
7. P.M. Kamalavathy (Kannur)
8. P.M. Suguna Bai (Kannur)
9. P.M. Kunjiruthamma (Kannur)
10. Mrs. Iswari Ammal (Calicut)
11. Miss. Mettilda Beatriz Kallan (Calicut) and so on.³

A.V. Kuttimalu Amma

A.V. Kuttimalu Amma is an important personality who entered the public life of Malabar during the national movement. She was born in 1905 in the Anakkara Vadakkath family as the daughter of Perumbilavil Govinda Menon and Anakkara Vadakkath Madhavi Amma. Her father was a revenue

³ A.K. Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 1986., first edn., 1935., p. 395.

officer (Thahasildar) in Malabar under the British government.⁴ He was an admirer of the British government. Kuttimalu Amma had formal education only upto sixth standard at Tellichery, Madras and Kozhikode. Then she was forced to stop it because of the prevalent system of not sending the girls of the Nair families outside for study.

KuttimaluAmma had lost her mother in her childhood and she was brought up under the efficient care of her stepmother Kozhipurath Meenakshi Amma⁵ till her marriage in 1925. She told stories about the messages of Mahatma Gandhi, the speeches of Sarojini Naidu, the services rendered by Sree Ramakrishna Mission, to KuttimaluAmma. All these shaped the personality of A.V. KuttimaluAmma and formed the inspiring factors for her future socio-political activities.

Though Kuttimalu Amma had no higher education, she gained knowledge through practical life by herself. The experiences in her life were her teachers.⁶ She became a multi linguist through her own effort. She had enough knowledge in Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and English and had practical knowledge in Kannada also. Her stay in Madras and her member

⁴ V.Kuttimalu Amma, *Ente Innalekal*, (Mal.), *Mathrubhumi*, 21 April 1985., p. 8.

⁵ Personal interview with Col.Achuthan, S/o A.V.Kuttimalu Amma, at his residence, Anakkara on 29 December 2005.. See also *Mathrubhumi*, 23 April 2006.

⁶ P.P.Ummerkoya, *Ellavaruteyum oppa*, (Mal.) *Mathrubhumi*, 16 April 1985, p. 4.

ship in Andhra Mahila Sabha there also contributed much in the development of her personality.⁷

Being a member of the Anakkara Vatakkath family, she was well aware of the national movement. Her relatives provided her with information about important personalities like Annie Besant, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Sarojini Naidu and many others.⁸ When Sarojini Naidu came to Malabar she had stayed with her grand father. Kuttimalu Amma could enter active politics only after her marriage because her father was a government servant, though he was a nationalist and used to wear *Khadi*.⁹

In 1925 she was married to Kozhippurath Madhava Menon, an Advocate who was practicing in Calicut Bar¹⁰ Madhava Menon was a strong nationalist and was fully involved in the movements of the period. This made her public life possible and successful. In her own words she married Madhavettan and the congress from the same *pandal*. Her *Pudava* was a Khaddar sari. From the day of her marriage till her death she used to wear *Khaddar* and *Khaddar* only.¹¹

⁷ *Mathrubhumi*, *op.cit.*

⁸ Oral History Transcript of interview with Smt. A.V.Kuttimalu Amma (herein after referred to as OHT.) On 2 November, 1974, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p. 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Mathrubhumi*, 16 April 1985.

¹¹ *Mathrubhumi*, 31 December 2006 and also personal interview with G.Suseelamma, niece of A.V Kuttimalu Amma, at her residence, Anakkara on 18 March 2007.

From marriage till her death in 1985 she never stood away from public activities. Madhava Menon and Kuttimalu Amma became the ideal political couple who were involved fully in the public activities in Malabar. Within a few days after marriage her husband went to jail in connection with the Satyagraha.¹² Kuttimalu Amma started her work as a public activist in 1926 when Gandhi came to Kerala in connection with his programme of Harijan upliftment. Then she started going out to collect money to give a women's purse to Gandhi.¹³ By this time nationalist leaders had cultivated links with peasants, workers and women organizations to demonstrate mass support for their position. Women were surprised to find political participation approved of by men who wanted their wives to behave in the home like the perfect wives in religious texts.¹⁴ It is in this context that one can consider the entry of Kuttimalu Amma into the nationalist scenario.

Women of Calicut formed a Mahila Sangh under the leadership of Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma who came to Malabar to participate in the national movement after resigning her teaching job under the Cochin government.¹⁵ Kuttimalu Amma was an active worker in this organization and

¹² *Mathrubhumi* 16 April 1985, p. 4.

¹³ OHT, *op.cit.*, p. 17 and Broadcast of A.V.Kuttimalu Amma, AIR, Kozhikode on 2 October 1977.

¹⁴ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 121.

¹⁵ Keezhedath Vasudevan Nair, "Keralam Swatantrya samarathil", *Mathrubhumi* weekly, 28 October 1956., p. 53.

began her public life in 1930 as an active Khadi and Swadeshi worker.¹⁶ The arrest of the congress leaders like Vallabhai Patel, Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya and some other members of the congress working committee created much excitement in Malabar.¹⁷ This became instrumental for the women of Kozhikode to actively participate along with men in the nationalist movement.

The congress working committee had decided to observe 15 August 1930 as All India Political Sufferers' Day. The Mahila Sangh under the leadership of A.V.Kuttimalu Amma and E.Narayanikutty Amma along with the leading members of the swadeshi league went round the town to propagate this.¹⁸ A hartal was observed in Calicut and hartals were observed in Palghat, Kannur and Tellichery and many were arrested.¹⁹ This was the first time when the women in Malabar joined the national movement directly. Kuttimalu Amma was an important personality among them. The involvement of women in the national movement challenged the British as the legitimate rulers of India and at the same time lent full support to the congress as the rightful heirs to political power.²⁰

¹⁶ K.Karunakaran Nair, *Who is who of freedom fighters in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1975., p. 316.

¹⁷ P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol.II Trivandrum, 2001., p. 246.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ V.R.Menon, *Mathurbhumiyyute Charithram*, (Mal.), Kozhikode, 1973, Vol.I, p. 274.

²⁰ Geraldine Fobes, *op.cit.*, p. 150.

From the earliest days of women protests the British were charged with brutal treatment of women demonstrators.²¹ The Mahila Sangh at Kozhikode had decided to conduct a procession on the All India Jawahar day as a protest against police atrocities on women satyagrahis in Bombay who showed their protest against the round table conference. The District Magistrate banned public meetings and processions and prohibitory orders were issued as per section 144 on Mukkappuzha Karthiyani Amma, K.Kalliani Amma,²² A.V.Kuttimalu Amma, Meenambal, and Gracy Aron.²³ On 16 November 1930 early in the morning about hundred ladies and girls students assembled at Verkot house in Tali, Calicut. They were dressed in spotless white Khadi as though they were going to the temple. When they were about to start the procession the police stopped them.²⁴ The Inspector General tried to snatch the National flag from a teen-aged girl, Jayalakshmi, daughter of T.V.Sundara Iyer but she did not want to part with that. When the women were not ready to disperse six women were arrested.²⁵ They were Mukkappuzha Karthiyani Amma, who was the leader of the procession, Gracy Aron, C.Kunhikkavu Amma, E.Narayanikutty Amma and

²¹ *Ibid.* A huge rally was held in Bombay to protest the police decision to arrest women demonstrators, transport them out of the city and abandon them in a jungle at night

²² *Mathrubhumi* weekly, *op.cit.*

²³ P.K.K.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 255, Meera Velayudhan, "Growth of Political Consciousness, among Women in Modern Kerala" in P.J.Chერიан, (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Trivandrum, 1999., p. 499.

²⁴ *Mathrubhumi*, *op.cit.*

²⁵ Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*

Jayalakshmi²⁶ who was a student of Chalappuram Native School. It was the first arrest of women in Malabar. Being a minor, Jayalakshmi was let off and others were remanded for two days. Only Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma was imprisoned for six months as per IPC 145.²⁷

After the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, Kamala Devi Chathopadhyaya took up the leadership of women activities at Calicut with the hearty co-operation of a group of enthusiastic workers.²⁸ A.V.Kuttimalu Amma worked in this group along with T.Ammukutty Amma, K.Kallianikutty Amma, C.Kunhikkavu Amma and many others. They picketed the shops of the leading markets while the men organisers did everything possible to avoid traffic obstruction and maintained orderliness in the streets.²⁹

The nationalist activities in Malabar had its immediate repercussion in the states of Kochi and Travancore. At this time A.V.Kuttimalu Amma and Margaret Pavamani from Calicut helped the educated women of Cochin belonging to middle class families and launched the picketing campaign in Trichur town on 25 April 1931.³⁰

Gandhi was arrested on 4 January 1932 soon after his arrival after attending the Second Round Table Conference. As a part of civil disobedience

²⁶ *Mathrubhumi*, *op.cit.*

²⁷ Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma, *Niram Teliyunna Nalukal*, (Mal.), Auto biography Published in *Mathrubhumi* Weekly, November 6 – 11, 1983., p. 8.

²⁸ P.K.K.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 269.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

movement all over India, in Kerala also it was started on the very next day itself.³¹ On 22 February 1932 a procession led by Kuttimalu Amma, the ninth Dictator accompanied by two women, Ammukutty Netyaramma and Sugunabai³² was stopped by the Police and the women were arrested.³³ All three were sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment in the Vellore Presidency Jail for women which was the only women's jail in the Madras Presidency. That was the first arrest of Kuttimalu Amma and then her baby was only fifty eight days old. Kuttimalu Amma asked the District Magistrate to permit her to keep the baby with her in jail. He did not permit that as the child was not with her when she was arrested.³⁴ Besides he warned her that people like her should think about the consequences when they started to break law.

Then she convinced the jail superintendent that the jail rules permitted women prisoners to carry children below six years along with them.³⁵ Then the jail superintendent permitted her to keep the baby with her in jail.³⁶

This baby was described as 'joy of the jail', in 'Madras Mail.'³⁷ The arrest and imprisonment in 1932 of a satyagrahi with her baby inspired

³¹ *Mathrubhumi* weekly, 28 December 1935., p. 36.

³² Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p. 503.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 504.

³⁴ OHT., p. 1.

³⁵ V.R.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 349.

³⁶ OHT., *op.cit.*

³⁷ Personal Interview with Chelangat Padmanabha Menon, a relative of A.V.Kuttimalu Amma, at his residence, Chalappuram, Calicut on 5 July 2007.

women to enter political life in large numbers.³⁸ With this A.V. Kuttimalu Amma became one of the leading congress leaders of the people. On 21 November 1934 M.P. Narayana Menon³⁹ arrived in Calicut after imprisonment. The then K.P.C.C. President C.Kunhikkavu Amma and other leaders including T.V.Sundara Iyer, U.Gopala Menon and A.V.Kuttimalu Amma jointly announced that a cordial reception would be given to him.⁴⁰ Accordingly a huge crowd assembled at the Railway station and took Narayana Menon and his wife were taken in procession to the Victoria Jubilee Town Hall, Calicut.⁴¹

After the Civil Disobedience Movement, the K.P.C.C. met at Calicut on 29 September 1935. The meeting was presided over by A.V.Kuttimalu Amma and it was decided to celebrate the congress jubilee in a grand way. The other members of the committee were the general Secretary K.Raman Menon, E.M.S. Nambuthiripad, P.K. Kunhisankara Menon, P. Achuthan and Mohammed Abdurahiman.⁴²

³⁸ *Mathrubhumi*, 16April 1985, p. 4.

³⁹ M.P.Narayanamenon was arrested in 1921 for the alleged offence of waging war against the King, in the course of the Non Co-operation Movement and Malabar Rebellion. He was serving a life imprisonment and was released in 1934 from Vellore Jail.

⁴⁰ P.C.Sukumaran Nair, C.Uthamakurup P.M.Sudhakaran, (eds) *Mathrubhumi yute Charithram*, (Mal.), Calicut, 1998, Vol.II, p. 142.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

When the congress took power in the states there were no women members in the legislative assemblies.⁴³ In 1937 election A.V.Kuttimalu Amma was elected as the member of Madras Legislative Assembly by defeating the people's party candidate.⁴⁴ She was elected to the assembly along with other congress candidates like C.K.Govindan Nair, R.Raghava Menon, Manikoth Kumaran, Dr.A.Chandu, K. Raghavan, M.P. Damodaran, Dr. P.G. Nair, M.P. Govinda Menon and so on.⁴⁵ She was elected as a candidate of the Indian National Congress from the Malabar urban seat. She showed her abilities as a legislative member from 1937 to 1939 in the Madras Assembly.⁴⁶ Her work as an MLA was appreciated by Rajagopalachari and Kamaraj.

In 1940 Gandhi announced Individual Satyagraha as against the Second World War. This had its immediate repercussion in Malabar also. A.V.Kuttimalu Amma participated in it in a leading way and courted arrest. Before starting individual Satyagraha a camp of Satyagrahis at Calicut was organised and sixteen people were trained in that camp.⁴⁷

⁴³ V.Parukutty Amma, *Atukkalayilum Arangathum Samaranganagalilum*, (Mal.), *Mathrubhumi* weekly Onam Special edition 24 Aug 1975., p. 19.

⁴⁴ OHT, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Perunna K.N.Nair, *Keralithile Congress Prasthanam*, (Mal.), Cochin, 1967, p. 121.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ OHT, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

On 21 November 1940 K. Kelappan was arrested while speaking against the Second World War at Quilandy.⁴⁸ Kuttimalu Amma was to be the next Satyagrahi. While addressing a public meeting at Chevayur on 24 November 1940 and offering Satyagraha she was arrested along with many other congress leaders including her husband.⁴⁹ When she was arrested she asked the sisters of Kerala not to destroy Gandhi's confidence on women. She was sentenced to simple imprisonment for one year by the Sub Divisional Magistrate of Kozhikode.⁵⁰

On 3 December 1941 she was released along with all other Satyagrahis. Gandhi's instruction was that who ever was released should observe Satyagraha and court arrest again. But in Malabar the police did not arrest people when they re-offered Satyagraha. As per the instruction, Kuttimalu Amma walked from village to village and addressed meetings but no such news was published in the newspapers. When K. Madhava Menon was released from the jail he also joined A.V. Kuttimalu Amma and they had a pleasant trip from Calicut to Payyannur in the north.⁵¹ In the meetings held, the communists created disturbances by throwing stones and shouting.⁵²

⁴⁸ K.Bheeman Nair, *Kuttikalute Kelappan*, (Mal.), Biography, Kollam, 1989., p.50.

⁴⁹ C.Uthamakurup, *et.al, op.cit.*, p. 483.

⁵⁰ K.Karunakaran Nair, *Who is Who of Freedom Fighters in Kerala*, 1975., p. 316.

⁵¹ OHT, p. 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*

The year 1942 was an eventful one in the whole history of the nationalist movement. With the failure of the Cripps Mission the congress announced a mass movement again. The All India Congress working committee met in Bombay on 8 August 1942 passed the Quit India Resolution. The resolution proposed the starting of a non violent mass movement⁵³ under Gandhi's leadership to achieve Independence.

Malabar was one of the areas which saw the changed face of the Quit India Movement. Within ten days after the passing of the resolution many notable congress leaders were arrested and jailed. Kuttimalu Amma was arrested along with E. Moidu Moulavi, R.Raghava Menon, M.P. Narayana Menon, P.K. Moideenkutty, A.Karunakara Menon, C.K. Govindan Nair, A. Parameswaran Nambiar, Neelankanta Iyer, K.P.Ramunni Menon, Advocate Ramayyan and so on. She was imprisoned for two years.⁵⁴ After the period of imprisonment, she came out of the prison first among the other jailed persons. Her presence was a relief to the youth who were motivated by the call 'Do or Die' in the absence of leaders who were all arrested.⁵⁵

She presided over the Karnataka Mahila Conference in 1 October 1944. In that meeting she said "Gandhiji had strong faith in the women community

⁵³ Bipan Chandra, *et.al*, *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857 to 1947*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 460.

⁵⁴ P.C. Sukumaran Nair, *et.al*, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

⁵⁵ Personal interview with Smt. Soudamini, a relative of A.V Kuttimalu Amma, Anakkara on 18 March 2007.

and we should keep it up and it is our duty.”⁵⁶ On 21 October 1944 a meeting was arranged in the V.J.T. Hall, Calicut. The meeting was inaugurated by Kamaladevi Chathopadhyaya, the President of All India Women’s Conference. In the inaugural address she stressed the necessity of social service programmes. Kuttimalu Amma presided over that meeting.⁵⁷ She participated in *Delhi Chalo* strike also which was done to compel the British Government to arrest the Satyagrahis.⁵⁸

A.V.Kuttimalu Amma was elected to the Madras Legislative Assembly for the second time in 1946. She was elected unopposed and held that post till 1952. She was the Municipal Councilor of Calicut for a long time.⁵⁹ In the election held in 1962 for the K.P.C.C. President, after the general election, A.V. Kuttimalu Amma and K.P. Madhavan Nair contested. In this election Kuttimalu Amma was elected as the President by the majority of two votes.⁶⁰

Kuttimalu Amma played a prominent role in the *Vimochanasamaram*, 1959. During that time she was the President of Calicut District Congress Committee. The Committee had started the *Samaram* a few days later than the other places for they felt that it was not started with the blessings of the

⁵⁶ *Mathrubhumi*, 5 October 1944.

⁵⁷ *Mathrubhumi*, 22 October 1944.

⁵⁸ Col. Achuthan, *op.cit.*

⁵⁹ OHT, *op.cit.*, p.11.

⁶⁰ Perunna K.N.Nair, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

Congress High Command. The committee met Indira Gandhi who was the President of the All India Congress Committee at Madras, took permission and started the agitation. According to her it was only in Calicut District that the leaders of the Congress participated and were arrested. In all other areas only the volunteers and workers were arrested and sent to jail.⁶¹ Kuttimalu Amma was arrested along with E. Moidu Moulavi, K. Madhava Menon, C.K.Govindan and P.P. Ummerkoya.⁶² She was not supporting the constitutionality of the *Vimochanasamaram*. She feared that it might become violent.⁶³

Kuttimalu Amma never wanted to part with the congress. In 1979 when she was a member of the congress working committee it was split following the emergency. Then she stood with Indira Congress very strongly.⁶⁴

On the whole, Kuttimalu Amma never stood away from any political activity which the society demanded. In her own words “a politician cannot retire from active politics till life ends.”⁶⁵ But she had decided not to stand

⁶¹ OHT, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶⁴ Col. Achuthan, “Ente Amma”, (Mal.), *Veekshanam*, 23 April 2006, and also see *Mathrubhumi*, 16 April, 1985, p. 4.

⁶⁵ OHT, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

for any election after 1970 and wanted older people to give way to younger people.⁶⁶

Kuttimalu Amma and Humanitarian Activities

Apart from her political activity A.V. Kuttimalu Amma was engaged in social activities also. In her political activities she was lovingly called by everybody including her husband and children as 'Oppa.'⁶⁷ But in the field of social service she was called as 'Amma' by many.⁶⁸ It was her daily routine to serve the poor and the helpless.

For orphans a Poor Home Society was founded at West Hill in 1937.⁶⁹ Kuttimalu Amma was the founding president of the society and she remained in that post till her death in 1985. During that time orphanages were not common in Malabar. The foundation of the PHS was an accidental coincidence of the mental readiness of two persons- A.V. Kuttimalu Amma and K.N. Kurup, an employee in British ship company.⁷⁰ K.N. Kurup sympathized with the pitiful condition of an old man in the street. He discussed that with a like minded person- that was A.V. Kuttimalu Amma. The service mind of Kuttimalu Amma and the work efficiency of K.N. Kurup combined and led to the foundation of the Poor Home Society. The orphanage

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Col. A.V. Achuthan, "Ente Amma Ellavaruteyum Oppa", (Mal.), *Mathrubhumi* 23 April 2006, p. 1. Oppa means elder sister.

⁶⁸ Arsu, "Smarana", (Mal.), in *Samayam*, monthly magazine, April 2007.

⁶⁹ V. Parukutty Amma, *Anadharute Amma*, (Mal.), *Mathrubhumi* 31 December 2006.

⁷⁰ Arsu, *op.cit.*

was started with three orphans, which later became an important social service institution in the whole of South India.⁷¹ During her stay in Madras with her husband while he was the minister she visited many social service organizations and the experience she got from there enabled her to start and manage the Poor Home Society very efficiently.⁷² This was opened to all without any caste, creed or political discrimination and was run with the generosity of a group in a model way.⁷³ It was described as the greatest charitable institution in Malabar.⁷⁴

Arrangements were made for men, women and children to live separately in separate buildings. Many homeless wandering destitutes, crippled people and blind people were taken to the Poor Home Society. There were many older inmates than Kuttimalu Amma and her husband. She had collected food, medicine, clothes and other needy things for the inmates from the rich and generous people. There were people who helped her like Jamnalal Bajaj⁷⁵ and the activities of the Poor Home Society were widened gradually.

A.V. Kuttimalu Amma had started working for the lepers since 1939 - 1940. During that period when the lepers were always going about in the streets of Calicut, Kuttimalu Amma wanted to stop that and decided to rehabilitate them. She approached the Mission Leprosy Hospital which has

⁷¹ V. Parukutty Amma, *op.cit.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Mathrubhumi* 7 January 1945, p. 3.

⁷⁴ *Mathrubhumi* 28 January 1945, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Arsu, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

been working very well for the last so many years and asked the hospital authorities whether they could take the lepers sent to them. The hospital authorities were reluctant to receive the wandering lepers of the street because they admitted lepers who arrived there voluntarily. Thereupon a separate building was constructed at West Hill for the lepers.⁷⁶ When people who stayed around protested, it was shifted to Chevayur near the Leprosy Hospital in 1946.⁷⁷ The place was donated by Abu Baker in memory of his father-in-law. It is called S.M.M. Koya Leprosy Home.⁷⁸

Kuttimalu Amma and her husband worked a lot to terminate the system of begging in Calicut. They had planned to stop the system of giving a coin once in a week to beggars. The wandering beggars were compulsorily taken to the Poor home and made to stay there. Collected ‘*Pitiyari*’ (a handful of rice) was collected from houses and handed over the rice to the Poor Home Society.⁷⁹ In 1952 when they came to Calicut from Madras while her husband was not the Minister, they stayed in the orphanage for two months.⁸⁰ In the orphanage children were educated by sending them to schools and under her leadership marriages were arranged for the youngsters.

Another important contribution of A.V. Kuttimalu Amma in the social scenario was the establishment of a Juvenile Home in Vellimadukunnu in

⁷⁶ O.H.T, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷⁷ Arsu, *op.cit.*

⁷⁸ O.H.T. *op.cit.*, p. 13.

⁷⁹ *Mathrubhumi*, 23 April 2006.

⁸⁰ P.P. Ummer Koya, *op.cit.*

1949. Till then the children who were convicted in Malabar were sent for training either to Madras and Vellore in Tamil Nadu or to Renigunda in Andhra Pradesh. While K. Madhavan Menon was the minister for jail affairs, twenty five acres of land with buildings were received from the family of Sait Nagjee Purushotham at Vellimadukunnu. This was utilized for starting “*Balamandiram*” and the management of this was handed over to the Orphanage Samajam. About thousand children were there and all of them experienced the love of A. V. Kuttimalu Amma.⁸¹ In the activities of the orphanage she was helped by V. Parukutty Amma.⁸²

Amidst the busy political life she found time to visit hospitals and orphanages and provide help. This continued even when she was an M.L.A and K. Madhava Menon a minister in Madras and later in Delhi when he was an M.P. The secretary of the Poor Home Society K. N. Kurup said, “She used to telephone me and enquire about the welfare of the children in the orphanage⁸³ where ever she was. When ever she came to Calicut, she visited the orphanage immediately and the children were happy to see her.⁸⁴ The Government entrusted Kuttimalu Amma with the care taking of the children

⁸¹ *Mathrubhumi*, 31 December 2006.

⁸² Personal interview with V. Parukutty Amma, at her residence, Calicut on 23 May 2005.

⁸³ V.M. Korothe, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

of the leprosy patients.⁸⁵ Thus her activities were not limited within the framework of the Congress party alone.

When the Scavengers of the Kozhikode Municipality announced strike under the Communist party union that created much problem in the society. To meet the situation, the congress workers under the leadership of Kuttimalu Amma and her husband went from house to house and removed the human excreta. The strikers had to withdraw the strike.⁸⁶

Politically she stood with the Congress party and worked very hard for the consolidation of the party. She was the treasurer of the K.P.C.C and was a member of the Executive Committee of the K.P.C.C. She handed over the leadership to the socialist group consisting of E.M.S. Nambuthiripad, and P. Narayanan Nair. She was also the ninth dictator of congress movement. Being a member of the A.I.C.C she had attended many other sessions of the Congress and Haripura Congress (1939) was the first among them. She became the member of a working committee of A.I.C.C. in 1954 after the Hyderabad session of the Congress when Jawaharlal Nehru was the President. She continued in that post for four years.⁸⁷

She was very active in the activities of All India Women's Conference, apart from working for hostel for girls, Sree Narayana Mission, Harijan

⁸⁵ Personal Interview with Col. Achuthan, *op.cit.*

⁸⁶ Personal Interview with Col. Achuthan, *op.cit.*, and also see *Mathrubhumi*, 28 January 2007.

⁸⁷ O.H.T, *op.cit.*

welfare, Khadi Sangh etc. Her many fold activities towards the progress of the society gave an image to the congress party in general.⁸⁸

She was a member of the Director Board of Mathrubhumi in 1947 and held the post till her death in 1985. She maintained close contacts with national leaders like Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Sastri and Indira Gandhi. She had translated the Tamil speeches of Kamaraj whenever he visited Malabar.⁸⁹ She was not an individual but an organization.⁹⁰

A.V. Kuttimalu Amma was the founding leader of All Kerala Women's League which was founded at Calicut on 13 June 1931.⁹¹ She participated in the activities of Women's Indian Association. Dr.Sumathi. S. Menon, Suseela Kovilamma and others helped her very much in the functioning of her activities in connection with this association.⁹² She was actively participated in the functioning of A.I.W.C also. Regarding the role of women, she was of the opinion that though women progressed very much in the modern period they do not forget their duties as house wives.⁹³

Kuttimalu Amma supported the movement led by K. Kelappan in order to construct the Tali Temple at Angadippuram near Perintalmanna on 17

⁸⁸ *Mathrubhumi*, 31 December 2006.

⁸⁹ *Mahacharithamala*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 2005, p. 106.

⁹⁰ Leela Damodara Menon, *Ounnathyathile Lalithyam*, (Mal.), *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, 19-25 May 1985, p. 9.

⁹¹ Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p. 505.

⁹² Personal interview with Col. Achuthan, *op.cit.*

⁹³ *Mathrubhumi*, 28 October 1968.

November 1968. Kelappan along with leaders like K.P. Kesava Menon, Kuttimalu Amma and many others led a procession to the temple, lit the lamp and performed rituals.⁹⁴ Thus Kuttimalu Amma never kept away from her public role throughout her life. Her activities were not limited within the framework of the Congress party.⁹⁵ She could move with everybody without any discrimination.⁹⁶

Kuttimalu Amma dedicated her life to the nation. She was honoured with. Mallur Govindapillai - Veluthambi Dalava award for patriotism on August 15, 1969. This was done considering her contribution towards the political and social scenario. This was in recognition of her services at the State and National levels.⁹⁷

Mukkappuzha Karthiyani Amma

Mukkappuzha Karthiyani Amma⁹⁸ entered the public life of Malabar during the Civil Disobedience Movement⁹⁹ at the clarion call of Mahatma Gandhi. Even before that her mind set was ready for a public personality through the guide lines of her own father and the teachings of Swami

⁹⁴ It was the last strike conducted by K. Kelappan. The Tali temple at Angadippuram gave inspiration to him to work creatively in the temple affairs. See K. Bheeman Nair, *op.cit*, pp. 72-73.

⁹⁵ Personal interview with Sri. K. P. Unnikrishnan, a relative of A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, at his residence in Pnniyankara, Calicut on 4 April 2007.

⁹⁶ Personal interview with Smt. Soudamini, a relative of A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, Anakkara on 18 March 2007.

⁹⁷ *Mathrubhumi*, 17 August 1969.

⁹⁸ Herein after referred to as M.Karthiyani Amma.

⁹⁹ Herein after referred to as CDM.

Vivekananda. She left an indelible imprint in the history of national movement in Malabar. Though she belonged to the princely state of Cochin, her activities were mainly concentrated in various parts of Malabar. This was because the congress had strictly banned the CDM in the princely states. Then many national minded men and women came to Malabar mainly to Kozhikode¹⁰⁰ which was the 'political centre' of national movement in Malabar.¹⁰¹ It may be noted that among the hundreds of Satyagraha volunteers working in Malabar a considerable number came from Travancore and Cochin. The freedom struggle in Malabar was regarded as a part of the freedom struggle of Kerala as a whole.

M. Karthiayani Amma was born in 1906 as the daughter of Mukkappuza Kalliani Amma and Pullatt Govinda Menon. Her father who served in the Madras Government showed much interest in her studies. He wanted her to learn and live according to the noble ideals of Swami Vivekananda. The first book she learned apart from her school text books was the "*Karma Yoga*" written by Swami Vivekananda and then she read *Jnana yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga*. These three books shaped the character and

¹⁰⁰ Samuel Aron, *Jeevitha Smaranakal*, Kannur, 1974, p. 61.

¹⁰¹ Kozhikode was the political centre of Malabar and the Verkot House was the 'nerve centre' of all political activities during the period 1930-1935. Many members of the family, both men and women participated in a major way in the national movement. The house belongs to an old aristocratic family and was the venue of many important events during the CDM.

future life of M. Karthiayani Amma.¹⁰² She completed her higher education at Maharaja's College, Ernakulam in 1927.

M.Karthiayani Amma joined Indian National Congress in 1928.¹⁰³ As a student she had watched the political happenings of the country and wanted to contribute towards the national movement. After reading "The History of the First War of Indian Independence" written by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, which was banned by the British Government, she took an oath to dedicate her life towards the Indian Independence movement.¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile she joined in the Government High School, Trichur as a science teacher

It may be remembered that Gandhi's primary emphasis during the national movement was on the constructive programme which was to precede, accompany and follow the political struggle. He wanted women to participate in the national movement through the constructive programme. Like many other women of the national movement Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma also entered politics through participating in the constructive programme of Gandhi. Charka, Handloom propaganda and development of Khadi were the main programmes which were organised in 1929.¹⁰⁵ Her teacher in these programmes was Kurur Neelankantan Nambuthiripad, a nationalist. His wife

¹⁰² M. Karthiayani Amma *Niram Theliyunna Nalukal*, (Mal.), published in *Mathrubhumi* weekly November 6-12, 1983, p. 6.

¹⁰³ K.Karunakaran Nair, *Who is Who of Freedom Fighters in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1975, p. 198.

¹⁰⁴ M.Karthiayani Amma, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

T.C Kochukutty Amma who was a teacher in Cochin Educational Service asked women to take up Gandhiji's constructive programme.¹⁰⁶ She inspired women to work for Khadi propaganda, boycotting liquor, etc.¹⁰⁷

M.Karthiayani Amma had observed all the events that had occurred before and after the arrival of the Simon Commission. The Calcutta session of the congress proclaimed nothing less than freedom as its aim. The congress decided to boycott foreign goods, make salt, picket foreign cloth shops etc. as per the decisions taken in the Lahore session of the congress. On 6 April, 1930 Gandhi and his seventy followers broke the salt law at Dandi and that was observed all over Kerala.¹⁰⁸ Many volunteers including Sarojini Naidu and Jawaharlal Nehru, the then congress president, were arrested. Though police atrocities were common, people observed non violence. They realized their strength through non violence, accepted the challenge and joined the movement.¹⁰⁹

Protests were common throughout against the arrest of the leaders of salt satyagraha led by Gandhi. Such a protest meeting was held in May, 1930 at *Thekkinkadu maidan*, Trichur. M. Karthiayani Amma who had already imbibed the spirit of nationalism went to attend the meeting along with her friends. Suddenly one of the leaders approached and asked her to speak. She

¹⁰⁶ *Mathrubhumi*, 18 March, 1930.

¹⁰⁷ V.R.Menon, *Mathrubhumiye Charithram*, (Mal.), Calicut, 1998, Vol.I , pp. 226-227.

¹⁰⁸ P.K.K.Menon, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol.II, Trivandrum, 2001, p. 219.

¹⁰⁹ M. Karthiayani Amma, *op.cit.*

did that immediately because she was inspired to do her duty to the nation.¹¹⁰ The speech was highly inspiring. In her speech she requested the audience assembled there to dedicate their life fully for the service of the nation. Being a government servant, the government took note of her activities and the political agent gave severe instruction to the Education Director to warn her of the consequences of such action. There upon she resigned the job and joined the national movement.¹¹¹

M. Karthiyani Amma left Cochin State and came to Malabar to work for Indian Independence. In Kozhikode Kurur Neelakantan Nambuthiripad made arrangements for her to stay with K.Kalliani Amma,¹¹² wife of K.Madhavan Nair.¹¹³ K. Kalliani Amma was involved in the constructive programme of the congress very actively and she welcomed Karthiyani Amma very gladly. Both of them went with other women in the Kozhikode town and distributed *Charka* and taught women how to spin. They also propagated boycott of foreign goods.¹¹⁴ In 1930 a Mahila Samajam (All Kerala Sevadal) was organised under the leadership and initiative of Karthiyani Amma.¹¹⁵ Through the Mahila Samajam she asked women to

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ V.R.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 265.

¹¹² K.Karunakaran Nair, *op.cit.*, p. 195.

¹¹³ K.Madhavan Nair was a nationalist. He was an advocate in the Kozhikode Bar, a political diplomat and a member of Madras Legislative Assembly.

¹¹⁴ M.Karthiyani Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

¹¹⁵ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

join the organization¹¹⁶ and active in the national movement. Many women from middle class families joined it.¹¹⁷ The Mahila Samajam aimed at involving women in the national movement through the constructive programme and to collect funds for the satyagrahis. Though Kozhikode was the centre of their activities, they reached different parts of Malabar.¹¹⁸

The women who confined themselves to the constructive programme of Gandhi were forced to enter in to the freedom struggle directly due to the cruel police atrocities.¹¹⁹ In her own words:

“We decided to enter the freedom struggle directly and made arrangements to conduct meetings, organise processions etc. When the authorities came to know this, arrest warrant was proclaimed and efforts were made to stop the programmes”.¹²⁰

The first step towards this was the distribution of notice saying that a huge conference was to be held on 16 November, 1930 at Chalappuram, speeches could be delivered and processions organised. In spite of the authority's efforts to block the programme, the meeting was held. M.Karthiyani Amma was arrested along with five other women. This was

¹¹⁶ M.Karthiyani Amma, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁷ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹¹⁹ M.Karthiyani Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

the first time women were arrested in Kerala in the cause of the national movement. Only Karthiayani Amma was punished as per IPC section 145 for she was the leader of the protest programme. She was sentenced to six months imprisonment but later this was reduced to two months severe imprisonment. Then the magistrate said that this was done so, considering her as the first woman political prisoner of Kerala. Thus Karthiayani Amma became the first woman political prisoner of Kerala during the freedom struggle.¹²¹ The punishment was in the form of a warning for the other arrested women. The imprisonment of Karthiayani Amma caused much mental agony to other arrested women who were released after two days remand. This incident had its immediate impact on the students of schools and colleges in Calicut. They observed Hartal on Monday, 17 November, 1930 to protest against the arrest of the ladies.¹²² She was released on 18 January, 1931¹²³ and was welcomed by hundreds of people including a large number of women.¹²⁴

When Margaret Pavamani became the seventh dictator of the KPCC she nominated an adhoc committee consisting of released leaders. Thus Karthiayani Amma was appointed in this committee as a member. Again she was elected as the AICC member from Kerala to attend the Karachi session of

¹²¹ P.K.K.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 256. The issue of Women going to jail first came into prominence in late1921. For details see Visalakshi Menon, *Indian women and Nationalism, the UP story*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 147.

¹²² P.K.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 257.

¹²³ M.Karthiayani Amma, *op.cit.*

¹²⁴ Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p. 500.

the congress, 1931.¹²⁵ She had participated in the activities of Desa Sevika Dal at Bombay for one month and from there she learned how to manage such organizations

During that period picketing of foreign cloth shops and liquor shops was an important agenda of KPCC.¹²⁶ Clearly Gandhiji had understood a very important aspect of women's consciousness when he made liquor boycott an integral part of the nationalist programme and entrusted its implementation with women.¹²⁷ From May 1931 she was busily engaged in leading the picketing of foreign cloth shops. Accordingly M.Karthiayani Amma worked in Alappuzha and she could force the closure of most of the foreign cloth shops there. In this venture she was helped by T.K.Madhavan, Dr.Rugmini Amma, K.Lakshmi Gopalakrishnan and others.¹²⁸

The fifth Kerala provincial political conference was a mile stone in the freedom struggle of Malabar. It was held at Narayana Nagar,¹²⁹ Badagara from 3-5 May 1931.¹³⁰ It was noted for a variety of conferences of various sections of the society towards the achievement of the common purpose. They were the provincial women's conference, All Kerala Students Conference, The Hindi Prachar Conference and the Kerala Political Sufferers'

¹²⁵ M.Karthiayani Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 39.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Bipan Chandra et.al., *India After Independence 1947-2000*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 455.

¹²⁸ Karthiayani Amma *op.cit.*, p. 41.

¹²⁹ The place was named after M.P.Narayana Menon.

¹³⁰ K.Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 353.

Conference. In these conferences many national leaders like Messrs J.M. Sengupta R.F.Nariman, T.Prakasam, Padmavathi Asher attended and presided over various conferences.

The provincial women's conference was the first to be held from among the various ones on the occasion. It was presided over by Smt. Padmavathi Asher of Tirupur.¹³¹ In this conference women of Malabar, as a class, showed their solidarity for the first time. Karthiayani Amma unfurled the tri-colour flag on the morning of 3 May 1931, in the presence of a huge crowd including delegates and visitors. In her presidential address, Padmavathi Asher asked the women of Kerala to keep the tri-colour flag aloft until the attainment of national independence.¹³² The provincial conference resolved that all Hindus, irrespective of caste discriminations should have free access to all public places and demanded the recognition of equal rights of women.¹³³ The conference also decided to organise the Kerala Mahila Desha Sevika Sangh.¹³⁴

Karthiayani Amma had an important role to play during the Guruvayur Satyagraha. She had her own views regarding the Satyagraha. She never wanted to mix politics with religion. She considered the temple entry

¹³¹ Padmavathi Asher was the wife of Sri. P.T.Asher, a textile industrialist of Tirupur. He was a nationalist who served the movement in various ways. He participated in the movement in person and helped the social reconstruction programme of the period. See A.K.Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 354.

¹³² P.K.K.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 276.

¹³³ A.K.Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 356.

¹³⁴ Details are given in the next section under Margaret Pavamani.

movement as a Bhakthi movement and wanted the high caste Hindus to invite the low caste Hindus to the temple for worship. This was not accepted by others who considered that temple entry should be accomplished as a right. Even though the leaders differed in their opinion they worked together.¹³⁵

The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee met on 3 August 1931 passed the resolution on temple entry.¹³⁶ The committee had appointed M.Karthiayani Amma and P.M Kamalavathi¹³⁷ along with K.Kelappan to do house to house propaganda work among the untouchable communities.¹³⁸

Meanwhile Gandhi declared Satyagraha in Poona protesting the 'Communal Award.' On 21 September 1931 K.Kelappan declared Satyagraha at Guruvayur. But he had to stop it on 1 October 1931 at the instruction of Gandhi. Gandhi decided to conduct a plebiscite in Guruvayur. For that Kasthurba Gandhi, Urmila Devi, Lakshmi Devadas, the daughter of Rajaji and so on came to Guruvayur.¹³⁹ Karthiayani Amma and other women along with this group went from house to house all day long to organise the

¹³⁵ M.Karthiayani Amma, *op.cit.*, *Mathrubhumi* weekly November 20-26, 1983, p. 33.

¹³⁶ A.K.Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 356.

¹³⁷ P.M.Kamalavathi was a nationalist from Kannur. She was the daughter of M.K.Vaidyar and grand daughter of Kunjiruthamma, a nationalist who courted arrest and was imprisoned in the Kannur central jail during the Salt Satyagraha. P.M.Kamalavathi was the eldest of the three sisters; the others were Suvarna and Sagunabai. All of them were participated in the national movement.

¹³⁸ Anita Arya, *Indian women*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 722.

¹³⁹ A.K.Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 361.

plebiscite. Out of one and a half lakhs of high caste Hindus, seventy five percentage supported temple entry for all groups.¹⁴⁰

On 4 January 1932 Gandhi was arrested and Vallabhai Patel, the president of AICC was also taken in to custody. As a protest, a huge meeting was held at Calicut beach on 5 January 1932. Karthiayani Amma was arrested and her colleagues K.A Damodara Menon and P.Krishnapillai were beaten brutally. This was done to frighten the people who gathered there. She was kept in remand at Kozhikode sub jail till 16 January 1932. She was charged under section 117 and 118. On 17 January she was sent to women's central jail at Vellore for six months rigorous imprisonment.¹⁴¹ After her release, she worked in the *Khadi Vastralaya* at Trichur as per the instruction of Rajagopalachari. There she could propagate *Khadi*.¹⁴²

Following the death of her mother in 1935 Karthiayani Amma was free to go outside Trichur for the nationalist activities. At the instruction of Gandhi she was again involved very actively in the constructive programme based on *Khadi* development. Then she was sent to Payyannur,¹⁴³ the biggest *Khadi* production centre in Kerala, in order to take charge of the village

¹⁴⁰ M.Karthiayani Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴³ A.K.pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 395.

reconstruction programme. She stayed in Karivellur. The women knew spinning and they sold the thread to the All India Spinners Association.¹⁴⁴

During that time not many people of Karivellur knew about the nationalist activities going on under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Then she told them about the national movement in the evening gatherings in the premises of the temple. On one such occasion she unfurled the national flag on the branch of a pipal tree near the temple.¹⁴⁵

Karthiyani Amma fell ill in 1937 and underwent treatment. She did not inform Gandhi fearing that he would invite her to the Vardha Asram. Though she was a Gandhian she did not like to stay in the Asram for two reasons. Firstly she feared that she would lose freedom and also she did not like the food and life style of the Asram.¹⁴⁶

The period from 1936 to 1946 for Karthiyani Amma was a period of withdrawal from the nationalist activities directly. She took law degree in that period from law college, Trivandrum and started practicing. When the Quit India movement started, the nationalist in Karthiyani Amma underwent a state of dilemma regarding joining the movement. Finally she decided not to participate directly but to help the movement financially. Meanwhile she

¹⁴⁴ Here in after referred to AISA. It was founded in 1925 as an independent organization and separated its activities with the congress activities. Gandhi was the founding president of the association. See A.K.Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 396.

¹⁴⁵ M.Karthiyani Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

married N.Ramaswamy Iyer, one of her colleagues in the Gandhian constructive programme. He was in charge of the Tamil Nadu branch of AISA. In 1946 a conference of AISA was held in Vardha. Karthiayani Amma went to that conference along with her husband.¹⁴⁷

When she met Gandhi in Vardha he asked her “is *Khadi* work greater service than practicing law,” she replied positively and thereupon Gandhi asked her to come back to *Khadi* work. Karthiayani Amma decided to resign the job and re-join national movement.¹⁴⁸ She was appointed to audit the accounts of AISA branches in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. While doing this, she had a bitter experience regarding the mal practice committed in the Madurai branch of AISA. Being a sincere and honest nationalist she was depressed and reported the incident to Gandhi. Before the report reached Gandhi, he was assassinated. Following this, Karthiayani Amma resigned the job.¹⁴⁹ Even after that she continued her work as a congress activist.

In 1949 AICC met at Jaipur in Rajasthan and an exhibition of *Khadi* was conducted there. Karthiayani Amma was in charge of controlling the

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

visitors. Among them came Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabai Patel and Sheik Abdulla from Kashmir.¹⁵⁰

Karthiyani Amma and her husband went to Tirupur and Ramaswamy started *Sarodaya Prachuralaya*. The aim of this was to publish Gandhian literature in Tamil and English. In order to propagate Khadi programme he had started a Magazine in Tamil called *Sarvodayam* in 1946 and in the next year another magazine in English called *Sarvodaya* was started. This was done to propagate Gandhian ideology in and across the world.¹⁵¹ In all these activities Karthiyani Amma helped her husband.

In 1951 Kurur Neelakantan Nambuthiripad, her political guru and Ikkanda Varier approached her and asked her to stand as a candidate in the assembly election. But she was not ready for that because her father considered such activities as a way of utilizing her earlier services for personal benefits. The incident displeased Kurur and Ikkanda Varier. After that she was not even a member of the congress party. And since then she did not join any other political party also. Thus she became a free individual without having politics, power or fame.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* When Sheik Abdulla violated the queue system she stopped and warned him. At this Patel appreciated her sincerity of doing the work in any situation by saying, “you are the real creative activist. I congratulate you”.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

In October 1954 Karthiayani Amma had shifted her area of activity from Tirupur to Tanjavur. She had started a *Prachuralaya*. there also. Meanwhile *Bhoodan* movement was started by Vinoba Bahve and Karthiayani Amma worked hard for the success of the movement.¹⁵³ In Tanjavur she was involved in the welfare activities of the labourers who suffered much under the Brahmin orthodoxy of Tanjavur. For that she was criticised by the Brahmin orthodoxy.¹⁵⁴

When Ramaswamy was affected with a heart problem in 1972, his cousin's wife asked Karthiayani Amma to leave the place because a Brahmin should not be with a non Brahmin wife in his last moments. If that happened, the whole family would be cursed. At this, Karthiayani Amma retorted with a broom stick in her hands, "get out of this place, if not, I will show you that I belong to Kerala and to the fighters' clan there. There women are equal to men."¹⁵⁵ Hearing this lady went back. In 1974 she left Tanjavur. Her house was given to the *Sarvodaya Sangh*, Tanjavur (West) and functioned as its office. She reached Trichur on 12 Feb 1974.¹⁵⁶

In Trichur also Karthiayani Amma and her husband were busy with their public activities. They were involved in the publication of *Sarvodaya* in English. The publication of *Sarvodayam* in Tamil was handed over to Tamil

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Nadu *Sarvodaya Sangh* because of the non availability of the press in Trichur. Even after the death of Ramaswamy on 19 September 1975 she continued the publication of *Sarvodaya* – that was her mission. But by 1980 she had to close down the publication of *Sarvodaya* because of her ill health and she handed over that also to Tamil Nadu *Sarvodaya Sangh* for publication.¹⁵⁷

By 1982 she put an end to her duties and responsibilities as a public personality. Thus the public life of Karthiayani Amma which lasted for a period of fifty two years (1930-1982) came to an end. Afterwards, she led a life of loneliness till her death on 1 September 1983.

The long and eventful history of Karthiayani Amma was an inspiring and enduring one. She was very active throughout her public life. Her fire brand speech in the *maidan* at Trichur marked the beginning of her public life. Malabar was her area of activity as a beginner. She had contributed much as an organiser through the *Mahila Sangham* at Kozhikode.

Where ever she was, she marked the excellence of her personality in various ways-as a leader, *Khadi* worker and nationalist and above all as a strong woman of Kerala. She took expedient measures through out her life and became an unforgettable woman leader of the public life. The spirit of Gandhian ideology was well adopted by Karthiayani Amma and she propagated through *Charka and Khadi*. She instilled the spirit of nationalism

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

in other women also. She toured in and across Kerala as part of nationalist movement activities. She was honoured by *Mathrubhumi* on 7 March 2008 on the eve of International women's day by publishing the preface¹⁵⁸ of her autobiography, *Niram Theliyunna Nalukal*. This is an apt and suitable salutation to a woman nationalist who was dedicated her life for the nation.

Kamala Bai Prabhu

Kamala Bai Prabhu was an important woman personality who entered the public life of Malabar by participating in the struggle for independence. She became famous in the pages of history due to a unique event hitherto unknown in the history of freedom struggle in India. She was born in 1900 as the daughter of M.Sesha Giri Prabhu, an educationist who was described as "an invaluable gem"¹⁵⁹. She was married to L.S.Prabhu, a famous advocate in the Thalassery court and a nationalist.¹⁶⁰ After marriage the couple dedicated their lives to the freedom struggle of Malabar. They were inspired by the models of national women leaders like Kasthurba Gandhi, Hanza Mehta, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Devi Chathopadhyaya, Mrs. Sutshi, Leelavathi Munshi, Aruna Asafali, Kamala Nehru, etc.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ C.Achutha Menon, Preface to Autobiography, *Niram Theliyunna Nalukal*, (Mal.), by Mukkppuzha Karthiayani Amma, *Mathrubhumi*, 7 March 2008.

¹⁵⁹ Paul Manalil, *Keralathile Bhasha neuna pakshangal*, (Mal.), Calicut, 2006, p. 131.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁶¹ V.R.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 349.

During the civil disobedience movement women were busily involved in the constructive programme of Gandhi. Picketing of foreign cloth shops, liquor shop etc took place through out the length and breadth of Malabar. When the Dictator N.K.Naha of Parappaangadi, was arrested at Calicut and was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment under section 188 (2) and 143 Smt. Kamalabai Prabhu took up the leadership¹⁶² In Tellicherry Kamalabai Prabhu led the picketing of foreign cloth shops along with two other women volunteers-Mrs.Govindan Nair and Sambhavi Amma.¹⁶³ They were arrested on 27 January 1932 and the sympathetic crowd of spectators was lathicharged.¹⁶⁴ She was tried and sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs.1000/- by Dodwell, the sub divisional Magistrate Tellicherry.¹⁶⁵

The magistrate ordered Kamalabai to surrender her ornaments towards fine. She surrendered her bangles and ear studs. But the amount was not enough.¹⁶⁶ Then he asked to surrender her *thali*¹⁶⁷ which is considered as sacred by Hindu women and she was reluctant to obey that. Meanwhile the lawyers presented in the court were trying to convince the magistrate regarding the 'value' assigned to *thali* by Hindu women. Dodwell who was a

¹⁶² P.K.K.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 295.

¹⁶³ Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p. 503.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Sreekanta Poduval, *Athyuthara Keralam Swatantrya Samarathil*, (Mal.), C.P.Sreedhran, (ed.) Annur, Payyannur, p. 71.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Thali*, a Golden Chain worn around the neck indicates that a Hindu woman is married. It is removed only after the death of her husband.

disciple of General Dyer was not ready to hear that. Besides, he asked the police men presented there to remove the *thali* by force. Thereupon she requested her friend to remove the *thali*.¹⁶⁸

The magistrate asked Kamala Bai if she was ready to give assurance for remaining loyal to the British Government, she would be exempted from punishment. She refused to do that¹⁶⁹ and was imprisoned for six months. The '*thali* incident' awakened even those who were not aware of the congress and the national movement till then.¹⁷⁰ The '*tali* snatching case' raised much hue and cry throughout the country. Such an incident had not happened in India before or after.¹⁷¹

When the social reformer Swamy Ananda Thirtha asked permission to meet Kamala Bai in the court the magistrate denied that.¹⁷² The incident was taken seriously by the All India Women's Conference. The Madras branch of the AIWC sent a telegram to the Viceroy and to the Madras Government, showing that the incident was inhuman and requested to take necessary action immediately. The protest occurred after the incident in India and in the House of Commons in England¹⁷³ opened the eyes of the authorities. The Government asked the Malabar District Magistrate to return the *thali*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

¹⁶⁹ V.R.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 350.

¹⁷⁰ K.Gopalankutty, *Malabar Patanangal*, (Mal.), Trivandrum, 2007, p. 53.

¹⁷¹ *Malayala Manorama Daily*, Tellicherry Nagara Satabdi supplement, 18 Nov 1967, p. 1.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ V.R.Menon, *op.cit.*, and also see *Malayala Manorama*, *op.cit.*

immediately to Kamala Bai Prabhu. The nationalist women leaders of India were not satisfied at this. Dr.Muthu Lakshmi Reddy,¹⁷⁴ Mrs.Jina Raja Dasa,¹⁷⁵ and Mrs.Ammu Swaminathan,¹⁷⁶ met the Law Member Sir.M.Krishnan Nair and requested him to enquire about the incident and to take necessary action. There upon he gave them such an assurance.¹⁷⁷

The Government responded with a pressnote regretting the magistrate's high handed measure. The magistrate himself expressed regret and ordered the return of the *thali*.¹⁷⁸ The *thali* which was returned to Mrs. Kamala Bai Prabhu was not accepted by her.

The *thali* incident was considered as a cruel attack made by the British Government. towards the Indian Woman hood¹⁷⁹ and had created much protest at the International level.¹⁸⁰ The strong protest and courage shown by Kamala Bai Prabhu inspired other women freedom fighters of the period.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴ Muthu Lakshmi Reddy was the first woman legislator who was appointed to the Madras legislative council in 1927.

¹⁷⁵ Mrs. Jina Raja Dasa, a Sri Lankan lady came to India in connection with the activities of the Home Rule Movement of Annie Besant. She worked with Margaret Cousins for establishing women's movement in India.

¹⁷⁶ Ammu Swaminathan, was a member of Vadakath Family, Anakkara. She was the Standing Committee Chair Person of the AIWC. She participated during the Quit India Movement and was arrested. She was imprisoned for two years. She was elected to the Central Assembly from Madras City Constituency. In 1952 she was elected to Lok Sabha.

¹⁷⁷ V.R.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 351.

¹⁷⁸ Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*

¹⁷⁹ *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 9 December 1986, p. 1.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Thus the sensational event, although it involved only one woman became known as ‘*thali* snatching case.’¹⁸² The significance of the event further increased by the fact that it led to changed policy matters of the British Government regarding the behaviour towards women. Till then women atrocities were a common feature during the Civil Disobedience Movement. Official records instructed police and magistrate how to deal with women and warned against the use of force and improper behaviour.¹⁸³ Thus the ‘*tali* snatching case’ became a unique and a powerful instance in the whole history of the freedom struggle in India.

Role of Basal Mission Women in the National Movement

Malabar can be legitimately proud of the few Christian ladies from rich families who came out to serve the country, in those early days when the Christian community in general had been hesitating to identify itself with the national movement. The three prominent Basal Mission¹⁸⁴ women who entered into public life during the national movement from the Malabar area were Mrs. Gracy Aron, Mrs. Margaret Pavamani and Miss. Mettilda Beatriz

¹⁸² Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, the new Cambridge History of India, Cambridge, 1998, p. 152.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁸⁴ Basel Evangelical Mission Society or Basel Mission, a Missionary Organization active in Basel, Switzerland started operating in erstwhile Madras Presidency from 1834 onwards. For details see, Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Basel Mission industries in Malabar and south Canara (1834 –1914) A Study of its Social and Economic Impact*, New Delhi. 1990. Introduction, p. 1.

Kallan. They were involved in the political and social activities of the period and left an indelible imprint in the history of Malabar.

Gracy Aron (1896-1967)

“My married life made my public life a successful one.”¹⁸⁵ This was a monologue by Choorakatt Samuel Aron,¹⁸⁶ husband of Gracy, in the later years of his life. Gracy Aron dedicated her life to social service and became a byword for that. She was a social activist and a political worker. She was largely influenced by the life of a Basal Mission background. She was simple in living, not at all interested in a life followed by Samuel Aron who lived in an entirely different atmosphere which was diametrically opposite to that of Gracy.¹⁸⁷

Gracy Aron’s predecessors belonged to Mooliyil family in Calicut and her ancestors were converted to Christianity.¹⁸⁸ Even after that they maintained cordial relations with the Mooliyil family. Gracy Aron was born

¹⁸⁵ Samuel Aron, *Jeevitha Smaranakal*, (Mal.), Kannur, 1974, p. 57.

¹⁸⁶ Samuel Aron, born as the son of Choorakat Aron, a thiyya convert to Christianity became a business man, Kannur. His son Samuel Aron also became an industrialist who runs the Aron textile mill at Pappiniseri. Valapattanam tile factory, Hindustan China Clay Works, etc. He came to be called, “Birla of South India” He was interested in agriculture also and he won the award for the best agriculturist. He entered the National movement mainly due to the influence of K. Madhavan Nair, U.Gopala Menon, K. Kelappan etc. He had participated, courted arrest and jailed thrice. He was a member of the local bodies of Kannur like the Taluk Board, Municipality etc. He was elected to the central legislature at Delhi under the banner of the Congress.

¹⁸⁷ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁸⁸ Thiyyas of Malabar and Billavas of South Canara constituted a majority of Bassel Mission converts. Among these castes the latter half of the 19th century was a period of social upheaval. This was made easy by the peculiar position of thiyyas in the caste hierarchy and their traditional attitudes which was rather cosmopolitan. See Jaiprakash Raghavaiah, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

on 20 January 1896 in Calicut. Her parents were Dr. Joseph and Easter Athasa,¹⁸⁹ Dr Joseph served in the Basel Mission hospital,¹⁹⁰ Calicut. Later he was transferred to Vaniyamkulam in valluvanad Taluk. Gracy. after passing intermediate from Malabar Christian College she underwent teacher's training from Royapuram Training College in the Madras Presidency. Then she joined as teacher in the Mission Higher Elementary School in Ottapalam. She also worked as a teacher in a Muslim Girls 'School in Vettattu Puthiyangadi near Tirur.¹⁹¹ Meanwhile her marriage was arranged with Samuel Aron. She resigned the job after marriage and went to Pappinisseri in 1918.

In the early years of marriage though Gracy Aron did not participate in the political, social and economic issues of the society directly, she had her own opinions and interests towards the same. She read a lot through news papers and books which helped her to strengthen her opinions regarding the current affairs.¹⁹² When she noticed that the statements made by the national leaders in newspapers were not right, she pointed out the draw backs with strong and forceful arguments. She used to discuss them with her husband in the evenings through strong but friendly arguments. This inspired him too to

¹⁸⁹ *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode 19 Dec 1967, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ Basal Mission hospitals were established in Vaniyamkulam, Kodakkal and Calicut. In Calicut it was situated in the Mission compound- present CSI Ladies hostel. This Hospital was worked till 1930's. Then with the establishment of Asoka Hospital, General Hospital, Ramanathan's Clinic, etc. the demand for Mission Hospital was lost. All other Mission hospitals were closed gradually. Personal Interview with Dr. Jaiprakash Raghavaiah at his residence, Calicut 08 Jan 2008.

¹⁹¹ *Mathrubhumi*, 19 Dec 1967, p. 1.

¹⁹² Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

involve in the issues around during the national movement. She was a very good orator.

Reading the leading news papers and discussing them was a daily routine of Gracy Aron and this inspired her very much to enter into the public life of Malabar.¹⁹³ This quality of Gracy Aron influenced the life of Samuel Aron very much. On many occasions she convinced him about his drawbacks in behaviour with the courage and dutifulness of a friend.

'Deena Bandhu' of Malabar

Gracy Aron entered the public life of Malabar first as a social activist in 1918. First and foremost she was interested in helping the orphan children and poor women. She took that as a Mission in her life. She carried on her activities in order to help the poor and needy through her own ways. To carry on her social activities she founded a child care centre in Pappinisseri. In the centre, children were looked after and medicines were given free to the patients consisting of children and poor women.¹⁹⁴ She was lovingly called by the people around her as "*Kachiyamma*."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Personal interview with Nellyodan Raman Nair, a freedom fighter, at his residence, Pappinasseri on 29 June 2007. He was appointed in the Aron mills at the age of fifteen as an office boy and served for forty five years. During this period he was an employee of Aron's Spinning and Weaving Mills, and in the Western India Cottons. He was involved in the national movement activities at Pappinasseri under the leadership of Samuel Aron. He was arrested and imprisoned during the Quit India Movement. At present he is the KPCC executive member at Pappinasseri.

From 1924 – 1935 she lived at Kulappuram when Samuel Aron shifted from Pappinisseri to Kulappuram in order to manage his industries there. There also she founded another child care centre and homeo clinic. She brought medicines from Kannur and distributed them to the patients freely.¹⁹⁶ Gracy Aron helped many children financially to gain education. They were also provided with food and clothes. She gave food and other things too many orphan women after providing them with some house hold work, even if that was not necessary.¹⁹⁷

In 1935 Gracy Aron returned to Pappinisseri when Samuel Aron shifted for his business activities there. There she founded a Mahila Samajam. This was aimed at the upliftment of women. A child care centre was also started there.¹⁹⁸ In the child care centre orphan children were protected. The children of the women workers of the Aron mill were also looked after there. In order to feed milk to the babies she reared many cows.¹⁹⁹ In the Mahila Samajam women were given training in tailoring and other craft works. Attached to the Mahila Samajam building Gracy Aron had managed a Maternity Home called *prasavalaya* for the poor and orphan women. There women could come and stay for their delivery and leave after delivery and the

¹⁹⁶ *Mathrubhumi*, 19 Dec 1967, p. 1.

¹⁹⁷ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁹⁸ *Mathrubhumi*, 19 Dec 1967, p. 1.

¹⁹⁹ Gracy looked after many cows and cared them without having any idea of financial gain. When they were staying in Pappinissri they were having thirty or thirty five cows in their shed. Gracy never allowed selling even a single one among them. Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

rest period.²⁰⁰ She had appointed a midwife called Juliyakka and a helper to assist the women who were admitted in the *prasavalaya*.²⁰¹ She appointed a physician called Kinattinkara Vaidyan in order to make ayurveda medicine for women.²⁰² The running of such an institution could not find any parallel in any where else in Kerala. The building which was constructed for the working of the *Mahila Samajam* was later donated to the congress party²⁰³ in 1954 because she shifted from Pappinisseri to Talap in Kannur. This building is at present functioning as *Congress Mandiram* at Pappinisseri. Thus the *Congress Mandiram* is the result of her close relations with the congress.²⁰⁴

In 1957 Mrs. & Mr. Aron shifted their home from Pappinisseri to Talap in Kannur. After settling down Gracy was involved in her social activities there also. She formed a *Mahila Samajam* there and made efforts to construct a building for the samajam. In this venture, she was supported by many women. Till the completion of the building it functioned in her house itself. She spent a considerable amount towards that. With these ideas she worked in Kulappuram and Pappinisseri. In Talap she had programmes to

²⁰⁰ Personal interview with Smt. Gladys Pavamani at her residence, Calicut on 3 Jul, 2007. She is the daughter of Sumitran Aron, the brother of Samuel Aron. She is the daughter in-law of Margaret Pavamani, another nationalist of the period.

²⁰¹ Personal interview with Seetha Pakkan at her residence, Pappinisseri on 24 Jul, 2007. She was an employee of the Aron mill for thirty years. She was also involved in the Mahila Samajam activities under Gracy Aron.

²⁰² Personal interview with Sumitran Pongadan, at his residence, Pappinisseri on 26 Jul 2007. He was the *Aiyyan* of the CSI church, Pappinisseri.

²⁰³ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

²⁰⁴ *Mathrubhumi*, 19 Dec, 1967, p. 1.

train women in tailoring, child caring, cooking, etc.²⁰⁵ She had run hostel for the girls who came from outside Kerala. A warden was appointed to supervise and manage the hostel.²⁰⁶

Gracy had arranged dance classes for girls under the auspices of the Mahila Samajam. To develop the artistic talents in the children she had conducted programmes in the mahila samajam. To implement all these *Bala Samiti* called *Kachiyamma Bala Jana Sakhyam* functioned as a part of the samajam.²⁰⁷

While Gracy was involved in the Mahila Samajam activities at Talap, the social service activities were continued in the Pappinesseri Mahila Samajam without any hindrance. She managed the Mahila Samajam activities even when she was ill without taking rest.²⁰⁸ *Kachiyanti* was very active but kept a low profile.²⁰⁹

Gracy was so generous that she supported and encouraged all the humanitarian measures of her husband. In 1957 Samuel Aron had donated about thousand acres of land at Pazhayangadi to the Bhoodan Movement²¹⁰ of

²⁰⁵ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 207.

²⁰⁶ Personal interview with Sumitran Pongadan, *op.cit.*

²⁰⁷ Samuel Aron, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Personal interview with Maleeha Raghavaiah, a relative of Samuel Aron, at her residence, Calicut , 3 July 2007.

²¹⁰ *Mathrubhumi*, 12 Mar, 1975.

Acharya Vinoba Bhave.²¹¹ This was supported, rather initiated by Gracy for it was done for a great national cause.²¹² According to her, donation of land would help a lot of people who had no shelter of their own.²¹³ Thus Gracy had spent about 50 years of her life in serving the poor and the needy women and children.²¹⁴ She can be aptly called *Deena Bandhu*.

Gracy Aron as a Nationalist

Gracy Aron who spent her life in serving the poor and the needy entered the public life of Malabar as a nationalist by 1930.²¹⁵ She had contributed much towards the freedom struggle along with her husband. When Samuel Aron entered the national movement, participated in it and was imprisoned she might have been inspired to enter into the political field.²¹⁶ That led to the fame of being the first Christian couple in India who participated in the national movement and courted arrest.²¹⁷ The patriotism of the Arons in the national movement was of unique because at that time

²¹¹ Bhoodan movement was started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the renowned disciple of Gandhi. Land reform was the objective of this movement. He gave shape to the 'Sarvodaya Sangh, an organization to effect land reforms. He wanted to create a society which would be free from violence. Vinoba Bhave went around visiting villages and urging the land owners to donate 1/6 of their land to the landless people and it was a great Success.

²¹² Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Mathrubhumi*, 12 Mar, 1975.

²¹⁵ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

members of the Christian community in general were still continuing as neutral spectators- K. Kelappan observed.²¹⁸

It was after their marriage that Samuel Aron became interested in the political matters and the main reason for that was Gracy Aron. She read all the available news papers and magazines as a daily routine. She waited for Samuel Aron to return home in order to discuss the important matters in them. Thus they were inspired by political happenings like the Home Rule Movement started by Mrs. Annie Besant, Rowlatt Act, Jallian Vala Bagh Massacre, the advent of Gandhi in the National movement, Khilafat, etc.²¹⁹ Further more the visit of C.F. Andrews to Kannur²²⁰ and his advice had created a new political consciousness in Samuel Aron and Gracy Aron.

Till 1930 the nationalist activities of Malabar were confined to the constructive programmes like Khadi propaganda, the eradication of untouchability, prohibition of liquor, boycotting of foreign clothes, swedeshi etc. Gracy Aron was interested in all these constructive programmes and she worked much for the Khadi propaganda²²¹ Gracy Aron took initiative to buy Charka and Takli for the women and instructed them to make thread and hand

²¹⁸ P.K.K.Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 221.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²²⁰ C. F Andrews was a true follower of Gandhi and he worked with Gandhi in South Africa. He came to the house of C.Aron to enquire about the oppression of a harijan at Aroli in Kannur. He came there with K.Kelappan and E.C.Kunhikannan Nambiar, the congress volunteers who were deputed to accompany him.

²²¹ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-125.

over the thread to the Khadi centres. This provided the employment opportunities to the poor women without any political implications.²²²

When the Civil Disobedience Movement was started under Gandhi's leadership Malabar also responded suitably. The Salt Satyagraha volunteers under the leadership of K. Kelappan reached the village of Pariyaram, near Payyanur on 21 April 1931. At this Samuel Aron was assigned to give protection and necessary arrangements to the volunteers for the Satyagraha. He had a building near Payyanur Railway station and that was used as the satyagraha Ashram.²²³ Gracy Aron took a leadership role in according a grand reception to the satyagrahis.²²⁴

Gandhi was arrested on 5 May 1930.²²⁵ This was followed by the arrest and imprisonment of many in and across the country. In Malabar the satyagraha volunteers were arrested. Samuel Aron was one of the arrested people, even though he was not a satyagraha volunteer. He was arrested and imprisoned for giving protection to the salt satyagraha volunteers in Payyannur.²²⁶

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ E.Moidu Moulavi, *Ente Koottukaran*, (Mal.), Life Sketch Mohammed Abdurahiman Sahib, Calicut, 1st impression, 1964, p. 149, and also see P.C. Karthiyanikutty Amma, *Thirumumbinoppam*, (Mal.), Memoirs, Kannur, 2006, p. 64.

²²⁴ K. Karunakaran Nair, (ed.), *Who is Who of Freedom Fighters in Kerala*, 1975, p. 1.

²²⁵ A. K. Pillai, *Congessum Keralavum*, (Mal.), 1935, DC Books, 1986, p. 46.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

Gracy Aron entered active politics at this juncture and took the leadership of the Civil Disobedience Movement. In the same year she was nominated as the KPCC member.²²⁷ While Samuel Aron was in the jail, Gracy Aron, along with many other women became fully involved in the constructive work of the congress. The various items in the constructive programme were the Khadi propaganda, prohibition of liquor, raising fund from house to house for the Satyagraha and propagate congress ideology among women. By this time women entered the National movement in various parts of Malabar. Gracy Aron joined the movement arguing that her duty was to make the aim of Samuel Aron's imprisonment a success.²²⁸

Government issued prohibitory orders on Gracy Aron²²⁹ along with other women leaders when women of Calicut decided to hold a protest demonstration against the police atrocities on women satyagrahis in Bombay. Though Gracy Aron was arrested on 17 November 1930 she was released after two days' remanding. Among them only Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma was imprisoned. Gracy Aron was disillusioned for being kept out of the punishment.²³⁰ During the Civil Disobedience Movement she became the third Dictator of the congress in Malabar²³¹ on the arrest of Raghavakurup. As

²²⁷ Sreekanta Poduval, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

²²⁸ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 157.

²²⁹ Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p. 499.

²³⁰ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 165, and also see Sreekanta Poduval, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

²³¹ C.S.Chandrika, "Keralathile Stree Munnettangalude Charithram", in *Malayalam weekly*, Supplementary Edition, 2000, p. 204.

the Dictator she gave the intimation to the authorities regarding her programme of action.

Gracy Aron, being the third Dictator led a procession to the Calicut beach²³² accompanied by P. Devaki Amma, Kamala Bai Prabhu, Mrs. Ganesh Pai, Vedavati Ammal and two men volunteers, K. Kumaran Nair and T. K. Ayyappan Pillai.²³³ She hoisted the tri-colour National Flag as the crowd sang the flag song in chorus.²³⁴ She was arrested along with other ladies and men volunteers. On that day a hartal was observed at Calicut. She was imprisoned for six months at Vellore Presidency jail for women, Madras. After the signing of the Gandhi Irwin pact, she was released.²³⁵ But when the Pact was denied by the congress, struggle continued though there was the prohibition order and brutal measures of the Government. prevailed. The sixth Kerala State political conference was held on 15 May 1932. The conference was presided over by Samuel Aron and the same was convened very secretly.²³⁶

By this time Samuel Aron wanted to keep Gracy Aron away from the freedom struggle because she has lost her health during the imprisonment.²³⁷ There were many people who kept away after one time imprisonment.²³⁸ But

²³² P.K.K. Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 261.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ A.K. Pillai, *op.cit.*

²³⁵ *Mathrubhumi*, 19 Dec 1967, p. 1, and also see Perunna K.N.Nair *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam*, (Mal.), Cochin, p. 81.

²³⁶ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 172.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

Gracy Aron did not agree seeing aloof from national movement as a humiliation.²³⁹ Thus both of them came to Calicut to attend the conference. When the VI KPCC conference was going on presided over by Samuel Aron,²⁴⁰ another conference was held in another part of the city²⁴¹ under the President ship of Gracy Aron. Though many were arrested, only twelve were penalized who included Samuel Aron, Gracy Aron, P. K. Kunhisankara Menon and Dictator Sankaravarma Raja and so on. She was sent to Vellore Presidency jail for women in Madras and imprisoned for two and a half years.²⁴²

By the time of her release in 1934 her health became very poor. Even then she was busily engaged in various public activities towards helping the National Movement. On many occasions without caring for her illness she made necessary arrangements for the Satyagraha leaders when many of them were in jail. During this period her work included collecting fund for the functioning of the Satyagraha.²⁴³ Gracy Aron never worked for fame or name. She carried on silent, selfless social service through out her life. She was engaged in social service activities in Kannur and the surrounding areas even before Gandhiji entered into the public life.²⁴⁴ She was a model social worker

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Perunna K.N.Nair, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

²⁴² *Mathrubhumi*, *op.cit.*, and also see Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 216.

²⁴³ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*

²⁴⁴ Mukkapuzha Karhiyani Amma, *Reminiscences*, cited in Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 215. She was a colleague of Gracy Aron from 1930 onwards in the National movement activities.

and guardian of the down trodden of the old generation. As a social service activist she worked through her own ideas and methods. She never depended on the fame and power of her husband, Samuel Aron.²⁴⁵ Smt. *Kachiyamma* was a quiet and dedicated social worker. She was the ‘gem of a person.’²⁴⁶ When we analyze the contributions of Gracy Aron in the multifaceted activities during the National Movement, her contribution as a social worker stands above everything else. She led the life of a true Christian and was “*Deenabandhu*” in the real sense of the term.

Margaret Pavamani (1897-1976)

The second Basel Mission couple²⁴⁷ who entered the public life of Malabar during the national movement was Advocate Benjamin Pavamani and Margaret Pavamani. Margaret Pavamani was born as the daughter of Stephen Puthen veetil –Jnanabharanam couple in 1897. Her father was a teacher in Trichur. After retirement, he came to Calicut and served as Head Master in the Malabar Christian College High School, Calicut. She had formal education up to high school. Margaret Pavamani was married to Benjamin Pavamani who was a leading Advocate in the Calicut Bar.

²⁴⁵ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 213.

²⁴⁶ Moidu Maulavi, *op.cit.*, p. 9. He was a centurion freedom fighter who belonged to Calicut. He was the editor of the news paper *Al- Ameen* for a long time. It was started on 12 October 1924. He was also managing the ‘Al- Ameen lodge’ which was the centre of nationalist activity for a long time. See M.G.S. Narayanan, *Calicut: The City of Truth, Revisited*, Calicut, 2006, pp. 50-51.

²⁴⁷ Samel Aron, *Jeevitha Smaranakal*, Kannur, 1976, p. 151.

Margaret Pavamani entered the public life of Malabar due to her husband's encouragement. Christians generally were against such a life.²⁴⁸ She entered the public life of Malabar during the Civil Disobedience Movement through the *Mahila Samajam*, which was started at Calicut under the leadership of Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma.²⁴⁹ The constructive programme of Gandhi was implemented by women through the *Mahila Samajam*.

The KPCC meeting at Payyannur on 17 May 1930 elected K. Madhavan Nair as its president and P.K. Kunhisankara Menon as secretary. The meeting decided to extend the Satyagraha to other places in Malabar in view of the rising popular enthusiasm. As per that a committee was constituted to organise *Khadi* work in Kerala in order to satisfy the increasing demand of the people for *Khadi*. Simultaneously a committee of women was formed at Calicut for implementing effective *Khadi* work. Margaret Pavamani was one of the members of the committee, the others being T. Narayani Amma, Mrs.U.Gopala Menon and K.E. Sarada Teacher. The members of the committee and other ladies organised a number of classes in spinning. They carried on house to house propaganda and distributed Charka and Cotton among a large number of people through out Malabar.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Personal interview with Gladys Pavamani, at her residence, Calicut on 27 February 2008. She is the daughter-in-law of Margaret Pavamani.

²⁴⁹ Samuel Aron, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

²⁵⁰ P.K.K. Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 233-234.

Gandhi asked the nation to observe 15 February 1931 as Motilal Day, giving out a programme to be followed by the country. In accordance with that Kunhilakshmi Amma, the sixth Dictator and other ladies like Margaret Pavamani along with K.V. Surya Narayana Iyer, P. Achuthan, Abdurahiman, K.M. Nair, Vallabhai Das Purushotham, K. Madhavan Nair and Dr. A. Chandu asked the people of Kerala to observe Motilal Day. As a part of that K. Kunhilakshmi Amma and N. Sanjivi Bai went to the big bazaar on 12 February 1931 holding the tri-colour flag high and picketed a piece-good shop. This was the first time when women in Malabar undertook picketing. The ladies were arrested on 14 February 1931.²⁵¹ Motilal Day was observed in all solemnity. Even in villages there were complete hartals, fasting silent, procession and peaceful condolence meetings.²⁵²

When the sixth dictator K. Kunhilakshmi Amma was arrested, AICC has appointed Margaret Pavamani as the next dictator of the Malabar Pradesh Congress Committee.²⁵³ Meanwhile the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed and that was welcomed in Kerala. Then Margaret Pavamani had nominated an adhoc committee which included all the jail released leaders.²⁵⁴

On 6 March 1931 Margaret Pavamani, the seventh Dictator and other ladies issued a Communiqué calling on the people to observe the terms of the

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 263.

²⁵³ *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 4 March 1976, p. 5.

²⁵⁴ Mukkapuzha Karthiayaniamma, *Niram Theliyunna Nalukal*, (Mal.), autobiography, in *Mathrubhumi* weekly, 13-19 November 1983, p. 39.

Pact and not to break law, including prohibitory orders issued under section 144 criminal procedure code where ever they were in force. To celebrate the event, public meetings were convened and processions were taken on 7 March 1931 all over Kerala. At Calicut, a huge procession was organised by the Bala Bharat Sangh, The Mahila Sangh and the Students League.²⁵⁵ A large meeting was also held at the beach and Margaret Pavamani presided over that meeting.

T.Prakasham, the great Andhra Leader who was released on 6 March 1931 from the central jail Kannur, congratulated Kerala on the splendid part played by Margaret Pavamani in the historic movement.²⁵⁶ He added, without any fear of contradiction that Malabar had contributed much more to the success of the Movement than any other part of south India.

Margaret Pavamani then nominated a new Kerala Provincial Congress Committee as an emergency measure. There was little time to conduct the proper election before the impending session of the All India Congress Committee proposed to be held at Karachi. The fifty nine members nominated by her included new blood besides the members of the old guard.²⁵⁷

At Tellicherry Margaret Pavamani and P.M. Kamalavathi organised the picketing liquor shops. At Kannur the ladies came out of their homes for

²⁵⁵ P.K.K. Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 265.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

picketing from 19 March onwards. On the whole the ladies who entered in to the political field were hailed from respectable middle class families and were educated. Their participation in the movement enhanced its popularity and was bound to contribute to its ultimate success. They inspired and increased consciousness regarding their duty to their mother land.

The great awakening in Malabar had its immediate favourable response in the princely states of Cochin and Travancore where the people came forward to enforce prohibition and propagate the use of Khadi. The educated women of Cochin belonging to middle class families launched the picketing in Trichur town on 25 April 1931. The women included Amritamma, P. Visalakshi Amma, T. Lakshmikutty, M.Karthiayani Amma and many others. The picketing was done with the cooperation of Margaret Pavamani and A.V. Kuttimalu Amma from Calicut.²⁵⁸

Under the direction of Kurur Neelakantan Nambutiripad, E. Ikkandavarier and K. Madhava Menon, they lined up in front of the leading foreign cloth shops. The sight of the high spirited ladies, fully drenched in the rain, standing before the shops and appealing to the buyer's conscience was indeed touching. As the picketing continued on the subsequent days some

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

young men belonging to orthodox aristocratic Nambuthiri families also stepped forward.²⁵⁹

The women's conference at Badagara which was presided over by Padmavathi Asher from Tirupur resolved to organise the Kerala Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh²⁶⁰ for carrying out national work and serving the cause of women in the country. It also decided to set up night schools and handicraft training centers for providing education and employment for poor women. As a part of that The All Kerala Women's League was founded in Calicut on 13 June 1931 at a meeting of women at verkot house. Margaret Pavamani was elected as its president, Kunhikkavu Amma as vice president, A.V. Kuttimalu Amma as treasurer, P.M. Kamalavathi and Kunhilakshmi Amma as secretaries.²⁶¹

The Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh has decided that the fourth day of every month should be observed as Gandhi day. As part of that a crowd gathered at Calicut under a banyan tree to the west of the Zamorin's College on 4 Feb 1932 under the leadership of Margaret Pavamani, Smt. kunhikavu Amma, Padmavathi Amma and others. The police arrested Margaret Pavamani, Kunhikavu Amma and Padmavathi Amma. The first two received

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ The organization was formed by 1930 under the initiative of women leaders like Sarojini Naidu. It was formed as a part of The Rashtriya Stree Sabha (1921), which was formed for the emancipation of women. To implement its aim the Members campaigned for the propagation of Swedeshi throughout Bombay.

²⁶¹ Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p. 502.

two and a half years rigorous imprisonment and Padmavathi was imprisoned for two years.²⁶²

Margaret Pavamani retired from active politics after the death of her husband in 1937.²⁶³ After that she stayed with her parents at Talakulathur, Annassery. In 1940s she went to Pappinisseri when her elder son Stephen had got a job in the Aron mill.²⁶⁴ She involved in the social service activities at Pappinisseri which was carried on under the leadership of Gracy Aron. The Bharat Mahila Samaj at Pappinisseri was very active during that period.²⁶⁵ When Gracy Aron shifted from Pappinisseri to Talap in 1957; the activities of the Samaj were controlled by Margaret Pavamani. She became the patron of the Samaj.²⁶⁶

As the president of the Mahila Samaj, Margaret Pavamani carried on several programmes for the benefit of the girls. While she was the president Lilly Mooliyil was the secretary of the Samaj. Under their initiative a *Mahila Mela* was conducted for two days.²⁶⁷ During this period she was helped by many other active women of Kannur. They were P.P. Sarada, Eliyamma,

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 503.

²⁶³ *Mathrubhumi*, 4 March 1976, p. 5.

²⁶⁴ Personal interview with Gladys Pavamani, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁵ Personal Interview with Seetha Pakkan at her residence, Pappinisseri on 24 July 2007. She worked in the Aron mill for a period of thirty years and was very active in the activities of the Samaj.

²⁶⁶ Personal Interview with Gladys Pavamani, *op.cit.*

²⁶⁷ Personal Interview with E. Moses Master at his residence in Pappinisseri on 23 July 2007. He was a teacher (retired) of Aron U.P School. He worked with Samuel Aron in the activities of the congress for many years. He was the D.C.C member, Pappinisseri unit.

Sophiya Varghese etc.²⁶⁸ Margaret Pavamani entered the public life of Malabar as a Nationalist through the Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh. She worked strenuously till the death of her husband in 1937. After that she did not involve in any of the political matters of Malabar. Later she confined herself in the social service activities of north Malabar.

Mettilda Beatriz Kallan

Another Basal Mission Woman who entered the public life of Malabar during the National Movement was Miss. Mettilda Beatriz Kallan.²⁶⁹ She was born on 31 August 1904²⁷⁰ as the daughter of Rev. Alphai Kallan and Raechal Kallan at Nettur, Illikkunnu in Tellichery near Moorat river.²⁷¹ She passed S.S.L.C., from Tellichery Brennen College High School and completed her secondary training.²⁷² She started her career as a teacher in the old Taluk Board.²⁷³

Miss. Kallan joined the National Movement at the clarion call of Mahatma Gandhi during the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1931 and she resigned the job for the sake of the nation. During that period educated ladies from well-to-do families in Malabar came to the fore-front and picketed the

²⁶⁸ Personal Interview with Samuel Amos Master at his residence, Pappinisseri on 24 July 2007. He retired from Aron U.P School. He is a member of D.C.C, Pappinisseri unit.

²⁶⁹ Here in after referred to as Miss. Kallan.

²⁷⁰ K.Karunakaran Nair, who is who of Freedom Fighters of Kerala, Trivandrum 1975, p. 189.

²⁷¹ Personal interview with Cynthia Kallan, (73) at her residence, Calicut on 29 May 2007. She is the daughter of Miss. Kallan's brother.

²⁷² *Mathrubhumi*, 14 March 1964.

²⁷³ K.Karunakaran Nair, *op.cit.*

foreign cloth shops. When the Gandhi-Irwin pact was signed, the congress leaders and workers were released from jail. With this the National Movement became active again. At Calicut, Kamaladevi Chathopadhyaya gave leadership for the boycotting of foreign clothes. Miss.Kallan was in the forefront of the picketing along with Mrs. V.Gopala Menon, A.V.Kuttimalu Amma and many other women.²⁷⁴ Miss. Kallan worked in Palghat to organise such activities along with Iswari Ammal, Mrs. R.V. Sharma, C.R. Devaki Amma and M.K .Janaki Amma. In this work, they were helped by an enthusiastic group of congress volunteers and some of the volunteers of the local Bar. They picketed the leading wholesale and retail foreign cloth shops in the town and spread the message of Gandhi in the remote villages of Palghat Taluk.²⁷⁵

Miss. Kallan was appointed as the Second Dictator of the 'Kerala Youth League' in 1932.²⁷⁶ Following the arrest of Gandhi, arrests were common in Malabar also. The arrest of K.Kelappan and E.C. Kunhikannan Nambiar provoked the youth of the time. Then there was no delay of actions among the ladies also. In Quilandy Miss. Kallan and Devi, who later became the wife of C.H. Kunhappa, the nationalist came to the fore front to lead the Civil Disobedience Movement.²⁷⁷ On 10 February 1932 they took out a

²⁷⁴ V.R .Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 302-303.

²⁷⁵ P.K.K. Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 268-269.

²⁷⁶ K.Karunakaran Nair, *op.cit.*

²⁷⁷ Thikkotiyar, *Arangu Kanatha Natan*, (Mal.), Trichur, 1991, pp. 67-68.

procession of Red Volunteers of the Kerala Yuvak Sangh in Quilandy. They were arrested and the volunteers were beaten up.²⁷⁸ They received two years rigorous imprisonment each. That was a time when women were reluctant to come to the public. In such a situation these ladies came forward, broke the laws and faced the Quilandy police known for their repressive strength.²⁷⁹

Miss. Kallan was released from jail in 1934. Meanwhile a branch of the 'Harijan Seva Sangh' was started in 1933 in Malabar. The president of the Sangh was K.Kelappan.²⁸⁰ Then Miss. Kallan withdrew from direct political activities and turned towards the upliftment of the Harijan girls. As a part of that she founded the Harijan Balika Sadan for poor girls in Ottapalam in 1934.²⁸¹ It was inaugurated by C. Kunhikkavu Amma, the president of K.P.C.C.²⁸² on 2 October 1934.²⁸³ On the day of inauguration, Kayaratt Vasudeva Menon, a nationalist was in the sadanam to manage the sadanam activities. He used to visit sadanam regularly. The activity of the sadanam was helpful and was promoted by many rich and influential men who were

²⁷⁸ Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p. 503.

²⁷⁹ Thikkotiyan, *op.cit.*

²⁸⁰ K.Bheeman Nair, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

²⁸¹ *Mathrubhumi*, 14 March 1964.

²⁸² Meera Velayudhan, *op.cit.*, p. 504.

²⁸³ Personal interview with E.K.Janaki teacher, (86), at her residence, Calicut on 11 July 2007. She was a native of Badagara and was brought to Kannur by Swami Ananda Teertha when she was eight years old. From there she was taken to Ottappalam by K.Kelappan when the Sadanam was started. She was the inmate of the Sadanam from the day of its inauguration. She continued education which was broken earlier because of 'untouchability' issue in the school. When Miss. Kallan shifted her area of activity from Ottappalam to Calicut, she came to Calicut and stayed with Miss. Kallan at her residence, "Gem villa", Puthiyara. Janaki took teacher's training from Government training school, Nadakkavu and joined service. She left Miss. Kallan's house only after her marriage. She retired from Ganapat School at Kallai, Calicut.

nationalists in mind. Jinachandran from Wynad supplied bags of rice to the sadanam and P.T. Asher provided clothes and beds to the inmates of the sadanam.²⁸⁴

In managing the day to day activities of Kasthurba Balika Sadan, Miss. Kallan was assisted by Sumalatha Uppott (Summi Uppott) who was a teacher of Moyen's Girls' High School, Palghat.²⁸⁵ There were sixteen girls from Payyanur to Palghat and they used to call Miss.Kallan "Amma." The girls, all Hindus, hailed from various castes.²⁸⁶

In 1939 the 'Sadanam' was shifted from Palghat to Calicut near Sabha School Puthiyara called Kasthurba Sadan.²⁸⁷ With this, Calicut became Miss.Kallan's area of activity.²⁸⁸ Meanwhile she joined the U.P. School, Parayancheri and became the Head Mistress. Being a strict disciplinarian, she could do much for the benefit of the students in the school. She inspired many women in the neighbouring area to learn and to be employed.²⁸⁹ She

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Personal interview with Vijayakumari. E.Kallan, niece of Miss. Kallan, Calicut, on 21 June 2007.

²⁸⁶ Personal interview with P.M.Janaki Teacher (81), at her residence, Puthiyara on 10 July 2007. She belonged to Payyoli and was an inmate of the Sadanam from its very inception. Till then she stayed in the Gandhi Sadanam at Pakkanarpuram. When Miss. Kallan admitted children in the BEM School Palghat, Janaki was admitted in the third standard. When the Sadanam was shifted to Calicut, she stayed with Miss. Kallan till her marriage in 1952. Before that she took teacher's training and was appointed in the U.P. School, Parayancheri. She used to meet 'Amma' daily after her marriage till the death of Miss. Kallan in 1964.

²⁸⁷ Thikkotiyan, *op.cit.*, p. 324.

²⁸⁸ Personal interview with Vijayakumari E.Kallan, *op.cit.*

²⁸⁹ Personal interview with Keezhedathu Padmini Teacher (Rtd.), Parayancheri School at her residence, Puthiyara, on 12 July 2007. She stated that she could become a teacher

was popularly known as “Vallia Teacher”²⁹⁰ and there was nobody in the Parayancheri Angadi who did not respect her.²⁹¹ She continued her service as the Head Mistress at U.P. School for Girls, Parayancheri, till her retirement in 1959.²⁹²

While Miss. Kallan was running the Kasthurba Sadanam in Calicut, she brought up six Harijan girls at her home. They were E.K. Janaki, P.M. Janaki, Panchali, Kalliani, Subhadra and Gouri-Four of them became teachers and two, nurses.²⁹³ They were brought up as Hindus and they were given prayer room in the house. They were considered on equal terms with others in spite of the fact that the Kallan family was a pious Christian one.

When the Quit India Movement broke out, it aroused the popular enthusiasm and had electrified impact all over India.²⁹⁴ Malabar also responded and acted suitably. Being a strong Gandhian and a Nationalist, Miss. Kallan could not keep away from the ‘August Revolution’. Thus she participated in the Quit India Movement and was imprisoned for one year. Thus she was a true Gandhian, wearing *Khadi* always, and a nationalist throughout her life without any craving for benefits or gains. In her own words; “I have done everything for the nation and the people, not for honors

only because of the support and inspiration of Miss. Kallan at a time when the girls of the Nair families were not permitted to go out side for job.

²⁹⁰ The phrase stands for the Head Mistress.

²⁹¹ Personal interview with Cynthia Kallan, *op.cit.*

²⁹² *Mathrubhumi*, 14 March 1964.

²⁹³ Personal interview with E.K.Janaki Teacher, *op.cit.*

²⁹⁴ Bipan Chandra, et.al., *India’s Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947*, Delhi, 1981, p. 459.

or pension.”²⁹⁵ In this context it is relevant to note that she turned down the request to give her name for the award of Tamrapatra.

When we analyse the life and activities of Miss. Kallan, it is clear that she was a radical nationalist and a many-sided activist. She was a dedicated teacher, freedom fighter and a social worker. As a true nationalist she worked in various parts of Malabar along with other nationalists of the period. She dedicated her life for the service of humanity in the context of National Movement and Harijan upliftment. She brought up many girls, educated them and provided them with employment. She inspired many during the National Movement.

The observations made in this section are attempts to analyse the role played by women of Malabar in the political scenario mainly during the freedom movement. But since they contributed much towards the society during the post- independence period also, the study was extended to the later period. All the women activists whose contributions were elaborated here were imbued with Gandhian nationalist ideology.

²⁹⁵ Personal interview with Vijayakumari E. Kallan, *op.cit.*

CHAPTER-III
PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE
RADICAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTH
MALABAR

Women's participation in any movement is a yard stick to measure the depth of that movement among the masses and concern of women about social issues.¹ Moreover the extent and the nature of women's participation is an indication of the characteristic of the movement as a whole. The women of lower classes in North Malabar entered public life with the ascendancy of the communist-peasant movement which has done a lot for mobilizing this social group. It was essential to focus such mobilization on uprooting the colonial; jenmi domination that existed in the society. The communist-peasant movements highlighted the need for collective, interactive evolutionary approach to sensitize the community.

In this chapter the participation of women in movements which were aimed at bringing structural changes in the society is taken up for discussion. After the Civil Disobedience Movement, many who had imbibed socialist ideology went ahead with the formation of organizations in Malabar. This radicalized the national movement and widened its social base. However an extensive study is not intended and women's participation in Teachers'

¹ Debal. K. Singha Roy, *Women in Peasant Movements-Tebhaga, Naxalite and After*, New Delhi, 1992, p.51.

Movement, Peasant Movement and in Women Organizations is taken up for discussion.

Teachers' Movement - Women's Role

An important feature of the National Movement in Malabar was the formation of Teachers' Movement. In 1931 the first Teachers' union was formed in Malabar in Malappuram in the Ponnani Taluk.² Through out the Civil Disobedience Movement and in the later period many teachers worked in the national movement at various stages. Cherukad in his autobiography, *Jeevithapatha* explains the strength, solidarity and discipline of the teachers' union. In the novel, *Muthassi*, Cherukad traces the formation of Teachers' Movement. Nani teacher, the heroine of the novel had an important role to play in strengthening the movement.³ Cherukad seems to have modeled the heroine from the character of his wife, Lakshmikutty teacher.⁴ She worked a lot for the formation and consolidation of the movement in the Pattambi area. She was known as the fire brand of the Teachers' movement.

An important development of this period was the organised efforts of the aided school teachers. Many of them were simultaneously the Congress, Congress socialist Party and Karshaka Sangham cadres in their area apart

² See for details K.Gopalankutty, *Malabar Patanangal*, (Mal.), Trivandrum, 2007, pp. 84-104.

³ See for details Cherukad, *Muthassi* (mal), Trichur, 1989.

⁴ See for details Cherukad, *Jeevithapatha* (mal), Trichur ,1974.

from being active participants in the Teachers' Movement.⁵ The condition of the aided school teachers was miserable at that time. Private managements would not pay on various pretexts even their meagre salaries ranging from Rs. 5 to Rs 10. There was no security of tenure.

In north Malabar, the Chirakkal Taluk Aided Teachers' Union sprang up in 1934 when it held its first conference and registered a steady growth in subsequent years. Its second conference was held in December 1935 attended by six hundred teachers. In 1936, *jathas* of aided teachers were organized on the problem of grants to these schools.⁶ The Teacher's Union under the leadership of the leftist activists worked along with the Karshaka Sangham and the Communist Party.⁷ From the very inception of the Teacher's Union women became active participants. Though there were many women teachers who worked in this movement, the present study concentrates only on the roles played by P.Yesoda Teacher, Nani Teacher, K.Kalliani Amma, V.P.Devaki Teacher, K.Janaki Teacher and U.Janaki Teacher.

P. Yesoda Teacher (1916-

Yesoda Teacher is an important woman personality who entered the public life of Malabar from 1930's. She was born as the daughter of

⁵ Prakash Karat, *The Peasant Movement in Malabar 1934-40*, Social Scientist Vol. 5. No.2, September 1976, p. 39

⁶ *Ibid* p. 40

⁷ Cherukad, *Jeevithapatha* (Mal.) Autobiography, Trichur, 1974, p. 462, and also see, *Kalliasseriyude Innalekal*. (Mal.), Kannur, p. 67.

Payyanadan Govindan and Atiyeri Janaki in February 1916.⁸ Her mother was a strong willed woman who had studied up to fifth standard. She had supported her daughter in her education and later in her public activities. Yesoda Teacher studied in the Kalliasseri U.P. School. She passed higher elementary and became a teacher of the same school at the age of fifteen. Later she joined the school at Keecheri and then became very active in the public life through the Communist Party.⁹

P. Yesoda became a teacher after overcoming many obstacles. In the school there were colleagues called Yesoda Teacher, Appini Sreedevi Teacher and Koroth Sreedevi Teacher. They had passed E.S.L.C. and had taken teacher's training in a period when women education was looked down upon. They were not given any occupation except agricultural labour. The conservative society looked on women who entered public as 'prostitutes.'¹⁰ In such a situation these teachers served the society through teaching profession. This led to the beginning of a social change. Following them C.V. Madhavikutty Teacher, Nani Teacher, and Upperi Janaki Teacher entered the public life.

Along with the Karshaka Samgham a strong Teacher's Union was organized in Malabar in 1935.¹¹ Many Schools in Malabar were owned by

⁸ Personal interview with P. Yesoda Teacher at her residence, Keecheri on 11 May 2006.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Streepadavi-Patanam*, (Mal.), Kalliasseri Grama Panchayat, 2000-2001, p. 5.

¹¹ Kalliasseri yute Innalekal, *op.cit.*

the *jenmis* and the teachers belonged to the families of peasants. These teachers suffered under double exploitation that of the Government and the Management. In North Malabar K.V. Narayanan Nambiar, P.M. Kunhiraman Nambiar, O.V. Govindan Nambiar, P. Yesoda Teacher and T.C. Narayanan Nambiar were the early leaders of the Chirakkal Taluk Aided Elementary Teachers' Union. Yesoda Teacher was the first woman member who had joined in the Malabar Teachers Union in 1935.¹² She questioned the practice of the management for not giving the full salary of teachers even after getting grant from the Government. She gave leadership to the boycotting of *Gurujana Samajam*. For that her certificate was suspended and she got it back only after one and a half years.¹³ After retrieving the certificate she served in the Mangad L.P. School and Aroli L.P. School. While working as a teacher she worked for promoting female education and for forming women organizations.

Yesoda teacher took the initiative to organize women under the aegis of the Communist Party. The Keecheri *Mahila Samajam*, the first of that kind in North Malabar was formed in 1937,¹⁴ under the leadership of Yesoda Teacher and Meenakshi Amma. The Samajam opposed dowry system, settled family problems, promoted female education, gave training in spinning etc.

¹² M.T.Narayanan, "Kandakkai Karshaka Samaram Charitra Paschatalathil" in *Kandakkai smaranika*, 1996, p. 19.

¹³ Personal interview, *op.cit*

¹⁴ *Ibid*

She worked much for the formation of Malabar *Mahila Samajam* in 1940. In 1942 the women of Malabar who were occupied as Teachers met together for the first time for the formation of Chirakkal Taluk Mahila Sangam.¹⁵ Yesoda Teacher was in the forefront of this organization. This meeting was the first effort by women which helped much to strengthen the organizational capacity of women in Chirakkal. Later many local Mahila Samajams were formed in North Malabar.

The *Mahila Samajam* aimed at the welfare of women and took up issues like education, employment, etc. The *Mahila Samajam* presented a drama in the annual programme of the *Samajam* in which Women like Nani Teacher and Kottodi Janaki Teacher were dressed as men. In the notice printed, it was written as ‘there will be special seating arrangement for men’.¹⁶ This was a clear indication of the courage shown by women to cope up with the activities of men of that period.

Till 1940’s girls and boys wore only a small piece of cloth called *thorthu* and the girls did not wear upper cloths. In such period a woman called Palakkal Mavila Valappil Parvathy Amma who hailed from the *Ananda Asramam* worked for women education and fought against caste

¹⁵ Streepadavi, *op.cit.*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

discrepancies. During this period Yesoda Teacher worked a lot for promoting female education.¹⁷

Yesoda Teacher became a communist member in 1939 itself and she was the first woman member of the Communist Party. She attended the camp for women organized by the Communist Party in November 1942 in Kozhikode.¹⁸ She was one of the few members who had participated in the first conference of Communist Party which was held in Bombay in 1943.¹⁹ She was prepared to attend the communist conference preceding the Morazha incident. But she was instructed by the party to stay in Keecheri.²⁰

In 1943 Yesoda Teacher married Kanthalot Kunhambu, a prominent communist leader. After marriage she continued her public activities without any interruption. She participated in the All India Women's conference meeting in Karachi in 1943 along with Devaki Narikkattiri.

In 1946 Karivellur – Kavumbayi Struggles occurred and the communists were hunted by M.S.P.- gunda alliance. Men were not in a condition to come out and there was acute food scarcity. Hearing these problems the Australian Labour Party extended its helping hand to Malabar. It sent two tons of food items to Malabar which included meat and tomato

¹⁷ Personal interview, *op.cit.*

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ Kalliasseri yute Innalekal, *op.cit.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Juice which were kept in Parassini. The custodian of the same was P. Yesoda Teacher.²¹

An important struggle which was geared by the labourers during the freedom movement was the Aron Mill Strike led by Kanthalot Kunhambu in 1946. In that women participated to help the strikers. In this situation Yesoda Teacher worked actively.²² They protested the arrest of men labourers by the Police. The leading women of this move were Unden Paru and Pola Janaki. Unden Paru challenged the authority by raising her hand to the face of the Police Inspector. This may be considered as an encouraging excitement to the women of the present.

Yesoda Teacher suffered a lot during the 'reign of terror' of 1948 under the brutal activities of the MSP and the gundas. She was beaten brutally and left in the field near her house thinking that she was dead.²³ She disguised as a peasant woman in order to evade the Police and escaped many times. She took asylum in the house of P.M. Gopalan, in Parassinikadav. From there she was caught by Sub. Inspector Rayarappan Nair and was beaten brutally. Then she lived under ground. At that time she lived in Kozhikode with the sister of E.M.S. Nambuthiripad. In Kannur she stayed in

²¹ K.Balakrishanan, "Parassini Chuvanna Katha" in *Desabhimani weekly* 9 June, 2002, p. 40.

²² The Mathrubhumi, 29 August 2008

²³ Personal interview, with P. Yesoda Teacher. dated 17 May 2006. She still remembers the words uttered by the police *udhar latto*. She says she was hearing those words for the first time.

the house of M.R.Bhattatiripad.²⁴ During this period she attended many meetings of the *Yogakshema Sabha*.

After that she went to Trichur with the help of the communist workers and there also she lived under ground. During that period she worked for organizing the women toddy tappers. While living under ground she attended the Asiatic women conference held at Calcutta in 1949. She was one of the founding members of the All India Mahila Federation and worked as its state secretary.

Yesoda teacher was the first woman reporter of *Desabhimani*.²⁵ She went to enquire about the *Kavumbayi Samaram* along with other Journalists. She reported the Kavumbayi and Kandakkai peasant struggles realistically.²⁶ She visited Kunhakkamma, the leader of the Kalamkettu Samaram, Kandakkai in the Kannur Central jail.²⁷ It was through her reports that the public could know about the struggles at Kandakkai. She was popularly called *swa.le*.²⁸

In the elections held in 1949 for the Malabar District Board. Yesoda Teacher contested as the Communist Party Candidate from Chirakkal Taluk. Her opponent in the election was Vishnu Bharateeyan. He stood as the

²⁴ Communist party 50th anniversary souvenir, 1989-1990, p. 212.

²⁵ Kalliasseri yude Innalekal, p. 68.

²⁶ *Desabhimani*.

²⁷ Kandakkai smaranika, *op.cit.*

²⁸ Swa.le stands for staff reporter. Personal interview with Smt. Prassanna, the niece of Yesoda teacher, 25 April 2006.

Congress party candidate though he was a leader of the *Karshaka Sangham*. Chatayan Govindan worked strenuously for the victory of Yesoda Teacher in the Kambil area.²⁹ In the election Vishnu Bharateeyan came out victorious and was elected to the District Board.³⁰

Thus P. Yesoda Teacher performed various activities. She symbolized the aspirations of the radicalized youth of the Communist Party in the pre-independence era and continued the same vigour and strength in the post independent period. She has a strong mind and will power to survive any situation.

Nani Teacher (1927-2005)

Another important personality who had contributed much towards the teachers' movement was Nani Teacher. She entered the public life of North Malabar through the Communist Party. She followed P. Yesoda in entering the field along with C.V. Madhavi Teacher and Upperi Janaki teacher. She was inspired by the activities of Pacheni Manikyam who bravely fed the communists who lived under ground.³¹

Nani teacher was invited to the *Mahila Samajam* by Maikkil Kunhikannan, a strong communist leader. She joined the *Balasangham* along

²⁹ K.Balakrishnan, Chatayan, *Poralium Theraliyum*, (Mal.), Trivandrum, 2000, p. 45.

³⁰ K.K.Kunhanandan Nambiar, cited in *Kandakkai smaranika*, op.cit., p. 55.

³¹ A.V Anilkumar, "Ayithakutti paricherinja jeevithasamarangal" in *Desabimani weekly*, 18 August 2002, p. 19.

with her brother Balan. The leaders of *Balasangham* were E.K. Nayanar, K.A. Keraleeyan and K.Panikkar. She inspired and organized girls in to the *Balasangham*. Nani Teacher was influenced by the women participation in the liberation struggles through out the world and the activities of the strong revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh. She considered 'mother' in the work of Maxim Gorkey as her own mother and some times as herself.³²

Nani Teacher took teachers training in 1946. The upper classes of the society were not ready to accept the rise of Nani as a teacher in the Government Service and her service in the political activities. In 1948 following the Calcutta Thesis she was arrested by the Police along with her brother Balan and her uncle Chinda Peruvannan.³³

She worked much for the propagation of Desabhimani by organizing girls of different castes and she conducted cultural programmes. She often worked to fix notices and postures for the party. She worked a lot to help the labourers during the Aron Mill Strike.³⁴ The leaders of the strike were K.P.R.Gopalan, Kanthalott Kunhambu, E.K.Nayanar, etc. P.Krishna Pillai and A.K.Gopalan. visited the place frequently and gave instructions for the success of the strike. The peasants and the youth and the teachers came forward to help the labourers who were on strike. Women under the leader

³² Streepadavi, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

³³ A.V.Anilkumar, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

³⁴ Personal interview with P.Mohandas, Son of P.Nani Teacher at his residence, Morazha on 17 April 2006.

ship of Nani Teacher protested the arrest and imprisonment of communist leaders like A.K.Gopalan.³⁵

The inter caste marriage of Nani Teacher with C.H. Narayanan Master was discussed in that period. Even the progressive thinkers of the society were not ready to accept the marriage between the 'high caste' Narayanan Nambiar with Nani Teacher who belonged to a 'low caste' in the society. He was born in a high family but lived among the down trodden section of the society.³⁶ The marriage was solemnised with the support of the Party leaders like K.P.R. Gopalan and M.P. Narayanan Nambiar The Teachers' Union strongly supported the marriage. This marriage was considered as a model for social progress and many others followed suit.³⁷

Nani teacher led the activities of the women organizations. In this, she was helped by P.Leela, U. Janaki Teacher, Kottodi Janaki Teacher, P.Kalyani, L.T. Cheriakutty, C.V. Madhavi teacher etc. She worked with the Kalliasseri Mahila Samajam for a long period. In the 1950's she worked with the Ozhakrom Mahila Samajam. After that she became the president of the Morazha Mahila Samajam. In all these capacities she worked for the

³⁵P.Mohandas, "Morazha", in *communist party souvenir, op.cit.*, p. 51. Since 1930 A.K.G. had good relationship with Mrs. & Mr. Samuel Aron and they were supporting his public activities. But later Samuel Aron became the enemy of C.S.P. and later the communist party. See A.K.G, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*, (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1980, p. 46.

³⁶ Narayanan Nambiar was born in 1923 in Chenicheri House, Morazha. His father was Kanoth Chathu Nambiar and mother was Kunhatiyamma. He came to the political activities through the *Balasangham*. He attended the meeting of the Chirakkal Congress Committee and became a member of the Congress Committee at Anchampeedika before reaching eighteen. Personal interview with P.Mohandas, *op.cit.*

³⁷ *Kalliasseriude innalekal, op.cit.*, p. 68.

development of the society through various ways under the banner of the Communist Party.

Nani Teacher served the society through the Balasangham in the beginning of her public life. She was attracted to the activities of the period under the aegis of the Communist Party. In spite of many protests she survived the situation during that period. For that she had to fight against the orthodoxy on the one side and on the other she had to fight against the imperial-land lord alliance. She worked with the Teachers' Union, Women Organizations and the Communist Party and dedicated her life to the same.

K. KallianiAmma

Another important woman personality who entered the public life of North Malabar was K. Kalliani Amma. She became a teacher in 1929 and started her activities towards the national movement. She was inspired by Moyarath Sankaran and K.P.K. Krishnan master, her own brother. She took Communist Party membership in 1944.³⁸ She was busily involved in teaching as well as in organizing women. She was married to T.V. Achuthan Nair, a communist leader. Her area of activity was Panur where the gunda politics was high.

She continued her public life activities after independence by engaging in the Teachers' Movement and Women Organization through the Communist

³⁸ Communist party souvenir, p. 213.

Party. During the emergency period she was in the forefront in organizing the people against the repressive measures of the Congress party. She worked in the district committee of the Communist Party (Marxist) in Kannur and had a leading role in the Mahila Sangham at the state level.³⁹

V. P. Devaki Teacher

V. P. Devaki teacher who belonged to the famous V.P. family was another important personality of this period. She served a lot through the Teachers' Movement and Women Organization under the banner of the Communist Party. She became a communist in the presence of P. Krishna Pillai.⁴⁰ She entered the political life during the nationalist movement. She was a member of the working committee of North Malabar Congress committee for a long period. She was married to K.K. Nair who was very active in political and literary fields.

After becoming a communist, she attended a meeting held at the house of Aryapallam in Cherupulasseri. It was in that meeting that the All Malabar Mahila Samajam was formed. O. T. Sarada Krishnan was the president and V.P. Devaki Amma its first secretary. Her first speech as the secretary was well appreciated by the Mathrubhumi Daily.⁴¹ Being the founding leader of

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.217.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

the women organization she functioned as the secretary of the Mahila Federation for a long period.

K. Janaki Teacher (1925-2003)

K. Janaki teacher entered the public life of North Malabar at a time when the society demanded involvement and participation of women. She belonged to a family in Kayaralam which was politically conscious. Her parents were Kandan Sreedevi and Kavil Raman.⁴² Her Uncle Kandan Kunhiraman fought against landlordism and imperialism. She studied up to fifth standard in the Kayaralam School. After that she joined Mayyil School. As a student itself, she was very active. Under her leadership a protest was made against a teacher who punished a student mercilessly. This was the first step of Janaki towards entering the public life. She passed from the Mayyil School in 1941. She participated in the first Communist Party meeting held in Calicut. She was accompanied by Meenakshi, E.P.Kalliani, etc. She was very active in women organizations from 1942 itself. She worked in the mahila sangham with P.C.Karthiayanikuttyamma in the Irikkur firca. Meanwhile she met Raghavan Master, the party secretary of Irikkur, whom she married in 1943. After marriage she stayed in Payyavur.

K. Janaki teacher was very active in the Teachers' Movement and organizing women. She made them participate in public meetings. Besides

⁴² Personal interview with Smt.Kairali, Daughter of K.Janaki Teacher at her residence, Bekkalam on 31 July 2007.

she worked much to create awareness among women regarding political and social conditions of the society. Above all, she wanted to make women self-reliant and strong.⁴³ In 1943 P.C.Joshi led a Malabar journey after the Communist Party conference at Calicut on 22 March. The aim of the journey was to make the women of the villages politically conscious because they were not fully aware of the concepts of the Communist Party and the Karshaka sangham and their line of action. They were received at many points like Malappattam, Blathur, etc. Janaki teacher accompanied that group and she considered that as an unforgettable experience. She was inspired to join Communist Party mainly due to the speech made by P.C.Joshi.⁴⁴

K. Janaki teacher was noted for singing party songs in the party meetings. In 1944 a Karshaka sangam meeting was held at Puthiyatheru, Kannur. A drama was presented by women and Janaki teacher appeared as a man in that drama.⁴⁵ When the Cholera epidemic broke out in Kannur, K.A.Keraleeyan organized an art troop in order to raise fund to undertake relief measures. Janaki sang folk songs composed by Keraleeyan, collected money and gave them to the affected people.⁴⁶

She became a teacher in the Ellerinji School in Kavumbayi when Raghavan master went underground after the Kavumbayi *Samaram* in 1946.

⁴³ K.P.Juli, "Ormakalil irambunna samarakalam" in *Stree Sabdam*, May 2003.

⁴⁴ A.V.Anil Kumar, "Swatantryathinte Pennakangal", in *Desabhimani* weekly October 2002, pp. 31-35.

⁴⁵ Personal interview, *op.cit.*

⁴⁶ K.P.Juli, *op.cit.*

While working in the Ellerinji School the M.S.P. searched, threatened and arrested the suspected communist teachers of the school and the school was burnt. She lost her certificate.⁴⁷ During the reign of terror of 1948 the notorious police oppressor Ray took her to the Kayaralam Police camp and asked her not to go for public activities and to stop politics. Further she was asked to divorce her husband. When she was not ready to oblige the police he called her a prostitute and uttered harsh words.⁴⁸

In 1949 Janaki Teacher joined the Mayyil School. The police atrocities were continued there also. She was accused of serving as a political activist, of being the wife of a communist leader etc. In 1950 her certificate was banned and she was dismissed from job. During this period, she lived by doing manual labour. It was only after four years that she could retrieve the certificate and rejoin the school. She survived all the hurdles and after sometime she joined the Parassini School. Later she became a teacher in the Morazha G.L.P. School in 1957.

Janaki teacher gave leadership to educate women. She made them read news papers and taught them politics. She fought for the rights of the peasant women. She organized the peasant women of the area and took them to the Illam of the Kayaralam Nambuthiri⁴⁹ and asked him to increase their wages.

⁴⁷ Communist souvenir, p. 222.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁹ A.V.Anilkumar, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

She propagated ideas to women through singing the songs of K.A.Karaleeyan. She was one of the pioneering organizers of the mahila federation. She was the vice president of the Mahila Association of the Thaliparamba area.⁵⁰

Janaki teacher entered the public life of North Malabar on the eve of the Indian Independence and she continued to be very active in the post Independent period till her death. She was a model communist⁵¹ who had contributed a lot to the Teachers' Movement and development of women through organization.

Thus the role of P.Yesoda teacher, Nani teacher, K.Kalliani teacher, V.P. Devaki teacher and K. Janaki teacher was great in the consolidation of the Teachers' Movement in North Malabar. Among them P. Yesoda teacher is the precursor. The teachers worked in this period had multifaceted roles to perform. Their participation was prominent in the peasant movements of the period.

Peasant Movements

The event which marked a turning point in the political life history of North Malabar was the formation of the Malabar unit of the All India Congress Socialist Party.⁵² The chief agenda of the C.S.P. at that time was to

⁵⁰ Personal interview, *op.cit.*

⁵¹ P.K.Sreemathi Teacher, "Janaki Teachr Ini ormakalil" in *Stree sabdam*, 12 Oct 2003.

⁵² The AICSP was formed under the leader ship of Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Minoo Masan in October, 1934. With this the socialist ideologies began to

assist the workers and peasants and uniting them under a single banner. It also aimed at leading them to struggle against the feudal form of Government. After forming a unit of the C.S.P.,⁵³ K.A.Keraleeyan, a young political activist was deputed to form an organization for the peasants. In a conference held in Calicut in 1935 under the aegis of the C.S.P. Keraleeyan presented a comprehensive programme of work which was approved by all workers. It was aimed at mobilizing the youth and to bring about worker-peasant alliance which would go a long way in mobilizing the poor villagers against the British.

The *karshaka sangham* was first formed in Kerala at Naniyur near Parssini Matapura in July 1935. Vishnu Bharatheeyan was its president and K. A. Keraleeyan its secretary.⁵⁴ The Naniyur Karshaka Sangham conference was presided over by barrister A.K.Pillai. The political mobilization of the peasantry closely involved the mobilization of the peasant women as well. Till 1930s rural women of North Malabar were unaware of the political movements or the peasant movements which sprang up then. The Karshaka sangham worked a lot to convince women about their rights to be achieved by fighting against landlordism and imperialism.⁵⁵ Thus the advancement of the

spread all over India rapidly. Bipan Chandra, et.al., *India's struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 304.

⁵³ Andalatt, (ed.), *Saghakkale Munnottu*, (Mal.), 1978, p. 509.

⁵⁴ K.Balakrishnan, *Chatayan; Poraliyum Theraliyum* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 2000, p. 40.

⁵⁵ The people of North Malabar suffered much under the yoke of land lords who exploited the peasants through various means. The landlords and the intermediaries extracted the

Karshaka Sangham facilitated the participation of women in the national movement. The peasant struggles started in North Malabar after 1935 and women became a part and parcel of the movements in various areas. In this section the role played by women of the Irikkur firca, Karivellur and Parassinikadavu are taken for discussion.

Irikkur Firca and Women Perspective

The Irikkur firca was an area which saw the peasant struggles in its severe form. The women of Irikkur firca had contributed much to the society during the struggle against imperialism and landlordism.⁵⁶ They left indelible imprint in the history of struggle for rights. They could recognize Red Flag as an important weapon as their sickle.⁵⁷ They entered public life of North Malabar through the *Karshaka Sangham* and the communist movement. Once they appeared in the public life they never went back till the victory of their mission.

Many of the peasant women were not formally educated but still they could understand the call of the day and they acted accordingly. When the communist volunteers were arrested in Kuyiloor, women jumped into the forefront and tried to stop them from being taken away. They did not

peasants by illegal levies. K.A.Keraliyan, "Kodakkatte Krishikkar" in *Prbhatam* 8 August, 1938, p. 11.

⁵⁶ A.Padmanabhan and Kavumbayi Narayanan, *Kavumbayi Karshika Kalapam* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1996, p.59.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

withdraw even when the police lathicharged and fired shots in order to frighten them.⁵⁸ Such instances became very common in many areas where the struggles occurred. Among the women of Irikkur firca who worked with men in every stage of peasant struggle Cheriyanamma, P.K.Kunhakkamma, Ummanamma, A.V.Kalliani, Chappayil Kalliani and Janaki teacher were in the forefront. Of these the contributions of Cheriyanamma and P.K.Kunhakkamma are taken into consideration in the present study. They never kept away from the activities of the men volunteers and participated in every struggle actively.

Cheriyamma

The role of Cheriyanamma was great in strengthening the peasant movement and the Communist Party in the old Chirakkal Taluk.⁵⁹ She used to earn her livelihood from the *jenmi's* house as a servant. But she later became active in anti-landlord movement in North Malabar.⁶⁰

Cheriyamma was born in a very poor peasant family in Nedungom village. Traditionally, her family served the house of the *jenmi*, Karakkattidam Nayanar. When she was grown up she also followed the same job in the *jenmi's* house. Besides, she was in charge of collecting milk and curd from the houses of the tenants and bring the same to the *jenmi's* house

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Communist Party 50th year Souvenir 1989-1990, p.133.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

daily.⁶¹ The tenants of the period took cows from the *jenmi* on lease for one year and it was their duty to supply free milk and curd to the *jenmi*.

Cheriyamma used to start her daily routine in the early morning, and worked till the evening in the house of *jenmi*.⁶² Meanwhile the peasant movement was growing up in North Malabar and started its resistance movements against the corrupt landlordism. The *karshaka sangham* decided to terminate slavery and the practice of collecting undue levies by the landlords from the tenants. This had created a new awakening in the minds of the peasants. They turned back the intermediaries who came to collect levies without giving the same. The *karshaka sangham* volunteers met those who were doing servitude. Likewise they met Cheriyamma and her family members who served the *jenmi*. However, at that time, she and her family members could not understand the role of *karshaka sangham* and its activities for the emancipation of the peasants. Further, they were not bold enough to break the chains of tradition. The *karshaka sangham* made repeated efforts in vain.⁶³

When Cheriyamma hesitated to obey the orders of the *karshaka sangham*, one day the *karshaka sangham* activists stopped her on her way to

⁶¹ Malappattam Prabhakaran, "I Ammaye Ariyumo", *Desabhimani*, February, 16-22, 1986 p. 24.

⁶² Personal interview with Pulkool Madhavi at her residence, Malappattam, 1 August, 2007. She is the wife of Pulkool Krishnan, a peasant activist who participated in the Malappattam Nelleduppu Samaram and was arrested and imprisoned. During this period she suffered a lot under the M.S.P.-gunda combine.

⁶³ Malappattam Prabhakaran, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

the *jenmi*'s house and destroyed the curd pot she carried. The news of this incident spread like wild fire. The *jenmi* resolved to take revenge against the offenders. He filed a fake case against sixteen communists for manhandling.⁶⁴

This incident awakened Cheriyanamma and she thought about her choices-continue her life of servitude or liberate herself. Finally she decided to accept the latter choice and to break the chains of feudal tradition.⁶⁵ She gradually detached from the *jenmi*'s slavery. Meanwhile Kotta Krishnan, the cattle boy of the *jenmi* left the job and joined the *karshaka sangham*. This also inspired her to join the movement. Naturally the *jenmi* could not tolerate such 'high handedness' and he did not want to spare her.

By that time the communist movement became very strong in North Malabar under the efficient leadership of K.P.R. Gopalan, K.A.Keraleeyan, M.C.Kunhikannan, Subramania Shenai etc. Cheriyanamma joined the communist party and worked for the party through the *karshaka sangham*. She went from house to house and forced women to come out 'from the kitchen to the political arena' and her life became a restless one.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ A.Padmanabhan and Kavumbayi Narayanan,*op.cit.*, p. 25.

⁶⁵ Malappattam Prabhakaran, *op.cit.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Cheriyamma has done a lot during the Kavumbayi peasant struggle which was occurred on 30 December 1946. During the ‘Punamkothu’⁶⁷ struggle she supplied food to the communist volunteers who went underground and protected them from police. In the Kavumbayi struggle five communists were martyred and Cheriyamma suffered a lot in the repression which followed. The M.S.P. visited Cheriyamma’s house daily asking ‘where is K.P.R. whom you are protecting?’ and used to beat her mercilessly.⁶⁸

Following the Kavumabayi struggle the communists conducted processions in Malabar-demanding the termination of the MSP-gunda repressive measures, to form a mass movement which was supporting the Communist Party and the Karshaka sangham. The processions also aimed at collecting funds for protecting the helpless family members of the martyrs of the struggle. K.P.R.Gopalan and Cheriyamma gave leadership to the procession in south Malabar while M.C.Kunhikannan and K.A.Keraleeyan led the procession in North Malabar.⁶⁹ During the procession the speech made by Cheriyamma describing her bitter experience was moving and could win the support of the audience. Moreover the procession programme could direct the audience towards the communist ideologies to a large extent.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Cheriyamma was involved in every activity of the peasant movement in the society. She had donated one acre land, her only possession, to the movement for establishing a school at Ellerinji. Till then, there was only an elementary school at Ellerinji which was managed by the Karakkattidam jenmi,⁷¹ where the children of *karshaka sangham* and Communist Party members studied. Fearing the spread of leftist ideas through education, the *jenmi* prohibited the children of the *karshaka sangham* and Communist Party members from seeking admission in his school. As against this a *Janakiya* school was founded at the initiative of the *karshaka sangham*.⁷² The *jenmi* did not spare that school also. By using the M.S.P. and the *gundas*, he destroyed the *Janakiya* School. The *karshaka sangham* activists did not give up and strenuously made efforts to re-construct the school. They constructed a school in the land donated by Cheriyamma.

Cheriyamma became a model activist and a good public speaker of the party.⁷³ In connection with the 1952 election programme, the Malabar rally of the Communist Party was held at Kozhikode beach. Cheriyamma was one among the speakers who included A.K.Gopalan, E.M.S.Nambuthiripad, Jyothi Basu etc.⁷⁴ On that occasion Cheriyamma made a speech for forty five

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² A.Padmanabhan and Kavumbayi Narayanan, *op.cit.*, p.58.

⁷³ Malappattam Prabhakaran, *op.cit.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

minutes. The speech was exciting and inspiring and the audience listened attentively.

In 1957 general election the Communist Party came out victorious and a ministry was formed with E.M.S. Nambuthiripad as the Chief Minister. Hearing the swearing-in-ceremony of the communist Government on 5 April 1957 she responded with joy to M.C.Kunhikannan, saying “my life is fulfilled, M.C.”⁷⁵ She expired on 28 November 1957.

Cheriyamma’s contribution to the peasantry and to the Communist Party is well acknowledged and a memorial for her called *Cheriyamma smaraka vayanasala* was constructed near Nedungom high school in Payyavur Road. This is unique in many ways. First of all, there is no such memorial dedicated to woman elsewhere in Malabar. Again the memorial is a *Vayanasala*,⁷⁶ a place where one could acquire knowledge. It is an apt tribute to a person who had donated her land for starting a school for the children of poor peasants.

P.K.Kunhakkamma (1881-1961)

P.K.Kunhakkamma is another ‘peasant mother’ who worked in the forefront for the consolidation of the communist movement and karshaka sangham in the Kandakkai area, North Malabar. She was born in Periyaniyan

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Prakash Karat, “Peasant movement and Malabar,” in *Social Scientist* Vol.15 No.2, New Delhi, 1976, p. 34.

Kannothe house, Velloore in 1881.⁷⁷ She was married to Kuttiatt Keloth Keppu Nambiar, Kandakkai. After marriage she lived in Kandakkai and had four sons. With the death of her husband in the end of 1930's she was asked by her husband's people to go back to Velloore. But Kunhakkamma was not willing to do so. She decided to stay back in Kandakkai with the support of the Congress party which was flourishing there. Later when the Communist Party was formed she joined the party in 1942-43.

As a communist worker, she was very active during the volunteer camp conducted by the Communist Party in 1943 at Sree Jataveta Guru Memorial Vayanasala⁷⁸ at Kandakkai.⁷⁹ Meanwhile the *Karshaka sangham* and the Communist Party became very strong in the Kandakkai area. This was not acceptable to E.P.Govindan Nambiar, the *Adhikari*⁸⁰ of the Kandakkai area who was also a relative of Kunhakkamma.⁸¹ She raised her voice against the corrupt policies of the *Adhikari* of Karakkattitam Nayanar, the *jenmi*.

⁷⁷ Personal Interview with C.Damodaran at his residence, Mayyil on 31 July 2007. He is the grandson of P.K.Kunhakkamma.

⁷⁸ Sree Jataveta Guru Memorial Vayanasala was established in 1938 at Kandakkai. This Vayanasala was the 'nerve centre' of the communist-karshakasangham activities at Kandakkai. During the Second World War, relief measures were undertaken under the auspices of the vayanasala. In 1940 this was destroyed by the landlordism. It was again burnt during the Kandakkai struggles by the MSP gunda alliance. In 1952 the jail released leaders re-constructed the vayanasala. In 1973 it was attacked again during the *Michabhoomi samram*. This was repeated during the emergency in 1975. Even after so many attacks and destructions the vayanasala still exist in the centre of Kodakkad field Kandakkai even now and it is very active in the social development programmes.

⁷⁹ *Kandakkai Smaranika* (Mal.), 1996, p. 76.

⁸⁰ *Adhikari* is the term for village head man

⁸¹ Communist party 50th year souvenir 1989-90, p.133.

Later she enrolled her eldest son Kunhappa Nambiar as a volunteer of the *Karshaka Sangham*.

Since Kunhakkamma had no house of her own she had to shift her residence from place to place. She utilized this opportunity to spread the ideologies of the *karshaka sangham* among women of the neighbourhood. With this she could create a positive attitude in the minds of women towards karshaka sangham. All these enraged the *Adhikari* E.P. Govindan Nambiar and he decided to stop such activities at any cost. He prohibited the peasants from plucking ‘*neipullu*’⁸² used for thatching roofs of their houses, a practice which was traditionally allowed. The *karshaka sangham* then decided to pluck the grass from the barren land and the peasants marched to Kandakkai on 19 December 1946. This is known as *Pullupari Samaram*. It was a part of implementing the decisions taken in the conference held in Calicut.⁸³ Disregarding the prohibition of the *Adhikari*, the peasants including women and children, plucked the grass and carried it to their homes. In this struggle, women were led by Kunkakkamma.

The news of the *Pullupari Samaram* spread like wild fire in the Irikkur Firca and created much excitement in Kandakkai and Kayaralam areas. As expected, on the very next day itself the M.S.P arrived at Kandakkai. Two

⁸² Smaranika, op.cit.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

M.S.P. camps were setup at Kandakkai at the request of the *Adhikari*. The M.S.P. brutally assaulted the peasants and raided their houses.

In 1947 the same situation was repeated during the '*Vilakoithu samaram*' in which the peasants reaped the harvest which was sown by them. The *Adhikari* declared that he would not permit the *karshaka sangham* and the Communist Party to work in Kandakkai village. He wanted to confiscate the cultivable land from peasants. He prohibited Urada Kannan Nair and V.V.Chandukutty Nambiar from harvesting, because they belonged to the *karshaka sangham*. Following this, the *karshaka sangham* of the Kayaralam area met at Mayyil Elementary school and the meeting decided "to reap the harvest by the persons who sowed it and those who protest would not set free."⁸⁴ The peasants from various parts of Irikkur Firca went to Kandakkai. On 13 February 1947, the *karshaka sangham* announced through megaphone "the peasants who showed the seeds will reap the harvest tomorrow." On 14 February 1947, dozens of men and women appeared in the Kottayatt paddy field, Kandakkai. By that time, the M.S.P. asked them to leave the place. But that was ignored by the peasants. They began to reap the harvest and carry it to their own courtyard under the instruction of the *karshaka sangham* leaders.

⁸⁴ K.Balakrishnan, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-17.

The M.S.P. orders to return the paddy bundles to the field were ignored by women with sarcastic comments.⁸⁵

Following the *Vilakoithu samaram*, the *jenmi* made arrangements to set up two M.S.P. camps one at Parayil house, Velam and the other at the house of Kottayatt *jenmi*. The M.S.P. conducted house raids and hunted the communists. They destroyed the utensils in the houses, burnt the houses etc. It was at this juncture that the revolutionary in Kunhakkamma was awakened. She took the leadership and came to the forefront of the peasant struggle. In these two incidents the leader and humanist in Kunhakkamma acted expediently. She helped the families who suffered due to police atrocities.⁸⁶ Women under her leadership maintained the communication network among the *karshaka sangham* activists and the communists who went underground. The role of women under the leadership of Kunhakkamma was reported and appreciated by P.Yesoda, the first woman reporter of *Desabhimani*.⁸⁷

Kunkakkamma, a middle aged woman of sixty five years took leadership in organizing women to protest against the police atrocities and house raids. During raids the house hold items were destroyed which included earthen pots and vessels. Thirteen women under the leadership of Kunhakkamma carried the broken vessels by head and marched to *jenmi's*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Smaranika, *op.cit.*

⁸⁷ *Desabhimani*, dated 8 April, 1947.

house on 22 February 1947 and heaped the broken items in the court yard of *jenmi's* house. This incident is known in history as the '*Kalamkettu samaram*.'⁸⁸ This was the first instance of such a protest by women in the history of peasant struggle. When she was scolded by the *jenmi*, she retorted, "You demon, you have destroyed the land, houses and the charity of women. If you touch us again....."⁸⁹ Kunhakkamma was arrested, beaten brutally and was sent to Kannur jail.⁹⁰ She remained there till 5 April 1947. She suffered a lot in the lockup.⁹¹

Before sending to jail the police told Kunhakkamma that if she withdrew her membership from the Communist Party she would be released immediately. She refused and retorted, 'Even the *machipatta* in my compound is a communist.'⁹² Such was the courage and honesty shown by Kunhakkamma even when her life was in danger. At this she was sent to jail. She was not even permitted to take an extra dress to change her clothes.⁹³ The strong stand taken by Kunhakkamma led to much excitement and inspiration in the minds of the people.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Smaranika, *op.cit.*, p.

⁸⁹ Malappattam Prabhakaran, "Kalamkettu samarathinte veerasmarana" in *Desabhimani* weekend edition, 11 March, 2007.

⁹⁰ *Desabhimani*, 7 April, 1947.

⁹¹ A.K.Gopalan, *EnteJeevithakadha*, Autobiography, (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1980, p. 282.

⁹² Personal interview with C.Damodaran, *op.cit.*, *Machipatta* is the local name for the leaf of Areacanut tree.

⁹³ *Desabhimani*, 22 February, 1947.

⁹⁴ Personal interview with C.Damodaran, *op.cit.*

Following the *Kalamkettu Samaram* the police –*gunda* alliance spread fear and atrocities through out the Kandakkai area. Since Kunhakkamma was responsible for organizing the struggle her family became the target of the police.⁹⁵ The police took her son Kunhappa Nambiar to the Velam camp and about 30 police men beaten him very brutally. The same was repeated in the Kottayatt camp also. At every blow the M.S.P asked him to say “Down, down, Communist Party”, on each occasion he said “*undavum, undavum Communist Party.*”⁹⁶ When this was questioned by the police, the spectators gave a false explanation that it was due to his ignorance of the English language.⁹⁷ The incident still excites and inspires even the present generation of the Kandakkai area.⁹⁸

Even after her release from imprisonment, Kunhakkamma continued her work for the Communist Party and the *Karshaka sangham*. In 1948 the Communist Party was banned after the Calcutta Thesis. This was continued till 1950. During this period the communist volunteers, supporters and their family members faced a very critical situation. Many communists went underground.⁹⁹ During this time Kunhakkamma took initiative to help the families of the communists who went underground.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Smaranika, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

⁹⁶ Communist party will be formed

⁹⁷ Personal interview, *op.cit.*

⁹⁸ Smaranika, *op.cit.*

⁹⁹ For details see E.K.Nayanar, *Olivile Ormakal* (Mal.), Trivandrum 1994.

¹⁰⁰ Smaranika, *op.cit.*

In 1951, the communist leaders like K.P.R. Gopalan, A.K.Gopalan., etc. were released. Before 1952 election, they organized processions throughout the length and breadth of Malabar and explained the police atrocities and the mischievous policies adopted by the Government and landlords. In this Kunhakkamma accompanied A.K.Gopalan. throughout North Malabar and explained to the people about the inhuman activities unleashed by the police from her own experience. Towards the later years of her life, she shifted to Velloore, her native place and died there in 1961.¹⁰¹

The role of Kunhakkamma was great in opposing corrupt practices of landlordism in North Malabar. She entered public life through the *Karshaka sangham* and the Communist Party and later participated actively in the *Pullupari Samaram*, the *Vilakoithu Samaram* and the *Kalamkettu Samaram*.

The participation of women during the peasant struggles in Irikkur firca was considerable and the leaders who led women in the struggles were Cheriyyamma and P.K. Kunhakkamma. Women under their leadership participated in each and every peasant struggle of the period directly. Besides they formed a network of communication by passing messages among the peasant activists and the communists while they lived underground and fed them even at the risk of their lives.

¹⁰¹ Souvenir, *op.cit.*

Karivellur Samaram and women perspective

Militant peasant movements in North Malabar occurred on the eve of the withdrawal of the British from India. The Movement incorporated throughout its progression an organized as well as spontaneous women's participation. A typical example of such participation could be seen in the Karivellur *Samaram* which occurred on 20 December 1946. The struggle took place under the leadership of A.V Kunhambu.¹⁰² When the struggle was suppressed by the *jenmi*-Imperial alliance, the leaders went underground to evade the police.

In this critical situation, the women of the area, became very active and saved the situation in an expedient manner. Till the 1940's the peasant women of the village were not much aware of the concepts of the Communist Party and Karshaka Sangham. When the male activists went underground they supplied them food in the forest and maintained the communication network for them. Important and urgent messages were always communicated through women to evade the vigilant eyes of the police. There were many mothers who fought through the Karivellur *Samaram* and left an indelible imprint in the history of the peasant struggle and the Communist Party of North Malabar. The prominent among them were K. Devayani, Kunnummal Sreedevi Amma, Neeliyam Veettil Cheriyaamma, Thekumbadan Madhavi,

¹⁰² For details see K.K.N.Kurup, *Keralathile Karshaka Samarangal :1946-1952*, (Mal.), Kottayam.

Chiriyamma, Kizhakke Veettil Lakhshmi Amma, Thotton Valapil Chiriyamma, Pariyarathu Narayani Amma etc.¹⁰³

K. Devayani [1922-1999]

K. Devayani was an important woman personality who worked and suffered a lot for the emancipation of the working class. She entered the public life of Malabar after A.V. Kunhambu married her in 1943. Even before that, she was associated with labour movements in her native place, Ambalapuzha. Her struggle for the protection of the poor peasants and workers attracted her to the Communist Party.¹⁰⁴

K. Devayani was born in 1922 in Kannittayil House in Ambalapuzha as the daughter of Sankaran and Pappiyamma. She had her education at Paruthikkad Kudipalli Koodam, Punnapra Karinjeerayil School and Punnapra B.E.M.School. She had to put an end to her studies because her parents did not like to send girls to distant places to study. Meanwhile she took an interest in public activities and she utilized the time for that.¹⁰⁵

K. Devayani entered public life through the Atma Vidya Sangham and was inspired by her brother who was a full time worker of the same. The activities of the Atma Vidya Sangham much progressed under the leadership

¹⁰³ Personal Interview with K.Jayadevan at his residence, Karivellur on 20 December, 2006.

¹⁰⁴ J.Devika, (ed.), *Anarasu Nattile Kazhchakal*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 2006.

¹⁰⁵ K.Devayani, *Chorayum Kanneerum Nananja Vazhikal*, (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1983, p. 14.

of Aryabhata Swami, a disciple of Vagbhatananda Guru. The first programme she attended was the conference of the women wing of Atma vidya Sangham of Punnapra. The conference was presided over by Muthukulam Parvathi Amma. Devayani sang the prayer song. It was the first time that she faced a public gathering. Soon she became a strong worker of the Atma Vidya Sangham and became the secretary of the women's wing. She liked Malayalam poems and read the poems *Chandalabhikshuki*, *Duravasta*, *Karuna*, *Veenapoovu*, *Chinta vishtayaya Sita*, etc. written by Kumaran Asan. She taught them to other women also. Her activities in the Atma Vidya Sangham helped her to develop an attitude against the evils of caste system.¹⁰⁶ In many meetings, she made speeches and the sight of a little girl wearing skirt and blouse, making powerful speech for social equality and against caste discrimination amazed the public.

Devayani later became the secretary of women's wing of Atma Vidya Sangham, Ambalapuzha Coir worker's Union Secretary, Kalarkad Peasant Labourers' Union Secretary, and Secretary of the Ambalapuzha Taluk Mahila Sangham. She learnt the first lessons of communism from P. Krishna Pillai. He advised Devayani to co-ordinate the activities of Atma Vidya Sangham, Karshaka Sangham and coir workers union with political activities.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

She attended the first training camp of the Communist Party for women conducted from 1 November 1942 at Puthiyara in Kozhikode.¹⁰⁷ Ninety eight women attended the camp including P. Yesoda and P.C. Karthiayani Kutty Amma from Kannur and Aryapallam from Palghat. Devayani's political faith was strengthened in that camp. After the camp, she became a fulltime worker of the Communist Party along with her classmate V.S. Achyuthanandan.¹⁰⁸

She was one of the leaders who started the Mahila wing of the Communist Party, the other leaders being Thankamma, wife of P.Krishna Pillai, Kalikutty Asatty and Ammini.¹⁰⁹ Devayani married A.V. Kunhambu on 23 June 1943 in a study class consisting of seventy six members in Alappuzha. The marriage was arranged under the leadership of K.C. George.¹¹⁰ At that time A.V.Kunhambu was living underground.

After marriage, Devayani came to Calicut to continue activities of the Mahila Sangham. At that time a 'Commune' functioned at Puthiyara. She worked in the 'commune' along with E.M.S. Nambuthiripad., Arya Antarjanam, Unni Raja, M.S. Devadas, C.M. Kunhiraman Nair, I.C.P. Nambuthiri, his wife Aryapallam, I.C.Priyadatta, O.M.Anujan, Arumukhan,

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁸ Karivellur Samaram 60th Anniversary Smaranika, (Mal.), Kannur, 2006, pp. 190-191.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Communist party 50th Anniversary Souvenir, (Mal.), 1989-1990, p. 221.

Krishnapillai, Thankamma, and P.R. Nambiar.¹¹¹ She learnt the discipline to be observed by a communist worker from the life in the 'Commune'. She convened meetings of the Mahila Sangham, issued membership, collected funds and made speeches in the functions where the people assembled. Frequently she collected money by singing songs. She attended marriages, blessed the couple and along with that conducted party propaganda work. She considered, being a communist as the most prestigious thing in the world.¹¹² She met her husband in the shelters occasionally and secretly.

In 1946 A.V. Kunhambu took her to Karivellur. She suffered a lot because they had no food to eat and no home of their own to stay.¹¹³ At Karivellur she became a full time worker of the *Karshaka Sangham*. While she was at home she taught the children of the neighbourhood to read and write. Since it was the war period there was acute food scarcity. In such a situation *Karshaka Sangham* under the leadership of A.V. Kunhambu met Rama Varma of Chirakkal Kovilakam who was the *jenmi* of the area.¹¹⁴ They asked the *jenmi* to sell the paddy collected as dues from the tenants to the people at fixed rate through ration shops. When this was not agreed by the Raja the *Karshaka Sangham* decided to stop the collection of dues by the agents of the *jenmi* and this was successful. They decided to stop the carrying

¹¹¹ Personal Interview with I.C.Priyadatta at her residence Calicut on 27 March 2007. I.C.Priyadatta was a communist activist who rendered a lot towards the accomplishment of communist ideologies.

¹¹² K.Devayani, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

¹¹³ Communist party souvenir, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁴ K.Devayani, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

of paddy from the *Kalappura* of the Chiakkal Kovilakam at Kuniyan on 20 December 1946.¹¹⁵ But the *jenmi* determined to transport paddy with the M.S.P. gunda support. The friction between the *Karshaka Sangham* and the *jenmi* led to bloodshed and ended in the suppression of the *Karshaka Sangham*.

Following the Kuniyan incident the M.S.P - *gunda* alliance started 'reign of terror' in which the family members of the communists of Karivellur suffered a lot. K. Devayani, being the wife of A. V. Kunhambu was the worst sufferer of the incident. She was then pregnant and suffered a lot due to the repressive measures of the police. When she felt that it was not safe to live alone in the house she lived secretly in the graveyard of the Harijans at Paliyeri Kovval in the day time.¹¹⁶ Being pregnant added to her misery. When she was fed up with these she took asylum in the house of Payyanadan Yesoda teacher at Keecheri.¹¹⁷ She could face these tribulations because of the feeling that everything she suffered was aimed at the emancipation of the poor people suffering from exploitation.

Devayani continued her struggle even after the Kuniyan incident. In 1948 the Communist Party was banned. During this period also A.V.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Communist party souvenir, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁷ K.Devayani, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

Kunhambu lived underground and she suffered a lot. Within this period her daughter Radhamani died due to illness and poverty.¹¹⁸

In the 1950's she kept away from the activities of the Mahila Sangh. This was done in order to bring up her children.¹¹⁹ In 1964 she returned to the women's wing activities. In that year the Payannur Mahila Federation was formed with K. Devayani as its president and V.V.Sarojini as secretary.¹²⁰ Devayani became the founding member of Kerala Mahila Federation which spread all over Kerala by 1970's.¹²¹ She became the president of the Kannur District Mahila Federation and later State Vice President and worked for a long period in this post very actively.¹²²

K. Devayani's autobiography, *Chorayum Kanneerum Nananha Vazhikal* is a kind of reference book for girls who entered communist movement later. Further, the book is a portrait of a woman who is the personification of 'strength and sacrifice.'¹²³ Her membership as the party member continued from 1942 to her death on 7 October 1999. She "lived as a communist and died as a communist."¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ K.Devayani, *op.cit.*

¹²⁴ Personal interview with Jayadevan at his residence, Karivellur dated 20 December, 2006.

Kunnummal Sreedevi Amma

Kunnummal Sreedevi Amma contributed a lot to protect the communist- *Karshaka Sangham* activists in the Karivellur area and she had suffered a lot for the same. She was born in 1918 as the eldest daughter of Alappadamba Manakkatt Karimbil Krishnan Vaidyar and Kunnummal Pattiyamma in Kankol- Alappadambu panchayath. She was married at the age of fourteen to Payangappodan Kunhiraman, one of the leaders of the Karivellur *Samaram*.¹²⁵

Following the Karivellur *Samaram* her husband Kunhiraman went underground and the M.S.P. tortured her in order to get information about him. The M.S.P. destroyed her house and her cultivation. They dragged her to the police camp and beat her with their *lathis* and threatened to kill her if she was not ready to give correct information about her husband. But even after severe torture she did not utter even a single word about those communists who went underground. She prepared food for the communists and sent it through her brother Kunnummal Kunhiraman.¹²⁶ He was martyred in the Munayankunnu incident on 1 May 1948.

¹²⁵ Souvenir, *op.cit.*, p. 197.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

Neeliyam Veettil Cheriamma

She was the wife of Puthiyedath Raman who had participated in the Karivellur *samaram* and was imprisoned. She also participated in the march to the Kuniyan riverbank on 20 December 1946.¹²⁷ When her husband was in jail, she suffered a lot due to the police atrocities and the *gunda* attacks on the one side and her own poverty on the other. She had to support her family. She withstood all the problems bravely and lived by hard work. Besides, she was the trendsetter in providing food to the communist activists and leaders who lived underground. On the pretext of cutting grass she went to the forest carrying food for them in her basket. She cared much to protect the communists from the police.

There were many women who suffered a lot when their husbands were imprisoned. To name a few, Thekkumpadan Madhavi, Chiriyamma, Kizhakke Veettil Lakshmi Amma, Thotton Valappil Chiriyamma, Pariyarth Narayani Amma survived everything by hard work and with the support of the communist party -

Thus the role played by women in the Karivellur area was praise worthy. Following the Karivellur *samaram* women actively worked in the public life on the one hand while certain others worked secretly which also led to the success of the movement. Though the communist leaders were

¹²⁷ Personal interview with Jayadevan, *op.cit.*

hunted by the police and *gunda*, support of the women of the area strengthened the solidarity of the party and helped those in resisting repression.

Parassini Kadavu - women perspective

Parassinikadavu was an important area of activity of the *Karshaka Sangham* and the Communist Party in the initial stage of their development. The vadakkayil family of the Matappura had an important role in developing the progressive movement in Parassini.¹²⁸ Simultaneously women participation was very much expressive in the area.

P.M. Madhavi

P.M. Madhavi who was popularly called *Karinjiyedathi* was a member of the Parassini Matappura family who entered the public life of North Malabar through the Communist Party and the *karshaka Sangham*. She loved the Communist Party which was in its infancy during the 1930's and 40's. She took membership of the Communist Party in 1941.¹²⁹ She was the 'mother' to hundreds of activists. She fed the communists when they were living underground. Among them were P. Krishna Pillai, K.A. Keraleeyan and Vishnu Bharatheeyan.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ K.Balakrishnan, "Parassini Chuvanna Katha" in *Desabimani weekly* 9 June, 2002, p. 38.

¹²⁹ Communist party souvenir 1989-90, (Pinarayi conference 1939), p. 220.

¹³⁰ K.Balakrishnan, *op.cit.*

Madhavi's politics was not confined to that only. She was involved in organizing women of the area. She gave leadership to the formation of the first Mahila Sangham in Malabar which functioned at Parassinikadavu. P. Yesoda teacher was her colleague. Under her leadership the Mahila Sangham grew in strength with Matappura as its centre.¹³¹ The other women who helped her were P.P. Madhavi and Chandroth Madhavi.

She participated in the Communist Party meeting held at Calicut in 1943. She worked very actively in many conferences held under the aegis of the *Karshaka Sangham* in places like Keecheri. When the Communist Party was split up in 1964 she stood with C.P.I.M. and remained as its active member till 1971.¹³²

C.Yesoda Teacher

In 1943 the first conference of the Communist Party was held at Mumbai. In that conference the Parassini troop was assigned to perform traditional Kerala Arts. The leader of the troop was Koran Master. In that troop a girl of ten was included. That was C.Yesoda. At that time she was unaware of the aims and objectives of the Communist Party but she entertained the party with her music because her brothers, Koran Master and Gopalan were actively involved in the party. She spent twelve days in Bombay and Madras along with the troop which consisted of eighteen

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 40.

¹³² Souvenir, *op.cit.*

members. There were P.M.Karthiayani and Lakshmi to perform *Kummi* along with her.¹³³ The programme in Bombay was well appreciated by P.C.Joshi, the General Secretary of the Communist Party.¹³⁴ She still remembers the activities of her troop very well. After the Bombay programme, her musical performance became a part of various vayanasalas and clubs meetings. She later became a music teacher and worked for a long period in the Providence Girls' High school in Calicut.¹³⁵ C.Yesoda Teacher could not actively participate in the communist programmes of Parassini Kadavu. But she retained her allegiance to the Communist Party which continues even now.

The role played by women during the peasant struggles in North Malabar was a considerable one. The peasant struggles occurred in the Irikkur firca, Kaerivellur and Parassinikadavu became successful only with the support and participation of women.

Women's organizations

An important feature of the radical movement was the formation of women's organizations in north Malabar. The women of this area met in the Aroli School in 1937 under the initiative of P.Yesoda Teacher and K.Kalliani Teacher, who later became the Secretary and President of the first organization. The meeting was presided over by advocate T.Chandu

¹³³ Personal interview with C.Yesoda at her residence Parassini Kadavu on 18 April, 2006.

¹³⁴ K.Balakrishnan,*op.cit.*, p. 40.

¹³⁵ Personal linterview with C.Yesoda, *op.cit.*

Nambiar. It was in this meeting that the Pappinisseri Mahila Samajam was formed.¹³⁶ The important issues taken up by the organization were man – woman equality, prohibition of child marriage, eradication of blind beliefs and evil customs prevalent in the society. Gracy Aron, a congress activist actively participated in the work of this Mahila Samajam.

When the Bekkalam conference was announced, many members of the Mahila Samajam decided to participate in the conference. This was opposed by Gracy Aron and this led to a rift in the Samajam. At this Gracy Aron formed a separate Mahila Samajam called Bharat Mahila Samajam. In 1940 All Malabar Mahila Sangham was formed in Pattambi under the leadership of Arya Pallam and Yesoda Teacher. Sarada Krishnan was the President and V.P.Devaki Amma was the Secretary of this organization.¹³⁷ The women who worked during this period met with much protest. It was under the auspices of Mahila Sangham that a training camp was conducted in Calicut in 1942. The women who took the leadership were Thankamma Krishnapillai, Aryapallam, P yesoda Teacher, K. Devayani, P.C. Karthiayani Kutty Amma and Uma Devi Antarjanam. In this camp, classes were given by leaders like Krishnapillai, EMS. Nambuthiripad and T.K.Raju. This camp elected Aryapallam as the President and Thankamma as the Secretary.

¹³⁶ C. Unniraja (ed.), *Communist Party Keralathil*, Smaranika 1990.p.198

¹³⁷ *Ibid*

In the early years of the women organizations, women met with much resistance in the society because women stepping out of their homes, attending meetings and raising slogans in the *Jathas* were activities which could not be tolerated. In north Malabar P. Yesoda Teacher was the precursor of the women activists. Under her leadership women were very active during the Aron Mill strike in 1946¹³⁸ Women were very active in all the activities of the *Karshaka Sangham* and the political movements of the period. They were ready to raise slogans against imperialism and landlordism.

An important organization which facilitated the formation of women's movement in north Malabar was the Abhinav Bharat Yuvak Sangh. The Abhinav Bharath Yuvak Sangh was formed on 13 April 1934 in Vannalakkot under the leadership of A.V.Kunhambu. The organization was influenced by the New Jawan Party formed in Punjab by Bhagat Singh.¹³⁹ The *Yuvak Sangh* carried out the Gandhian constructive work in a different style.

The *Yuvak Sangh* recognized that in order to awaken various sections of the society including women it had to fight against evil customs and orthodox beliefs. The idea originated from the rational ideology of *Athma vidya sangham*.¹⁴⁰ The activities of A.B.Y.S helped to rouse nationalism in the minds of the peasants. The fourth annual meeting of the A.B.Y.S was held

¹³⁸ Details are given in the section under Teachers' movement

¹³⁹ A.V.Anil Kumar, "Yuvak Sanghavam Streekalude Itavum", *Desabhimani Weekly*, 23, June, 2002, pp.44-45.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

on 14-15 January in 1939 at Kodakkat.¹⁴¹ This was an important event in the history of women's movement in North Malabar. In this connection the role of P.C.Karthiayani Kutty Amma, wife of T.Subramanian Thirumumbu¹⁴² is worth mentioning.

P.C Karthiayani Kutty Amma (1916 -)

P.C.Karthiayani Kutty Amma was born on 8 August 1916 as the daughter of Kesavan Nambuthiri of Alappadambil Perukkamana Illam and Kunhitheman Amma of Palat Chirakarra family.¹⁴³ She studied up to fourth standard at Peelikkot Government. L.P.School. Her family background was very much conservative and against any radical ideology. But her father was a progressive thinker.¹⁴⁴ He did not conduct *Thaliketttu kalyanam*, the traditional ceremony for her and her sister, Tambayikutty. This it self was a revolutionary step in a period when the Nair community was observing such ceremonies very earnestly. The activity of her father sowed the seeds of revolution and freedom in the mind of Karthiayani Kutty Amma¹⁴⁵ As a child, she learnt spinning in the *charkka* and became a follower of Gandhi – this was due to the influence of her uncles, who were Congress men. She married

¹⁴¹ K.K.N.Kurup, (ed.), *Swantanrya Samaram Kasaragod Talukkil*, (Mal.), Smaranika, 1984, p. XXVII.

¹⁴² For details see *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁴³ Personal interview with P.C.Karthiayanikutty Amma at her residence, Cheruvathur on 20 December 2006.

¹⁴⁴ P.C.Karthiayanikutty Amma, *Tirumumbinoppam*, Ormakurippukal, (Mal.), Trivandurm, 2006, p. 43.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Thirumumbu in 1934. In her own words “when I became the wife of Thirumumbu I saw the pathetic condition of the common man and his sufferings. I saw his sincerity which would not die even in acute poverty. I could experience his innocent love. Thus, I became a communist.”¹⁴⁶

P.C.Karthiayani Kutty Amma entered public life through the Congress party and later she suffered a lot due to the political activities of her husband. A public meeting she participated was the Kodakkat conference on 14 January 1939. The women came to the conference wearing blouses challenging the order of the *jenmis* not to wear blouses.¹⁴⁷ The presence of upper caste women like P.C.Karthiayani Kutty Amma, and Parameswari Antarjanam created an excitement in the conference. The women wing under the leadership of P.C.Karthiayani Kutty Amma, Chaman Veetil Lakshmi Amma and Payyadakkan Lakshmi Amma played an important role in the conference. This marked the entry of women in the public life under the leadership of A.B.Y.S. A common lunch *Panthibhojanam* was arranged for all. This *Panthibhojanam* took place under the leadership of P.C. Karthiayani Kutty Amma and Parameswari Antarjanam.¹⁴⁸ P.C. Karthiayani Kutty Amma was the first to take food in this gathering along with the lower castes. Before taking food she announced, “See I am taking food along with the lower caste

¹⁴⁶ P.C. Karthiayanikutty Amma, *Thirumumb-The life story*, (Mal.), Thirumumb Birth centenary souvenir, 2006, p. 39.

¹⁴⁷ Karivellur Murali, Karivellur “Charithram, Samskaram, Samaram”, (Mal.) in Karivellur Samaram 60th anniversary Smaranika, 2006, pp. 95-96.

¹⁴⁸ Kuttiam, (ed.) Nerippu, (Mal.), *The History of Madikkai*, Kasaragod, 2004, p.153.

people and nothing wrong happened to me.”¹⁴⁹ As a person, who had suffered much under the harsh treatment of the police, an *Ulakka* (a wooden pestle for pounding rice, grain, etc.) was presented to her in the conference.¹⁵⁰ The inter dining of a high caste woman with the lower sections of the society created a great stir in that period.

The Kodakkat conference (1939) was the first organizational women meeting in North Malabar. About five hundred women attended the conference. Women were very active in helping men to train a volunteer corps’ under the leadership of C.V. Kunhambu.¹⁵¹ They prepared food for the trainees, exchanged messages secretly, carried uniform to the volunteers, etc. Thus the Kodakkat conference opened a new vista of freedom to women of North Malabar.¹⁵²

P.C. Karthiayani Kutty Amma attended a study class for seven days conducted by the Communist Party at Calicut in 1942 at the instigation of A.K.Gopalan and Keraleeyan.¹⁵³ It was the first political get together of communist women from Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. It was a turning point in the life of Karthiayani Kutty Amma as she could meet K. Devayani, Thankam Krishnapillai, the wife of Krishanapillai, Mrs. M.R.Bhatathiripad.,

¹⁴⁹ Smaranika, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ A.V.Anilkumar, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Karivellur Murali, “Amma Oru Rashtriyapadam” in T.S.Thirumumbu Birth centenary Souvenir, (Mal.), 2006, p.41.

Mrs. T.C.Narayanan Nair and Bhavani Amma in the class and formed Mahila Samajam in their return journey itself.¹⁵⁴

After attending the classes in Calicut she became a political activist. She travelled across Malabar to form women association of the Communist Party. She began to speak at gatherings. Later she became the president of the Kasaragod Mahila Sangham.¹⁵⁵ She also participated in the Cheruvattur Vilakoithu Samaram in 1942 along with many other women. When P.C. Joshi, came to Kannur to visit the accused in the Kayyur riot at the Kannur Central jail¹⁵⁶ a *jatha* was conducted under the leadership of Kozhummal Madhavan to receive him. P.C. Karhiyani Kuttiamma participated in this *jatha* along with three other women which included her daughter also.¹⁵⁷

P.C.Karthiayani Kutty Amma participated in the *Tol-Viraku Samaram* of 1946. The peasants and the labourers used to collect *pullu* (grass), *thol* (small branches of trees for manure) and *viraku* (firewood) from the estate owned by Thazhekattu Mana. The facility was availed by the peasants of Timiri, Cheruvattur and Kayyur areas surrounding the Cheemeni estate. When the estate was transferred to George Joseph Kottukappalli, he prohibited the peasants from availing *Thol- viraku*. Against this, the Communist Party started the struggle which came to be called *Thol-viraku*

¹⁵⁴ P.C.Karthiayanikutty Amma, *op.cit.*, p.104.

¹⁵⁵ T.S.Thirumumbu Birth centenary Souvenir, p. 31.

¹⁵⁶ C.Balan, (ed.), *Kasaragod Charitram Samooahavum*, (Mal), Kasaragod, 2001, p. 385.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

samaram.¹⁵⁸ In this peasant struggle women participated along with men. Karthiayani Kutty Amma was in the forefront of the struggle. More than two hundred women participated in this struggle and it has no parallel in modern Kerala history.

When the Communist Party was banned after the Calcutta thesis the M.S.P. and the Congress party hunted and punished the communists in an inhuman way. When the communists lived underground, women were doing the risky job of protecting the leaders. They carried the messages from place to place secretly. Along with many other leaders like K.P.R. Gopalan, E.K.Nayanar, K. Madhavan, Thirumumbu also lived underground.¹⁵⁹ At this time, Karthiayani Kutty Amma faced rude behaviour of the police sub inspector. She bravely stood against the police atrocities.¹⁶⁰ In public meetings she used to recite the poems of Thirumumbu so naturally that many people thought that she was reciting her own poems.

P.C. Karthiayani Kutty Amma had contributed much towards the development of society through various means. She entered the main stream of the society at a time when women were not allowed to do so. She worked in the struggle against caste discrepancies, landlordism and imperialism simultaneously. Above all, she worked in the forefront in organizing women

¹⁵⁸ M.M.Rahman, "Kasaragodinte Samskarika Bhoomisastram" in the souvenir *op.cit.*, p. 29.

¹⁵⁹ M.M.Rahman, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

of North Malabar. She represented women of the period who spent tense sleepless nights to give or receive messages and to shelter the underground activists. This was in addition to running the house hold single handed. She wanted women to be strong and on their own.

Kuthur Pattiyamma (1891-1973)

Pattiyamma was a heroic personality who entered the public life of Kuttamath area. She began to work through the *Karshaka Sangham* and showed affiliation to it from its very inception.¹⁶¹ She was a strong person and was one among the peasant movement leaders.

She played an important role in organizing women during the *thol-viraku* Samaram in 1946.¹⁶² The spectacle of women carrying sickles in their hands marching resolutely made the British officers nervous. In this move Pattiyamma showed extra ordinary courage and inspired others. Her son Appukuttan participated in the Karivellur Samaram.

Paleri Kumbha (1890-1982)

Another woman who entered the public life of North Malabar was Paleri Kumbha. She was an active member of the *Karshaka Sangham*.¹⁶³ She participated in the Vilakoith Samaram in 1948 at Timiri and was an accused

¹⁶¹ Andalatt, *op.cit.*, p.188.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

in the case. Her children also were active workers of the Communist Party and the *Karshaka Sangham*.¹⁶⁴

Women organizations played an important role in accomplishing the activities of the radical movement in North Malabar. The two prominent leaders who became the spearheads of women organizations in North Malabar were P. Yesoda teacher and P.C. Kathiayani Kutty Amma.

Summary

The women of North Malabar entered the public life by 1930's itself. They were active in all the activities of the Communist Party- Teachers' Movement, *Karshaka Sangham* and women's organizations. Through the Teachers' Movement, women worked a lot to strengthen their organization. Women participated in all activities of the *Karshaka Sangham* to emancipate the poor peasants and workers who suffered a lot under imperialism and landlordism. Along with these organizations they had formed their own organization-Mahila Sanghams to work for the society. All women who entered the public life were associated with the Mahila Sanghams of varied names. But all of them owed their allegiance to the Communist Party and they always supplemented all the activities of the Communist Party and made them a success.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Once they stepped out of their homes they never kept away from public life. On many occasions they saved the situations through their expediency.¹⁶⁵ When the Communist leaders went underground to evade the police, the political stability was maintained only because of the active and timely involvement of women. They were doubly burdened on many occasions especially in a period when the police- *gunda* alliance unleashed atrocities. On the one side they had to face, suffer and with stand the attacks and repressions of police-*gunda* alliance: and on the other they had to sustain their families single handed. They involved and participated in all the activities disregarding their discrepancies. Without women participation the struggle ‘against the lord and the state’ would not have materialized and become a success. In this context, it is worthy to mention, “Women are coming forward today not for self-expression but for compensating the void that was formed as a result of their confinement to their own ‘quarters’.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ For details see E.K.Nayanar, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁶ Begum Meer Amerutty, Presidential address, Madras Women’s conference cited in *Prabhatham*, 21 November, 1938.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN SOCIAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES OF MALABAR

In the social service field an important role was played by the women of Malabar during the national movement. Indian Renaissance which coincided with the rise and growth of Indian nationalism, climaxing in freedom for the country is singularly marked by the active participation of a large number of women along with those of men.¹ Malabar was not an exemption to this general rule. The Malabar society of the nineteenth century suffered much due to many social evils like caste system and the related discrepancies.² The same situation was continued in the early decades of the twentieth century also. Women who entered public life for the emancipation of the down trodden and the upliftment of the society suffered a lot. Many of them had to encounter stiff opposition at every level-from the house hold, community and society at large.

In this context, the services rendered by women personalities like Mrs.Nayanar, Manjeri Kamalambal, Karayi Damayanthi, C.K.Revathi Amma, T.C.Kunhachumma, P.M.Mariyumma. Amina Hashim, Ayisha Rauf, Haleema Abootty and so on are praise worthy. They entered the public life of

¹ Sushila Nayar and Kamla Mankekar, *Women pioneers In India's Renaissance*, New Delhi, 2002, introduction, p. 1.

² For details.See P.Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Noottandile Keralam*, Trichur, 1988.

Malabar through different situations and various organizations. Though they stepped out of their homes during the national movement, they did not involve themselves in the freedom struggle directly. But their activities contributed very much towards the broad national movement. Social service was central to their activities.

Kayaratt Madhavi Kutty Amma alias Mrs.Nayanar

“Mrs. Nayanar and Mr. Nayanar are not two, they are one.” These words reflect the nature of their work and contribution to the society.³ For a better understanding of the contributions of Kayaratt Madhavi Kutty Amma one has to know the role of V.R.Nayanar⁴ in the Malabar society as a social worker and as a humanist. He is hailed as ‘Gokhale of Kerala.’⁵

V. R. Nayanar was profoundly influenced by Gokhale and his noble ideals. He served as librarian of B.S.S. office at Poona for a few months and acquired practical training in voluntary social service.⁶ Thus Nayanar

³ Personal interview with Karthat Balachandran, at his residence, Palghat, on 11May 2007. He is a Freedom fighter who worked with V.R. Nayanar in connection with his reconstruction activities under the auspices of Devadhar Malabar Re-construction Trust.

⁴ V.R. Nayanar was born in a wealthy, aristocratic Jenmi family of North Malabar in1900.⁴ His father Ayilliath Rairu Nambiar was a rich Tahsildar and mother Varikkara Kalliani Amma.⁴ As per his father’s wishes he joined the M.B.B.S. course in the Madras Medical College.⁴ But V.R. Nayanar was not at all attracted to the medical profession. His interest lay elsewhere, so he gave up his studies and returned home. His father sent him to visit places like Madras, Bombay, Poona and so on in order to help him to make up his mind. The journey was an eye-opener. In Poona he visited Servants of India Society or Bharath Seva Sangh⁴ and came in to contact with Gopala Krishna Gokhale

⁵ T. M Vijayan, “V.R. Nayanar; The Gokhale of Kerala”, cited in *Indica*, Vol.43, No.2, Journal of the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture, Mumbai, September 2006, p. 139.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142

discovered his vocation and decided to spend the rest of his life in the service of the Indian people and the Indian nation. He returned to Malabar as a full member of B.S.S. at a critical period when the Mapilla Rebellion⁷ had devastated a considerable area in Malabar and its people. In order to manage the relief activities of the B.S.S. a trust was formed called Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust⁸ and V.R Nayanar was at first, a member of the Executive Committee of the Trust but soon became its Secretary.⁹ This marked the beginning of a silent revolution of serving the needy and the down trodden in Malabar¹⁰

During the Second World War the D.M.R.T. under the leadership of V.R.Nayanar had played yeomen service. Lack of proper food and medicine, resulted in the spread of epidemic throughout Malabar.¹¹ The starvation resulted in deaths and disease became a common occurrence. Harijans and other poor sections of the society suffered the most. Cholera took away the

⁷ See for the details of Malabar Rebellion, K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, (Mal.), Calicut, 1971, K.N.Panikkar, *Against Lord and State, Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921*, New Delhi, 1989 and M.Gangadharan, *Malabar Rebellion*, Allahabad, 1989.

⁸ Devadhar Malabar Reconstruction Trust hereinafter referred as DMRT.

⁹ Sukumar Kootali, "Aa Jeevitham oru Samagra Veekshanam" cited in V. R. Nayanar Smaranika, p. 22.

¹⁰ The campaign against untouchability and caste system and promotion of the upliftment of women and the depressed classes were the priority programmes of the D.M.R.T. *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 26 January 2000, p. 3.

¹¹ T.P.R. Nambesan, "Anusmaranagal; Sri V.R. Nayanarute Koote" cited in V.R. *Nayanar Smaranika*, p. 51.

lives of the elders of families leaving the kids orphans.¹² There Nayanar worked as a saviour like Fr. Daniel and Mother Theresa.¹³

The most important programme of Nayanar in this regard was the establishment of a series of orphanages in Malabar. In order to accommodate the orphan children he started thirteen camps in Malabar from Madayi in the north to Valappad in the south.¹⁴ In these orphanages children were admitted without any discrimination of caste and creed. Among these twelve were for boys and one for girls.¹⁵ The orphanage for girls is the 'Nayanar Balikasadanam' at Eranjipalam¹⁶ in Kozhikode, which exists even now. They were given free food, dress, shelter, education and were given training in different crafts like Spinning, Weaving, Book-binding etc.¹⁷

V.R. Nayanar died on 16 May 1945. The death of Nayanar left a vacuum in the public life of Malabar. The unexpected death of Nayanar was a great blow to the down trodden people of Malabar¹⁸ Before his death, Nayanar had brought all the girls from thirteen orphanages into Balika Sadanam at Eranjipalam. After his death all orphanages except Balika Sadanam were on the verges of closure. Seven years after his death, Balika

¹² K. Janaki Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

¹³ Sukumar Kootali, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

¹⁴ *Mathrubhumi Daily*, Kozhikode, 26 January 2000, p. 3.

¹⁵ K. Janaki Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

¹⁶ K. Balakrishnan, "Keralaparyatanam, V. R. Nayanar", *Desabhimani Weekly*, p. 28

¹⁷ Personal interview with Keezhedath Madhu, niece of Kayaratt Madhavi Amma, at her residence Calicut on 16 November 2007.

¹⁸ P. Krishnapillai, *Thozhilali Varga Prasthanam*, p. 104

Sadanam was also decided to close down due to lack of funds. It was during this period that Kayaratt Madhavi Kutty Amma, wife of Nayanar came forward to take care of the Balika Sadanam¹⁹ and it marked the real beginning in the realm of social service. Thus she became the saviour of Sadanam²⁰

Before marriage Mrs.Nayanar was a co-worker of Nayanar in social service activities.²¹ She was born in the Kayaratt family in 1905 at Kadambamazhipuram, Ottappalam. She belonged to a congress family, had enough social commitment and was involved in social service even before marriage.²² She was an active member of the D.M.R.T. She worked as a teacher in D.M.R.T. School, Tanur. After the death of her husband Mrs.Nayanar was in the forefront in running the Balika Sadanam. She was assisted and supported by like minded personalities such as V.S. Keraleeyan, V.M.Nair, Kayaratt Vasudeva Menon²³ Thikkotiyan, and many others.²⁴ Hundreds of poor Harijan girls found in Mrs.Nayanar their mother. She was an efficient lady with a good heart.²⁵ She brought them up as a mother with love and affection.

¹⁹ Kayratt Madhavi Kutty Amma was the second wife of Nayanar who was popularly known as Mrs. Nayanar. V.R.Nayanar married her after the death of his first wife. Personal interview with Keezhedath Madhu, *op.cit.* ..

²⁰ K.Janaki Amma, *op. cit.*,p.33

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Personal interview with Karthat Balachandran, *op.cit.*, on 11 May 2007.

²³ Kayaratt Vasudeva Menon was the brother of Mrs.Nayanar.

²⁴ Thikkotiyan, *op.cit.*, p. 183, also see *Mathrubhumi* Kozhikode, 22 May 1945.

²⁵ Personal interview with Ammini Amma, at Balika Sadanam, Eranjipalam, on 15, November 2007. She was brought to Balika Sadanam by K.Kellappan in 1962, at the

Everybody in the Sadanam called her *Amma* and she was a mother in the true sense, though she had no children of her own. After marriage with V.R.Nayanar she stayed at Tanur, near D.M.R.T. school and after the death of her husband, she sold the house at Tanur and left to 'Sadanam' at Eranjipalam.²⁶ She provided every help to the girls to become ideal citizens. She made arrangements to get jobs for the educated girls and arranged marriages for them. Mrs. Nayanar dedicated her life completely for the upliftment of the orphan girls. Along with the activities of the Balika Sadanam Mrs.Nayanar also founded a Nayanar Children's Home Society in 1957²⁷ at Eranjipalam and many poor Dalit children were given education till her death in 1985. She was buried in the vicinity of the Sadanam.²⁸ The old lady almost single handedly struggled to keep the institution, which was dear to her husband, active.²⁹ After her death Thikkodiyan became the caretaker of the Sadanam. The Balika Sadanam is still functioning as Sadanam or house for destitute orphan girls in memory of Mr. and Mrs.Nayanar.

request of Mrs.Nayanar and from then onwards she is in the Sadanam. Now Ammini Amma is managing the Sadanam.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Nayanar Children's Home Society, memorandum of association, rules and regulations, Kozhikode, 1957.

²⁸ N.Madhavan Kutty, "Hard Days for Balika Sadanam", cited in Indian Express Daily, Kozhikode, 19 October 1989.

²⁹ *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 17, July 1985.

Manjeri Kamalambal

Manjeri Kamalambal is another prominent personality who entered the public life of Malabar during the national movement with the sole motto of social service. She was born on 16 May 1905³⁰ as the daughter of Manjeri Rama Iyer³¹ and Annapoorni Ammal. She was a great social worker and a co-worker of Mrs. Annie Besant. She was the first president of the Malabar branch of the Women Indian Association.³² After completing primary education at Madanapally, Adayar, under the auspicious of the Theosophical Society.³³ Kamalambal was given home tuitions for various other subjects including music by Mrs. Margaret Cousins,³⁴ a lieutenant of Annie Besant. In Madanapally, Kamalambal was deeply influenced by the activities of the Theosophical Society.³⁵ Thus she was lucky to become the student of Margaret Cousins. Since Kamalambal was not interested in studying in a co-education school, as per the instruction of Margaret Cousins she returned to

³⁰ K.Karunakaran Nair, (ed.), *Who is Who of Freedom Fighters in Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1975, p. 191.

³¹ Manjeri Rama Iyer was a leading lawyer in the Calicut Bar and a veteran leader. He was a nationalist who took initiative in implementing Khadi which intensified the boycott of foreign cloths. On 9 November 1929 The Kerala Yuvak Sangh was organized at Calicut with Manjeri Rama Iyer as president. This organization resolved to carry on active propaganda for Khadi, prohibition and traditional Kalari system. This organization was declared unlawful through a notification in the Font St.George Gazette, dated 1 February 1932.

³² Sammuell Aron, *Jeevitha Smaranakal*, (Mal.), p.100, for details see *Manasi*, Souvenir published by Mahila Bharatha Sangam, Calicut, 2005, p.11.

³³ *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 6, April 1967.

³⁴ Margaret Cousins was an Irish lady who came to India in connection with the activities of the Theosophical Society. She was the pioneer of women movements in India who founded the Women Indian Association in 1917.

³⁵ Personal Interview with Dr. G. Raman, son of Kamalambal, at his residence, Calicut on 15, January, 2008.

Calicut. Her connections with the Theosophical Society enabled Kamalambal to perform her duties as a social worker selflessly and honestly.

Kamalambal entered the public life of Malabar as a social worker at the age of fourteen along with her father.³⁶ Born in a Brahmin community, Kamalambal fought against the evil customs of that society like child marriage, dowry system and caste system.³⁷ Though she was encouraged by the support of her father, a Brahmin lady entering the public life of Malabar shocked the orthodoxy in the society. Her family was the first Brahmin family of Calicut to get involved in social service.³⁸ She was married to V.Gopala Krishna Iyer on 18 May 1921 at Adayar.³⁹ Her father worked as the right hand of Annie Besant who was the founder of the Home Rule League. Her husband V. Gopala Krishna Iyer was a loyal disciple of the Brahma Vidya Sangh and this gave her greater freedom and flexibility in her activities directed towards the freedom of the nation. Besides all these positive factors she was lucky to have the lessons of social service activities from her devoted teacher Margaret Cousins who was the model social worker of the period. All these multifarious positive factors were fully utilized by Kamalambal effectively through her self-less and dedicated work.⁴⁰ In 1924 when the

³⁶ *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 6 April 1967.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Reminiscences of V. Gopala Krishna Iyer, Husband of Kamalambal, 'A Desolate Husband's Lament', *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 6 April 1968.

⁴⁰ Reminiscences of Keezhadath Vasudevan Nair who worked with Kamalambal for a long time, *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 6 April 1969.

flood occurred in Calicut Kamalambal and Mooliyil Janaki worked hard to organize relief measures.⁴¹ Their work directed the attention of the society towards the pathetic health condition of the fishing community.⁴²

Kamalambal had played a long and important role in the public activities of Calicut. She served for a period of 45 years in various social service of Calicut. Kamalambal had served all prominent women associations in the city as secretary as well as president, she served in various official and non official committees organized for social service activities. At the age of 25 she became a member of the Malabar Secondary Education Trust and continued in that post for nine years. She was a life member of the Malabar Education Trust.⁴³ She held high position in the 'Ladies Club', which was the first women's organization in Kozhikode.⁴⁴ She became the president of the Women Indian Association at the age of thirty in 1935 and also became the president of All India Women's Conference in 1952 and continued for 15 years till her death in 1967.⁴⁵

⁴¹ *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 6 April 1967.

⁴² *Malayala Manorama*, Kozhikode, *op.cit.*

⁴³ *Mathrubhumi*, Kozhikode, 6 April 1967.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Malayala Manorama*, Kozhikode, 6 April 1967.

During the Second World War Kamalambal worked for extending the activities of the women's auxiliary corps. She was trained in giving first aid and home nursing and acquired Red Cross Medal and Medalian Certificate.⁴⁶

Kamalambal founded an organization called 'Lotus Circle' in Calicut for children below twelve years of age to propagate the ideas of universal brotherhood among all religions and to spread the ideas of Theosophical Society.⁴⁷ This organization gave training in fine arts like music, drama, drawing, etc for children. She also managed a *Balavrindavanam*, a school for children on the Montessori method.⁴⁸ Through the organization she worked a lot to increase the facilities for girl's education. For the working women Kamalambal founded a working women's hostel in Calicut. She was a member of the guild of services.⁴⁹ She organized the women wing of the Chalappuram Ganapath High School.

Kamalambal played a prominent role in conducting the first fine arts exhibition at Calicut.⁵⁰ She was a member of the advisory committee of the hospitals, advisory committee of All India Radio and advisory Board of the Rescue home and worked in all these committees very effectively.⁵¹ Kamalambal was a very good artist especially in Music and she educated girls

⁴⁶ *Mathrubhumi, op.cit.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Reminiscences of Keezhedath Vasudevan Nair, op.cit.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Mathrubhumi, op.cit.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

in music, dance, painting, etc. at Annie Hall in Calicut. She had a melodious voice and she sang beautifully. Her Prayer recitation of the 'Vande Mataram' was an inspiration for the listeners during the hey days of the national movement.⁵²

Kamalambal was a prominent member of the All India Khadi Swadeshi Exhibition Committee at Calicut from 1930-40.⁵³ She raised her voice in favour of equal rights to women volunteers along with male volunteers in that committee. For this she fought against her own brother, Manjeri Subrahmaniam who was the secretary of the committee.⁵⁴ This issue was settled in favour of Kamalambal with the interference of Suvicharananda Swami, who was the president of the committee.⁵⁵ She never allowed or tolerated anybody abusing women in any gathering or situation.

When we analyze the activities of Kamalambal, we realize that there are two sides to her personality and activities in her social work. On the one hand she carefully preserved herself as Manjeri Kamalam, a sensitive cultured woman, who pursued a straight course of doing her duty wherever it was decided she could best render service. On the other side she was always loyal to her chiefs and colleagues who in return regarded her as a leader. So

⁵² Reminiscences of V. Gopalakrishna Iyer, *op.cit.*

⁵³ Reminiscences of Keezhedath Vasudevan Nair, *op.cit.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Ganapath Rao was the founder of Ganapath High School. He later became a *Sanyasin* and adopted the name *Suvicherananda Swamiji*. See Paul Manalil, *Keralathile Bhasha Neunapakshangal* (Mal.), Calicut, 2006, p. 117.

far as the home front was concerned she proved to be a practical business like person, who assumed the reins, advised, criticized, overruled and smoothed every day difficulties out of the way.⁵⁶

Kamalambal died on 6 April 1967 at her residence at Annie Hall, Calicut. Her humility and staunch faith in God were her supportive factors in her social service activities. According to Moorkkoth Kunhappa, she was a golden link between the old feudal system and the new colonial social system which was come to an end with her death.⁵⁷ She worked very sincerely in all the progressive activities at Calicut. Through her life Kamalambal revealed what brotherhood of mankind is.⁵⁸ Her splendid speeches created a sense of optimism in the minds of the audience. She had an exemplary character and leadership qualities⁵⁹ and for this reason it was natural for the people to accept her as a great leader⁶⁰.

In short, Manjeri Kamalambal held responsible positions in social, educational, charitable institutions and associations and rendered remarkable service for the benefit of the society.

⁵⁶ Reminiscences of V.Gopala Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*

⁵⁷ Reminiscences of Moorkkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama* Kozhikode 6 April 1967.

⁵⁸ Reminiscences of V.Gopala Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*

⁵⁹ Personal interview with Ambikamma, Grand daughter of Swadeshbimani K. Ramakrishna Pillai, at her residence, Calicut on 3, October, 2005.

⁶⁰ Lakshmi, N. Menon, unveiled her portrait at Calicut Townhall on 6 April, 1968. She asked women to gain inspiration from the life and works on Kamalambal., *Mathrubhumi*, 6 April, 1968.

When compared to certain other castes of Malabar, women are given importance in the Thiyya community-in their inheritance, marriage systems, customs and manners, system of worship etc. Some of them could get the benefits of English education and colonialism. They were able to get the benefits of missionary education because of their poverty and the economic changes paved the way for their English education.⁶¹ These educated women stood against evil customs and blind beliefs regarding various aspects of life.

The life of Thiyya women of North Kerala was much different when compared to that of other areas .Since they did not have the fear of losing caste and were not under caste restrictions they could mingle with the Europeans and many women were sent to help the wives of the Britishers .So they could develop economically and culturally. This is seen in Kannur, Kozhikode and Tellichery.⁶²

The influence of social reformers is another important factor which led to the development of the women community there. The ideas of Sree Narayana Guru⁶³ towards women education and freedom through education had an important impact on the society. Almost all the activities of Vagbhatananda⁶⁴ were directed towards women education. He specified that

⁶¹ Manjula K. V, *Stree Vidyabhyasavum Samoouhika Mattavum* in *Kannur Kalathilude*, (Mal.), Kannur, 2006, p. 134.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁶³ See for details, C.R. Mithra, *Sree Narayana Guru and Social Revolution*, Shertalai, 1979.

⁶⁴ See for details- M.S. Nair, *Vagbhatananda Guruvum Samoohika Navothanavum* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1998.

women education is essential for social progress. The *Atmavidya Sangham* founded by Vagbhatananda and the *Saraswathi Vilasa Vidya Peetam* at Thiruvangad had played an important role in the education of women and their freedom in the society. Hence the role of intellectuals in the nineteenth century especially of Sree Narayana Guru, Vagbhatananda and Swami Ananda Theertha had much influence in reforming the society of North Malabar especially the women community of Malabar.

Multifarious factors were instrumental in the women of Tellichery entering the public life of Malabar. The colonial situation combined with economic advantages through commercial contacts with people of other areas like Gujarat. These contacts often led to marriage and through that they got enough education and refined culture.⁶⁵ Convent education and the refined ideologies of the reformers provided ample opportunities to the women to act. This was made easy only due to the absence of caste restrictions and limitations.

Karayi Damayanthi

The first woman who appeared prominently in the public life of Tellichery was Karayi Damayanthi. She was born in 1865 as the daughter of a rich merchant called Karayi Bappu in a famous Thiyya family at Tellichery. She formed a '*Ladies club*' by the second decade of the twentieth century.

⁶⁵ C.K. Revathi Amma, *Sahasra Poornima* (Mal.), Autobiography, 1977, p. 46.

During that period there were only very few women associations in the whole of Kerala. Through this association she tried to develop reading habits among women by supplying books at their doorsteps. Thus the idea of the mobile library was first accomplished by Karayi Damayanthi.⁶⁶ The ladies club aimed at the educational and social progress of Thiyya women of Tellichery. She introduced informal education by giving training⁶⁷ in tailoring, child caring etc. Doctors were invited to give classes regarding child caring. These were the activities of the Ladies Club in its initial years.⁶⁸ This lady was a role model in the social life of Tellichery.⁶⁹

Karayi Damayanthi worked much for women education through her writings in early Malayalam magazines. She was a staunch advocate of women education and according to her, social progress is possible only through women education. She insisted on the essentiality of girls' schools in Tellichery. Since education in the convent school was costly, girls of lower income families could not go to the convent. Through her writings in *Mitavadi* she tried to awaken the Government to establish a high school for girls. She was critical of the fact that men were not trying to develop women education while they were working for the development of boys in various

⁶⁶ K.V. Manjula, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

⁶⁷ Meera Velayudan, "Growth of Political Consciousness Among Women in Modern Kerala", in *Perspectives in Kerala History*, Trivandrum, 1999, p. 505.

⁶⁸ Murkoth Kumaran, C.K. Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*, introduction, pp. 14-15.

⁶⁹ A.V. Anil Kumar, "Randu Kalaghatangalile Kalahangal", (Mal.), in *Desabhimani Weekly*, Onam special, 2006, p. 111.

ways.⁷⁰ She also argued that women are not lower in intelligence than men.⁷¹ Karayi Damayanthi worked for the accomplishment of women education. Whenever girls who went to the convent with her daughters dropped out from schooling, she met their parents and forced them to send their children to school again. Further they were allowed to travel in horse carts along with her daughters. She sent lunch for the children of poor fishermen in the school.⁷²

Karayi Damayanthi was well assured of the fact that women could do all activities which men could do including journalism, book writing etc. She cited examples of Kunjukutty Thankachi, Theravath Ammalu Amma, and B.Kalliani Amma who proved themselves as good writers. Her intention was to inspire and empower women. Regarding the kind of education which should be given to girls Karayi Damayanthi opted to have the kind of education which would impart religious knowledge too so that they would develop right way in life.⁷³ Education should help women to take proper care of children, to have a basic knowledge regarding diseases, treatment etc. Again the education should help women to become full-fledged, efficient house wives.⁷⁴ When we analyze the contributions of Karayi Damayanthi, we find that she was a pioneer of women's movement in Tellichery. She was not a mere preacher of reform but an activist as well. On the one hand she tried to

⁷⁰ Karayi Damayanthi, "Nammude Streekalude Vidhyabhyasam", (Mal.) in *Mitavati*, Book 2, N.7, 1914, p. 17.

⁷¹ C.K. Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷³ Karayi Damayanthi, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

awaken the public about women education and on the other she showed the possibilities through her writings. For this she wielded her pen through the *Mitavadi* magazine of the period.

Karayi Damayanthi was a woman of generosity. She helped the neighbouring poor people on expensive occasions like marriage, death etc. At times she even donated her own children`s ornaments to the poor for marriage. She donated generously believing in the maxim,“if we give earthen pot God will give us golden pot.”⁷⁵ She even donated from the money she got after selling her property for the marriage of her daughter C K Revathi Amma.⁷⁶

Karayi Damayanthi was a social reformer. She was against child marriage and hence decided to get her daughter C.K.Revathi Amma married only at the age of fifteen. This was a great change and the inspiration was undoubtedly the visit and preaching of Sree Narayana Guru. The Guru asked the bridegroom to tie the *thali* on the occasion of the marriage, a custom not practiced till then.

C.K.Revathi Amma

Family is the basic social unit in which everyone lives in a network of mutual ties and obligations. It prepares the members as social beings through

⁷⁵ C.K.Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

transmission of tradition and the cultural, moral and spiritual values from one generation to another.⁷⁷ There is no better example to show this than C.K.Revathi Amma who carried on the same social commitment and service programmes of her mother, Damayanthi Amma. C.K.Revathi Amma was in the public life of Tellichery in various ways. Born in 1891 she was a well known novelist, play wright and social worker who lived in Tellichery. Her life spanned a fascinating spectrum of events.

Revathi Amma was educated up to fifth standard in the Sacred Heart Convent School at Tellichery. She was married at the age of fifteen to Paithal, the commissiar of Mahe. Marriage took her to Mahe which was a French enclave. Revathi Amma initiated many efforts to implement reforms among the women of Mahe. She was prompted for this by her own mother's social service activities and the family background .Further she was married to an influential family of Mahe in which the *Karanavar* (Head of the family) was the Mayor of Mahe and he accepted the social service mentality of Revathi Amma. Revathi Amma's public life began under the influence of all these positive factors.⁷⁸ More than that, she was influenced by the ideals of Sree Narayana Guru, especially the ideas regarding equality which is very similar

⁷⁷ Renjini. D. Nair, *Women Today, Disintegration of Matrilineal system and the status of Nair women in Kerala*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 33.

⁷⁸ C.K. Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

to French ideals of Democracy-Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.⁷⁹ All these helped Revathi Amma to work for the poor and needy and for social harmony.

Through the words of her grandmother Revathi Amma explored the evil customs which existed in the society and the resultant issues that occurred in the society especially regarding women. Child marriage was prevalent at that time. Usually girls were married before they attained the age of twelve. The girl would be kept in ignorance of her marriage. The child bride was not permitted to travel in the horse cart on the day of the marriage. If she violated this unwritten rule, she was ostracized (*brashtu*). To relieve herself from the ostracism, the *karanavar* must be propitiated suitably by offering betel leaves at the feet of the *karanavar* and doing penance. A special meeting would be held and the girl would have to repent before those gathered. On such occasions the *karanavar* would scold and behave badly. The bride would not be permitted to use any footwear. The girls after marriage were denied any kind of freedom in their husband's house. They would have to lead a life equivalent to that of a servant in the house.⁸⁰

Another social evil which was prevalent among the Thiyyas was the *talikettu kalyanam*. As per belief the function should be observed when a girl attained puberty. The *tali* was tied around the neck of the girl by her aunts. The function was as costly as a real marriage. Other social customs observed

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 41- 42.

as function by the Thiyya community of the period were *tirandukuli*, (function observed when a girl attained puberty), *pulikuti* (a custom observed during pregnancy) etc. In 1904 Sree Narayana Guru visited Tellichery as a part of the reform movement and he insisted on abolishing all these unwanted, lavish social customs. The visit of Sree Narayana Guru created awareness among the Thiyyas regarding social reforms and the construction of a temple was realized-that was the Jagannatha temple. Till then the Thiyyas had worshiped in the *Kavus* only. The prominent among them were Parassini Muthappan Matappura, Andallur Kavu, Cheerumba Kavu, etc.⁸¹

After the First World War, Red Cross societies were formed in Mahe to help the wounded and the members of the families of deceased *jawans*. In order to discuss its activities a meeting was held at the Bungalow of the *Mooppan saive*.⁸² Revathi Amma attended the meeting. In the meeting decision was taken to raise money by way of enacting out farce drama and send the money to the French Government. Revathi Amma had an important role in making it a success. This was the first activity of Revathi Amma as a social worker.

Revathi Amma as a Writer

Revathi Amma read many novels and she could form her own ideas and could write by including the social customs and manners of her own

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁸² Mooppan Saive was the French Administrator of Mahe.

caste. Thus she developed as a writer at the age of thirty. She used to write when her husband went to office and she wrote late in the night. Her husband did not like this. He used to blow out the lamp and throw out the papers in which she wrote. But Revathi Amma continued to write patiently, tolerating her husband's rude behaviour and she was proud of that.⁸³ Thus she wrote the first novel which was later named *Randu Sahodarikal* (two sisters). The book was corrected by Moorkkoth Kumaran and was published by C.K.Damodaran, the manager of Vidyavilasam press.

Revathi Amma wrote farces to be enacted for the programmes of the *Stree Samajam*. They are *Sarala Vijayam* (victory of Sarala) and *Valiya tharavattile kutti* (The child of a big family). Revathi Amma wrote her second novel *Sobhana* when she was more than fifty two years old and it was published by the Vidyavilasam press. After the publication of this novel she became a familiar person to the public. She was offered various positions and honours even though she did not aspire for them. She wrote her auto biography *Sahasra poornima* (One thousand full moons) in 1977. The book portrays the history and culture of Tellichery in a vivid way.⁸⁴ It throws light in to many events of the period. She took twelve years to complete the work. It won the Kerala Sahithya Academy Award in 1980.

⁸³ Geetha Doctor, "My grandmother- C.K.Revathi Amma", cited in C.K.Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 264.

⁸⁴ C.K.Revathi Amma *op.cit.*, p. 129.

C.K. Revathi Amma as an Organizer

Revathi Amma was a dynamic person who never sat idle. When she was in Mahe she wanted to form an organization for women. She was motivated by other women organizations which were formed in some other cities which were in the fore front of education. Such associations were carrying out developmental activities for their own communities and for the country. She could gather such ideas from the news papers of the period and she decided to start such an association at Mahe also.

To start the women's association-*Stree Samajam* she got the support of Madam Dero, the headmistress of the Girls' School of Mahe who was well versed in English and French. Since she had visited many cities of India and abroad, she also wanted to establish such an association in Mahe. This social commitment and progressive thinking of Madam Dero helped Revathi Amma a lot to form the *Stree Samajam* in 1931. It was inaugurated by Mooliyil Janaki, a native of Kozhikode and it was presided over by Moopan Saive. Madam Dero was the president and C.K.Revathi Amma was the vice president of the *Stree Samajam*.⁸⁵ The secretary and treasurer of the Samajam were the teachers of the Girls' School. The monthly membership fee was Rs.1 per head. With this money a reading room was started under the auspices of the *Stree Samajam*. The *Stree Samajam* of Mahe under the leader

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

ship of Revathi Amma had contributed a lot to the cultural life of Mahe.⁸⁶ The *Stree Samajam* and the Vidyarthi Samajam worked together during the Second World War period in order to collect money towards the war fund.⁸⁷

When Gandhi visited Kerala to raise funds for Harijan upliftment, he visited Mahe on 13 January 1934. Revathi Amma was informed of the reception programme by Dr.M.K.Menon who was a congress worker. The meeting was held in the premises of the Puthalam Temple at Mahe.⁸⁸ The reception committee had donated a money bag containing an amount of Rs.301. The *Stree Samajam* under the leadership of C.K.Revathi Amma took the initiative to conduct the function at the request of M.K.Menon. After receiving the money bag Gandhi asked women to donate gold ornaments to the fund.⁸⁹

At this the women were in a dilemma for there was womanly interest for ornaments on the one side and patriotic Swarajist thinking on the other. But the situation was changed when Mrs.M.K.Menon and her sisters donated gold ornaments. Revathi Amma donated two bangles and a golden chain of her daughter⁹⁰ and many others followed suit.

⁸⁶ C.H.Gangadharan, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

⁸⁷ C.K.Revathi Aamma, *op.cit.*, p. 162.

⁸⁸ C.H.Gangadharan, *Mayyazhi*, Calicut, 1984, p. 127.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Chokiliyute Innalekal*, (Mal.), Chokli Grama Panchayat, 2005, p. 49.

Revathi Amma considered the blessings of Gandhi as an important factor for her social service activities afterwards.⁹¹

After shifting residence to Tellichery she had started a Mahila Samajam there also and it functioned well. By the time she published her second novel *Sobhana* she already held an honorable place in the society. She contested as a congress candidate in the District Board election without success. She was elected as one of the directors of the urban bank and held that post for three years.⁹²

C.K. Revathi Amma was selected to the Director Board of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam. She went to Quilon for every annual meeting of the Yogam.⁹³ By this time Guild of Service was founded in Tellichery and she became a member of that. With this she began to collect money under the banner of Mahila Samajam for raising funds for the Social Service League. Cultural programmes were conducted regularly on the occasion of the Republic Day. Only Samajam members participated in these programmes. In the Samajam only congress members were admitted as members. When Nehru visited Tellichery, they worked very hard to make the programme a success.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

Apart from the social service for the down trodden the Guild of Service also ran a free hospital at Tellichery. That was donated by C.K.Revathi Amma and Narayani Rao. C.K.Revathi Amma was elected as the secretary of the hospital.⁹⁴

When the communist party was in power a rehabilitation centre was started due to the strenuous efforts of V.R.Krishna Iyer. The institution was aimed at protecting the poor and orphan boys and guiding them to have a normal life.⁹⁵ Even though there were Government employees to manage the centre C.K.Revathi Amma and other members of the Samajam worked for the smooth functioning of the institution. Since every activity needed fund to implement the schemes, fund raising was a great problem. C.K.Revathi Amma accompanied the members to collect money and she was nicknamed *pirivamma*.⁹⁶ The After Care Home was started in 1956 and she became the Chairman of the After Care Home in 1971. Advocate P.Kunhiraman was the founding Chairman of the After Care Home and C.K.Revathi Amma its secretary.

She worked in the Red Cross Society and was a member of the Tellichery co-operative milk society.⁹⁷ She functioned as the president of the Society for three years. She was appointed as the District Development

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁹⁶ A mother who collects money.

⁹⁷ C.K.Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 188.

Council Member by the Kerala Government. Meanwhile the famous ophthalmologist Dr.Modi had conducted an eye camp at Tellichery. The patients were treated in Brennen College and Mission High School, Tellichery. Municipality and the Social Service League helped in the venture and made it a success. Politically the Social Service League had strong faith in the congress and the members helped the congress candidates during every election period in many ways.⁹⁸

The Samajam had worked for collecting fund for the rejuvenation work of the pond of the Thiruvangad Temple. She worked at this venture for three years successfully. Due to all these public activities many people accused her and her own brother and family ridiculed her as “angadi adu.”⁹⁹

She had visited various places in the country with her son Padmanaban who was the Indian Ambassador abroad. In 1958 the Tellichery women co-operative society was started¹⁰⁰ to help women and unmarried girls to earn a little extra money through the sale of jams and preserves and readymade garments.¹⁰¹ Ambassador Padmanaban laid the foundation stone of the building. C.K.Revathi Amma worked a lot for the construction of the building and for the maintenance of the society.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-190.

⁹⁹ A goat in the street.

¹⁰⁰ C.K.Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*

¹⁰¹ Geetha Doctor, *op.cit.*

Chinmayananda Swami was invited to conduct a *yajna* in 1962. In the working committee Revathi Amma was the General Secretary. She unfurled the flag in the premises of the SreeRamaswamy Temple as per the instructions of the Swami.¹⁰² That was a historical event because till then the Thiyyas were not even given permission to enter in to the temple. In such a temple Revathi Amma, a Thiyya woman unfurled the flag. After two years Swami was again invited to conduct *yajna* on 24 February 1965 at Tellichery and at that time he stayed in Revathi Amma's house. This elicited protests from the public and upper castes and she was ridiculed by them. But they all joined the programme gradually and made it a success. There after they called her family as "Royal Thiyyas."¹⁰³

C.K.Revathi Amma was appointed in the National Savings Board and Family Planning Board as member from the Kannur District. Due to the initiative and effort of C.K.Revathi Amma two L.P. Schools of Tellichery were upgraded to U.P. Schools when R.Sankar was the Chief Minister of Kerala. When ever she went to Trivandrum for official matters or to regress the grievances of the public she used to stay in the women's lodge of Gouri Amma.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² C.K.Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 222.

¹⁰³ Her own caste people did not like the visit of Chinmayananda Swami at her house and they asked her whether she was going to join the Nair caste. Personal interview with Padma Devarajan, daughter of C.K.Revathi Amma, at her residence, Tellichery on 15 October 2007.

¹⁰⁴ C.K.Revathi Amma, *op.cit.*, p. 234.

C.K.Revathi Amma went to Bombay when her son Ambassador Padmanabhan came there along with the King and Queen of Iran. She stayed in Bombay for three months in order to collect money for the construction of the Tellichery women's cooperative society building.

During the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1971, an unprecedented incident occurred in the peaceful town of Tellichery. Revathi Amma went and stood on the steps of the local mosque (Shaheedar Mosque).¹⁰⁵ This act of Revathi Amma prevented the mob from attacking it. Thus Revathi Amma acted expediently to re-establish communal harmony in Tellichery.

After performing so much of social services and duties in various capacities she actually wanted to withdraw from public life and she desired to go to Dakshineswaram but could not fulfill that. She had to continue the same busy schedule in her later life.

In many of these activities C.K.Revathi Amma did not get the support of her family members. Even her husband was not supportive at times. She worked undaunted and succeeded in overcoming all such hurdles.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

Muslim Women in the Public Life of Malabar

Muslim community was also influenced by the socio-economic, educational and cultural movements of the modern period. The Muslims of Malabar, comparatively a backward community, showed trends of change¹⁰⁶ by the early decades of the twentieth century. Till then the traditional Madrassa and Dars education were the systems of education that were predominant among the Muslims.¹⁰⁷ Modern education for girls was almost forbidden. Sending a girl for education up to matriculation was unthinkable; college education of women was even more unthinkable. Modern secular education was slowly accepted by them and a few women acquired modern education and stepped out of their homes to be active in the social and political scenario.

The Muslim women of Tellichery showed signs of reform in their life and attitudes through convent education. Education equipped them to be instrumental in socio-political activities of the society. Tellichery, being the early settlement of the British in Malabar, had the unique privilege to be the ground for the lucrative trade of the period. Trade enabled the people to have exposure to the outside world. This was fruitfully combined with the educational opportunities which were effectively made use of by the progressive families of the area. Women from these families entered the

¹⁰⁶ S.M.Mohamed Koya, *Mappilas of Malabar*, Calicut, 1983, p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

public life of Malabar and capitalized on the transformation, the society was undergoing.

T.C. Kunhachumma

Begum Thacharakkal Cannoth Areekkasthanath Kunhachumma¹⁰⁸ was born in 1889 as the daughter of O.Mayanali. Among the Muslim women who came forward into public life in the early decades of the twentieth century, she was in the forefront. Tellichery, in her time, had a sizeable Muslim population and she pioneered the social reform movement among them and indirectly involved in the political movements of the period. The financial power of the family and the support of her husband Kadankandy Kuttiamu Hajji enabled her to be active in the public life of her time.

The Muslims of Malabar observed the matrilineal system until the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the early decades of the century witnessed the gradual transformation from matrilineal to patrilineal. This was a social change of considerable importance and it was ensued by far reaching structural changes in the Muslim society of Malabar.¹⁰⁹ The first Muslim family to shift from the matrilineal to the patrilineal system was the Puthiya Maliyekkal (1919), while the Malabar Muslims were unanimously observing

¹⁰⁸ Herein after referred to as T.C.Kunhachumma.

¹⁰⁹ S.M.Mohammed Koya, *op.cit.*, p. 172.

Marumakkathiyam.¹¹⁰ This change happened when Kuttiamu Hajji constructed a thirty bed roomed house, in an acre of land for his wife, T.C.Kunhachumma and her nine children.¹¹¹

Therewith, 'the Maliyekkal house' became the pivot of the social reform movement among the Muslims and influenced the social, cultural and political life of the Muslims of Malabar. The social service mission of the Maliyekkal family has been fervently carried on by every successive generation of the family.

During the National Movement, Kunhachumma became a member of the women's wing of the All India Muslim league.¹¹² She attended the annual conference of the All India Muslim League held at Patna in 1938 and she was the only Muslim woman from Kerala who was elected to the women's wing of the League.¹¹³ Leaders like Ali brothers and their mother, Bi-amman were hosted by Kunhachumma and it may be noted that she even gifted a dollar chain to Ali Brothers to express her strong sympathies. When ever the nationalist leaders like Annie Besant or Suchetha Kripalani came to Kerala, they were received by the Maliyekkal family. The Maliyekkal family showed the will and the boldness to give succor to politicians and leaders in the time

¹¹⁰ Personal interview with P.V.Hameed, grandson of T.C.Kunhachumma, at his residence, Tellichery on 3 August, 2007.

¹¹¹ Personal interview with Maliyekkal Mariyumma, grand daughter of T.C.Kunhachumma, at her residence, Tellichery on 3rd December 2006.

¹¹² M.R., *Kunhachumma Oru Dheera Mahila, Malayala Manorama* supplement, Tellichery 18 November, 1967.

¹¹³ *Patayani*, Tellichery, 29 Jun 1988, p. 2.

of trouble and political tribulation. Abdul Rahiman Sahib and Yakoob Hassan received an unwholesome welcome on their visit to Kerala. The Muslim extremists revolted against them and their visit, waving black flags of protest. When the threats leaped out of control, the Maliyekkal family came to their rescue and offered asylum. Eminent men like Kamal Pasha, Abdullah Gandhi, K.P.Kesava Menon, Panambilly Govinda Menon and Moidu Moulavi enjoyed the family's gracious hospitality. Leaders like EMS. Nambuthiripad, AKGopalan, and Imbichibava many a time had lived underground under the cover of this family.¹¹⁴

Till her death in 1945,¹¹⁵ she had a massive sway among the women of Tellichery. For the first time the Muslim women of Kerala were organized under her leadership. In 1933 Kunhachumma formed the Tellichery Muslim Mahila Samajam in the court yard of her family and she was its president.¹¹⁶ In the initial phase of the Samajam, the women from her family and the women from the neighbourhood were its members.

The Muslim orthodoxy was displeased with her move. The Mahila Samajam was secular in nature, though was named "Muslim Mahila Samajam". Outstanding women like Chinnamalu Amma, Karthiayani Amma and Justice Janaki were active members of this association. The activities of

¹¹⁴ Personal interview with Maliyekkal Mariyumma, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁵ *Mathrubhumi*, 26 January, 1945.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the Samajam included the arranging of free blood testing camps, the free distribution of medicines for the needy and the organization of awareness classes. Even in the 1930s family planning awareness seminars were convened in the court yard of Maliyekkal family under the auspices of the Samajam¹¹⁷. The Samajam also took up a literacy mission and initiated the steps to impart adult education for the Muslims of Malabar.

In the time of the Second World War Kunhachumma took the initiative to recruit the unemployed youth in to the Army. She desired to help the youth with employment and their poor families with an income. She searched out the youth who were willing to join the army and helped them to get recruited. Her services were recognized by the British Government. In January 1945, the Madras Governor Sir Arthur Hop honored Kunhachumma in a function at Calicut and presented the Recruitment Medal to her.¹¹⁸ The British Government honored her for the role she played in the socio political activities of Malabar. She was the only one among the Muslim women of Kerala to be honored by the British.¹¹⁹

Equality of women

In her time, T.C.Kunhachumma was the vanguard of Muslim women reforms in Tellichery. The Muslim orthodoxy strongly protested against her

¹¹⁷ Personal interview, Maliyekkal Mariyumma, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁸ *Mathrubhumi*, 26 January, 1945.

¹¹⁹ *Malayala Manorama*, 28 October 1968.

progressive moves but protests failed to dampen her zeal. She realized that the Muslim women of her time could be empowered only through education and initiated the drive to impart education to them. She transformed her court yard into a venue for social activities.¹²⁰ Kunhachumma realized the starkness of the evil of child marriage which was rampant among Muslims. She campaigned against it in her own way among the women. She made women aware of the evils of child marriage. Muslim marriages in Kunhachumma's time were a platform of unhealthy extravagances which inflicted heavy financial burden on the families. People spent beyond their means to impress their kin with pomp. Kunhachumma unveiled to the women in her reach, the folly of extravagant spending in connection with marriages.

Kunhachumma realized that Muslim women lived in their homes as second class citizens often under the dictatorial rule of their unsympathetic husbands. The reformer in her ardently worked to establish the equality of women. As a bold step towards this, in 1920 she convened Tharaviya Namaskaram¹²¹ in the court yard of Maliyekkal family.¹²² Even today in the month of Ramzan ladies lead the Tharaviya Namaskaram. Women were also given training in Kalari, Kolkali and swimming.¹²³

¹²⁰ O.Aabu, *Anthapurathil oru Susaktha Sanghatana, Mathrubhumi* 25 December 1965.

¹²¹ Tharaveeya Namaskaram is performed in the month of Ramzan. The popular belief is that if this is observed the reward from God will be, twenty seven times more.

¹²² Personal interview with P.V.Hameed, *op.cit.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

In the post-independence era, the Maliyekkal family embraced the leftist political ideology. Positions of political power at varied levels were held by members of the Maliyekkal family. The administrative machinery of Tellichery has had many from the family. Amina Hashim who was the leader of the women's wing of the socialist party, Ramla Babu the Ex Tellichery Municipal Councilor, Amina Maliyekkal are people who continued the tradition of left politics.¹²⁴

The Tellichery Muslim Mahila Samajam was a relief centre for the poor people of Tellichery. Irrespective of their caste, needy students and poor girls who could not get married were helped by the Samajam. The Samajam went a long way under the able leadership of its founder T.C.Kunhachumma, her daughter P.M.Manumma and her daughter P.M.Mariyumma. The Samajam sustained itself and its activities, without seeking governmental aid of any kind, relying almost solely on the donations of benefactors. The services of the Samajam had far reaching influences in the Muslim society and have won recognition from many.¹²⁵

With in three decades, the Samajam changed the very nature of the Muslim society itself. The extravagant expenditure in connection with marriage which was celebrated in five or eight days was minimized to one day celebration mainly due to the Samajam's efforts. Expensive celebrations

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Malayala Manorama*, 28 October 1968.

like *Kathukuthu* (piercing of the ear) *Nalpathu Kuli* (a function on the 40th day after delivery), *Nathun Sadya* (feast in connection with the visit of sister-in-law) were abandoned with the efforts of the Samajam.¹²⁶

P.M.Mariyumma (1925 -)

The Muslim Mahila Samajam worked well under the leadership of P.M.Mariyumma, grand daughter of T.C.Kunhachumma. She is convent educated and a true follower of Kunhachumma in social service activities.¹²⁷ She is the second daughter of O.V.Abdullah (Senior) of Maliyekkal family. She joined the Tellichery Sacred Heart Convent School as per the advice of her father. She went to school at a time when formal education was a taboo for Muslim girls. In those times, girls were not permitted even to go outside the house alone. Only very few girls were lucky to have formal education up to third or fourth standard.

It was during such an atmosphere that a girl from Maliyekkal family went to the convent for English education and studied up to fifth form. Naturally it has been a matter of hot discussion among the Muslim community. “When I was a student I was the only Muslim girl in the convent”.¹²⁸ These were the words of Maliyekkal Mariyumma who was who was sarcastically called as ‘English Mariyumma’ by the public, at a time

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ O.Abu, *op.cit.*

¹²⁸ Personal interview with P.M.Mariyumma, *op.cit.*

when English language was considered by the orthodoxy as the language of the hell.

Her father Abdullah was well versed in religious subjects. Later he had gone to Cochin for trade and engaged in self study. His contacts with foreign traders who arrived for trade, gave him the chance to learn languages like English, Urdu, Hindi, Parsi, Kannada, and Tamil. He was well versed in Arabic and had translated *Burdabaith* from Arabic to English. He had a good library of different languages and this was handed over to Tellichery Darussalam Yatheemkhana (Orphanage) which was established under his initiative.¹²⁹

Mariyumma was married on 13 May 1943 to V.R. Mayan Ali, Military Recruiting Officer who later worked as inspector of General Insurance and as the Managing Director of the Ex-Servicemen Bus Service. He worked with the national movement and was an active member of the Muslim Majlis which was formed by the Muslims in the congress. Her father O.V. Abdullah, Abdulkalam Azad, E. Moidu Moulavi, Palat Kunhi Koya, Abdul Rahiman Sahib and P.P. Ummer Koya worked as a team for the Majlis. Through the public activities of her father and husband she could meet and get acquainted with many famous personalities. Ali brothers,

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Yakoob Hassan, E.Moidu Moulavi, EMS Nambuthiripad, A. K. Gopalan and General Kariappa were some among them.¹³⁰

Mariyumma entered the public life of Tellichery as the secretary of the Muslim Mahila Samajam which was founded by her grand mother. Later she became the president of the Samajam and continued the work of the Samajam till 1975. The death of her husband made her withdraw from public life and it adversely affected the activities of the Samajam.

Though the name of the Samajam was Muslim Mahila Samajam, the membership was open to all others irrespective of caste barriers. O.C.Chinnamalu who was the District Education Officer and the social activist C.K.Revathi Amma were some among them. A.V.Kuttimalu Amma, Thankamma, the health Director, Panambilly Govinda Menon, K.P.Kesava Menon, Dr.Abdul Gaffoor and Nafeesath Beevi participated in various functions of the Samajam.¹³¹

She was an artist too. She was a member of the committee that was in charge of the selection of announcers to All India Radio. The other members were Konniyur Narendra Nath and N.K.Seshan.¹³²

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Desabhimani, 30 January 2005.

¹³² Personal interview with P.M.Mariyumma, *op.cit.*

Marks of modernity- Tellichery Sisters

The awakened Muslim families which had welcomed the values of renaissance and progressive ideas with open arms realized the necessity of education early enough. The women in such a family had gained English education in the 1930s itself. Vayyappurath Kunnath Kunhimayin Sahib sent his three daughters to the convent for English education for the first time in Malabar. For this he was accused and ridiculed by the public orthodoxy as *Khafir* Mayin.¹³³ These three girls were known as Tellichery sisters. They were Amina Hashim Ayisha Rauf, and Haleema Abooty. Amina Hashim was a doctor; Ayisha Rauf was the Muslim school Inspector at Malappuram under the British Government. After her marriage she went to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) with her husband and she was elected as the first woman Mayor of Colombo Municipality. Haleema Abooty was a house wife. These ladies revolutionized the dressing pattern of the Muslim society.¹³⁴ They wore skirt and blouse and went to the convent with their brothers who unlike the Muslim boys of the time, wore trousers and had cropped hair. Later when they grew older, they wore sari instead of traditional Muslim clothes.

It was a time when the Muslim girls were destined to live within the four walls of the house. They were not allowed to go outside freely, talk loudly or to have formal education. Vayyappurath Kunnath Kunhi Mayin

¹³³ *Malayala Manorama*, 29 August 1999.

¹³⁴ Personal interview with P.V.Siraj, son of Haleema Abooty, Tellichery 3 Aug, 2007.

Sahib decided to educate his three daughters along with his two sons. That was a revolutionary step in the history of Muslims in Malabar. When they went to the Sacred Heart Convent, Tellichery wearing skirt and frock, the orthodox people used to say, “see, *Khafir* Mayin’s children are going to school”. Those who got modern education were considered by the orthodoxy as outcastes and *Khafirs*.

Kunhi Mayin Sahib was educated and was well versed in religious matters and was a progressive. He bought books from the world famous Oxford, Macmillan companies, enriched his knowledge and maintained a good library.

Dr. Amina Hashim (1912 -1981)

The first Muslim girl who studied in an English medium school in Malabar was Amina Hashim. She had her primary education at Sacred Heart Convent Tellichery. She passed Intermediate from the Madras Queen Mary’s College and took MBBS from the Punjab University. She served as a Medical Practitioner in Bombay, Poona and in various parts of Kerala.¹³⁵

Amina was married to Villandavidutha Hashim Sahib, who was the Deputy collector of Malabar District under the British. Amina was immersed in the socio-cultural realms of Malabar and was active in political activities too. In 1950 she contested to the Madras legislative Assembly as a socialist

¹³⁵ Personal interview with P.V.Hameed, son of Haleema Abootty, *op.cit.*

party candidate, but lost.¹³⁶ P.R.Kurup, who later became a minister was the election agent of Amina.

Ayisha Rauf (1914-1991)

“Ceylon is a beautiful country and Colombo is a very clean city. If any of you get a chance to travel do not fail to see Ceylon.” These were the words of Kunhi Mayin Sahib to his children after his visit of Ceylon in 1930. These words were accomplished by his second daughter Ayisha Rauf. Little did she realize that she would marry a handsome Muslim man from Ceylon and so over in 1944 not only to live there but to enter the political scene as the first Muslim woman in politics?¹³⁷

Ayisha got primary education along with her sisters Amina and Haleema from the Tellichery convent. From there she went for higher studies to St.Anne’s College affiliated to Madras University. After a short while she became a member of the debating society. As a Muslim girl it required courage, tact and perseverance to step out of a strict mould of conservative traditions and bravely break the old traditional restrictions on Muslim girls. During this time she met Moulana Shoukkath Ali, Mohammed Ali and

¹³⁶ Kerala Muslim Directory, Cochin, 1960, p. 636.

¹³⁷ Roshan Pieris, Ayisha Rauf –the first woman Deputy Mayor, The Sunday Observer, 17 January 1988, p. 20.

Mahatma Gandhi along with her sisters. In the memories of Haleema, her sisters received Ali brothers by wearing *Khaddar* clothes.¹³⁸

Ayisha did her degree at Queen Mary's college affiliated to Madras University. She studied English, French, Economics Politics and History. She was unique as a Muslim girl and in later life she was a Muslim woman who stood out from the crowd of Muslim women by her accomplishments. She was the first Muslim Head Prefect of the Sacred Heart Convent. She was also the first Muslim girl to graduate from a University in the whole of the Malabar District. At Queen Mary's College she created further history, by not only participating in sports, but by being exceptionally good at Tennis and she represented the college in inter college sports.

After I graduated, I lectured for a couple of months at the training college, Tellichery and was soon appointed as Inspector of Muslim girls in Manjeri, in south Malabar. In the mean time I armed myself with a diploma in teaching too. When I passed out I was appointed as a special officer for women's education for the whole of Malabar."¹³⁹ In Malabar she worked for the progress of Muslim women in the society.

By then, slowly Muslim girls were stepping out of their homes seeking education. Yet they maintained all their traditions and customs which they respected. Ayisha sought to promote education among Muslim

¹³⁸ Personal interview with P.V.Hameed, son of Haleema Abootty, *op.cit.*

¹³⁹ Quoted in Roshan Pieris, *op.cit.*

girls. To Ayisha it was a sacred mission which all through her life she worked to fulfill.

“When I began my work I had many threatening letters from fellow Muslims saying it was a disgrace traveling alone by bus from place to place as an inspectress.”¹⁴⁰

So when ever possible her brother who was working as an Inspector of Boy’s schools at that time accompanied her. Once she nearly lost her life by drowning when she was crossing a river. In 1943 she was married to Mohamed Shareef Mohamed Rauf and in the next year she went to Ceylon with her husband.¹⁴¹ She continued her public activity there also¹⁴².

Haleema Abootty

The youngest of the three sisters was Haleema who too had convent education. After school, she joined Queen Mary’s College and passed the

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Kerala Muslim Directory, *op.cit.*, p. 638.

¹⁴² She was asked by the then Minister of Education Mr.C.W.W. Kanangara and the Director of Education Dr. Howes to report to the Principal of the Govt. Girls School Maradana. The school for the Muslim girls became the Muslim Ladies College and Ayisha was the first Principal of that college. In the school there were only twenty children on the first day (9.9.1946) but with in a month there were two hundred girls. Ayisha entered politics in Ceylon. She became a Member of the Ceylon Indian Congress and worked hard to better the lives of both men and women working on the plantations. There she campaigned for M.F.Ghany. Then she became the first Muslim woman Municipal Councilor. In the election for the Deputy Mayor the left group which had the same number of candidates as the Right’s group proposed Ayisha’s name. The votes were divided almost equally and she, a left supported candidate won by just one vote. That made her the first woman Deputy Mayor of Ceylon. She gave up politics in 1961 when the Government took over the school and she became a public servant. See Roshan Pieris, *op.cit.*

Intermediate. She was involved in social service activities in Tellichery. She was married to a congress man T.C.Abooty who was the son of T.C.Kunachumma, the founding president of the Tellichery Muslim Mahila Samajam. Haleema continued her social service activities even after marriage. She was an asylum to the poor women of Tellichery.¹⁴³ She patched up the quarrels which occurred among the neighbouring families in Tellichery. She used to go to the police station and to the collector ate in order to get relief for poor women.¹⁴⁴

Thus the reformation of the modern period is well reflected in the life and culture of Muslim community in Tellichery. The major factor which altered the life and culture of Muslim women was English education. At a time when the female education was considered as a 'taboo', the women of some progressive families were educated on modern lines. Further these convents educated women entered public life of Malabar mainly through social service activities. They performed their role well without considering caste discrepancies, social in-equalities etc. All the women personalities who were brought under study in the present chapter were involved in social service activities without interfering in the political movements of the period. The women leaders responded to the need of the time and acted in the best interests of the people within their community and outside.

¹⁴³ Personal interview with P.V.Hameed, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

The study made in the previous chapters shows that women of Malabar had an important role to play in the public life at a time when the society was under going drastic changes under British imperialism. The traditional Malayalee society did not allow mobility and freedom for women. This was especially so for upper caste women. In a highly structured society women were either shut up in their houses or were marginalized. Women's role was thus being privatized.

Women's entry into public life of Malabar was not an abrupt one, rather it was the sum total of various changes and developments which took place during the last decades of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth century. Politically, Malabar became a part of the British Empire by 1790's and since then Malabar was experiencing foreign domination. Socially, the nineteenth century Malabar society was a highly hierarchical one which suffered much under casteism-where 'untouchability' and 'unseeability' were strictly observed. Women were the worst hit in such a society. In this highly restricted society education was denied to them. This began to change towards the end of the 19th century when education was provided to girls also. In this context, the contribution of the Basel Evangelical Missionaries was considerable. .

Women education was popularized by early Malayalam novelists. While Appu Nedungadi accomplished women education by the establishment of the first girls' school in Malabar, O. Chandu Menon popularized the concept of women education, freedom and modernity in life through his character Indulekha, who was the symbol of 'colonial modernity'. Missionary education was propagated by Joseph Mooliyil in the novel *Sukumari*. The conflict between tradition and modernity and the final victory of modernity is well traced in the novel *Meenakshi*. Formal education provided an open avenue to women to understand the changes which took place around them. Education enabled women to approach things realistically and critically. Besides women could occupy responsible positions outside their home and this facilitated their entry in to public life. Thus education, both formal and informal, helped women a lot to get them involved in the political and social activities of the period.

Malabar had women organizations called *Stree Samajams* by the beginning of the 20th century itself. Stree Samajams of Tellichery, Kozhikode and Palghat were some of the very active and influential women organizations. Besides these regional organizations, branches of Women's Indian Association and All India Women's Conference were established in Malabar by the 1930's. These associations worked a lot to educate women and to make them self reliant and self conscious politically and socially.

Meanwhile there were some local organizations- Mahe-Tellichery Mahila Samajam and Tellichery Muslim Mahila Samajam to name a few.

With the formation of Congress Socialist Party, women of North Malabar were organized. The Pappinisseri Mahila Samajam was one such organization. Later Deseeya Mahila Samajam was formed. All these organizations provided avenue for women to work for the society. All these organizations made women 'visible' in the public life of Malabar. The contribution made by women as active participants of these organizations was substantial.

Women's journals and magazines have an important place in the awareness of women regarding the public activities and they were pushed to the forefront as writers in these journals and magazines. Many of them became editors of the magazines of the period. The articles and stories published in these magazines deliberately made efforts to convince women about their intellectual capacities which were often neglected in the traditional society¹. Such writings certainly made women conscious of their role in a literate society. The articles thus published helped them a lot since they touched every aspect of their life and they could be visible on the stage itself.

¹.In the *Thalachorillatha Streekal* Govindan Nair was not prepared to consider his wife as an individual with intelligence .¹Knowing this attitude, his wife Kalliani Amma wrote and sent articles to the publishers under the pen name Balakrishnan Nair and all her writings were recognized by the editor. Finally Govindan Nair was ready to consider his wife as a capable and intelligent person. He was even ready to say, " I will never say that women have no brain", M. Saraswathi Bai, *Thalachorillatha Streekal*, Bhashaposhini book 15 No.8,9 Meenam 1086 (1911)

Women like Theravath Ammalu Amma made earnest efforts to empower women literally through her writings. Thus women in the early twentieth century could get a clear picture of the literate society as well as the role of women in such a society. Thus the creation of a 'reading public' and their achievements of women writers could do a lot during the early decades of the 20th century.

The national movement drew women in to the public. Anti-imperialism united Indians and they protested against the high handedness and discriminatory policies of the British Government. In the case of women, the discrimination was two fold-one under the Government and the other under patriarchy. It was from such a situation that women were organized under the banner of nationalism and this formed a catalytic force in the awakening of women.

During the early phase of the Indian National Congress, women's participation was minimal and largely symbolic and it is noteworthy that the membership of this organization for women was open right from the very beginning. It was Gandhian ideology that attracted women to the national movement. Gandhi was convinced that Indian women need to draw upon the deep resources available within themselves as women and with in their rich and fertile religio-cultural inheritance in order to participate in the public life

and the vital role which he envisaged for them in the struggle for swaraj and the quest for Sarvodaya

The rich cultural heritage along with the extensive social and political history of India was also a major source of inspiration for Gandhi's vision. The ideals of womanhood emphasized by Gandhi were mainly Sita, Savithri and Draupathi and the model for man-woman relations which he advocated was that of Ram and Sita of Ramacharita Manas² With the acceleration of the national movement, elite women of Malabar began to join in considerable numbers. They attended political meetings and joined processions. Though they lived in the tradition bound environment of the family, they never felt any difficulty or obstruction in adjusting with the larger and more demanding world of politics.

Women of Malabar, along with their sisters in other parts of India, not only bravely participated in the freedom struggle but also displayed ardent patriotism, self-less sacrifice and a total dedication to the cause of this struggle. The participation of the freedom struggle provided women for the first time an opportunity to establish their individual identity and strength.

Women of Malabar entered the public life with the Non Co-operation Movement (1920-22) under Gandhian leader ship. Gandhi included the

² Rajan Mahan, Women in Indian National Congress. 1921-to 1931 Rawat Publications, New Delhi (1999)p.87

service of women in his Constructive Programme.³ During this period women were instrumental in raising funds for the Constructive Programme. In Calicut, the women organization called 'Ladies wing' worked for raising funds towards the Harijan welfare programme of Gandhi. Most of the women personalities participated in the movement as members but there were no women leaders and their role was not pronounced prominently. .

In this context, many women donated their ornaments to Gandhi. Among them Kaumudi Teacher stands unique. While many women replaced their donated ornaments, Kaumudi Teacher lived without wearing ornaments there after and still lives as a true Gandhian.

It was during the Civil Disobedience Movement that women of Malabar participated in large numbers. It was argued that the whole system of Gandhian technique was such that women found no difficulty in participating in the Movements organized by him. That is why "women from all ranks of society, educated and uneducated highly sophisticated ladies and rustic women, all gathered round him. Even women of conservative families who had never been out of their homes joined in the struggle. Their men folk were sure that no harm could come to them in a Movement guided and controlled by Gandhi. Under his inspiring leadership, his fostering care and loving

³ M.K.Gandhi, Constructive Programme. It's Meaning and Place(First ed 1941) Navajeevan publishing house Ahamedabad 1998p.16

guidance they could play a significant part in the freedom fight”⁴. Through Satyagraha Gandhi brought Indian women into public life. During this period women of Malabar worked very actively and that was followed by women of Travancore and Cochin⁵. There were many women who entered the political field due to the influence of their family background but this cannot be generalized. There were many women who entered the political field through their own personal initiative as we find in the case of Miss. Kallan and Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma.

In Malabar, many women took leadership during the Civil Disobedience Movement. They dedicated their life to the nation. A.V.Kuttimalu Amma represent such a category of women who entered the political life during the national movement and continued her activities as a politician and as a social worker. To her, political life and social life were two wheels of the same cart. She began her public life through the constructive programme of Gandhi during the Non-Cooperation Movement. During the CDM she became a leader, led picketing and went to jail with her small baby. This incident motivated other women to involve in political activities.

⁴ Sucheta Kripalani, “Mahatma Gandhi. Leader and Teacher of women”, Verinder Grover and Ranjana Arora (ed), *Sucheta Kripalani. A Biography of Her Vision and Ideas*, Deep and Deep publications New Delhi-1998 pp.45-46)

⁵ A.Sreedharamenon, *Keralavum Swatantrya Samaravum*, D C books 1998-p.133

A.V. Kuttimalu Amma is still remembered as a social worker as well. The establishments of the Poor Home Society in West Hill in 1937 and the Juvenile Home at Vellimadukunnu in 1949 are substantial.

Mukkappuzha Karthiayani Amma was another leader of the national movement. She was the organizer of Mahila Sangh (All Kerala Seva Dal) in 1930. Through this organization Karthiayani Amma could bring many women to participate in the National Movement. She was highly involved in the Civil Disobedience Movement, courted arrest and was imprisoned. Karthiayani Amma is known in history as the first woman political prisoner of Malabar.

Civil Disobedience Movement of Malabar is specially noted for a unique event which is known in history as '*Thali* Snatching case' in which Kamala Bai Prabhu was forcefully made to surrender her *Thali* to the British. This incident was a highly significant one because it enraged the whole spirit of the national movement in India as well as in England. The British Government was to adopt changes in their policy towards women in India.

The national movement in Malabar witnessed the presence of three Basal Mission women in a leading role at a time when not many Christian ladies appeared in the political field anywhere else. All of them were attracted to the National Movement due to the Gandhian ideology. Gracy Aron started her public activity as a social worker. She founded the Bharat

Mahila Samajam in order to work for the poor and the needy. The establishment of a Maternity Home called *Prasavalaya* for the poor women finds no parallel in Kerala. Gracy Aron did a lot by empowering women vocationally through Khadi and other craft works. Politically she was very active during the C D M, involved in picketing and other protest movements and courted arrest. Margaret Pavamani participated in the national movement during the C D M and she was the seventh Dictator of the Congress. After 1937 she withdrew from political participation and was involved in social service activities along with Gracy Aron.

In Malabar both married and single women participated in the national movement. Miss. Mettilda Beatriz Kallan was another Basal Mission woman who was attracted to the national movement due to the clarion call of Gandhi. During the C D M she led the protest movement in Quilandy and was arrested and imprisoned. After release from jail she was busily engaged in the Harijan Upliftment Programme of Gandhi which had started a branch called Harijan Seva Sangh under the leadership of K.Kelappan. As a part of that Miss. Kallan founded the Harijan Balika Sadan for poor girls in Ottappalam and also as a part of Harijan upliftment she accommodated six Harijan girls in her home 'Gem Villa'. She educated those girls and helped them to be employed. As the Headmistress of the Parayancheri Girls' school, Miss.Kallan had done

a lot to educate and empower women of the surrounding areas.⁶ Miss. Kallan has strongly influenced many others in moulding or shaping their bright future. Thus all women who entered the public life of Malabar were followers of Gandhian ideology and they worked through political participation and social service activities.

During the post-Civil Disobedience Movement period North Malabar witnessed a shift of ideology from Congress ideology based on Gandhian philosophy to the socialist ideology based on Marxist philosophy. This was started with the formation of Congress Socialist Party in 1934 under which the peasantry of Malabar was politically organized and brought into the main stream of the National Movement. This highly motivated the peasants who suffered much under double exploitation of British imperialism and landlordism. Thus CSP created a new enthusiasm in the national movement in Malabar. The freedom movement in North Malabar drew out the best from action oriented women revolutionaries. The politics of North Malabar was democratized under the aegis of the Communist Movement.

Radical Movements made women more expressive and active-The teachers' movement, peasant movement and women organizations were inseparable in the way of achieving the goal. The radical movements in North

⁶ Keezhedath Padmini Teacher expresses her gratitude to Miss. Kallan being the main source of inspiration for guiding her to take up the role of a teacher. Interview with Padmini Teacher on 12 July 2007.

Malabar were anti-feudal in the strict sense of the term. The earliest struggle which took place under the radical movement was against the school managers. Under the system teachers were ill paid and ill treated even though there was the grant-in-aid system. There was no service security for the teachers and even the service rules were implemented by corrupt officials. To overcome the situation the first Aided Teachers Union was formed in 1931.

With the formation of Chirakkal Taluk Aided Teachers' Union in 1934, women became very active in the movement. P. Yesoda Teacher who represents the radicalized youth of the Communist Party became a member of this union in the very same year. Since then she worked a lot in various fields. And she was in the forefront in the fight against the owners of schools in Malabar. In this struggle she herself became a victim. Besides, she was actively involved in the peasant struggles of North Malabar. She was the first woman reporter of Desabhimani and she reported in detail about peasant struggles.

Calcutta Thesis of 1948 was a turning point in the history of radical movements of North Malabar. Among the victimized included P. Yesoda Teacher, Nani Teacher, K. Janaki Teacher and P.P. Devaki Teacher. What distinguished the service of women of this period from others is that they were involved in various struggles which took place simultaneously.

The Karshaka Sangham led a lot of peasant struggles in North Malabar. Meanwhile the Karshaka Sangham activists contributed greatly in mobilizing peasant women and to convince them about their rights to be achieved by fighting against imperialism and landlordism. As a result of this, women played a significant role in all the peasant struggle of this period. Irikkur Firca which was known as 'Red Firca', of the period was a land of peasant struggles. The women leaders of the struggles were Cheriyanamma and Kunhakkamma. Both of them entered the public life through the Karshaka Sangham and the Communist Party. They acquired informal education through the Communist party. They were very good organizers and they worked among women of the rural area asking them to come out to the active, powerful political arena.

Apart from direct participation in the peasant struggles, women's role was more important in protecting men leaders of the period. While the leaders lived underground to evade the police and to escape from the *gundas* of the jenmis, these women acted as messengers and food suppliers. For this, women were beaten by the police.

The bravery shown by the women in the *Pullupari Samaram*, *Vilakoithu Samaram* and the *Kalamkettu Samaram* was astonishing. They dared to question the unjust practices of the feudal authorities and their strength was the communist party. The informal education which they

acquired through the study classes of the party inculcated a spirit to interrogate every negative socio political situation and to survive the same. The comment made by Kunhakkamma, “even the *Machipatta* of my compound is a communist” is a clear indication of their attitude and intimacy to the party. They lived for the party and through the party till the end of their life.

During the *Karivellur Samaram* many women leaders suffered much under MSP- gunda repressive measures. K.Devayani, Kunnummal Sreedevi Amma and many others were victimized during this period. Being the wife of a communist leader, K. Devayani was tortured but she survived the situation with much courage and with the support of the communist party. K.Devayani was involved in the women welfare programmes and she was the founding member of Kerala Mahila Federation.

There were many women radicalists who supplied food to the men leaders of the peasant struggle. P.M.Madhavi, a peasant activist of Parassini Kadavu belong to such a category of women who was called by A.K.Gopalan as *Amma*. P.M.Madhavi organized women of this area under the banner of Mahila Sangham which was a strong supportive pillar of the Karshaka Sangham in Malabar.

The peasant struggles of North Malabar would not have been successful without the participation of women. The founding members of

Mahila Sangham - Pappinisseri Mahila Samajam (1937) - were P.Yesoda Teacher and K. Kalliani Teacher-. In the early years of its formation both the congress and socialist women worked together but with the Bekkalam conference there occurred a split between two groups and after that they began to work separately.

The Mahila Sanghams contributed a lot during the radical movements in North Malabar. Women became very active after the Kodakkat conference (1939), the first organizational meeting of women of North Malabar. With this many women began to be involved in public activities. In this context, the role played by P.C.Karthiayani Kutty Amma is memorable. She interdined with members of other castes and this raised a challenge to the traditional caste system of Kerala. Further she organized women of this area under the Mahila Sangham in order to fight against social and political evils. She led women of this area in many peasants struggle like the famous *Tholviraku Samaram*.

Being the wife of T. Subramanian Thirumumb, a nationalist and a peasant struggle leader, Karthiayani Kutty Amma had to face opposition from her own family members, from the community and from the society at large. But with much courage she fought against casteism, landlordism and imperialism. Whenever Thirumumb went underground she had to manage the

household. On many occasions she met with severe repressive measures of the MSP – gunda alliance but she survived all these.

Apart from direct political participation, Malabar saw a group of women personalities who entered the public life through social service activities. They were influenced by the reform movements of Sree Naryanaguru, Theosophical society, Gandhian ideology and so on. They performed their role very well without considering caste discrepancies, social inequalities etc. Such women did not interfere in the political movements of the period, though they imbibed the spirit of the time. The most noteworthy part is that they never lost their direction; they kept on with their work. Their motto was the development of the society, especially women community, which would be supportive of the national movement. Basically all of them supported and propagated women education. Further they worked a lot for reforming the society by wiping out social evils which circumscribed the nineteenth century Kerala society.

The post -Malabar Rebellion period saw the constructive programme led by DMRT under the initiative of V.R. Nayanar. It was in this context that Mrs. Nayanar stepped out of the confines of her home and carried out the social service mission of her husband with full dedication. What distinguishes the service of DMRT is that it started many orphanages. Mrs. Nayanar worked for the upliftment of poor orphaned girls of Malabar. She

will be remembered for her selflessness and commitment to help the poor and the oppressed. Nayanar Balika Sadanam of Kozhikode stands as a memorial for Mrs. Nayanar.

Theosophical society found its realization in Calicut through the work of Manjeri Kamalambal. She fought against the prevalent social evils of Malabar like child marriage, dowry system and casteism. Kamalambal was the type of woman who continued to inspire and encourage women to carry on their social activities. She used to mediate social disputes in which women were involved and she worked to protect women's interests. Though Kamalambal was a follower of Gandhian ideology and under took Khadi propagation, she never interfered in political struggles of the period directly. But she contributed substantially through social, educational, charitable institutions and associations.

Many women of Tellichery entered the public life of Malabar through the influence of western education and culture. Since they had matrimonial relations with other groups with in India like Gujaratis and with the Britishers, they dared to work out side their homes independently. Many of them had acquired convent education. Social service activities of Tellichery were initiated by Karayi Damayanti, the founder of Tellichery *Stree Samajam*. Through this she tried to make women educated and strong. She realized that education was the most powerful step towards progress and she championed

that through *Mitavati*. To make women a part of the 'reading public', she started a mobile library, the first of its kind in Malabar.

The social service spirit was carried on by C.K.Revathi Amma which found expressions in Mahe and Tellichery in the formation of women associations. She was a convent educated lady, a writer who survived the protest of her husband in involving public activities. She was deeply influenced by the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru. She was an organizer who served various voluntary and non voluntary organizations. She could restore communal harmony during the Hindu- Muslim Riot of 1971. She could do that through toleration and sense of equality.

Muslim women of Tellichery showed signs of modernity by the beginning of the twentieth century through social service. Muslim women of Tellichery involved in social activities of Malabar through women organization. The Muslim Mahila Samajam was founded by T.C.Kunhachumma. It was a unique achievement of Muslim women in Malabar because it was for the first time that Muslim women of Kerala were organized.

T C Kunhachumma was a politically conscious woman who belonged to a family which supported the national movement. She did not participate in the freedom struggle directly. But she hosted many nationalist leaders like

Ali brothers and their mother Bi-Amman She represented Malabar in the All India Muslim League as the only woman member of it.

The Muslim Mahila Samajam aimed at women development towards progress. Her community was also not free from unwanted social formalities. She terminated many extravagant expenditure of the community in connection with occasions like marriage. She undertook literacy mission for women.

T.C.Kunjachumma was concerned about the plight of women and deeply interested in liberating them. Through the Muslim Mahila Samajam she fought for the upliftment of women of the depressed class. The social service activities were continued by her convent educated grand daughter Mariyumma with same strength and vigor.⁷

From a society where boundaries were decided by rivers and women were not allowed to go out of their home the Tellichery sisters' went beyond restrictions and appeared in the public life. Ayisha Rauf was the first Muslim woman who worked as school inspectress of Malabar. Later she became the first Muslim woman Municipal Councilor of Sreelanka . Thus the fame of the service of Muslim women of Malabar went beyond the boundaries.

⁷ Even at the age of 83 though she is unable to participate actively in public life, she remains deeply committed to and involved in various activities around her. In the Movie *Daivanamathil* Mariyumma appeared to inspire and strengthen the heroine when she was in a tight corner in life. Mariyumma advised the heroine to overcome the situation by explaining her own miserable condition as a student, 'when I was a student, I was the only Muslim girl in the convent'

The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed drastic changes in all realms of Kerala society. Definitely the period saw the birth of a 'new woman' in Malabar which was mainly facilitated by the high level of women literacy. The impact of that was found in Malabar, outside Malabar and even outside India. Once they stepped out of their homes, women never turned back.

In the foregoing we have taken up representative women who were involved in politics, social service, educational activities and radical movements. In all these women went out of the confines of their home and played an active public role. This was inspite of the oppositions of traditionalists and conservative elements in the society. This was not economically beneficial to the women. On the contrary they had to suffer a lot – suffer imprisonment, separation from their near and dear ones and police repression. That they were not cowed down stand as an eloquent testimony to their new found 'freedom', identity and courage of conviction. It became clear that Malabar women had an influence over their own lives. 'Kerala Model' has attracted the attention of social scientists the world over. Though we do not claim that women played a pivotal role in the making of this model, it is beyond doubt that the popular awareness and social change that contributed to the making of the model had historical roots and that women played a not so insignificant role in this.

GLOSSARY

Achara Maryada	: Customary Practices
Adhikari	: Village Headman.
Angadi Adu	: Goat in the street.
Antarjanam	: Malayali Brahmin woman
Balamandiram	: Children's Home
Bandhavam	: Marriage
Brahmana Balika Patasala	: School for Brahmin Girls
Charka	: Spinning wheel
Dars	: Traditional Arabic schools attached to Mosques where classes are conducted in different disciplines of Islam
Gunda	: Rowdy, Scoundrel, Ruffian
Jatha	: Political procession.
Jeduka	: Horse Cart
Jenmi	: Absolute owner of land or proprietor.
Jnan	: Stands for 'I'
Karanavar	: Eldest member of the traditional joint family
Karshakasangham	: Peasant union
Kutiyan	: Tenant.
Machipatta	: Leaf of the Areacanut tree
Madrassa	: School in which Muslim children are taught religion.

Mahila Samajam	: Women's Association
Mahila Sangham	: Women's Association
Maidan	: Playground
Marumakkathayam	: Matrilineal system of inheritance
Paniya	: An Adivasi group found in Wynad
Pathivrata Dharma	: Duty of a faithful wife
Pattam	: Share of the produce of land due to officials and princes
Pitiyari	: A handful of rice
Prasavalaya	: Maternity Home.
Pudava	: Wedding cloth or Sari
Pulikuti	: A custom observed during pregnancy
Pullu	: Grass
Punam	: Waste land cultivation of the forest region, shifting cultivation.
Sala	: School
Sambandhakaran	: Husband under sambandham system of marriage
Sambandham	: A loose and often temporary alliance between a Nambuthiri and a Nair woman or between a Nair and a Nair woman
Stree Samajam	: Women organization
Tahasildar	: Revenue Officer
Taluk	: A revenue subdivision of a district which consists of numerous villages.
Tamrapatra	: An award of honour given by the Government of India to Freedom Fighters
Tarawad	: Matrilineal household.

Thalachorillatha Streekal	: Women without intelligence
Thali	: A small gold piece tied by a Hindu husband around his wife's neck at the time of marriage and worn by her until divorce or widowhood.
Thalikettu Kalyanam	: A mock marriage by tying the Tali
Thol	: Small branches of trees used for manure
Tirandu Kuli	: Ceremony attached to a girl's puberty
Vallia Teacher	: Colloquial usage for Headmistress
Vastralaya	: Textile shop
Vayanasala	: Reading room
Vimochana Samaram	: Liberation Struggle
Viraku	: Fire wood
Ulakka	: A wooden Pestle for pounding rice, grain etc.
Samaram	: Strike
Sadanam	: House

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**APPENDIX II
PHOTOGRAPHS**



A. V. Kuttimalu Amma with Lakshmi N. Menon, Leela Damodara Menon and others in a political function



E. Narayani Kuttiamma and Ammu Swaminathan with others in a public function during the CDM



P. M. Mariyumma at one of the inaugurations in Tellichery



P. M. Mariyumma being honored by her Alma Mater, Sacred Heart Convent, Tellichery in 2008.



Advocate Benjamin Pavamani and Margaret Pavamani



Margaret Pavamani, at one of the Mahila Samajam (Pappinisseri) functions



Samuel Aron and his wife Gracy Aron
(Photo taken in 1927)



The Building of the Mahila Samajam (Pappinisseri) run by Gracy Aron, later donated to the Congress Party.



The historical 'Gem Villa' belonged to Miss. Kallan (right), presently demolished



Mukkappuzha Karthiyani Amma and Gracy Aron, significant women leaders of the C.D.M. in Malabar.



E. K. Janaki Teacher, an inmate of 'Gem Villa'



Harijan Balika Sadanam, Ottapalam, run by Miss. Kallan. Miss. Kallan and Margaret Cousins (Centre) with inmates of the Sadanam



Mrs. V.R. Nayanar



Cheriyamma Smaraka Vayanasala at Nedungom Village, Kannur



Smt. Manjeri Kamalambal



Nayanar Balika Sadanam at Eranjipalam, Kozhikode



T.C. Kunhachamma, the founder of Tellichery Muslim Mahila Samajam



Tellichery Muslim Mahila Samajam celebrating its thirty sixth anniversary at town hall, Tellichery



Mrs. O. T. Sarada Krishnan



C. K. Revathi Amma (right) in a public function