

**BEYOND THE MARGINS:
A STUDY ON THE EMERGENCE OF THE
PULAYAS IN CENTRAL KERALA**

*Thesis submitted to the faculty of Humanities.
University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History*

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This is to certify that this thesis entitled “**Beyond the Margins: A Study on the Emergence of the Pulayas in Central Kerala**” is an authentic record of research work carried out by REMANI.K.K in the Department of History, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda under my guidance and supervision and that this has not been submitted to any other University or institution for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, title or recognition before.

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DECLARATION

I, REMANI.K.K do hereby declare that the thesis entitled “**Beyond the Margins: A Study on the Emergence of the Pulayas in Central Kerala**”, embodies the result of the original research work done by me in the Department of History, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda under the supervision and guidance of Dr. K. T. Thomas and that this has not been submitted by me to any other University or institution for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship, title or recognition before.

Place: Irinjalakuda

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C M S	: <i>Church Missionary Society</i>
C P M S	: <i>Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha</i>
I C H R	: <i>Indian Council of Historical Research</i>
K P M S	: <i>Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha</i>
K S A	: <i>Kerala State Archives</i>
K K S	: <i>Kerala Karshaka Sangham</i>
L M S	: <i>London Missionary Society</i>
M L C	: <i>Member of Legislative Council</i>
R A E	: <i>Regional Archives Ernakulam</i>
S N D P	: <i>Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam</i>
S J P S	: <i>Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham</i>
S S	: <i>Sahodhara Sangham</i>
S C	: <i>Scheduled Caste</i>
S T	: <i>Scheduled Tribe</i>
S C D C	: <i>Scheduled Castes Development Corporation</i>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my profound sense of gratitude to my esteemed Supervising Teacher Dr.K.T Thomas, Research Guide in History, Christ College(Autonomous), Irinjalakuda. I am indebted to him for his valuable guidance, criticism, encouragement and generous help through at my research work.

I am grateful to Rev.Fr.Jose Thekkan, former Principal of the Christ College, Irinjalakuda, who is no longer with us, for his inspiring attitude and encouragement. I express my gratitude to Lisha K.K, the Head of the Department of History, Christ College (Autonomous) for her timely help and co-operation.

I have benefited from the academic discussions I had with Mr. Shinas A.M, the H.O.D of History, K. K.T.M Government College, Pullut.I express my sincere gratitude for his continuous support and creative suggestions.

During the course of my research I have incurred enormous debts and gratitude to a number of institutions, academics and friends. I am grateful to all of them and the following in particular. Dr. Sreevidya V and Jincy.S.R of Christ College, Dr.Sophy Jacob of M. E. S Asmabi College,Mrs. Chitra Sebastian and Dr.Suja. I am thankful to my friends ManojKumar P.S, Rincy T.P, Sini P.M, Saritha V.C, Harikrishnan G.,Shany N.S, Animol Jacob,Sree Parvathy D, Swapna K.P and Aneesh K. for their academic support and encouragement.

I extend my gratitude to the University Grants Commission of India for the award of Teacher Fellowship under F D P during the XIIth Plan Period.

I express sincere thanks to the staff and librarians of the Christ College Library, Kerala History Association Library Ernakulam ,Regional Archives Ernakulam, ,Regional

Archives Calicut,Sahitya Academy Library, Thrissur,Appan Tamburan Smaraka Library Ayyanthole, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) Mulamkunnathukavu, Thrissur, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Library of Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Council for Historical Research Library,Thiruvananthapuram,for their assistance and support.

Finally, I wish to thank my parents, Kunjamu and Kuttimon, without whom this work would not have completed.

INTRODUCTION

The present study deals with the socio-political awakening of *Pulaya* community in Central Kerala during the 20th century. Central Kerala as has been used in this study mainly signifies the territories that belonged to the erstwhile Cochin state. The *Pulayas* constitute an important category of the dalit community in Kerala. The identity of the *Pulayas* was closely related to land. The *Pulayas*, who were agrestic slaves belonged to the lowest castes in the Hindu hierarchy. Throughout history, they had remained as landless labourers who lived at the mercy of their masters. They had remained socially segregated from the rest of the Hindu society through the institution of caste.

Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchables. The term Dalit is coined by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar to indicate the Scheduled Caste in the *Mahars* of Maharashtra. The Act of 1919 used the term ‘Depressed Class’ and the Simon Commission addressed the depressed class by calling them ‘Scheduled Castes’¹. Mahatma Gandhi’s coinage of the word *Harijan* was translated roughly as ‘Children of God’ to identify the former untouchables. Later on the term dalit began to be used for the entire Scheduled Castes of India. ‘Dalit is not a caste, dalit is a symbol of change and revolution, and they were socially and economically exploited section of the society. They were oppressed for no reason of their own and were suppressed to the lowest strata by imposing untouchability upon them’². The dalit communities had their own deities, ways of life, and production systems that are different from that of the upper castes.

¹ Ram Ahuja, *Indian Social System*, Rawat Publishers, New Delhi, 1993, p.364., Surendra K.Gupta, *Emerging Social Science Concerns*, Concept Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p.28.

² V.Muralidharan, *Educational Properties and Dalit Society*, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, 1997, p.1.

Caste can be defined in several ways. There are theories put forward by various scholars with regard to the origin and growth of the caste system in India. These theories help us to have an understanding of the social stratification on the Indian context. Ambedkar argued that the caste system is not only a mere a division of labour, but also a division of labourers. Civilized society undoubtedly needs division of labour. But in no civilized society the division of labour is accompanied by the unnatural division of labourers into water-tight compartments³. Ambedkar held that division of labour brought about by the caste system is not based on choice; individual choice has no role in it, for it is based on the dogma of predestination.

Kancha Ilaiah, modern thinker writes with passionate anger laced with irony on the caste system and Indian society. He describes caste as the ‘productive castes’ in contrast to the parasitical twice- born communities⁴. The condition of dalits in relation to the high caste Hindus was that of a conquered people, an enslaved people and a people living in a condition of culturally, and socially enforced apartheid.

Louis Dumont opinion that the caste system is based on the fundamental social principle of hierarchy and this hierarchy is based on birth as well as the principle of purity and pollution; the pure is superior to the impure. The pure and the impure must be kept separate⁵.

Kosambi holds the view that caste system originated in later Vedic period as Varna divisions. Varnas are only four, but castes are numerous⁶.

Suvira Jaiswal, holds that caste in India is a Brahmanic child and that endogamy, the outstanding feature of caste, was first developed by the Brahmins. Caste as a

³Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*, Samyak Prakashan, New Delhi, 2000, p.42., Imtiaz Ahmad & Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, *Dalit Assertion In Society, Literature and History*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, 2010, p.100.

⁴ Kancha Ilaiah, *Why I am not a Hindu*, Samaya Publishers, Kolkata, 1996, p.VIII.

⁵ Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchies: The Caste System and Its Implications*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, p. 5.

⁶ D.D. Kosambi, *Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1965, p.50.

hierarchical social system rooted in religious principle that imputed inherently pure or polluting status to social groups⁷. The sociological perspective views the caste system in terms of social stratification in a society and as a phenomenon of social inequality. Society has certain structural aspects and it distributes its members in social positions.⁸

The caste system originated in Kerala as a result of migration of Brahmins .The expansion of Brahmins in Kerala had taken place in between the 7th and 10th centuries A.D. They were mostly agriculturists who cultivated virgin lands. The slowness and the gradualness of the Aryan migration to the south resulted in the development of caste system and the consequent separation between the communities. Communities and sub-castes were formed in a temple-centered society on the basis of hereditary occupation⁹. It was a practice to rear the specialized labour with land based entitlements which made the specialized labour hereditary. This hereditary specialization might have resulted in the emergence of profession labeled groups which in turn might have led to the sub castes. During this period toiling classes like the *Parayas*, the *Pulayas*, the *Panas* and the *Ezhavas* were begun to be looked upon as low castes. *Pulayas* which was a term indicating agricultural labourers began to be treated as ‘caste’¹⁰.

The socio-religious reform movements which had originated in Bengal and other parts of India had an impact on Kerala .It was the social reformer Ayyankali who espoused such noble cause as eradication of caste barriers and *Harijan* upliftment also left his indelible mark on the socio-cultural life of modern Kerala. He was convinced of the need for an organization to channelize the new found Dalit power through the right course, to spread awareness regarding their rights and to acquire those rights through mobilized strength. In 1907 he founded an organization for the lower caste called the *Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham*, which fought against the inequalities prevailed in the society and tried

⁷ Suvira Jaiswal, *Caste*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1998, p.25.

⁸ B. Kuppaswamy, *Social Change in India*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1972,p.6.

⁹M.G.S.Narayanan, *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*, Kerala Historical Society, Thiruvananthapuram, 1972, p.1.

¹⁰ N. K. Jose, *Pulaya Lahala*, Malayalam,(here after Mal.), Prakasam Publications, Kottayam, 1982, p.3.

to uplift the backward and downtrodden. He considered that the political unification and consolidation of the dalits were imperative to bring about any change in the social and political status of the dalits.

A new wave of assertion of civil rights, agitation against untouchability and other forms of oppression swept through Central Kerala in the early decades of the 20th century. The reflections of Ayyankali's idea of equality had its impact on the formation of '*Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha*' in 1913 and also the formation of '*Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha*' in 1970. The ideological influences resulted in mass mobilization of *Pulayas* in Central Kerala by Pandit K.P.Karuppan, Krishnathi Asan, P.C.Chanchan, K.P.Vallon, Dhashayani Velayudhan and P.K. Chathan Master. They wanted to reform the social life by effecting a structural transformation in society.

A number of *Karshaka Samaram* took place in Central Kerala, against the 'feudalistic' exploitation in the state. The peasant -land lord conflict had appeared in the form of agrarian struggles during 1933-1963. The *Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram*¹¹, (1948) was one such struggle against the exploitation of the peasantry by the landlords and the eviction from the land.

The *Pulayas* were denied access to temples, schools and there were restrictions even on their freedom to walk without fear along the public roads. They were not allowed to live in the main villages inhabited by the upper classes. The practice of pollution was widely observed. A number of struggles took place against the inequities of the caste system during the colonial period, which helped the lower castes improve their social status. Some *upper castes* had also revolted against the age-old bondages of caste-oppression and irrational social practices in Central Kerala. For example, some *upper caste* leaders like P.C.Pailikutty, P.V.Damodaran, C.V., Devasikutty and E.Gopala Krishna Menon participated in the *Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram*. M.K.Kattuparamban, P. Gangadharan and K.P.Madhavan were the important *savarna* leader of Kuttamkulam

¹¹ *Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram Smaranika*, (Mal.), Chalakkudy, 2013, p.15.

Struggle. The Guruvayur *Satyagraha* was led by K. Kelappan, A. K. Gopalan and P. Krishna Pillai.

The present study entitled “*Beyond the Margins: A Study on the Emergence of the Pulayas in Central Kerala*,” covers the period from 1907 to 1975. It was in 1907, Ayyankali founded an organization, *Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham* for the upliftment of the lower castes. The study ends with 1975, marked by the end of the first phase of land reforms in Kerala. Kerala Agricultural Relation Bill ordinance was passed by the E.M.S ministry which came to power in 1957. The Kerala Land Reform Act passed in 1970, specifically meant for providing land to the landless, benefited a few, but a large majority of dalits were allotted few cents in the so called colonies designed for them. On the basis of this land reform act, *Pulayas* who were known as *Kudikidappukkar*¹² got only homestead.

The study focuses on the historical experiences of the agrestic slaves in Central Kerala, mainly consisting of Ernakulam and Thrissur districts.

Objectives of the Thesis.

- To examine the emergence of the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala and to trace their history from 1907 onwards, for the first organization of *Pulayas* was formed in that year.
- To trace out the colonial strategies and programmes that had a bearing on the movements for the social upliftment of the *Pulayas*.
- To assess the role of the Christian Missionaries in the social and political awakening among the *Pulayas*.

¹² *Kudikidappukkar* are people who did not own land of their own; their huts were put up in a corner of the landlord's property; A worker makes his living wholly or mainly by selling his labour power.

- To examine Ayyankali's movement in Central Kerala which had its impact on the formation of *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* under Pandit K.P.Karuppan and Krishnadhi Asan.
- To explore the social mobilization under *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha* led by P.K.Chathan Master.
- To analyze how the *Pulayas* were benefited by the formation of the first Communist government in Kerala and the consequent land reforms and other socio- economic programmes.

Review of Literature

The studies on *Pulayas* can be classified into caste studies, dalit studies, ethnographical caste based studies, sociological studies, studies on *Pulayas* and general studies.

Ganga Prasad's, *The Caste System*¹³, is a study of the caste and the so called untouchables, the sudras. It attempts to trace the division of all men into four varnas, which prevailed in ancient India and was originally based on merits and not on birth.

G.S. Gurye's, *Caste and Race in India*¹⁴, describes the features of Hindu society when it was ruled by the social philosophy of caste, and elucidates the genesis and growth of the institution of caste. This study highlights the conditions of Scheduled Caste, their problems like evils of untouchability, social inequalities, and economic exploitation. Socio-economic condition reveals the low position that they held in the hierarchy of society.

¹³ Ganga Prasad Upadhyaya, *The Caste System*, Reink Books Publishers, Lahore, 1922.

¹⁴ G.S Gurye, *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1932.

Paul G.Hiebert's, *Caste and Personal Rank in an Indian Village: An Extension in Techniques*¹⁵, explains the caste rank is important in an Indian village, but caste alone does not determine a man's personal rank. He deals with objective method for determining caste ranks and man's caste rank determine his personal rank in the village. In the context of his own village, where he is judged as a person, a man can gain influence through non caste channels. The range of personal mobility is limited however by the dominant role played by the caste hierarchy in determine a man's personal status in the village.

Dipankar Gupta's, *Social Stratification*¹⁶, is a collection of essays concerning the historiographical relevance of caste system and similar self-reflexive writings. *Interrogating Caste*¹⁷, is another major work to be mentioned the hierarchy is arbitrary and valid only from the perspective of the individual castes. The study conceives the caste system and provides fresh insight into caste as a social, political and economic reality.

K.L. Sharma's, *Caste and Class in India*¹⁸, is a collection of essays reflected on caste and class in India. Caste and class are viewed as the most significant dimensions of social stratification. Another major work *Social Inequality in India*¹⁹, furnishes a historical analysis of the society, profiles of caste, class, power and social mobility. His focus is on the study of theory, structure and process relating to hierarchy and social inequality.

Gloria Goodwin Raheja's, *Caste, Colonialism and the Speech of the Colonized: Entextualization and Disciplinary Control in India*²⁰ analyzes transformation

¹⁵Paul G.Hiebert, *Caste and Personal Rank in an Indian Village: An Extension in Techniques*, *American Anthropologist*, Vol.71, No.3, January 1969.

¹⁶ Dipankar Gupta, *Social Stratification*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1991.

¹⁷Dipankar Gupta, *Interrogating Caste*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2000.

¹⁸ K.L Sharma, *Caste and Class in India*, Rawat Publishers, Jaipur, 1994.

¹⁹K.L, Sharma, *Social Stratification in India issues and Themes*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1997.

²⁰ Gloria Goodwin Raheja, 'Caste, Colonialism and the speech of the Colonized: Entextualization and disciplinary control in India', *American Ethnologist*, Vol.23, No.3, August 1996.

in colonial representations of caste and in the entextualization of speeches. As discourse about caste came to predominate in colonial representations of Indian society there was a corresponding shift in the way that proverbial speech figured in imperial documents, strategies of entextualization were altered. Another article *India: Caste, Kingship and Dominance Reconsidered*²¹, is a study of the relationship between a hierarchical order of castes, with its focus on the superior position of the Brahmans, on the one hand and a conception of sovereignty focused on the Hindu King or the royal function of the dominant caste at the level of the village.

Suvira Jaiswal's, *Caste*²², reveals the caste as a hierarchical social system rooted in religious principle that imputed inherently pure or polluting status to social groups. This study indicates that the caste ideology has gained strength due to political and economic reasons, in spite of the fact that there are increasing differentiations of wealth and status of individuals within each caste.

Nicholas B. Dirks's, *Castes of Mind*²³, argues that caste is in fact neither an unchanged survival of ancient India nor a single system that reflects some core culture. Rather than being an expression of Indian tradition, caste is a relatively modern phenomenon-the product of the encounter between India and the British colonial rule. The author examines the rise of caste politics in contemporary India, in particular caste-based movements and their implications for Indian nationhood.

Anupama Rao's, *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*²⁴, explores how India's dalits transformed into citizens. The caste questions reveal the dynamics of an Indian democracy discriminated not by overcoming caste, but by new forms of violence and new means of regulating caste.

²¹ Gloria Goodwin Raheja, 'India: Caste, Kingship and Dominance Reconsidered,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol.17, 1998.

²² Suvira Jaiswal, *Caste*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1998.

²³ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2002.

²⁴ Anupama Roy, *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2010.

Surinder S.Jodhka's, *Caste*²⁵, includes various perspectives and diverse experience of caste. In this perspective, the ideology of caste shaped social interaction among the Hindus, their social life and identities are discussed.

Anand Teltumbde's, *Republic of Caste*²⁶, argues that the exclusion and disempowerment of dalits emerge as intrinsic to India's republican system whether expressed through state policies on education, agriculture and land ownership or the tacit encouragement of caste embedded in both law and political practice. He attempt to rebaptize Marx into an Ambedkarite and Ambedkar into a Marxist. This is the born out of the author's conviction that the only plausible solution lies in merging dalits and the proletariat. He argues dalits to foreground the need to annihilate caste and reorient themselves to see society in class terms. He is unambiguous in his view that annihilation of castes will necessitate thorough going democratic revolution, which can happen only through a class struggle, which presupposes a meeting point between Ambedkar and Marx. However, Teltumbde sees Ambedkar as reactive and thus purely pragmatic and Marx as scientific and as having a theoretical foundation, which has objective rigour and correctly explains the past. Ambedkar is pictured as having only a short-term approach, whereas Marx is praised as one who has given a scientific frame work for revolution and a theory to bring it about. So the author is harshly and uncharitably critical of Ambedkar in comparison to Marx.

Anand Teltumbde's, another major work *Dalits: Past Present and Future*²⁷, discusses the ideology, strategy and tactics of the dalit movement in India. It also traces the history of the caste system from its origin to the present day. The book traces the varied changes that befell them during the colonial period and their expansion thereafter under the leadership of Babasaheb Ambedkar in the centre of political arena.

²⁵ Surinder S .Jodhka, *Caste*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012.

²⁶ Anand Teltumbde, *Republic of Caste*, Navayana, New Delhi, 2018.

²⁷ Anand Teltumbde, *Dalits: Past Present and Future*, Routledge, Newyork, 2016.

Dalit study of Gail Omvedt, *Dalit Visions*²⁸, explores and critiques the sensibility which equates Indian tradition with Hinduism, and Hinduism with Brahmanism. It deals with the way in which the dalit movement and other social forces have confronted and contested brahmanic Hinduism not only its most virulent form of *Hindutva*, but equally the more liberal forms that have provided the dominant interpretation of Indian society and history. *Understanding Caste: From Buddha to Ambedkar and Beyond*²⁹, analyses the historical issue of caste and anti- caste movements. The formation and hierarchy of caste system and how it affects the Indian society at various stages is very well narrated.

Eleanor Zelliot's, *From Untouchable to Dalit:Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*³⁰, analyzed the dalit identity and politics in general and Ambedkar movement in particular.

*The Cracked Mirror:An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*³¹ by Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarakkai, addresses the lived experience of dalits in the backdrop of social theory. It also discusses the issue of egalitarianism in the social science in India.

A Padmanaban's,*Dalits at the Cross-Roads their Struggle-Past and Present*³², deals with the edifice of uniting all the Scheduled Caste's and Scheduled Tribes and giving them political identity, leading to rights and safeguards built by Dr. B.R Ambedkar through his 'educate, organize and agitate'. It also suggests that the emergence of strong will and determination among the dalits is required to protest, revolt and to assert their rights.

²⁸ Gail Omvedt, *Dalit Visions*, Orient Black Swan, New Delhi, 1995.

²⁹ Gail Omvedt, *Understanding Caste, From Buddha to Ambedkar and Beyond*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, 2012.

³⁰ Eleanor Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit: Essays on the Ambedkar Movement*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

³¹Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarakkai, *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*,Oxford University Press, New Delhi,2012.

³² A Padmanabhan, *Dalits at the Cross-Roads their Struggle-Past and Present*, Madras,1996.

*Dalit Assertion in Society, Literature and History*³³, edited by Imtiaz Ahmad & Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, analyzes the identity of dalits in history, literature and society. It also examines the dynamics of a pervasive caste system that is intrinsically hostile to the growth of a collective consciousness among the backward classes.

*The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing*³⁴, edited by M. Dasan, V. Prathiba, et.al, attempts to creative expressions and images of Malayali dalits from the early twentieth century .It narrates the growth of dalit aesthetics in Kerala, locates the writings in their cultural, historical and political context.

P.Sanal Mohan's, *Modernity of Slavery*,³⁵ tells the story of the *Cherumas*, the *Kuravas*, the *Parayas* and the *Thanda-Pulayas* the slave castes of nineteenth century in Kerala and their tryst with Christianity. In the nineteenth and twentieth century's, when European Missionaries began working among the slave castes, thousands joined the church. Their experience, struggles and memories shaped their collective self, and deeply impacted the emergence of dalit consciousness in Kerala.

The socio economic backwardness of the dalit has been discussed in general by A.K.Bakshi in *Dalit and Human Rights*, S.Chinnammai, in her *Relevance of Socio Economic Thoughts of Dr.Ambedkar Today*, and by K.S. Chalam, in his *Economic Reforms and Social Exclusion*³⁶.

Ethnographical study of L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, narrates the origin and tradition, marriage customs, tribal organization, occupations and religion of the *Pulayas*³⁷. It also examines the work of missionaries among the lower castes and also the conversion of the *Pulayas*. The *Cochin Tribes and Castes*, authored by him discuss the

³³ Imtiaz Ahmad & Shashi Bhushan Upadhyay, *op.cit.*,.

³⁴ M.Dasan, V.Prathiba, et.al, *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

³⁵ P. Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2015.

³⁶ A.K,Bakshi, *Dalit and Human Rights*, Akhand Publishing House, New Delhi, 2010., K.S Chalam, *Economic Reforms and Social Exclusion*, Sage Publishers, New Delhi, 2011., S.Chinnammai, *Relevance of Socio-Economic thoughts of Dr.Ambedkar Today*, New Delhi, 2011.

³⁷ L.K.Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Ethnographical Survey of the Cochin State, Caste –Pulayas*, Ernakulam, 1906.

status of the *Pulayas* of the Cochin state, subsistence of agrestic slaves, and abolition of slavery, internal structure of caste, habitations and customs³⁸.

Sociological study of K.Saradmoni, deals with the largest agrestic slave community in Kerala, the *Pulayas* and throws light on how the hierarchical Hindu social structure had suppressed hundreds and thousands of untouchables. It highlights the emergence of the *Pulayas* and the problems faced by them³⁹.

N.K.Jose in his work *Pulaya Lahala*⁴⁰, held that the *Pulayas* even ruled over certain regions of Kerala and they held high social and economic status. Kunnukuzhi S. Mani opines that the *Pulayas* were the early inhabitants and were one of the primitive dwellers of Kerala⁴¹. Karivelli Babukuttan narrates the social background of the *Pulayas* in the 19th century and the movement for the realization of their socio-economic rights.⁴²

General study, *Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam*⁴³ authored by P.Bhaskaranunny enumerates the different castes in Kerala and provides a brief history of social reforms. *Keralam Irupatham Nootandinte Arambathil*,⁴⁴ authored by him analyses caste and the caste organizations concerns in the contemporary Kerala society.

P.K.Balakrishnan in his *Jathivyavasthayum Kerala Charithravum*, explains the growth of agrarian society. He held that Brahmin ascendancy paved the way for the growth of the division of labour and the proliferation of caste in Kerala⁴⁵.T.H.P

³⁸ L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *Cochin Tribes and Castes*, Vol.1, Madras, 1909.

³⁹ K. Saradmoni, *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980.

⁴⁰ N. K, Jose, *op.cit.*,.

⁴¹ Kunnukuzhi S.Manipulayar Nootandukkalil Oru Charithra Padanam (Mal.),Kerala Cultural Department, Thiruvananthapuram,1989.

⁴² Karivelli Babukuttan, *Pulayar Charithravum, Varthamanavum*(Mal.),Poorna Publications, Calicut,2011.

⁴³ P. Baskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Nootandile Keralam*,(Mal.),Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur,1988.

⁴⁴ P.Baskaranunni *Keralam Irupatham Nootandinte Arambathil*, (Mal.),Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur, 2005.

⁴⁵ P.K.Balakrishnan *Jathivyavasthayum Kerala Charithravum*, (Mal.), D. C Books,Kottayam, 1983.

Chentharassery's, *Kerala Charithrathile Avaganikeppetta Edukal*⁴⁶, defines the term 'Pulaya' in the *Vattezuthu* inscriptions found in the Thrikkakara Temple which implies that they were farmers or caretakers of the land. K.K.Kochu's *Kerala Charithravum Samooha Roopikaranavum*,⁴⁷ deals with after the decline of *Chera* rulers and Brahmin settlements of Kerala was sufficiently well established and after the establishment of Brahmin settlements witnessed the virtual extension of a new system of production relation to a larger society. This work narrates the role of caste in the integration of the agrarian society and how caste was an institution in the society of Kerala.

Besides, there are several historical articles dealing with conditions of *Pulayas* in Central Kerala pertaining to the modern period of history that served as an inspiration for the present venture. The articles of Parameswara K.Kurup, Cherai Ramadas and Kunnukuzhi S.Mani,⁴⁸ are to be mentioned in this context.

So far, no work has paid serious academic attention on the history of the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala with a focus on the impact of the British policies, programmes of the first Communist government and the socio –political mobilization within the community. That said, this does not mean that there exist a number of studies both amateur and academic in nature that deal with various aspects of the histories of the *Pulayas*. However, they are scattered mainly in popular periodicals and very few of them in scholarly works. Nevertheless a structural approach encompassing the impact and consequences of colonial policies, missionary intervention and their impacts, programme of the first Communist government, and internal political dynamics within the community, which

⁴⁶T.H.P,Chentharassery,*Kerala Charithrathile Avaganikeppetta Edukal*,(Mal.),Prabatham, Thiruvananthapuram, 1970.

⁴⁷K.K.Kochu, *Kerala Charithravum Samooha Roopikaranavum*(Mal.),Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvnanthapuram, 2012.

⁴⁸Parameswara K.Kurup,'Pulayanmar', (Mal.),*Mangalodhayam Varika*,Vol.10,No.4,July 15,1917.,Cherai Ramadas, 'Kochiyie Nayicha Mulavukadu'(Mal.), *Deshabimani Varika* Vol.39, No.13, August 26, 2007., Cherai Ramadas, 'Ayithajathikar Niyamasabhail', (Mal.), *Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*, Vol.82, No.32, October10, 2004., Cherai Ramadas,'Kayalil Roopamkonda Pulaya Sabha', (Mal.), *Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*, Vol .82,No.53, February 22-28, 2004.,Kunnukuzhi S.Mani,'Kochi Kayal Sammelanathinu Nooruvayasu' (Mal.),*Vigjanakairali*, March 5, 2014.

are of decisive importance to the history of *Pulayas* has not yet been subjected to a structural analysis.

Research Problem

The *Pulayas*, often termed 'Depressed Castes' and at times as 'Out Castes', are an oppressed, culturally subjugated and politically marginalized category among the dalit community. The issue of social exclusion and discrimination is closely related to the prevalence of caste system. There has been a high magnitude of inequality in the possession of productive assets like land, capital etc. which were monopolized and controlled by the higher castes.

As *Pulayas* were the primary producers, agricultural production depended up on the labour of these groups. The historical antecedence which led to the colonial policies and programmes which has been considered generally beneficial for the progress of the *Pulayas* has to be analyzed. Impacts of the activities of the Christian missionaries and the spread of western education among the *Pulayas* have also to be considered.

The study gives importance to the social reforms brought about by the great dalit leader Ayyankali, and their social organization which had a deep impact on life of marginalized people of Central Kerala. It resulted in the formation of *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha*, under Pandit K.P. Karuppan and Krishndhi Asan, which stood for civil rights and freedom of the people. The impact of social organization of Sahodaran Ayyappan, the impact of literary works, Gandhian ideology and anti caste struggles gradually awakening of the *Pulayas* are issues to be examined.

The organizations of the *Pulayas* through *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha* under the leadership of P.K.Chathan Master is to be assessed. The formation of the first communist government in Kerala and the consequent land reforms and other socio-economic programmes which were beneficial to the *Pulayas* to a certain extent, also come under the scope of this study.

The study would bring to light the historical factors behind the backwardness of the *Pulayas*. It would be helpful to initiate steps conducive for the socio-economic progress and political empowerment of the *Pulayas*.

Sources and Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include Administration Reports of Cochin State, Census Reports of Cochin State, Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, and the Cochin Government Gazetteers, Register book for Deeds of Sale or Gifts of Lands and Malayalam Diaries.

Archival sources were made use of for this study. Records from the Tamil Nadu archives Chennai, Kerala state archives Thiruvananthapuram, regional archives of Kozhikode and Ernakulam were consulted.

Inscriptions are very important and authentic sources for the study. *Travancore Archaeological Series edited by T. A. Gopinatha Rao*, translated into English is a major source for the reconstruction of Kerala history. Records from the Kerala State Development Corporation of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, Thrissur, have been consulted for the study.

Secondary sources like books, journals, periodicals, souvenir, unpublished thesis and other published materials are made use of.

Library facilities have been utilized at Kerala History Association Ernakulam, Karuppan Smaraka Library Ernakulam, Kerala Sahitya Academy Thrissur, Public Library, Thrissur, Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) Mulamkunnathukavu, Thrissur, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Kerala Council of Historical Research Thiruvananthapuram, Central library, Thiruvananthapuram, Center for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, C. H. Muhamadkoya Central Library, Calicut and Madras University, Chennai, Sri C. Achutha Menon Government College, Thrissur, K.K.T.M.Govt.College, Pullut, Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda, Academic Staff College, Calicut University and Department of History, Calicut

University. The e-Journals facilities and Delnet have been extensively utilized. Periodicals have been collected from Appan Thampuram Smaraka Library, Ayyanthole.

Methodological framework, which is predominantly qualitative and analytical in nature, includes use and analysis of another set of primary sources. Apart from the traditional primary as well as secondary sources, oral interviews and oral traditions have been appropriately used in this study. Oral sources have been verified with documentary sources and in some cases they are found to be not in agreement, if not contradictory. The reason for this discrepancy has been analyzed.

The study should be interdisciplinary by depicted on models from sociology, anthropology and many other disciplines. The scope of the present study is limited to the area of Central Kerala, mainly consisting of Ernakulam and Thrissur districts.

The bulk of oral evidences are the data obtained from living people. Another important resource for oral history is oral tradition. It is oral testimonies transmitted verbally from one generation to the next or more⁴⁹. Individual memories transmitted by others are also oral sources used by oral historians. The significant contribution of oral history is that it helps the efforts to reconstruct the lives and actions of people hidden from history. Lower castes, peasants, workers, women, migrants, indigenous groups and so on often possess few written records as opposed to the elite and privileged groups. These underprivileged and marginalized groups have been represented in mainstream history as statistical aggregates derived from earlier administrative investigation. The more personal, local and unofficial a document the less likely it was to survive⁵⁰.

Paul Thomson, one of the well known oral historians writes; oral history allows heroes not just from leaders, but from unknown majority of people. It brings history into and out of community. It helps the less privileged. Equally oral history offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history⁵¹. In this study, in many cases oral sources have been

⁴⁹ Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 1930, p.199.

⁵⁰ Paul Thomson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978, p.27.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.23.

suitably corroborated by written records, both primary and secondary. However as far as precise chronology is concerned, some oral testimonies may not be accommodating. For example, when the researcher interviewed people who were former bonded agricultural labourers, almost all of them unanimously said that bonded labour continued unabated in Kerala till the middle of the 1970s. As opposed to these oral evidences bonded labour ceased to exist in Kerala in 1872 as per official records.

Design of the Study

The design of the thesis is based on available materials pertaining to the area of research, and a thematic division is followed. The entire work is divided into five chapters, excluding introduction and followed by a brief conclusion. The introduction deals with the objectives of the study and research problem. It also includes review of literature, methodology and the sources of the study.

First chapter is 'Evolution of the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala: An Historical Overview'. It deals with the traditional society, the Aryan migration and their settlements, agrarian process and the historical process of the transition of the tribes into the castes. The condition of the *Pulayas* during the pre-colonial and colonial period and the effects of the abolition of slavery on *Pulayas* are also highlighted.

The second chapter entitled 'Changing Land Relations and the Occupational Mobility of the *Pulayas*' focuses on the agrarian changes and its impact on the *Pulayas*. The opportunities of occupational changes for the *Pulayas* brought about by the new developments in agrarian relations have also come under scrutiny.

Third chapter is 'Education as a Means of Empowerment: Social Changes among the *Pulayas*'. It explores the freedom of education and the question of whether colonial policies and programmes had a bearing on the emergence of movements for the social progress of the *Pulayas*. Contribution of Christian Missionaries in the educational awakening among the *Pulayas*, Ayyankali's struggle for education and the role of the

Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha which picked up the issues faced by the *Pulayas* have been dealt with in this chapter.

The fourth chapter entitled ‘Advent of Colonial Modernity and the Struggle against Graded Inequality’. It focuses social reformers like Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali among others and the social organizations founded by them and their activities. The historical context and the consequences of the Ayyankali’s movement in Central Kerala, the ideological influences resulting in the mass mobilization of *Pulayas* by Pandit K.P.Karuppan, Krishnadhi Asan, P.C.Chanchen, K.P.Vallon, Dhakshayani Velayudhan and P.K.Chathan Master constitute substantial part of in this chapter. The impacts of social organization of Sahodaran Ayyappan, the role of literature, Gandhian ideology and anti caste struggles against untouchability are also discussed.

Fifth chapter is ‘Struggle for Social Justice, Self Respect and Upward Mobility’. It focuses on P.K.Chathan Master’s activities in Central Kerala which were channelized in different ways through the social organization *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha*. Formation of the association of agricultural labourers in Cochin State and anti-land lord struggles has also been discussed. The Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1969 and its impact on the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala have been analyzed.

CHAPTER I

EVOLUTION OF THE PULAYAS IN CENTRAL KERALA:

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW.

As an overture to the main theme of the study, this section attempts to furnish an historical overview of the agrarian society of ancient Thamilakam. How caste evolved as an institution in Thamilakam, and the historical roots of the transition of the tribes into the castes. The condition of the *Pulayas* during the pre-colonial and colonial period and the effects of the abolition of slavery on *Pulayas* are also highlighted.

In ancient period Kerala was a part of Thamilakam. Society in ancient Thamilakam was tribal in character. The division of population into castes and communities were absent in the Sangam period. Social evils like the denial of equal opportunity, exploitation and untouchability were unknown during that period. Various social groups like the *Panar*, the *Parayar*, and the *Kuravar* enjoyed social freedom and social equality¹.

In the Sangam age, Thamilakam was divided into five Tinais or regions with specific geographical features. They had their own occupational structure and respective modes of expression. The process of social formation in Kerala can be traced back to the development of settlements owing to increase in population. As people were familiar with the usage of iron tools and equipment they could clear the forest more easily and start cultivation². The spread of agriculture led to the expansion of their settlements.

Questions related to the role of caste in the integration of the agrarian society and how caste evolved as an institution in Thamilakam have received wide academic attention. During the fifth and sixth centuries, the agrarian societies of Thamilakam were

¹Elamkulam P.N.Kunjanpillai, *Keralam Anchum Arum Noottandukalil*, (Mal.), National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1961, pp.204-205.

²M.G.S.Narayanan, *Foundations of South Indian Society and Culture*, Bharathiya Book Corporation, Delhi, 1994, p.44.

becoming class structured ones. This was directly related to the spread of plough agriculture and the new relations of production and social stratification based on the nature of land use. It was tripartite stratification of the people into land holders, lease holders, and tillers³. The social relations began to be further structured during the sixth – seventh centuries with the expansion of plough agriculture across the wetland. The real replacement of the kinship basis of production relation began around the *brahmana* households where plough agriculture was most prevalent. Non-kin relation of production had become prominent. The expansion of agrarian settlements involved in the superior rights of the Brahmans over the communal holdings and the clan families of the locality. This process of transformation of primitive agriculture and clan settlements developed into advanced agriculture and farmer settlements respectively. Agrarian expansion advanced human settlements bound by kinship. The transformation of Non-Brahman village into productive relations transcending kinship (non-kin relation of production) was a continuous process. The development of non-kin relations in plough agriculture and its domination over the total society engendered a process of the occupational specializations and their ordering into a hierarchy⁴. The hierarchy became more elaborate and complex during the seventh and eight centuries A.D. It was a hierarchy with land holders who were mostly Brahmins at the top and lease holders who were artisans and craftsmen constituted the intermediary. At the bottom of the society there were the actual tillers constituting primary producers.⁵

The social formation structured by the dominance of productive relations based on kin-labour was broken down all over Thamilakam during the early medieval period⁶. In this process the transformation clan identity disappeared and *jati*⁷ came as the

³ Rajan Gurukkal ,M.R.Raghava Warriar (ed.), *Cultural History of Kerala*, Vol.1, Department of Cultural Publications, Government of Kerala, 1999, p.252.

⁴ Rajan Gurukkal,*Social Formations of Early South India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010, p.265.

⁵K.NGanesh, *Keralathinte Ennalakal*, (Mal.), Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2011, pp.160-161.

⁶ Rajan Gurukkal ,M.R.Raghava Warriar (ed.), *op.cit.*,p.253.

⁷ *Jati* is an occupational status.

substitute, mostly by retaining the names of the clan. *Jati* is a term used to identify the different social segments of the Hindu society based on caste⁸.

Growth of Brahmin Supremacy and Proliferation of Caste System in Kerala.

Various professional historians have addressed the formation, evolution and subsequent transformation of the caste system. They deal with formation of caste system in Kerala in general and with the formation of the *Pulaya* caste in particular.

Ellamkulam P.N Kunjan Pillai for the first time proposed a historical analysis of origin and growth of the caste system in the pre-colonial Kerala. He says:

The period of the early Tamil anthologies popularly known as Sangam period was a casteless society. He contended that the collapse of the Kulashekara Empire and the subsequent emergence of small principalities helped the Brahmin to further foster the caste system⁹.

The view of M.G.S Narayanan about the formation of the caste system in Kerala is as follows:

The context of the temple centered Brahmin villages and the brahmanical ideology played an important role in the formation of caste system. He opines that hereditary groups in the Dravidian society such as *Ezhavas, Vaniyar, Vellalur, Thachan, Thattan, Pulayas* and so on had become rigid castes during the Perumal period. This hereditary occupation provided a strong trust to the evolution of sub castes within the general frame work of caste system.¹⁰

⁸ V.T.Rajeshekar, *Caste, A Nation With in the Nation*, Karnataka, 2007, p.4.

⁹Elamkulam P.N Kunjanpillai, *Jenmi Sambrathayam Keralathil*, (Mal.), Sahitya Pravarthaka Sangham, Kottayam, 1959, p.519.

¹⁰M.G.S., Narayanan, *Perumals of Kerala*, Calicut University Press, Calicut, 1996, p.153.

Rajan Gurukul delineates the spread of Brahmin villages and the expansion of wetland agriculture which incorporate the non-kin labour into the labour process¹¹.

Kesavan Veluthat in his work *Brahman Settlements in Kerala - Historical Studies*, explores the process of Aryan migration and settlement in Kerala had begun as early as the age of the Sangam¹². So he assumes that:

Brahman settlements of Kerala took shape between the closing years of the Sangam age and 7th century A .D .He used the term *Aryan* is applied to the groups of people who came originally from north India with the Sanskritic ways of life. A Brahmin settlement in Kerala was temple-centered and the temple which was the nucleus of the *brahmana* settlement functioned as the agency which transformed the way of life in Kerala- in terms of economy, society and polity¹³.

The caste formation was attributed to the expansion of production and led to the proliferation of hereditary occupation made by the Brahmins and temple centered Brahmin villages. Through the specialization of labour, several clans like the *Panas*, the *Parayas*, the *Vettuvas*, the *Pulayas* and the *Maravas* came to be identified as *jati*¹⁴.

The Brahmin migration to Kerala led to the emergence of temple centered society and culture that occurred during the period from C. 600 A. D to C. 1000 A.D¹⁵. By the 9th century, the *Chera* kingdom was revived with Mahodayapuram as its new capital. By that time Brahmin settlements of Kerala were almost well established. Development of agrarian society and the subsequent growth of Brahmin supremacy paved way for the growth of the division of labour and the proliferation of castes in Kerala.

¹¹ Rajan Gurukkal, *op.cit.*, p.265.

¹² Kesavan Veluthat, *Brahman Settlements In Kerala Historical Studies*, Cosmo, Thrissur, 2013,p.24.

¹³ *Ibid.*,p.31.

¹⁴ Rajan Gurukkal, M.R.Raghava Warriar, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.255.

¹⁵ M. G. S.,Narayanan, *op.cit.*, p.29.

In Kerala, the Brahmanical domination was strongly felt, the majority of the landlords were Brahmins and *dewaswams*¹⁶ owned vast tracts of land. The actual formation of castes took place in the temple-centered Brahmin villages having extensive agrarian activities. The land system and service tenancy became widespread and therefore the caste based social stratification became all pervasive. The settlements of temple-oriented Brahmins promoted service tenancy and thereby caste hierarchy was consolidated¹⁷. As a landed institutional agency of the Brahmins land lords, the temple played a crucial role in the multiplication of castes and sub castes. With the consolidation of caste hierarchies, the most exploited and oppressed groups like the *Parayas*, the *Panas*, the *Kuravas* and the *Pulayas* began to be looked upon as the lowest in the caste hierarchy. Thus *Pulayas*, a term literally indicating agricultural labourers began to be considered as the most bottom level of the caste system. Later *Pulayas* began to be considered as caste¹⁸.

Evolution of the term Pulayas.

There are various views on the origin of the term *Pulayas*. Almost all names have a link with the traditional occupation of the *Pulayas*, namely work in the field. The word *Pulayas* is derived from *pulam*, which means *Nilam or Field*. The term *Pulayas* was related as outcaste and they were working in the field¹⁹. *Kerala Basha Nighanddu*, and *Kerala Charithra Nighanddu*, mention the *Pulayas* as the earliest inhabitants of Kerala and their traditional occupation were work in the *pulam* or field²⁰. *Folklore Nighanddu*,

¹⁶ Literally means belonging to the deity; in usage 'pertaining to Hindu temple'.

¹⁷Elamkulam P.N.Kunjanpillai, *Samskarathinte Nazhikakallukal* (Mal.), National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1958,p.90.,Elamkulam P.N.Kunjanpillai *Charithrathinte Paschathalathil* (Mal.), Sahithya Pravarthaka Sangham, Kottayam, 1961, p.156.

¹⁸ N. K. Jose, *Pulaya Lahala* (Mal.), Prakasam Publications, Kottayam, 1982, p.3.

¹⁹Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboothiripad, *Aryanmarude Kudiyettam Keralathlil*,(Mal.),Vol.2, Kunnamkulam, 2009, p.86.

²⁰S.Gupthan Nair,*Kerala Basha Nighanddu* (Mal.),Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, p.1077.,S.K.Vasanthan, *Kerala Charithra Nighanddu* (Mal.),Sahithya Pravarthaka Sangham, Kottayam, 1983, p.253.

by Vishnu Namboothiri says that *Pulayas* were the earliest inhabitants of Kerala and main occupation was farming²¹.

'*Pulaya*' is a term that we often came across in our ancient inscriptions. The Vattezuthu inscriptions found in the Thrikkakara Temple states that:

Entnessarakotha donated a *Thirunitha Vilakku* to this temple and for that '*Peruvayyal boomi and Pulaiyar*'²² were offered. This indicates that the land and *Pulaiyar* were offered towards the expenses of maintaining the Thirunitha Vilakku. The term *Pulaiyar* seen in these inscriptions does not imply caste. In those days there was no caste called the *Pulayas*. The term '*Pulaya*' used in these inscriptions implies farmers or those who are caretakers of the land.

The Cochin Census Report of 1891 and 1901 reveals that:

The *Pulayas* and *Cherumans* were separately classed, but there was no difference between *Pulayas* and *Cherumas*²³. But Census Report of 1901 states that they are differently designated in different localities. In the district of Malabar and in the Northern Taluks of Cochin State, they go more generally by the names of *Cherumakkal* and *Mulayan*. In Travancore and the Southern Taluks of Cochin, they were designated as *Pulayas*.

The term *Cheruma* or *Cherumakkal* meant sons of the soil²⁴. It is said that, it is a compound of *cheru* + *makkal*, '*Cheru*' in Malayalam means, 'wet soil' or mud and *makkal*, children of the soil which indicates their indigenous origin and their occupation

²¹M.V.Vishnu Namboothiri, *Folklore Nighanddu*, (Mal.), Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989, p.602.

²²Travancore Archeological Series No.III ,P.170.,T.H.P., Chentharassery, *Keralathile Avaganikepetta Edukal*, (Mal.),Prabath Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1970,p.160.

²³ C.,Achutha, Menon , Report on the Census of Cochin, 1891, Part 1, Government Press, Cochin, 1893,p.152.

²⁴ Edger Thurston, & Rangachari, K., *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. II, Cosmo, Delhi, 1975, p.46.

working in the soil²⁵. They were also called *Mulayan* because they were engaged in the occupation of fencing of land using bamboo. The author of the *Malabar Manual* said that the term *cheruman* was derived from the Malayalam word *cheru*, which means small. He wrote:

‘size depends upon conditions of food than upon anything else and a race which was for centuries on centuries continued to be fed by its masters on a minimum of what will keep body and soul together is pretty sure in the long term run to degenerate in site²⁶.’

A different observation is made by K. C. Alexander, who states that:

The word *Pulayas* originates from *pula* which means birth and death pollution. He holds the view that the term *Pulayas* is associated with impurity because the word '*Pula*' is used to denote 'pollution' or 'impurity'. This term was applied to the lower castes to indicate that their presence or approach will cause impurity to the upper castes. Therefore the *Pulayas* were considered as concrete symbols of pollution.²⁷

But the modern historians claim that there are archaeological records to show that even in 10th and 11th centuries the term *Pulaya* was not a caste name. It meant cultivating people. In the opinion of Ellam Kulam Kunjan Pillai, *Pulayan* in the original sense meant either owner or caretaker of field. He argues that: the word (*pula*) was not used in the sense of pollution and did not connote impurity until the Nambuthiri Brahmins dominated Kerala society²⁸.

Anthropologists, historians and social scientists agree that the *Pulayas* belonged to primitive dwellers of Kerala. A.H. Keane said that, the *Pulayas* belong to one of the

²⁵ C., Achutha Menon *Report on the Census of Cochin*, 1901, Vol. XX, Cochin Part I, & II Ernakulum, 1903. p.172.

²⁶ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. I, Asian Educational Services, Madras, 1867, p.147.

²⁷ K.C. Alexander, 'Changing Status of Pulaya Harijans of Kerala', *E P W*, Vol.3, No.26/28, 1968, p.1071.

²⁸ Elamkulam P.N., Kunjanpillai, *Keralam Anchum Arum Noottandukalil*, (Mal.), *op.cit.*, p.65.

primitive groups representing different Negrito and Dravidian blends. They had the basic features of Proto- Australoid mixed with features of Negrito race. The main features of Proto-Australoid were dark complexion, short stature, flat nose and long mandibles²⁹. All these features are seen partly on the *Pulayas*.

Pulaya Assembly

Pulayas have an assembly managed which consists of the elderly members of the caste, who meet on all important occasions affecting the welfare of the caste. They have their *Vallon* or *Valiyavan* who presides at their marriage, funeral and other ceremonies and also decides all disputes among the *Pulayas* with the aid of the castes men of the village. As a president of the elders, he is a supreme judge and law giver or the expounder of the custom. The *Pulayas* used to hold assemblies of their men for discussing matters relating to the community and reaching decisions³⁰. The *Valluvan* held some privileges, an umbrella with a long handle, bracelets and long ear – rings and a box for keeping betel-leaves. Anybody is committing a crime; the punishment inflicted on him was a fine of a few rupees. To prove the incorruptibility of a man's guilt, he had to swear by assembly I have not done it. It is held so sacred that no *Pulayas* who had committed a crime would swear falsely by this assembly. As time went on they found it difficult to meet and so left off assembling together. At present for all similar cases, they invite the headmen and the elderly members of several villages for deliberation and decision³¹.

²⁹ Krishna Iyer L. A, *Social History of Kerala*, Vol.II, Oriental Publishers, Delhi, 1970, p.30.

³⁰K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*,Vol.III,Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1986 , p.210.,K.V.Kumaran,'Unnniyarchayum Vallopulayanum Pattikajathi Samvaranavum',(Mal.), *Mattanchery Harijan Service Sahakarana Sangham Rejatha Jubilee, Smaranika*, 1986,p.45.,Premnath A Vettiyur, 'Pulayarude Badrakalipattu', (Mal.),*Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*, Vol .41,No.2, April 28, 1963,p.27.

³¹ L.K.Anatha Krishna Iyer, *Ethnographical Survey of the Cochin State, Caste –Pulayas*, Cochin Press, Cochin,1906,p.24.

Huts, Marriage and Festivals

Pulayas huts were generally called *madams*³² which were put up on the banks of fields, in the middle of paddy flats or on tress along their borders so as to enable them to watch the crops after the toils of the day. The upper caste members used to denote them by the term *chala* or *chetta veedu*, which meant degradation and worthlessness³³. They were not even allowed to build huts to protect themselves from the uncles of the weather. The *madams* above referred to are very poor huts supported on four small posts and thatched with leaves. The sides are protected with the same kind of leaves. There was only one room and floor, though slightly raised is very damp during the rainy months. All the members of the family slept together in the same hut. Cooking was done inside the hut during rainy months and outside during summer. Usually they were given food in leaves or in some discarded dishes only. After taking food or drink they had to wash the vessel, keep it with its mouth downward and sprinkle water over it.

Marriage is endogamous so far as the sub tribe is concerned. It is prohibited among the members of the same family. In the Chittur and Thalappilli *Taulk* of the Cochin State, members of the same village do not inter marry. A young man may marry the daughter of his maternal uncle, but this is not allowed among some of the sub tribes. When a young man chooses a girl for wedding the preliminary arrangements are made in her hut in the presence of her parents, relations and the castes men of the village. The auspicious day is fixed and a sum of five *panoms* is paid as the bride's price. The members assembled are treated to a dinner. A similar entertainment is also held at the bride grooms hut to the bride's parents, uncles and others who come to see the bridegroom. On the morning of the day fixed for the wedding, the bridegroom and his party go to the bride's hut where they are welcomed and seated on mats in a small *panthal* put up in front of the hut. A piece of cloth and two small *mundus* are the

³² *Pulaya* houses.

³³ N. Bhakthavalsala Reddy, *The Socio- Economic Transformation of South Indian Villages During the 20th Century*, Folklore Society of South Indian Languages, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004, p.54.

marriage presents to the bride elect³⁴. A vessel full of paddy, a lightened lamp and a coconut are placed in a conspicuous part therein. The bride is taken to the booth and seated by the side of the bridegroom. With prayers to their gods for blessings on the couple, the '*tali*' is tied round the bride's neck. The ceremony is brought to a close with a feast to those assembled there.

The chief festival takes place either in Kumbham or Meenam. The *Cherumas* of the Northern parts as well as the *Pulayas* of the Southern parts of the state attend the festival after a sumptuous meal and toddy drinking according to their custom and join the procession. Toy horses are made and attached to long bamboo poles which are carried to the neighborhood of the temple. As they go they leap and dance to the accompaniment of pipe and drum. One among them who acts as a *velichapad* goes in front of them and after a good deal of dancing and loud praying in honour of the deity they return home³⁵.

Vithu iduka is another festival which consists of putting seeds or bringing paddy seeds to the temple of the village *bhagavathi*. This is also a significant festival which they celebrate on the day of *bharani* month of *kumbham*. Standing at a distance assigned to them by the village authorities where they offer prayers to Kali. They put the paddy grains which they have brought on a bamboo mat spread in front of them after which they return home³⁶.

In the Chittur *taluk* and various parts of Kerala there is a festival called *Kathiru*³⁷ celebrated in honour of the village goddess in the month of *Vrischikam*. When these people start from the farms of their masters and go in procession accompanied with music of pipe and drum. Some of them were carried *kathirkootams* and are thrown away among the crowds of audience all along the route of the procession and also on arrival at the

³⁴ K. Paramewara Kurup, 'Pulayanmar', (Mal.), *Mangalodayam Varika*, Vol.10, No.4, July, 1917, p.103.

³⁵ Information gathered from Chandran, Pulaya Agricultural Labourer, Pullur, Mukundapuram Taluk, 14-7-2015.

³⁶ Information gathered from Chathan, Pulaya Agricultural Labourer, Thozhiyur, Chavakkad, Taulk, 13-5-2014.

³⁷ *Kathiru* means, eyes of Corn.

temple. The viewers, both young and old, scramble to obtain as many of the packets as possible and carry home. They are then hung in front of the houses for it is believed that their presence will help promoting the prosperity of the family until the festival comes around again next year. The significance of the festival is that, *Pulayas* and other agrestic slaves, who are supposed to impart to long distant atmospheric pollution and consequently may not approach the habitations of high caste Hindus, are freely allowed to enter villages and worship in the village temples.

There is another custom connected with harvest existing amongst the *Pulayas*. Before harvest, the *Pulayas* headman asks his master whether he may begin to reap. With his permission he faces the east and puts the sickle to the stalks. The first bundle he reserves for the gods of his master and the second for those of his castes men. Before thrashing, the same headman takes a few bundles of corn from the sheaf intended for their gods and spray toddy on them. Another *Pulayas* do the same thing for the various reapers and says as he does so, ‘come thrashing corn increase’³⁸.

Pulayas become Agrestic Slaves.

Slave labour was effectively utilized in agriculture during ancient and medieval Kerala. Slavery was the most primitive form prevailed in the land even in the beginning of 19th century. Higher castes kept slaves, possessing the absolute right to sell chain or kill them. They were forced to toil in the soil from dawn to dusk without enough food or remuneration. The masters treated them in the most inhuman manner subjected them to untold cruelty and suffering. The slaves were different castes namely the *Pulayas* or the *Cherumas*, the *Parayas*, the *Vettuvass* and the *Kanakkas*. K.P.Padmanabha Menon has the following explanation on the origin of slavery in Kerala:

The institution of slavery in Kerala, like all other institutions there, is attributed to Parasu Rama, who is said to have organized the slave caste as a provision for

³⁸P.K.Narayana Pillai, *Kerala Studies*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1955, p.129.,N.K.Jose, *Kerala Parasuraman Pulaya Sathru*, (Mal.), Hobi Publishers, Vaikkam, 1992,p.3.

agriculture, when he gave the country to the Brahmans. Historically, there can be no doubt that it rose out of the conquest of the original owners of the soil (*Cheruman*, or *Pulayan*) by invaders settlers from the north. Aryans were conquered, and debased by the more refined northerners, whether Dravidian or Aryan, they were condemned to be tillers of the soil, whence they claimed to be sprung³⁹.

There is an argument that the *Pulayas* had ruled over certain regions of Kerala. *Pulayas* held social and economic status in some regions in Kerala. But the arrival of Aryans marked the decline in the position of the *Pulayas* and they became agrestic slaves. The establishment of Brahmin settlements witnessed the virtual extension of a new system of production relation to a larger society. The Brahmin migration and their social domination transformed the indigenous *Pulayas* who were to do menial labour for them. The position of Brahmins was accepted by the rulers and local population; they were their guardians and advisers. The Brahmins together with the rulers are said to have succeeded in making the local population believe in and accept the superiority of the former. Making use of the influence they gained, the Brahmins built temples and persuaded the original inhabitants to offer their properties as gifts to the gods and goddesses who would protect them from all dangers and evils. They proved that they were the instruments for the integration of the emerging agrarian society. The growth of the new power of the Brahmins was accepted by the society and they were considered as the land owners and the ritual authority. Some scholars argue that:

The emergence of temples marked expansion of agriculture through Brahmanical colonization. Gradually, the temples which grew rich with the farmers land and money became the property of the Brahmins. The right of ownership itself was

³⁹K.P.Padmanabha, Menon, *History of Kerala, Vol. II*, Asian Educational Service, New Delhi, 1986, p.272.

vested on the Brahmins by law. Eventually, the *Pulayas* became slaves of the owners of the land and they became agrestic slaves⁴⁰.

In all *taluks* of Cochin State, the agrarian labour force drawn largely from the traditional agrarian slaves belonged to *Pulayas* family. They were played a significant role in the production processes. The identity of the *Pulayas* was closely bound up with the land, as they were an integral part of the masters landed property. In fact they were described as 'being held precisely under the same tenures and terms as the land itself.'⁴¹ It was a product of the absolute control of peasant and superior castes over the untouchable castes. *Pulayas* were held as entirely pure and therefore compelled to keep a stipulated distance from their superiors. They were cultivated the land and on their sweat the landholders drew for the payment of the revenue to the British as also for their own good life. Neither the landlords nor the British were willing to disturb this system for fear of losing their advantages.

The life situations of the *Pulayas* have been accounted by K. Saradhamoni, she writes:

The life of *Pulayas* in the economy was chiefly centered on the institution of slavery. For a slave, the possession of a piece of land was a day dream. They had to cultivate the land and take the yield to their masters. They were hereditary slaves attached to the soil, and their proficiency in agricultural operations was considered greater than that of any other classes of people. They were denied all social and economic rights and privileges⁴².

⁴⁰ *Census Report of Cochin, 1891, op.cit.*,p.155.,K. Saradhamoni, *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala* ,Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1970, p. 32., L.K. Anatha Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*,p.28., K.Dhamodaran, *Indiayude Athmavu* (Mal.), Pusthaka Prasathaka Sangham, 1986,p.21., Rajan Gurukkal, *The Kerala Temple and Early Medieval Agrarian System*, Vallathol Vidyapeedam, Sukapuram, 1992, p.29.

⁴¹ Dharma Kumar,*Land and Caste in South India*,London,1965,p.36.

⁴² K. Saradhamoni, *op.cit.*, p.53.

The *Pulayas* formed the low country tribes who groaned under the disabilities imposed by slavery in Cochin. They were regarded with capricious indifference by their masters to whom they were very obedient. Ananthakrishna Iyer says:

.....whether Brahmin, Nair, and Christian all agreed in their oppression, they experienced little sympathy in sickness, when they were left to nature. They were absolutely obedient from the sluggish apathy of their character, which rendered them ever mindful of their lot. In case of indigence, a *Pulaya* mother would sell a child for Rs 14 to Rs 17, and if a higher rate had been given, it would have been of no use to them, as the proprietor would take away the surplus. The eldest son was the property of the owner, but the mother had the right to redeem the first child for Rs.4 ¹/₂ whether the possessor liked it or not. They were employed in agriculture, and their services were repaid in grain. The wages being three measures of paddy for a man, two for a woman, and one for a child⁴³.

The slave's attachment to the master's family was so strong that they called *Adiyar*. According to Tanika Sarkar, the institution of agrestic slaves:

'Agrestic slavery was based on the inter relatedness between ritual compulsions and the pattern of cultivation'⁴⁴.The seasonal character of cultivation created demand for labour, which was supplied at subsistence rates in Cochin state. The agrestic slaves were denied all social and economic rights and privileges.

Ward and Conner observe the agrestic slaves in Travancore and Cochin States. He says that ,a very opulent farmer will possess from thirty to forty slaves, fifteen or twenty plough, about forty buffaloes, and as many head of cattle, but there are very few indeed with such a large establishments; a fourth of the above may be estimated as the stock of the better class of husband-men, while the lesser ryots who constitute by far the greatest

⁴³ L.K. Ananthakrishna, Iyer, *Ethnographical Survey of the Cochin State, op.cit.*, p.26.

⁴⁴Tanika Sarkar, 'Bondage in the Colonial Context', in Utsa Patnaik and Manjari Dingwaney (ed.), *Chains of Servitude*, Madras, 1985, p.130.

number, will not possess even one-half of this amount: from two to three slaves and a similar number of plough are estimated as capable of tiling a hundred parras; on poonjay lands, the labour is severer⁴⁵.

The status of the slave's D.R. Banaji opined that:

There was no exemption for slaves from the general regulations and also that no special provision was suggested for their protection. As regards the protection to a slave, appeal to the laws would affect his state of bondage, and the ruling power did not have the right of granting his manumission. The slave of law is ignorance, the distance kept by the masters and expense and uncertainty of obtaining relief. The dread of attempting to oppose their masters under whom it had become habitual for them to bend had made it difficult for the slaves to seek redressed by law⁴⁶.

Archival and foreign documents referred to as Agrestic slaves

Archival records and foreign documents deal with the agrarian slavery in Kerala has been brought to light. In early and early medieval documents the castes that provided productive labour in the agrarian society were referred to as *Adiyalar/Adima*, means slaves⁴⁷.

Archival records reveal that:

Large number of slaves belonged to the government to which they were escheated along with other property on the extinction of their owner's families and they were partly employed on government lands. The rate of slaves varied from half a parrah to six parrah of paddy according to the physical ability of the slave. According to

⁴⁵ Ward and Conner, *Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin State*, Vol.I, Government of Kerala, 1863, pp.28-29.

⁴⁶ D.R,Banaji, *Slavery In British India*, Bombay,1933,p.59.

⁴⁷ K.S Madhavan,'*Primary Producing Groups in Early and Early Medieval Kerala: Production Process and Historical Roots of Transition to Castes*' (300-1300 CE), Unpublished Ph.D Thesis submitted to Calicut University,2012,p.5.

the Sirkar account of 1850 there were 6760 Sirkar slaves male and female and 1226 children making together 7986 slaves⁴⁸.

European travelers who came to Kerala in the Middle Ages deal about the condition of slaves and also untouchability and unseeability were practiced. Canter Visscher in his letter no. 13 wrote in 1723 as follows:

‘Every landlord or wealthy Nair had a certain number of slaves employed their own land. These poor creatures form a peculiar and numerous castes and that their masters have power to put them to death without being called upon to account or if they are pleased to sell them⁴⁹.

Francis Buchanan who visited Malabar at the end of A. D 1800 had stated that:

‘The *Namburi* proprietors cultivated their estates by means of their slaves called, *cherumar*. The greater part of the labour in the field is performed by slaves, *Pulayas* or *cherumas*. These are the absolute property of their lords and may be employed in any work that their master pleases⁵⁰. They are not attached to the soil, but may be sold, or transferred in any manner that the master thinks fit, only a husband and wife cannot be sold separately but children may be separated from their parents and brothers from their sisters.

The missionary documents provide valuable information about the agrarian slaves like the *Pulayas* and the *Parayas* of the 19th and early 20th century. Missionary documents gave a description of the personal life of individual slaves and their changes in the socio-economic condition of *Pulayas*⁵¹.

⁴⁸ Sirkar Slaves: ‘A Source of Revenue Income’, from *Kerala Archives News Letter*, Vol.I, No.III, 1975, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Quoted from, Adoor K.K.Rama Chandran Nair, *Slavery in Kerala*, Mittal Publications Delhi, 1986, p.16.

⁵⁰ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.147.

⁵¹ Sanal Mohan P, ‘*Imagining Equality: Modernity and Social Transformation of Lower Castes in Colonial Kerala*’, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University, 2005, p.45.

Present study focuses on the narratives of agrestic slaves based on oral sources. The narratives are significance to give their own experience. These are vividly portrayed in the words of Kuttimon:

He is a *Pulaya* agricultural labourer, lived in Thallappilli *Taulk* in Porkulam. He is eighty five; he told me his family and condition of slaves. Koran and Kali have six children. The eldest son Kuttimon did not go to school, his father died in childhood and how can a poor agricultural mother look these children's. His mother decided that his eldest son Kuttimon was sold to their master. His family borrows money from their master and consequently goes into bondage. Bonded labour refers to work in slave-like conditions in order to pay off a debt. Kolady Varghese is the *jenmi* of this region, his forefathers were allowed to erect a hut in a corner of the master's land, and where they lived for generations as *Kudikidappukkar*. He was primarily considered as domestic slaves, later he became an agrestic slaves⁵².

In 1872 slavery was abolished, but slavery was existed for a longtime. Status of Kuttimon has agrestic slave work to do for the master. He told me first communist government came in Kerala he became as coolie labourer and free from his master and went for work in others land. The Bonded Labour System Act, 1970 abolishes all agreements and obligations arising out of the bonded labour system. It releases all laboures from bondage, cancel any outstanding debt, and prohibit the creation of new bondage agreements⁵³.

Another agrestic slave Chathan lived in Mukunthapuram *Taluk* in Nadavaramb. He clearly depicted the working conditions of agrarian slaves:

⁵² Information gathered from Kuttimon, Pulaya Agricultural Labourer, Porkulam, Thalappilli Taluk, 12.3.2015.

⁵³ R.K. Bakshi, *Dalit and Human Rights*, Akhand Publishing House, New Delhi, 2010, p.121.

Under the traditional system, *Pulayas* was no regulation of working hours, periods of rests, mode of payment of wage and other aspects of working conditions. They were gone to fields for work early in the morning and left only by sun set. The system of wage the slave's only paddy; there was no uniformity of wages paid to agricultural workers in different *Taluks* and villages in Central Kerala. Colonial policies affected this system was changed the wages could vary with area, seasons and types of grain cultivation and quality of work⁵⁴.

TABLE 1.1

Strength of Slave Castes in 1891.

Year	Slave Caste	No. of people
1891	Kanakkan	9926
	Kutan	520
	Valluvan	565
	Vetuvan	747
	Cheruman	14695
	Pulayan	36555
	Parayan	6245
TOTAL		69254

Source: *Reports on the Census of Cochin, 1891, P.89*

The above table deals with *Pulayas* and *Cherumans* were separately classed, but there was no difference between *Pulayas* and *Cherumas*.

⁵⁴Information gathered from Chathan , Pulaya Agricultural labourer, Nadavaramb ,Mukundapuram Taluk, 10-2 2014.

TABLE 1.2. Strength of Slave Castes in 1901

Year	Slave Caste	No. of People
1901	Kanakkan	5617
	Kutan	990
	Vetuvan	6349
	Cheruman or Pulayan	59840
	Parayan	8841
TOTAL		81637

Source: *Reports on the Census of Cochin*, Government of Cochin, 1901, p.112.

The above table states that *Pulayas* or *Cherumans* are differently designated in different localities.

There were authentic records to show the prevalence of the system of slavery during the Buddhist and Jain epochs in Indian history. There was a separate section called *Dasaputta* among the militia of times. *Dasagrama* occurring in the Buddhist works meant places where slaves lived⁵⁵. The lady attendants who performed the household work such as cooking were given *Dasibhogam*⁵⁶. It is recorded that punishments including mutilation of head were inflicted on slaves.

Conditions of Pulayas

Pulayas suffered from various kinds of disabilities like social, economic, occupational, educational and religiously.

Socially the practice of untouchability and unseeability militated against human dignity. Schools and courts were not open to the lower castes. Thus the rules and

⁵⁵ Ramachandran, Nair, K. K., Adoor, *Slavery in Kerala*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1986, p.3

⁵⁶ Remuneration for menial work

regulations of caste hampered social mobility, fostered social division and sapped individual initiative. Untouchability and unapproachability had been strictly observed in dealing with them owing to their low caste origin. There was intense caste feeling among the different classes and they observed untouchability as a normal and necessary social rule. The primary human rights were trampled upon and low caste Hindus were prevented from entering market places, towns and temples. They occupy a very low position in the social scale and their approach to persons of superior caste causes pollution. When a *Pulayas* or *Cherumas* meets a person of superior caste Brahmin, he must stand at a distance of 90 feet. If he comes within this prohibited distance, his approach is said to cause pollution, which is removed only by bathing in water⁵⁷.

The rigidity of caste system was too intense that in society there were a large number of people who were untouchables and unseeables. Untouchability had basically an economic foundation and the untouchables were the most poverty stricken section of the people. Their low social position accentuated their economic exploitation and their economic conditions tended to stabilize their low status. Life of these people putting up with hopeless poverty was miserable. Their lives were considered of no value and they were inferior to chattels. They were separate from the fabric of caste, community, lineage and religion.

Ward and Conner in *Geographical and Statistical Memoir of the Survey of Travancore and Cochin States* remarks:

‘Their name is connected with everything revolting, shunned as if inflicted with plague, the higher classes view their presence with a mixture of alarm and indignation’⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Information gathered from Kumaran, K.C ,Pulaya Agricultural Labourer,Mulavudu, Kanayannur Taulk, 12.3.2013.

⁵⁸ Ward and Conner, *op.cit.*,p.150.

Regarding the distance of pollution between pure and polluting castes, there exists opinion among the scholars and rather standard calculation of distance of pollution. Some scholars argue that:

Ganga Prasad,⁵⁹ Edgar Thurston, C. Rajagopalachari⁶⁰, C. R. Mitra,⁶¹ and Tomy Joseph,⁶² etc. give vivid vision regarding various aspects of the range of caste pollution. Low caste like, the *Parayas*, the *Pulayas*, the *Panas*, the *Manans*, the *Kanakkas* and the *Velans* has to keep away from a high caste. Brahmins was 90 feet; Nairs stand at a distance- low caste like, the *Parayas*, the *Pulayass*, the *Panas*, the *Manans*, the *Kanakkas* and the *Velans* 64 feet. The Nairs were free to kill any low-caste Hindu who did not observe the rule of pollution.

The lowest castes were divided into castes and sub castes. They had their separate and peculiar customs. Buchanan has an account of the distinctions observed by the lowest castes between themselves. The *Pulayan* was to remain 10 paces from *Vettuva*, the *Parayan* the same distance from the *Pulayan* and *Nayady*, 12 paces from the *Parayan*.⁶³

There is a picture by Buchanan taken from the practice between the *Kanakkan* and *Pulayan* upon the lands of the land lords. They meet work together on all working days, but on leaving work the *Kanakkans* invariably bathe they return to their houses or taste food. After bathing they utter cry and warn the coming *Pulayan* to quit the road and retreat to the prescribed distance⁶⁴. Their houses were obliged to be away from the *Pulayans*. They did not frequent the same roads nor did they buy at the same market. This elaborate and almost perfect system of keeping man away from man, caste from caste, prevented the birth of any kind of solidarity among the slave castes. The beliefs, practices

⁵⁹ Ganga Prasad, *The Caste System*, Lahore, 1922, p.51.

⁶⁰ Edgar Thurston, *op.cit.*, p.52.

⁶¹ C. R. Mitra, *Sree Narayana Guru and Social Revolution*, Shertalai, Kottayam, 1979, p.82.

⁶² Tomy Joseph, 'Empowerment of Dalits and the Role of Dalit Movement in Kerala: A study of Kottayam District', Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Mahatma Gandhi University, 2010, p.5.

⁶³ Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, 1870, p.170.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.173.

and ideology of the times of each caste, low it was developed a pride in its own status. Buchanan made this clear when he wrote that:

‘Even among those miserable creatures, the practice of caste has its full influence; and if a *Cheruma* or *Pulayan* be touched by a slave of the *Prayan* caste, he is defiled’⁶⁵.

The important subject of the slaves had the most miserable experience in their quest for justice in the law courts. M.C. Koran, Retired Sheristhar in Irinjalakuda Court, He says:

Whether plaintiff or defendant they had to remain outside the court compound. The questions asked by the judge and advocate were transmitted to them through the peon standing at the door step. Similarly was the answer transmitted back? In the process of transmitting the questions and answers very often the peon made mistakes with the result that the question asked from inside was not properly conveyed to them and consequently the answer given by them became something different by the time it reached the judge. It is only to be imagined the extent of justice these poor creatures got in the judgments pronounced by the judges after such proceedings⁶⁶.

The body of the slave intensely depicted on the words of Kalikutty:

Women were banned from covering the upper part of their body. They were not allowed to wear clean and tidy clothes. They were prohibited from wearing gold or silver ornaments. Males wore round the loin’s *mundus* which seldom extend below the knees and wore them until they fell to pieces. They wore a similar dirty cloth on their shoulders. Woman wore a kacha, a piece of cloth seven cubits in length round the loins⁶⁷, they seldom cover their breasts. The hair on the head was neither well parted nor oiled, but merely tied into a knot pointing upwards and slightly

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*,p.175.

⁶⁶ Information gathered from M.C.Koran, Sharisthar,Irinjalakuda Court, (Rtd) Mukundapuram Thaluk, 20.2.2012.

⁶⁷ Information gathered from Kalikutty, Pulaya Agricultural Labourer,Ollari,Thrissur Taluk, 10.1.2014.

inclined to the back of the head. The ear holes are sufficiently dilated to contain wooden plugs, by the side of which there is another small hole containing ten to fifteen small iron rings. Whenever *Pulayas* tried to break these restrictions they were punished.

Another case of a severe form of unkindness was reported in relation to the use of public office. Kunjumon, retired village officer, says:

They were not allowed entry into public buildings like the village office or the post office. If a low caste man needed anything from these offices he had to stand at a distance and shout out *Thamburanay*. Only after he had shouted for a long time would the official come out and enquire what he needed. When the low caste man had explained his requirement the official would ask him to keep the coins there on the sand. Accordingly the low caste man would keep the coins on a green leaf and move away. And then the official would come and collect the coins and keep there the receipt or stamp or whatever else was required. Only after the official reached back the office building could the low caste man come and pick it up⁶⁸.

Occupations were specifically associated with their caste. They were dispossessed of land in pre-colonial period; they became the labouring groups in the agrarian system. They were not paid for each job done, but food and other minimum necessities were provided every day to keep them alive. Some grain was supplied every harvest time to feed their families. Some gifts were given during times of festivals and family ceremonies⁶⁹. Their earnings were meager and they were primarily indebted and forced to work as bonded labour to the upper caste on low wages. They were also under obligation to perform forced labour. Men, women and children worked together.

⁶⁸ Information gathered from Kunjumon, Retired Village Officer, Craganore Taluk, 21.5.2015.

⁶⁹M.Achuthan, *Writing Indian History A View from Below*, Samya Publications, New Delhi, 2009, p.205.

Discrimination on the basis of caste was severe in the field of education. Education was highly religious oriented and the Brahmins had a monopoly over the institutions of learning in the state. Historically the *Pulayas* had been the most uneducated and illiterate group. The *Pulaya* children were not permitted to attend schools. They were forced to tend cattle or such work on nominal wages. In the words of Kumaran family members and other *Pulayas* family also were forced to work in the field every day and night. They were willing to learn but their masters did not permit them⁷⁰. So the *Pulayas* remained as uneducated and untouchables in the state during pre- British.

The *Pulayas* were denied access to temples for worship. *Teendal* and *Thodil* had been supposed to carry pollution both to the members of caste Hindu communities and to the deities in the temples. They were not allowed to travel through the temple roads. Their gods are Parakutty, Karikutty, Chathan and the spirit of their ancestors⁷¹. The priest was a member of the *Pulayas* caste. The *Pulayas* also believe that spirits exercise an influence over the members of their family.

Because of the Political disability during the pre- colonial period, there was no right to franchise and elect representatives to the legislative assembly. Only the upper caste people enjoyed all the rights and privileges in the society.

Transactions of Pulayas.

The slaves were valued differently in different places according to the modes of transfer. There are several medieval records which show that *Pulayas* were bought and sold as slaves and often transferred with or without land from one owner to another as part of a transaction. Francis Buchannan made the following observation:

‘The *Cherumas* are supreme property they are part of the live-stock on a land. In the selling and buying land it is not necessary that they should

⁷⁰Information gathered from Kumaran, *Pulaya Agricultural Labourer*, Thrissur Taluk, 21.10.2015.

⁷¹Information gathered from Kurumba, *Pulaya Agricultural Labourer*, Madayikonam, Mukundapuram Taluk, 18-6-2014.

follow the soil; both kinds of property are equally disposable and may fall into different lands. The *Cherumas* may be sold, leased and mortgaged, like the land itself or like any cattle or thing⁷².

A few indigenous documents throw light on the transactions of slaves along with land the purpose of maintaining and cultivating the land. The earliest among the inscriptions is the one relating to *Adimakasu*⁷³ occurring in the Tharisapilli Inscriptions of 849 A.D states that:

The Venad Raja, Ayyan Adikal Thiruvadikal grants certain privileges to the congregation of the Tharisa church at Quilon. It is laid down in this inscription that the levy of *Adimakasu* need not be exacted which indicates the existence of slavery in Kerala. People who kept slaves had to pay various sorts of dues to the government like *Atimaikku Alkkasu or Adimakasu* money for keeping slaves, per capita tax for slaves.⁷⁴ As the slaves were considered as outcastes in society their human rights were totally violated.

One of the inscription of the 11th century A.D, Tirukkakkarai inscription from Central Travancore, there is specific mention of the transfer of a *Pulayas*:

Tirukkakkarai inscription is engraved on the outside base of the *surre-mandapa* of the Vishnu temple at Tirukkakkarai. It remains incomplete having lost a good portion at the end of each of the first three lines. It registers a gift of money made by a certain Kannan Kumaran of Karilam in favour of the temple at Tirukkakari, so as to enable the temple officers the *ulpadan* and the *permudiyam* to purchase certain lands situated at Kannamangalam and belonging to a certain Iyakkan Kodai of Ravimangalam. Other persons like *Pulayas* and *Parayas* appear to have been made the cultivators of the lands on condition that they supplied annually six

⁷²Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*, p.150.

⁷³ slave levy

⁷⁴M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, p.3., K.Rathnama *Pracheena Shasanagalum Malayala Paribhashayam*, (Mal.), Cultural Department, Government of Kerala, 2006, p.41.

hundred *nazhi* of paddy to the temple. According to the conditions of grant, with the transaction of land from one owner to another the *Pulayas* were also transferred⁷⁵.

Thus we find the *Peruvayal Bhumi and Pulayar, Vettikkarikkattu Bhumi and Pulayar,* and *Kannamangalathu Vayal and Puliayar,* being donated for the conduct of certain routine expenses in Trikkakara temple⁷⁶. In these cases the slaves mentioned along with the land must have been the *Pulayas* or similar tribes settled there.

Archival records explain the transactions of the *Pulayas*:

With the transactions of land from one *jenmi* to another all the members of the *Pulaya* family transferred. Later they became the agrestic slaves of the *jenmi*.⁷⁷ They were absolute property and they were part of the livestock on a land. In selling and buying land it is not necessary that they should follow the land, both kinds of property are equally disposable and might fall into different hands⁷⁸. They might be sold, leased like the land itself or like any cattle or thing.

Buchanan explained that there are three modes of transferring the slaves as follows:

The first is by *jennum* or sale, where the full value of the slave is given and property is entirely transferred to a new master who is in some measure bound by his interest to attend to the welfare of his slave. The second, *kanam* or mortgage. The proprietor receives a loan of money generally two thirds of the value of the slaves and he also receives annually a small quantity of rice to show it is his property whenever he pleases to repay the money borrowed for which in the mean while he pays no interest. In case of any of the slaves dying, he is held bound to

⁷⁵*Tirukkakarai Inscription of Kannan Kumaran*, Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. III, Part.I, p.24.

⁷⁶ M.G.S,Narayanan, *op.cit.*,p.154.

⁷⁷*Malayalam Diary, 1007*, Karkkitakam, Vol.II, Regional Archives Ernakulam,(here after R A E); *Inscription of Indukodai*, Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol.III, Part.I, p.32.

⁷⁸ *Register Book for Deeds of Sale or Gifts of Lands, Houses or other real Property*, No.12-1831 Regional Archives Kozhikode, p.25.

supply another of equal value. The lender maintains the slaves and has their labour for the interest of his money and for their support. The third manner of employing slaves is by letting them for *patam* or rent in this a certain annual sum the master gives them to another man they provides them with their maintenance⁷⁹.

They were in many places attached to the soil and their market value was not much above that of the cattle united with them in the same bondage while they were far below them in the estimation in which they were held. Their freedom could only be productive of starvation or a change of servitude which occurred, the deed of transfer generally contained the clause, " *you may sell or kill him or her*"⁸⁰, they had no ideas beyond their occupation and were never guilty of any violence to their masters to whom they were absolutely obedient from the sluggish apathy of their character, which rendered them ever mindful of their own lot. Being themselves born slaves, their children also were born slaves and every land lord had a number of them. They toiled day and night in the soil and its fruits were exploited by the privileged classes of the society. They were even exchanged and sold like cattle along with land and this depressed and polluting caste had been denied all privileges enjoyed by other castes of Kerala.

According to Buchanan the price of the slave:

"A young man with his wife will sell for from 250 to 300 *fanams*, two or three children will add 100 *fanams* . Four or five children two of whom are beginning to work will make the family worth from 500 to 600 *fanams*, a pair of slaves may be worth four pair of buffaloes"⁸¹. They get an allowance of rice and a cloth. They sometimes run away but still remain in their servile condition. If reclaimed, the children they may have during their stay are divided between the old master from whom they have fled and new master to whom they restored. Buchanan understands that a master was considered as bound to give the slave a certain

⁷⁹ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*,p.88.

⁸⁰ Samuval Mateer, *Land of Charity*, London Missionary Society India, Kerala, 1871, p.44.

⁸¹ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*,p.90.

allowance of provisions: A man or woman while capable of labour receives two *edangazies* of rice in the husk weekly or two sevenths of allowances that consider as reasonable for persons of all ages included. A male slave annually gets seven cubits of cloth and a woman fourteen cubits.

When European mercantilism extended its activities on the Cochin coast, the slaves were widely exported to the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French. Dutch records reveal that an export duty had been realized by the Dutch on slave trade from their port at Cochin⁸². The characteristic of Cochin society which permitted slave system helped the foreigners to engage themselves in slave trade.

Karl Marx observed the purchase and sale of slaves:

The purchase and sale of slaves formally also a purchase and sale of commodities. But money cannot perform this function without the existence of slavery. If slavery exists money can be invested in the purchase of slaves. On the other hand the mere possession of money cannot make slavery possible⁸³.

So the slave owning society of Central Kerala encouraged the slave trade. Every wealthy man owned a number of slaves they were bought and sold like cattle in several markets.

Slavery is a form of surplus labour appropriation by the suppression of one individual the slave by another individual the master. The aim of such ill-treatment was twofold: to extract the maximum labour output from the slave at the lowest possible expense and to create a sense of obedience and fear among the slaves⁸⁴. However, the treatments of slaves were by and large dependent on the attitude of the individual masters. The slaves were considered as possessed goods, they had no power to question their masters, nor could they easily escape from them. In fact, the subordination of the slaves had been so

⁸² *Deeds of Sale and Transfer of Slaves*, 1765, Dutch Records Chennai Archives, Chennai, p.94.

⁸³ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol.II, Moscow, 1971, p.32.

⁸⁴ Jayasre, C. H, *Slavery and Serfdom in the 19th Century in Kerala*, With special reference to Malabar, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis Submitted to Mangalore University, 1994, pp.61-62.

deep rooted that it had become a part of the slaves psyche, and the master-slave relationship was considered as normal and also as ensuring social relation.

Socio-Economic Transformation- Impact of British Rule.

Abolition of Slavery

Slavery was abolished in India by the Indian slavery act of 1843. Colonel Monroe, who had taken various legal measures, was in favour of the amelioration of the condition of slaves in Cochin State. The first step towards the abolition of slavery in Cochin was that, the Cochin government issued a proclamation on 16th February 1854 declaring that ‘all children who may be born of sarkar slaves after the date there of shall be free’⁸⁵. But the proclamation did not bring changes in the society or in the agrarian relations. Thus in spite of the proclamation, the conditions of the slaves remained the same. Even the free ones could not lead an independent life. There were very few persons of this caste the *Pulayas*, the *Kanakkans*, the *Pallas* and the *Vedans* who possessed landed property. At the lower level of the agrarian society the situation continued to be worse.

A final blow to slavery in India was section 370, 371 of the Indian penal Code, which came in to force in January 1862. It declared that any person who have no rights to possess slaves. On 25th September 1872, the government of Cochin issued a proclamation for the abolition of slavery in Cochin State-- the buying, selling and possession of slaves were prohibited by law⁸⁶.

The Condition of the Pulayas after the Abolition of Slavery in Central Kerala.

The Slavery Abolition Act of 1872 in Cochin State did effect some changes in the life of the *Pulayas*. The opening of public work departments and plantation industries in Cochin State provided salaried employment to thousands of low castes people as

⁸⁵ Archival Records, Abolition of Slavery, 1854, R A E.

⁸⁶ Adima Avakasam Nirthiya Velambaram, *Kerala Archives News Letter*, Published by the Directorate of Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, Vol.V, 1982.

coolies⁸⁷. Their exploitation was very severe in the plantation sector, but these beneficial changes only to a small number of *Pulayas*. Majority of them were live as attached labourers to their old master.

The working conditions of liberated slave castes were in no way better than slaves, when they were in debts. Stoppage of allowance was made and their condition was worse than the slaves⁸⁸. The state of Cochin the freed slaves had not changed even half a century after the formal ending of slavery⁸⁹. The members of these castes were profoundly ignorant and superstitious, steeped in miserable poverty and subjected to many displeasure and degrading restrictions and disabilities. Their emancipation from slavery had no improvement in their material condition.

The wetland paddy cultivation was in the main dependent on the agrestic slave, the Devan Peishkar of Cochin, opinion that slavery by birth as it existed in Cochin and which was part of Hindu society. The masters treated their slaves with kindness and considerations. He wrote:

‘When lands change hands, the new purchaser paid something to the previous owner as a compensation for the goodwill of the labourers who are made over with the lands. Indeed in this compensation or consideration is altogether a private arrangement not claimable in a court of law’⁹⁰.

About the condition of the freed slaves, the Dewan Periskar noted:

“However resigned the freed slaves may be to their personal lot for want of a better, it is I must say a pitiable one....the land owners having a monopoly of their labour give them nothing more than bare subsistence. They live in an almost exposed state, and sleep in portable huts. It is impossible to say how hard and by

⁸⁷P.J.Cheryan *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Kerala State Gazetteer, Vol.II, Part II, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, P.458.

⁸⁸ Francis Buchanan, *op.cit.*,p.90.

⁸⁹ C.Achutha Menon, *op.cit.*,p.205.

⁹⁰ K, Saradhamoni *op.cit.*,p.98.

what manner of treatment they are made to work. Unless somebody else is willing to take them into his services, they cannot leave their present master or complain against them”⁹¹.

Dewan said that the land owners found it in their interest to maintain body of labourers at their perfect command. They did not believe that coolies would be always available or would be devoted to their work. Slaves assured a supply of labour in emergencies like bursting of a tank or irrigation canal⁹².

The Missionary accounts give us information about the freed slaves as follows:

The initiatives of the missionaries to support the cause of the abolition of slavery, sufferings of the slave castes made the missionaries intervene in their affairs with a view to liberate them from an inhuman existence. Missionaries supported the cause of abolition of slavery in order to make free wage labourers available in the plantations⁹³.

Labourers were mainly untouchable slave castes who could have acquired spatial mobility after the abolition of slavery. It may be noted that their spatial mobility in any substantial scale was observed only from the second decade of the twentieth century. Many lower castes desired to adopt Christianity; caste rigidity and consequent social ostracism and loss of traditional jobs for converts forced them to initiate economic activities. They forced to start new employment opportunities and social security to converts. They wanted to create a condition for them to earn economic prosperity and through that social esteem.

Archival records deal the after the abolition of slavery memo to the Dewan of Cochin by the *Cherumas* or *Pulayas* of *Thalappilli Taluk* as follows:

⁹¹ *Ibid.*,p.98.

⁹² *Ibid.*,p.99.

⁹³ P.Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2015, p.17.

The condition of *Pulayas*, the grievance petition by *Cheruman Ayyappan*, *Mepoddi Chekali*, *Chunkathe Povarakkal Kolannur Chathan* of *Kunnamkulamgara Pravarthi* including *Talappilly Kovilakamthum Vathukkar* of *Cochin State* to the honorable government of *Madras*; Though slavery has been officially abolished in 1872, we the *Cherumakkal* of the state are saddened by the fact that we have been meted out with extreme inhuman treatment and discrimination our land lords continue the practice of buying our bodies under the company label and subject us to physical treatment and violence. Therefore we request the honorable governor to kindly take necessary action to stop such savagery on put of the landlords of the state⁹⁴.

The slavery abolition measures granted only de jure freedom and not defacto freedom to the slaves. This was the case in the two princely states and the British administered Malabar after the enactments relating to the legal abolition of slavery. The effects of the anti-slavery enactments were that in most cases. The slave castes lost their security of having a master to work for and they still had to depend on the land-lords for work and earnings. The primary reason for the above plight of the slave castes were that the slavery amelioration acts. Those were not followed by any economic transformation or social awakening .Ultimately affects the life of these poor people who were subjected to deprivation and servitude for ages. William Logan delineated the crux of the problem with his characteristic foresight thus:

‘The slaves, however as a caste will never understand what real freedom means until measures are adopted to give them indefeasible rights in the small orchards occupied by them as house-sites⁹⁵.’

The formal abolition of slavery in *Cochin State* in 1872 was no doubt claimed as a triumph of the liberal and humane in British rule. But in reality, the liberated slaves were

⁹⁴ Series Files(1684-1869) ,R A E.

⁹⁵ William Logan, *op.cit.*,p.65.

merely sucked into a new agrarian capitalists of the plantations gained in the bargain. The fact is that the agrestic slaves and traditional agricultural laborers of Kerala had to wait to achieve the goal for nearly a century till the passing of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act.

The *Pulayas* received inhuman treatment at the hands of the upper castes, as the law was not egalitarian. Socio- economic conditions of the *Pulayas* were very low; they had no access to land. They were restricted from choosing their occupation. They were tied to the land and were treated as slaves. The Slavery Abolition Act of 1872 in Cochin State did some changes in the life of the *Pulayas*. Due to colonial intervention in agriculture, labour was to be released from land to land and to be converted into capital. The beginning of industries in Cochin State provided salaried employment to some *Pulayas* as coolie labourer's .This facilitated a transition from slave labourers to wage labourers.

CHAPTER-2

CHANGING LAND RELATIONS AND THE OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY OF THE PULAYAS.

The British controlled the Princely State of Cochin from 1791 to 1947. In 1791 a treaty was concluded by the Raja of Cochin with the East India Company by which the company agreed to protect Cochin State from any external aggression. In return, the Raja was bound to pay an annual subsidy of one lakh Rupees¹. In 1809, the treaty was renewed in the background of Chief Minister Paliyath Achan's revolt against the Resident. The new treaty enhanced the subsidy to the English to Rs. 276037² which resulted in further increase in land revenue assessment in 1808-1809³. A peculiar machinery of administration existed in Cochin in the 19th century. The Raja was assisted by the Diwan⁴. However, the office of the Resident⁵ was the mechanism adopted by the English to control the administration⁶. The correspondence between the British Resident and the Raja of Cochin are testimonies to the nature of control exercised by the Resident on the administration⁷.

Cochin, in the pre-nineteenth century presented a picture almost equivalent to that of Malabar in the political and socio-economic field⁸. The King was the head of the state, holding extensive crown lands for his maintenance. The rest of his territory was divided into *nadus* ruled over by *naduvazhi* chiefs, who exercised

¹ *Report on the Administration of Cochin*, Introductory Note, 1928, Government Press, Cochin, 1929, p.2.

² The Treaty of Perpetual Friendship and Subsidy between the Hon'ble East India Company and the Raja of Cochin.

³ "The Primary Method of Surplus Extraction throughout India had come to be the levy of Land Revenue..." Irfan Habib, *Colonization of the Indian Economy, 1757-1900, Essays in Indian History*, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 1995, p.297.

⁴ equivalent to chief minister.

⁵ representative of the English Company.

⁶ K.T.Thomas, 'The Princely State of Cochin: A Dichotomy of Sovereignty and Control', *Quest Historica*, Vol.11, No.2, Oct.2003, P.36.

⁷ For details, the Resident's Letters from 1814 to 1896 in the Bound Register, R A E .

⁸ K.T.Thomas, *op.cit.*, p.36.

quasi- sovereign authority over them⁹. The *nadus* were again divided into *desams* or villages ruled by *desavazhis*. The *naduvazhi* or *desavazhi* were not required to pay any regular tax to the King for the lands they possessed. But they were bound to attend the King and march with their fighting men whenever their services were called for. The King and chiefs granted land to the Brahmins for their services, both spiritual and temporal. In course of time, lands became distributed among the King, the *naduvazhis* , the *desavazhis* , the Brahmins and the *devasawams*.

Till the middle of the 18th century (up to 1762) the Raja of Cochin did not collect any land revenue, in the modern sense of the term, from the lands of private *jenmis* (landlords), the produce was shared between the land lord and his tenant¹⁰. The expenses of the civil administration were met by taxes in the nature of *sayer* and *moturpha*¹¹.

The expenses of the ruling family seem to have been met from the royal demesnes called *kandukrishi* lands¹². In 1762 the exigencies of administration compelled the government to levy revenue from *Puravaka* lands under private ownership. Since then the *rajabhogam* together with the *jenmibhogam* (share of the landlord) from the lands belonged to *sarkar* constituted the land revenue of the state. But stabilization and enhancement of the land revenue had been the result of British interference¹³.

One-third of the cultivated lands in Cochin was with the state. In 1812, Col.Munro, the Resident, annexed the lands and properties which belonged to 179 temples to the state¹⁴.This was a dissimilar situation compared to that of Malabar

⁹ Achutha Menon C, *Cochin State Manual*, Ernakulam, 1911, P.299.

¹⁰ S.,Subbarama Iyer, *Economic Life in a Kerala Village : A Study in India's Rural Economic Organization*, Banglore.1925,p.15.

¹¹Sayer means customs and exercise duties on trade by sea or land. Moturpha is a form of profession tax formerly imposed on artisans, shepherds and owners of ships, looms, oil presses etc.

¹² Crown lands leased to tenants –at-will or cultivated directly by the workers of the ruler.

¹³K.T.Thomas,*op.cit.*,p.37.

¹⁴ E. Krishna Menon(compiled), *The Cochin Devaswam Manual*, Ernakulam,1938,introduction,para3.

where entire lands, including even forests were regarded as the private property of the landlords. In Cochin the government itself was a landlord and gradually four-tenth of the cultivated lands came under the possession of the *sarkar*¹⁵.

Though Cochin was an independent Princely State, the colonial influence on administration was tremendous. The Resident claimed to have the right to know everything related to *pandaravaka* (government) land. He interfered in the day-to-day administration. He even questioned the *tittoorams* (royal writs) issued by the Raja.

The colonial control of Cochin had its effect on the agrarian relations. The English demand for a huge annual subsidy put a heavy burden on the Cochin tenants and labourers who bore the brunt of colonial intervention¹⁶. The English demand for higher subsidy compelled the state to demand more land revenue.

The Raja of Cochin was forced to accept a subordinate political status under British dominance. The British taking advantage of their strategic position, exploited the resources of the subjugated state of Cochin for their advantage. The acceptance of the British control necessitated introducing features of colonial system of administration. The traditional land system in Cochin was a *jenmi* centered one consisting of:

three distinct classes — landlords, tenants, and agricultural labourers. The Nambudiri landlords had control over their own land as *brahmaswom*, and temple lands as *devaswam*. The *Namboodiris* managed the *devaswam* lands as trustees of the temples. The *Namboodiris* and the Nayers were the only important groups who had land ownership. They had dominated by appropriating the agricultural surplus, produced by the *avarna* labour that had remained marginalized as a result¹⁷.

¹⁵T.C.Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences: Land Tenures in Kerala, 1850- 1960*, Bombay, 1970, p.32., S., Subbarama Iyer, *op.cit.*, p.16.

¹⁶ K.T.Thomas, *op.cit.*, p.37.

¹⁷D.Damodaran Namboodiri, 'Caste and Social Change in Colonial Kerala', in P.J,Cheriyar(ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, P.433.

The basic organization of land rights was as follows:

The temples and Brahmans, along with *Naduvazhi* chief who were consolidating their position in different parts of Kerala, held most of the available land, wet lands as well as garden lands, as a permanent, hereditary right¹⁸. Such lands were classified as *devaswam*, *brahmaswam* and *cherikkal* lands¹⁹, they were being cultivated by settled cultivators who paid a share of the produce to the *jenmi*. These cultivators were not a monolithic class. They included large landholders who got lands cultivated by others on lease and simple lease holders.

The unique feature of the agrarian structure was the close inter-relationship between the land owners and labourers. There were several occupational groups. The *Musaris* were stone-cutters and *Asaris* were carpenters, *Kollans* were blacksmiths, *Thattans* were goldsmiths and *Kaniyans* were astrologers and *Pulayas* were agricultural labourers, who had no direct right in land, made a living by various menial and manual occupations which in most cases conformed to their caste-based traditional occupations. These occupational castes formed the basic and permanent group in the agrarian society²⁰. The *Pulaya* labourers, did not have much access to land. The land distribution was highly unequal, where upper castes mostly monopolized the control of land.

Land tenurial system was based on *jenmi-kudiyam* pattern. In this pattern there survived a three tier division of land rights, *janmam*, *kanam* and *verumpattam*²¹. *Janmam* tenure itself was of three kinds; free-hold *janmam*, *devaswam* and *brahmaswam* and other *janmam* lands. Free-hold *janmam* was totally exempted from payment of any tax to the

¹⁸ K.N Ganesh, *Reflection on Pre Modern Kerala*, Cosmo Books, Thrissur, 2016, p.169.

¹⁹ Rajan Gurukulal, 'Medieval Land Rights: Structure and Pattern of Redistribution', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 39, 1978, pp.280-81., *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, Vol.1*, the Regional Records Survey Committee (ed.), Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, P.82.

²⁰ L.K., Anathakrishna, Iyer *Ethnographical Survey of the Cochin State, Caste- Pulayas-Cochin Press, Cochin*, 1906, p.30., K.N., Ganesh, *Keralathinte Ennalakal*, (Mal.), Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2011, p.155.

²¹ C.K., Narayanan Namboothiripad, 'Kudiyayma Cochiyl', (Mal.), *Mathruboomi Azchapattippu*, Vol. 36, No.42, January 4, 1959, p.17.

government. The *janmam* right has been traced to the formation of a stratified agrarian society between the ninth and twelfth centuries. Agrarian settlement grew up in the river valleys and the Brahmins came to establish hereditary rights over the wet lands. Lands held by these landowners were cultivated by large and small tenants²². By the 12th century, gradation of rights over lands emerged, with the *Naduvazhi* chief at the top, followed by *Uralar* at the middle, and *Kudiyan*, and *Adiyalar* at the bottom in the descending order. Brahmins and *Naduvazhi* owned lands as *janmam*, as the rights that they held were inherited from their predecessors by matrilineal or patrilineal forms of succession²³.

Kanam tenure was granted by the *jenmis* for a period of twelve years. *Kanam* means the visible right of the *kanamdar* by virtue of his being in possession as opposed to the invisible right of *jenmi*. *Kanamdar* had a supervising role over his land. *Verumpattam* means simple lease of lands for cultivation for a short period they had no fixity of tenure. Gradation of rights among the producing class was also consolidated. The different strata of producers which had been formed during the later Chera period were transformed into a class of lease holders who held lands from the *jenmi* on the basis of payment of a share of the produce as *pattam*. By the eighteenth century, *pattam* became a category that applied to all types of lease by landholders occupying different economic positions. Variations on the form of rent depended on the established traditional and legal practices in a particular region. With the growth of *janmam* tenure along with the privileges associated with it, the settled cultivators became tenants paying rent or service to the *jenmi*. *Kudiyan* became the leaseholders and *Adiyalar* remained bonded slaves, attached to the soil in food crop producing areas²⁴.

The land tenures enjoyed by each of the claimants were known by different names reflecting the nature of rights, status and obligations of the respective tenures. The

²² K.N Ganesh, *op.cit.* p.167.

²³ *Ibid.*,p.168.

²⁴ C.K.,Narayanan Namboothiripad,*op.cit.*,p.18., K.Harihara Krishna Iyer, *Keralathile Booniyamagalum Ulbhavavum, Valarchayum*, (Mal.), *Thiruvananthapuram*, 1984,p.24.

right for the collection of taxes vested in the hands of chieftains who held semi-independent jurisdiction within their territorial limits and supplied military troops for service under the Rajah whenever he needed the same. Thus the Kavalapara Nair, Vadakethale Nambidi, and similar chieftains in the north, the numerous Kaimal, Achans and Karthas distributed military troops all over the country. Some Rajahs like Craganore Rajah, Parur Rajah and Edapilli Rajah also had this right²⁵. Later most of the land of these Chieftains and Rajahs had been reduced to the position of private properties of land and some of them had ceased to exist altogether, their properties having lapsed to the state and been merged therein.

In the *jenmi kudiyan* tenurial pattern, *Pulayas* had to provide domestic and social productive labour as follows:

Their productive activity, which was really an incessant struggle against nature, always took place within the framework of specific social ties which was extremely exploitative. The *Pulayas* earnings were insufficient and they were primarily indebted and were forced to work as bonded labourers of the upper castes²⁶.

Pulayas always remained as an essential condition for the existence of human society. So the productive forces of society are the means of production and labour power in their interaction. Marx underlined the 18th century American statesman and writer Benjamin Franklin's view that 'man is an animal who produces tools'²⁷.

In all the *taluks* of Central Kerala, *Paniyal* system existed. *Adiyalar* refer to the relationship between a *Pulaya* family and the *Thamburan*²⁸. The word *Adiyalar* or

²⁵ Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1910, Government Press, Cochin, 1911, p.87.

²⁶P.K.,Gopalakrishnan *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*,(Mal.),Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2008,p.423.,L.K.Anathakrishna Iyer,*op.cit.*,p.29.

²⁷ L.Lenotyev,*Political Economy A Condensed Course*, Progress Publishers,Moscow,1972,p.10.

²⁸P.Sanal Mohan, 'Keezhala Padanangalum Dalit Charithravum',*Malayalam Varika*, Vol .15, No.49, May 25, 2012,p.49.,K.Dhamodharan,*Indiayude Alnavu*,(Mal.),Pusthaka Prasadhaka Sangham,1986,p.21., T.K

Kezhalar indicates that the *Pulayas* belonged to the lowest strata of society. *Pulayas* were merely *Adiyans* and *Melalans* were drawn from Brahmins, Nairs, and Syrian Christians.

The life of *Pulayas* as described by K.C. Alexander is as follows:

Pulayas lived in small huts in the land of the landlord and worked in their fields. They were not permitted to work for someone else without the prior permission of the land lord. They were real producers of food grains and other crops and toiled day and night in the soil and its fruits were exploited by the land lord. Payments of these were made in kind for harvesting and threshing, and in cash for such operations such as weeding, budding and transplantation²⁹.

In return the *Thamburan* offers wages, in the form of things like coconut, oil, clothes and rice during certain festival occasions like *Onam* and *Vishu*³⁰.

When a *Pulaya* wished to marry he could approach his master who then met the marriage expenses³¹. There was no fixed rule as to where the slave couple could live after the marriage. They followed matrilineal law of inheritance of their masters. If the woman came to live with her husband she worked for her husband's master as long as she lived with her husband. The women of this class were considered as the property of lords of the husband³². Their elder son will become the property of the father's master and others of the mother's master. Wages were usually paid to them in kind and at the lowest possible rates. Their labourers were paid in grain three measures of paddy to a man, two to a woman and one to a child being their least daily wages³³.

Oommen, 'The Politics of Agrarian Tension in Kerala', In *Social Conflict*, Jayaram N, and Satish Sberwal, (ed.), Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p.321.

²⁹ K.C.Alexander, 'Pulayar', (Mal.), *Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*, Vol. 45, No.30, March 12, 1967, p.21 .

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.32.

³¹ C.K., Kareem, *Francis Buchanante Keralam*, (Mal.), Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, p.158.

³² Information gathered from Thanku, *Pulaya Agricultural Labourer*, Porkulam, Thalapilli Taulk, 10-11-2013.

³³ *Report on the Census of Native Cochin*, 1875, Government of Cochin, 1877, p.40.

Colonialism and Transformations of the Land System

The colonial intervention in agriculture paved the way for releasing labour from land and the conversion of land into capital. The European concept of land ownership was introduced in Cochin. Contractual relations replaced the customary land relations and all the underprivileged tenancies were downgraded as contract-tenures. Land became private property, which could be owned, sold, mortgaged and auctioned³⁴. The land system was made more flexible to cater to the imperial designs in agriculture. The limited supply of agricultural land in the land market and the high demand for land for cultivation also resulted in the encroachment of forests and reclamation of backwaters for cultivation. The survey and settlement of the land tax and the registration of land transfers ensured regular source of revenue to the government. One of the consequences of the introduction of new land relations and revenue payment in the form of fixed money payment was that the old objective of village agriculture, production for village use was replaced by that for market. The production and produce were now determined by the new objective, that of sale, and hence changed their character.

Administrative centralization resulted in the restructuring of tax regime in the efficient attempts towards the land survey and settlement. To identify and settle the boundaries of properties, to create exact registers of land, to examine and record the various tenures under which the properties held and to fix and limit the government demand and so on were declared as the proposed objectives of the settlement process. In the Cochin State regular survey of lands had been made, but the amount of the tax was fixed only by oral enquiries with the land holder³⁵. These settlements were known as *Kettezhuthu*, this was followed by the *Kandezhuthu* settlement, signifying the recording of land rights based on what was seen. On the land Revenue Settlement in Cochin as C.Achutha Menon states:

³⁴ Omana J, 'Colonialism in Erstwhile Cochin State', in Sivadasan S, (ed.), *Colonialism and Resistance Movements in South India*, Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, 2008. p. 141.

³⁵ Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of Cochin State, 1909, R A E .

Almost all the lands in the possession of Europeans in Cochin are permanently settled, and the extent of these lands is about equal to that of ten survey villages and that of Cranganore. Accustomed as they were to fixity of assessment in their own country, they took care not to expose themselves to the periodical deprivation of the fruits of their labour by the obnoxious visitation of settlement officers. The government agreed to their own terms and conceded to them the benefit of a permanently settled assessment³⁶.

During 1813-1814 a survey was conducted in all the three varieties of cultivated land, viz. wet, garden and dry. When the Cochin State came under the protection of the British government and was free thereafter from all troubles from outside, and when things had settled down and peace and calm restored, the necessity for improved administration of the country came to be felt, and a regular inspection or *kandezhuthu* of the *niloms* and *parambas* was ordered in 1813-1814 A.D to fix the tax relying mainly upon *kandezhuthu*³⁷. Munro made provision for the *kandezhuthu* of *parambas* once every twenty years. The inspection and assessment of *parambas* was completed in 1821, but even on this occasion all the lands were not actually measured. The extent of land was estimated after personal inspection in terms of the quantity of seed required for sowing a field and the tax due to the state was fixed with reference to the estimates of the landholders and their neighbours³⁸.

The new land system eliminated the village as the unit of land assessment and revenue payment was established. By creating individual holders of land, it introduced the system of individual land assessment and revenue payment³⁹. New method

³⁶ Achutha Menon C., *An Unspoken Speech on the Permanent Settlement of Land Revenue in Cochin*, Vidya Vinodini Press, Thrissur, 1928, p.7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4., V.V.K.Valath, *Charithra Kavadal*, (Mal.), Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Samkham, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1977, p.32.

³⁸ Diwans Diaries, M .E .999, Vol.1, R A E.

³⁹ *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement, op.cit.*, p.73.

of fixing the land revenue and its payment was introduced. Previously the revenue due to the state or its intermediary, to whom the Raja had farmed out the village, was a specified portion of the year's actual produce which varied from year to year. This was now replaced by the system of fixed money payments, assessed on land regularly due in cash irrespective of the year's production whether in good or bad harvests and whether more or less of the land was cultivated or not, and in the overwhelming majority of settlements the revenue was fixed on individual land holders, whether direct cultivators or land lords appointed by the state. This new method and form of the land revenue assessment and payment had a far-reaching consequence. The 1905 settlement proclamation is as follows:

It is based on an accurate and scientific survey and full proprietary rights on the tenants of the state owned land (*Pandaramvaka* land)⁴⁰. Previously, land had less value than the crop because land was easily available. The tenants right to the land began to be depended on regular payment of tax. Tenants also began to be threatened with eviction from their holdings for their default of payments⁴¹.

The extension of cultivation and the increased agricultural production brought more land revenue to the state. The payment to the government also began to be transformed from kind to cash. The fact is that the centre of gravity of the states finance had shifted from land revenue to separate revenue.

The Cochin Tenancy Act of 1915 and 1938 gave fixity to *Kanam* tenure. With the 'Verumpattomdars Act' of 1943, most of sub-tenants were reduced to crop sharers⁴². The granting of proprietary rights to the tenants of the state-owned lands and security from arbitrary expulsion provided to the tenants of the private landlords went a

⁴⁰ Suma Scaria, 'Changes in Land Reallion:The Political Economy of Land Reforms in a Kerala Village,' *E P W*, Vol.45, No.26-27, June 26, 2010, p.194., C.K., Narayanan Namboothiripad, *op.cit.*, p.17.

⁴¹ V.V.K., Vallath, *op.cit.*, p.32.

⁴² Thomas Shea, 'Travancore-Cochin Land Tenure Reform', *E P W*, Vol.6, Issue No.38, September 18, 1954, p.1044., S. Raimon, and S. Ramachandran, (ed.), *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala Vol.III 1938-1948*, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006, p.261.

long way in promoting capital formation in agriculture. There was an increase in the area under cultivation and a sudden shift in the cropping pattern. The extension of cultivation was actually the result of the expansion of cash crop cultivation. Production for consumption and exchange gave way to production for market. The economy had begun to change along with the progressive decline in landlordism. However, in spite of these changes in the agrarian system, 'feudal' privileges in the society were not abolished.

After the integration of Travancore and Cochin in 1949, several acts were enacted to bring in uniformity in laws in the two regions. The Cochin Proclamation of 1947 and The Travancore Prevention of Eviction Act 1949 were passed restricting the eviction of hutment dwellers from their residential plots⁴³. However, it was the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1969 that has made drastic changes to the legislation in the post-independence period.

In the context of colonial conquest and capital penetration, the economy and society was restructured. The tenancy reforms and changes in the land utilization pattern affected the social organization of the Kerala.

Changes in the Occupational Structure among the Pulayas.

In the nineteenth century, transition to commercial agriculture brought about changes in the pattern of land utilization and labour mobilization. Commercialization of agriculture engendered the introduction of new land relations and revenue reforms that were being an imposed process upon the village community. Under the new system, the peasant produced mainly for the market, and with which occurred the steady improvement of means of transport and expanding operations of trading capital under colonial control. Commercialization of economy was consistent with the progressive

⁴³*Report of Land Policy Committee, Travancore-Cochin*, 1950, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1957, p.1., T.K., Oommen, 'Agrarian Legislations and Movement as Sources of Change :The Case of Kerala', *E P W*, Vol.10, Issue No.40, October 4th 1975, p.1574.

decline in the ‘feudal’ controls over the land. However, notwithstanding the relaxation of landlord controls, and lords privileges were not completely abolished. With the advent of obtaining revenue in cash, flexibility and the lack of ruthlessness that was very much a part of the revenue administration under the pre-colonial regimes became a matter of past⁴⁴. Commutation of ‘feudal’ rent from kind to cash, the absolute individual ownership rights over land and legalizing the outright expulsion of tax debtors were the obvious changes associated with the land as has been perceived by the local community.

Colonial transformation of the agrarian sector expanded considerably with the development of plantations as follows:

Forest lands were cleared for the commercial cultivation of coffee, tea and rubber. Introduction of plantation and commercial agriculture created demand for agricultural labourers who would be free from the obligation of wetland agriculture mediated by the traditional relations of production. There was pronounced shift both in its economy and the structure of the work force away from agriculture to processing industries which, by and large, catered to foreign markets⁴⁵.

Changes in land relations or the security of tenure for tenants did not benefit the *Pulayas* as they had no land. Neither was the change in inheritance laws relevant to them as they had no property. They tilled the master’s land and spent almost the entire lifetime in one place without learning any other skill and without knowing how others lived. But the colonial transformation had its impact on the occupational structure of the *Pulayas* which had undergone noteworthy changes. The processing industries and plantations, which were basically labour intensive, not only employed sections of the rural population but also opened up fresh economic opportunities to them.

⁴⁴ Harikrishnan G., ‘*Conflict and Change in Travancore: Representation of Social Change in Malayalam Novels, A Historical Analysis*’, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis Submitted to Department of History, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, 2017,p.59.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.67.

The socio-economic organization of society, social institutions and morals conforming to the traditional life and culture had undergone transformation under colonialism, particularly after the abolition of slavery. Social consequence of the industrial development was the emergence of new social classes in the society; the industrial capitalist class and the working class. The industrial blooming had a significant role in engendering positive changes in the socio-economic life of the *Pulayas*. These people lived in isolated villages. Opening up of new industries provided opportunities for slightly better living conditions for this class of people. After the growth of industries agricultural labourers migrated to the towns in search of employment in the factories and the people had migrated permanently and seasonally. With this development income has increased rapidly which facilitated a better life in town, but it had also pushed them out from the agrarian economy. The *Pulayas*, who ceaselessly toiled for the master and having known nothing but servitude and deprivation, had found themselves more at the mercy of other people. This labour mobility was looked upon by the landed class with suspicion because they enjoyed the traditional rights and privileges on labour. With the gradual monopolizing of the free labour market by the entrepreneurs, they started hiring the cheap labour of the erstwhile agricultural labourers, mostly the *Pulayas*.

Social relations separated from the production relations in the domain of economic activity were largely depended and governed by the divine superstition of rights⁴⁶. But in the colonial period, increasing economic opportunities owing to the advent of industries the agricultural labourers started moving from the rural areas to the cities⁴⁷. They felt that their only hope lay in emigration to distant lands, for this labouring class hoped to escape from the clutches of landlords and recurrent poverty. As a consequence of this outmigration there was noticeable growth in the occupational mobility of the *Pulayas*. They preferred migration, since wages earned in the industries were higher than the wages in the agricultural sector. Thus, emigration proved to be

⁴⁶ Pulla Rao D. *Human Development and Social Exclusion*, Cereals Publishers, New Delhi, 2011, p.389.

⁴⁷ Paramjith S, *Towards Sociology of Dalits*, Sage Publications, 2014,p.65.

advantageous to these communities of emigrants, since they could return with some savings⁴⁸. They were convinced that they could improve their social and economic status in an unfamiliar land instead of home land.

The Abolition of Slavery led to changes in the process of production, leading to the formation of new relations of production. The colonial interventions in the realm of land relations and in other spheres facilitated the transition of slave labour into wage labour⁴⁹. New relations of production had been followed by the gradual emergence of free –wage labour. These new relations of production could not be considered as a complete break with the past since those who provided physical labour came from the slave castes and the emergent industrialists came mostly from the dominant upper castes. With the establishment of plantations, European planters also required labourers. The colonial process of production incorporated the slave castes as labourers. Free wage labour was essential for the development of colonial capitalism. Abolition of slavery ushered in free-wage labour for the development of capitalist relations of productions in the plantations in Kerala⁵⁰. To put it differently, the formal abolition of slavery led to the emergence of free-wage labour, which displaced the slave labour.

In the beginning of the 20th century, there had been a significant increase in the number of people in Kerala who were engaged in non- agricultural sector. The British colonial apparatus first intervened in the Kerala economy for the sole purpose of extracting economic surplus. The Kerala economy was opened up for railways, plantations, coir, tile industries, among others which promoted the expansion of non-agricultural sectors of the economy. Colonial transformation of the agrarian sector expanded considerably with the development of plantations. Large tracts of forestlands were cleared for the commercial cultivation of coffee, tea and rubber. In the agrarian

⁴⁸ Pulla Rao D., *op.cit.*, p.37.

⁴⁹ P. Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2015, p.314.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

sector, introduction of plantation and commercial agriculture created demand for agricultural labourers who would be free from the 'feudal' obligation of wetland agriculture mediated by the traditional relations of production. The commercialization of village agriculture had an effect on the balanced village economy preceding it. The intervening trend in the agrarian social structure was the gradual development of market relations in the traditional subsistence oriented economic system. The pattern of land utilization and labour mobilization was transformed. Integral to these processes and as an inevitable byproduct, several changes were introduced in the organization of production and exchange systems⁵¹.

The commoditization of labour was the major change introduced by the company. The slave caste performed productive labour historically, irrespective of whether they were agricultural or non agricultural in nature. The organization and management of the labour process was intervened through intimidation that was legitimized by invoking the ideology of caste. Colonial rule introduced factories in the Princely State of Cochin. The economy had changed into a market oriented economy. Foreign investments had a strong impact on the economy of Cochin State since that led to substantial growth in material production.

Foreign capital investment moved to Cochin and the British entrepreneurs started Madhura Coats Company in Cochin⁵². The low caste people who were engaged in agricultural work in the rural areas were attracted to these factories. The wages in the upcoming factories were slightly higher than in the agricultural sector. The wages were paid daily in cash and the working conditions in the factories were considered better than in the agricultural sector, where agricultural workers had toiled earlier. Main produce of the Madhura Coats Company was craft threads. It provided salaried employment to both the *Pulayas* and the *Ezhavas* as coolie labourers. As a consequence of these new job

⁵¹ Harikrishnan G, *op.cit.*,p.66.

⁵² *Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram Smaranika*, (Mal.),Chalaky, 2013, p.74.

avenues and comparatively increased wages, the living conditions of the *Pulayas* employed in factories obviously improved.

The tile industries also brought about changes in the life of the *Pulayas*. The tile industries were introduced by the Basel Missionaries and their first factory in Kerala was set up in Calicut in 1873⁵³. In the beginning of the 19th century, the Basel Evangelical Mission played an important role to bring out social change in the Kerala. The English East India Company was not ready to permit any mission society in India except the Britain based societies till 1833. But with the Charter Act in 1833, all missionary societies belonging to any country were given permission to work independently in all the British colonies⁵⁴. So the Basel Evangelical Mission was able to start its missionary activities in Malabar when the Basel missionaries landed at Calicut on 13th October 1834 and missionary activities had began in Malabar with Mangalore as its headquarters. They decided to set up industries and the important among them was the tile making industry. They opened tile factories in different parts of Kerala.

Kerala had become the home of the tile industry as numerous rivers and back waters could provide cheap transport, easy availability of quality raw materials and supply of cheap labour. About fifty percentage of the tile factories in Kerala were located in Thrissur district. Most of the factories in Thrissur district were small scale units. By 1900 there were about 50 tile units in the Mukundapuram and Thrissur *taluks*. Around five thousand workers were employed in these factories. Almost one third of the total work force in the tile industries in Kerala belonged to the Thrissur district⁵⁵.

⁵³ K.T.Thomas, *Tile Industry in Thrissur District: History, Problems and Prospects*, Minor Project Report Submitted to the University Grants Commission, Department of History, Christ College, (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda, 2012, p. 15.

⁵⁴ E.J. Edona, *The Economic Condition of Protestant Christians in Malabar with Special Reference to Basel Mission Church*, Calicut, 1940, p.16.

⁵⁵ Government of Kerala, *A Study on the Tile Industry in Kerala*, Labour and Industrial Bureau, Thiruvananthapuram, 1969, p.41.

Human life was greatly affected by flood recurring in Karuvannur River. Hence the vast agricultural lands were transformed into deep clay mines and bricks production was introduced. Quality of the clay obtained from there was well suited for the manufacture of tiles⁵⁶. Easy availability of raw-materials and ensured market for the finished goods are the two essential pre-requisites for the development of an industry. In this respect, Porathissery Grama Panchayath was favorably placed as far as clay products manufacturing industry was concerned⁵⁷. The first tile factory was established by Azchagattil Devassy in 1900 at Karuvannur in the present Thrissur district. These factories were generally small in size. Their working was almost on a cottage industry basis, employing only hand presses and small pug mills often run by the bullocks. One thousand and five hundred *Pulayas* and other lower caste people were working in this factory⁵⁸.

In the words of Ayyappan, who was a *Mesthiri* (supervisor) of a tile factory at Karuvannur. The life in the region of Porathissery Grama Panchayath was primarily based on agriculture. Five dalit colonies existed in this region, and the dalit community constituted of *Panas, Parayas, Kanakas, and Pulayas*. They were agriculture labourers, and most of them were *Pulayas*. They were permanent labourers of the *jenmis* and their wages were very low. After the abolition of slavery they were free from the hands of *jenmis* and they got freedom to search new occupations⁵⁹. During the colonial period, commercialization of agriculture resulted in the decline of paddy cultivation and at the same time came up new industries.

Tile factories were established at various places in Thrissur districts like Puthukkad, Ollur, Cherur, Poochinipadam, Urakkam and Irinjalakuda. Industry employed full time and part time workers and they mainly belonged to backward communities.

⁵⁶ *Porathiseery Grama Panchayath Gramolsavam Smaranika*, (Mal.), 2010, p.62.

⁵⁷ *Porathiseery Grama Panchayath Miniutes*, 1953, p.50.

⁵⁹ Information gathered from Ayyappan, Mesthiri of Tile Factory at Karuvannur, 10.11.2014.

Women folk during non-cultivation season were also engaged in this industry as part time workers.

Tile factories in Thrissur had played a significant role in reshaping the socio-economic history of this region. The industrial activities in this region gradually gave a fillip to the socio- economic changes which shook the structure of the traditional society.

The introduction of railway into Travancore and Cochin area was taken up by the respective governments in 1876. It revolutionized the transportation of goods and accelerated the progress of internal trade. The export of goods like cotton fibre and spices in large scale resulted in the accumulation of capital. In Cochin the trading communities from Western India were prominent⁶⁰. The Marwaries, the Gujaratis and the Gauda Swarasthar were at the helm of affairs. They had begun to settle permanently in Cochin as they developed long lasting economic interests there. Gujarati businessmen who constituted around 80 percent of the trading communities migrated to Cochin along with women and children during the period of 1866-1890⁶¹.

The traders from Guajarat had also moved to interior places near the forests where the wood industry could thrive. They started sawmills in the interior areas like Chalakudi, Moovattupuzha and Perumbavur. In due course sawmills developed into an industry of considerable importance. All the major sawmills in Cochin were owned and managed by the Guajarati traders. When they started these mills they recruited the labourers from the local areas especially for the purpose of loading and unloading the timber. The industrial structure made use of the labour of the slave castes such as the *Pulayas* and they were incorporated into the capitalist economy under the colonial conditions.

⁶⁰ T. K Vellupillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1965, p.491.

⁶¹ *Report on the Census of Cochin, 1891*, Part 1, Government Press, Cochin, 1893, p.214.

Cochin State Forest Tramway also provided occupational mobility to the *Pulayas*. The history of tramway is closely connected with the forest history of the native state. Tramways are lightly laid railways, sometimes worked without locomotives. Tramways can take many types, sometimes just tracks laid on the ground to move materials around a factory mine or quarry. ‘The Cochin Forest Tramway Act’ passed in 1907 by the Maharaja of Cochin provided security and took on the management of the tramway⁶². Cochin State Forest Tramway ran between Parambikulam and Chalakkudi. In total it used to take 10 hours to cover the entire distance. The tramway was mainly used for the transportation of the teak and rosewood from the Western Ghats which were later shipped to different destinations.

The functioning of the tramway was under elaborated managerial system. The technical staff of the tramway included permanent way inspectors, loco foreman, driver, stokers, and traffic inspectors, guards, administrative staff like managers, accountants, cashiers, clerks, peons etc⁶³. They belonged to different castes, mostly from the higher castes. But the *Pulayas* and tribal’s like the *Kadars* and the *Malayars* were employed as a watchers and coolies in the tramway service. Tribals from Kuriyarkutty tribal colony and the *Pulayas* from Chalakudy region were employed in the tramway for clearing the forests, building the tramway lines and loading⁶⁴.

When the First World War started in 1914, the demand for teak wood and other resources of Western Ghats substantially increased. Thereafter the movement of forest products, especially timber of commercial value, was carried through this tramway never as before. One of the major results was that Chalakudi had become a prosperous town with many timber related industries. Along with these sprouted many other enterprisers in association with timber industries. Standard Furniture Company, Oriental Timber Industry, Cochin Chemicals, Cochin Rubber Works, Nirmala Tile

⁶² *Archives News Letter*, 1919, R A E, p.6.

⁶³ Edward, Harran, ‘The Cochin Forest Railway’, *Scientific American*, February 26, 1910, pp. 184–185.

⁶⁴ *Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram Smaranika*, *op.cit.*, p.74.

Company etc were most important among them. In 1963 Tramway ceased to function on the basis of a special finance committee report.

New bridges and bunds were constructed for developing trade in Cochin State. The development of new centers of trade and commerce, ports, markets and other infrastructure facilities had incorporated far-off regions in the network of exchange. For the construction of a stone wall in the Ernakulum '*kayal*', the workers were brought from Tamilnadu. Later the *Pulayas* of Mulavukad moved to this job as the wage was higher than that of agricultural work. According to P. K. Chathan Master, K.P.Vallon became an expert stone worker at childhood itself. He was able to handle the work of bridges with *Pulaya* workers. Vallon came to be known as an expert stone worker in Cochin. Then he started taking 'sub –contract' to build *kalungu* and bridges⁶⁵. Many of the *Pulayas* turned out to become stone workers in the Cochin Kanayanur *Taluk*.

Pottery making was another industry in Central Kerala which provided employment to the *Pulayas*, along with other low castes. Cochin Potteries was established in 1920. The pottery produced here was of high demand in countries like Germany and France. This factory provided employment opportunities to the weaker section of the society. Around six hundred workers were employed in this company.

Tanneries were another industry that emerged in the Cochin State. Tannery is a work shop where raw hides (large animals) and skins (smaller animals) are transformed into leather⁶⁶. The tanneries at Cochin State played a dual role; giving employment to the *Pulayas* and the other low castes and receiving foreign exchange by exporting leather and leather products. The availability of cheap labour, good quality of hides and skins,

⁶⁵ K. P. Vallon *Smaranika*(Mal.), Vishwa Keralam Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, p.102.

⁶⁶ Sarkar, K.T., *Practice of Leather Manufacture*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, P 33., Alexander Watt, *The Art of Leather Manufacture*, London, 1934, p. 34.

introduction of chrome tanning process, and the policy taken by the British government contributed to the growth of the leather industry in Cochin State. Cochin Tanneries, started in 1925 was a leather processing factory. The tanned leather had to be dried regularly before it was exported. Nearly six hundred workers of the factory belonged to the lower castes.

Printing presses started functioning in Kerala in the 17th century .It began when members of Roman Catholic sect known as Jesuits⁶⁷, who were engaged in spreading Christianity in Kerala, set up printing presses in Cochin, Ambazhakkad, a place near Chalakudy and Vaippinkkotta located near Chendamangalam in Ernakulam district. Ernakulam Government Press was established in 1847. When they started these presses they recruited the labourers from the local areas. They offered employment opportunities to the weaker sections of the society. There were 66 presses working at the end of the year 1933⁶⁸.

Table: 2.1

Growth of factory Labourers of Pulayas in Central Kerala -1875-1941

<i>Year</i>	<i>Pulaya Population</i>	<i>No. of Factory Workers</i>							
		<i>Sawmill</i>	<i>Madura Coats</i>	<i>Tile and Brick works</i>	<i>Cochin State Forest Tramway</i>	<i>Pottery</i>	<i>Tanneries</i>	<i>Stone masonry</i>	<i>Total</i>
1875	50477	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
1891	52251	500	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	500
1911	72787	550	230	5000	185	Nil	Nil	Nil	5798
1921	69423	650	402	7000	200	Nil	Nil	50	8302
1931	82043	810	550	9000	352	600	600	250	12162
1941	107000	1000	502	11000	401	800	750	350	14803

Source: Census Report, 1875-1941.

⁶⁷Jose Kalapura, India Inscribed : Development of Printing Technology in India, 16- 18th Centuries, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 68th Session, Vol. 68, Part one, 2007, p. 437.

⁶⁸ Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1933, Government Press, Cochin, 1934, p.48.

Table 2.1 indicates that a marginal shift of the *Pulaya* labourers from agricultural to factory sector. The unskilled and illiterate *Pulayas* gradually moved to non agricultural sector.

Studies from different parts of the Cochin State show that the occupational changes were also occurring among the *Pulaya* women during the colonial period. References have shown that the labour in agrarian economy was mainly based on women's labour. Caste works in a different ways among men and women, i.e, men and women of the same caste⁶⁹. They had differential access to forms of social privilege, to wage and to the means of production.⁷⁰ They were largely attached to the *jenmis* land with a hut. Conditions of the *Pulaya* women during the pre-colonial were nasty. The subordination of the *Pulayas* to the *jenmis* resulted in the general sexual accessibility of the *Pulaya* women to the *jenmis* men. They were not allowed to cover the upper part of their body before the *jenmi*. Good looking women belonging to the *Pulaya* families were being molested by the landlords⁷¹.

Occupational nature of the *Pulaya* women labour was undergoing transformation. The commercialization of agriculture led to the development of agro-processing industries like cashew, tile, beedi and book making etc. By the 1920s coastal towns of Muthuvattur and Chavakkad in Thrissur district had developed into important beedi manufacturing centers. Cashew was another important industry that developed during this period, mainly at Pullur in the Mukundapuram *taluk*. The book making industry became a major non-agricultural occupation that started at Kunnankulam in Thrissur district. Other important industry, tile factories were established at different parts of the Thrissur district. In all these industries *Pulaya* women had been working and their wages were comparatively higher than in the agricultural sector. There was an

⁶⁹ Pirappancode, Murali, *Malaya Pulayanum E M Sum*, Janeswari Publishers, Calicut, 2008, p.23.

⁷⁰ Information gathered from Kunjhimol, *Pulaya Agricultural Labourer*, Kanipayyaur, Thalappilly Taluk, 10.12.2015.

⁷¹ Pirappancode, Murali, *op.cit.*, p.26.

extensive spread of these cottage industries producing commodities for market, but these did not develop into the higher stage of factory industry. These industries seem to have adversely affected the agrarian sector. Studies prove that capitalist production and exchange have caused to decrease of the traditional in agrarian sector. *Pulaya* female labourers were brought under factory in which they became wage labourers⁷². The nature of exploitation changed, which was in terms of hours of work, wages and even in the form of sexual advances.

Colonial policy resulted in the restructuring of tax system in capable efforts towards the land survey and settlement. The extension of cultivation and the increased agricultural production brought more land revenue to the state. The payment to government also began to be transformed from kind to cash. Changes in the agrarian relations transformed bonded labourers to wage labourers and from *jenmi* dependence to self dependence. Labourers in the industrial sector had developed a new outlook that stimulated the desire for minimum standard of economic and social life. Increases in wage rates reflected in the lives of the *Pulayas* and their families and also in the quality of food, dress, houses, and education of children etc. The Missionaries supported the cause of abolition of slavery in order to make free wage labourers available in the industries. It may be noted that the spatial mobility of the *Pulayas* in any substantial scale could be observed only from the second decade of the twentieth century. Changes in the agrarian relations and facilities of occupational changes were key factors to upward social mobility of the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala even if the degree of mobility was limited in nature.

⁷² Ashly, Mathew, '*Labour Participation and Social Mobility among the Pulaya Women of Rural Kerala*', Unpublished Ph.D Thesis Submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, 1995, pp.44-45.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT: SOCIAL CHANGES AMONG THE PULAYAS.

Social change signifies changes in structure, composition and functioning of the social order. The caste system isolated the Scheduled Castes from the rest of the society. The caste and untouchability based exclusion and discrimination have been pervasive in the socio-economic, educational and political realms. Social change is influenced by education which significantly helps in the reduction of poverty, class discrimination and gender bias.

In the words of Wilbert E. Moore, social change is:

the significant alteration of social structure (that is, of patterns of social action and alterations) including consequences and manifestations of such structures embodied in norms (rules of conduct), values and cultural products and symbiosis¹.

Education has become a powerful tool, inextricably linked to the economic growth and social change of the nation, particularly so in a society where majority of the illiterate people are living under stress and strain of poverty, disease and unemployment. It has to play an indispensable and instrumental role in quickening the pulse of social change and development in all areas of the society, giving priority to backward areas and people. The whole range of skills produced by education including manual, mechanical, intellectual, scientific, executive and others together with qualities of integrity, hard work and dedication have to move into the rural and neglected parts of the country in order to achieve the goal of a socialistic pattern of society².

¹ Wilbert, E. Moore, *Social Change*, New Jersey, 1963, p.24.

² K. Balan, *Socio Economic Change in India*, Ashish Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p.73.

Education is concerned with learning. Learning is a process of acquiring knowledge or skills by instruction, study or experience. Education belongs to the general process known as enculturation by which the growing person is initiated into the way of life of her/his society. As one sector in the great network of culture, education influences events in other domains of the culture. Main aspect of education is the purification of the mind and it gives the individual self-knowledge and self-respect, and it actively functions in the interest of humanity. It also prepares the individual to successfully fight out the battle of life³. Education is considered as an important remedy for the numerous social evils of the depressed classes.

Jyoti Rao Phule was the first socio-religious reformer in modern India who demanded universal primary education for dalits⁴. He emerged as the savior of the dalits by starting massive movements for education by opening various schools in Pune. Education must be based on rationalism and reason. Education agitates our mind; it gives us awareness about what is good and what is bad. Hence education has been increasingly regarded as a main instrument of social change.

Traditional Education System

Traditional education was mainly concerned about teachings of traditional aspects which were caste based and religious oriented in nature. It was highly conservative, hierarchical and caste oriented. With the progress of Aryanisation and the increasing hold of the caste system, the high castes, particularly Brahmins came to have the monopoly in this field. Education became highly religion-oriented and the Brahmins had unparalleled dominance over the institutions of learning in the state. Education was denied to the untouchable classes.

Temples were the centers of all cultural activities after the 8th century, and naturally educational institutions formed part of the temple establishments. There were schools and

³ *Souvenir, Progressive Cochin, Cochin, 1932, p.21.*

⁴ K.S.Chalam, *Economic Reforms and Social Exclusion*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2011, p.147.

colleges in all important temples of Kerala. The Brahmins had maintained several *madras* under their control. The Namboothiri students enjoyed many privileges. They were given free food and accommodation. Members of other castes were not admitted to these institutions. Brahmin pupils were taught to recite the Vedas, while those who had the inclination and interest were also given instruction in Sanskrit literature and science. Higher education in Sanskrit was monopolized by the Brahmins⁵.

In the later medieval period, side by side with the institutions intended for the education of Brahmin youth, there was a parallel system of village schools called *Ezhuthupallis*. In the rural areas every village had its own *Ezhuthachan*⁶. These schools were of the mixed type in which both boys and girls were taught reading and writing, and the recitation of hymns in Sanskrit and Malayalam⁷. They resided either in the houses of rich men or in sheds put up by the people of the *kara*. The *Asan* did not receive any tuition fee but he was remunerated in kind. This system of village education was prevalent till the spread of English education in the 19th century.

Pulayas in Central Kerala were kept outside the *Ezhuthupallis*. Their children were not permitted to attend the schools and they were to work in the field. They did not enjoy any facilities for education and remained steeped in illiteracy. Education of the agrestic slave castes were confined to their folk-lore and skills, handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.

⁵ C.Achutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, Kerala Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, p.373.

⁶ Hereditary Village School Master.

⁷ A.Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala District Gazetteers ,Ernakulam*, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1965, p.709.

Table.3.1. .Literacy level of Pulayas in Different Taluks in Cochin State in 1875.

Taluks	Population(Pulaya)	Literate
Cochin-Kanayannur	18172	2
Kodungallur	757	1
Mukundapuram	10510	2
Thrissur	6083	1
Talapilly	11317	5
Chittur	5638	1
Total	50477	12

Source: *Report on the Census of Native Cochin, 1875*, Government of Cochin, 1877 P.40.

Table 3.1 illustrates the low level of education among the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala. Slave castes were not admitted in schools till 1870. 1875 Census data indicate that only 12 *Pulayas* out of 50477 were in a position to read and write.

The situation began to change gradually during the colonial period. There are certain factors which helped the growth of education among the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala. They were colonial initiatives, the involvement of the Christian missionaries, the influence of the Ayyankali movement and the formation of the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* in 1913.

Changes in Education System in the Colonial Period

By the end of the 19th century, English, as well as vernacular schools were set up in different parts of the state by the government and by the private agencies. State activity in the field of education began in Cochin from the time of Col.Munro. By 1818 the Raja of Cochin established 33 schools providing education in Malayalam medium⁸. In 1835, six vernacular schools were started, one in each *Taluk* in Cochin. With the introduction of the grant-in-aid system in 1890, in every *Taluk* of the state elementary

⁸ C. Achutha Menon, *History of Education in Cochin*, Government Press, Ernakulam, 1925, p.8.

vernacular schools were opened. Grants- in –aid were provided to private schools which imparted primary education. These schools were then placed under the control of an officer called ‘Superintendent of Education’⁹. The Grant-in-aid system was sanctioned to private schools on the following conditions.

- (i). the course of instruction followed was to be the same as that of government schools.
- (ii). the text books prescribed by the government were to be used in private schools.
- (iii). properly qualified teachers were to be appointed¹⁰.

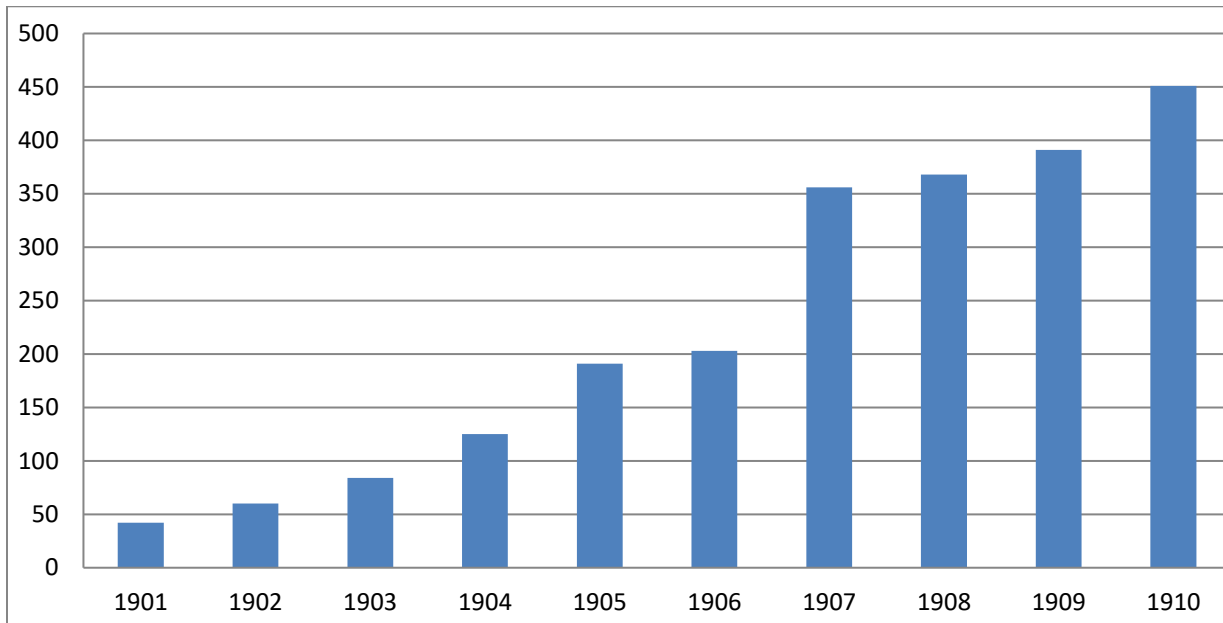
Table.3.2 Literacy Level of Pulaya community in Cochin State before the Education Code 1911.

<i>Year</i>	<i>No.of Literate Pulaya students.</i>
1901	42
1902	60
1903	84
1904	125
1905	191
1906	203
1907	356
1908	368
1909	391
1910	451

⁹ *Blue Books Containing Progress of Education Cochin State, 1914, R A E,p.5.*

¹⁰ *Ibid., P.XXVI.*

Figure3.1. Diagram showing the literacy level of the Pulayas in Central Kerala before the Education Code 1911.



Sources: *Administration Report of Cochin, 1901-1910.*

The preceding table and diagram indicate that the growth of literacy among the *Pulayas* was a slow process. The limited increase prior to 1911 was the result of missionary activities and a favorable response from the government.

Considerable progress was made in the field of education during the time of Dewan A.R. Banerji (1907-1914). The whole state was divided into various educational districts for this purpose. The name of the education department was changed to the Department of Public Instruction. The Education Code of Cochin came into force on 15th June 1911¹¹. Government observed that all the educational agencies in the state, official and non-official, *sirkar* as well as aided, would join together to make the new system a success¹². The Education Code abolished fees at primary level, and introduced

¹¹ *Diwans proceedings dated 12th March 1911, G.O. R.O. C. No.422/86. R A E .*

¹² *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 3rd March 1919 to 18th April 1922, Cochin Government Press, Eranakulam, 1923, p.XXIII.*

scholarships to poor students. In 1911 restrictions on the admission of the *Pulaya* children to Departmental Schools were removed¹³.

Under the Code of 1911, primary schools were divided into Vernacular and Anglo-Vernacular schools. The bulk of education was in the vernacular, Malayalam. The vernacular schools consisted of primary, middle, and high schools. Instruction in vernacular schools was in the mother tongue. English was an optional subject in a considerable number of primary schools. The princely state was very enthusiastic about the promotion of English education and from 1911 in Cochin the rulers established English schools. Besides this direct involvement by way of establishing government English schools, the native rulers also gave active encouragement to the Christian missions in their English educational activities¹⁴.

The government of Cochin took active interest in the education of depressed classes from the beginning of the 20th century. Various ameliorative measures were undertaken by the government for the progress of depressed classes in the educational sphere. Lower castes, owing to their social disabilities, poverty and the nature of their occupation were very backward in the realm of education. The Education Code of 1911 provided special concessions to the *Pulayas*, the *Parayas* and other backward classes as follows:

the government met the expenditure incurred for (a) the purpose of maintaining schools; (b) providing scholarships; (c) giving stipends for training of teachers; and (d) providing mid-day meals¹⁵.

Special scholarships and various financial concessions had their impact on the progress of the education of the depressed classes in the state. The *Pulaya* boys and girls were given admission in all government and aided schools. Special schools were opened for *Pulaya* children. The government adopted the policy of providing free meals, books and clothing to the *Pulaya* and the *Paraya* children in order to attract them to school. As per the

¹³ Ibid.,P.XXIV.

¹⁴Ibid.,P.XXV.

¹⁵ Ibid.,P.XXVII.

Education Code of 1911, special institutions called the 'Night Schools' were opened for the education of lower castes, where full time Head Masters were appointed. Free books and slates were provided to the poor students. There were fourteen such night schools¹⁶. The aim of the government was to create an interest in education among the low castes which would be helpful to improve their socio- economic status and enable them to stand on their own legs.

In 1919, government started working on a scheme of free and compulsory primary education in the state¹⁷. The scheme was extended to the poorer classes, mainly the *Pulayas*, the *Parayas*, the *Kanakkans* and the *Muslims*. In 1920, the revision of education code proposed improvement in the scale of salaries of primary teachers and the abolition of fees in all primary classes and also compulsory education to be brought in throughout the whole state. Cochin Education Code was revised in 1921¹⁸. The special feature of the Code was the encouragement of education among the backward communities. The education of the depressed classes, notably the *Pulayas*, received great impetus with the exemption of fees in English schools, both sirkar and aided. Half fee concession was granted to the Muslims, the Ezhavas and other backward classes in English schools. The allotment for *Pulaya* education rose from Rs.10000 in 1920 to Rs.13000, in 1921¹⁹.

In 1925 individuals started a number of schools for the benefit of *Pulayas*; the Ramavarma Memorial School, Vijayaraghavachari Memorial School and Davies Memorial School²⁰. With the aid from government they provided slates and books free of cost and free clothes once in a year. As a result of these steps there was significant increase in the number of pupils from *Pulayas* attending the schools.

¹⁶ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1912 -1913*, Government Press, Cochin, 1914, p.21.

¹⁷ *C.No. 28/95, dated, 3rd September 1919, R A E.*

¹⁸ *G.O. R.O.C.No.3325/96, dt 28th May 1921, RAE.*

¹⁹ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1922*, Government Press, Cochin, 1923, p.85.

²⁰ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings 7th August, 1925*, Government Press, Cochin, ,p.723.

Table.3.3. Literacy Level of Pulayas in Cochin State after the Education Code 1911

<i>Sl.no.</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Population (Pulaya)</i>	<i>Male Literate</i>	<i>Female Literate</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index</i>
1	1911	72787	500	141	641	100
2	1921	69423	2030	2336	4366	681
3	1931	82043	3123	3705	6828	1065
4	1941	107000	7858	6004	13862	2162

Source: *Administration Reports of Cochin 1911-1941.*

The data given above reveal a definite rise in the literacy level of the *Pulayas* from 1911 to 1941. The Education Code of 1911 had a favourable impact on *Pulaya* education. The level of female literacy considerably increased during this period. The opening up of new schools and introduction of compulsory education also benefited the *Pulayas*.

With the government's liberal 'open door'²¹ policy of education for all, the department had to face opposition of a wholly unjustifiable character. For example, in Pegamuk a *Pulaya* boy when proceeding to school was beaten by an Ezhava on the ground that he was polluted .A Nair entered the Vellangallur School and created disturbance owing to the admission of the *Pulayas* that criminal proceedings had to be taken against him. The Nairs at Edavanakkad and Palluruthy withdrew their children from school on account of the admission of the *Pulayas*²². Despite such protests here and there the admission of the lowest castes into all the schools of the state was beginning to be accepted even by its opponents as a settled fact.

²¹ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1920*, Government Press, Cochin, 1921, p.92.

²² *Kerala Archive News Letter* Vol.IV, No.2, December 1980, R A E ,p.4.

Table.3.4 Government fund for Pulaya Education.

Year	Amount	Literate Students
1919-1920	10000	2902
1921-1922	13000	3366
1923-1924	32000	4502
1925-1926	36000	4810

Source: *Administrative Reports of Cochin, 1919-1926.*

Government fund for *Pulaya* education shows a positive impact on the number of *Pulaya* students attending schools, their total enrolment having risen from 2902 in 1919-1920 to 6698 in 1925-26. By 1935 the allotment rose to Rs.41410 and the student strength was 7948²³. The Education Code of 1911, and its revision in 1921, the open door policy of education for all, special encouragement to the education of the depressed communities, including the increase in the allotment of government fund for *Pulaya* education had its favourable impact.

Educational Initiatives of the Christian Missionaries' among the Pulayas

In the early decades of the 19th century, the advent of the missionaries opened a new phase in the education system in Kerala. European missionaries have made deep impact on social, cultural and economic aspects of Kerala society. The activities of the Christian missionaries had influenced the social and political awakening of the lower castes, particularly the *Pulayas*.

The depressed castes lived in ignorance and abject misery and poverty when the missionaries reached here. The stigma of untouchability that rested upon them for generations had led them to a sub-human level of existence. They were systematically

²³ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1935*, Government Press, Cochin, 1936, p.98.

exploited and kept down for centuries by caste Hindus. Missionaries decided to work among them. Working among them was not easy because they had been extremely depressed for so many centuries and therefore they were living without any ambition. As first step the missionaries had to create an inner urge among the depressed people to obtain education .As most of the parents lived in acute poverty, they could not even think of imparting education to their children. Since education was a forbidden fruit for the depressed, there was no ray of hope for their future .The land lords stridently opposed the education of slave castes because they feared that the paddy fields would be declined or their fields would go uncultivated. They feared that education of the *Pulayas* and the *Parayas* would result in the erosion of manual labour force. The slave castes looked upon the missionaries and the mission societies that were doing their best to improve their condition, as their saviors.

Among the Christian missionaries in Kerala the London Mission Society was active in South and Central Travancore. In the Cochin region it was the Church Mission Society and in the Malabar area it was the Basel German Evangelical Mission. These mission societies were responsible for the initiation of social reform movements, especially amongst depressed communities in Kerala.

Missionary leaders in Cochin State, Rev.Hokes Worth, Rev.George Mathan and Rev.Hentry Harley mobilized the community of depressed classes and created awareness of human rights among them. The organization of missionary school education conformed to their objective. At the lower level elementary schools, apart from reading and writing, arithmetic was also taught. At the second level, i.e. secondary schools, Sanskrit, sciences etc were included. The final stage was that of higher college education. Their educational efforts attracted the backward classes and the depressed communities. Slave castes were not admitted into schools till 1870.Diwan Madhava Rao laid the principle that, ‘no child in the state, whatever his caste or social position, should be

allowed to grow up without the rudiments of education'²⁴.But the depressed castes were not allowed in schools by the upper castes. However, the missionaries took a firm stand on the promotion of education for the depressed castes. CMS contributed a lot for the progress and prosperity of depressed castes of Cochin.

Rev.Hokes Worth and Rev.George Mathan rendered remarkable services to the oppressed section. Rev.Hokes Worth had great concern for education of the agrestic slaves. The admission of slave children to the schools in the Kanayanur *Taluk* began in a very interesting manner.The school master Ponnarai in the adjoining Cochin Church took much interest to admit the slave boys in the school. When, Worth the Superintending Missionary of Kannayanur *Taluk* went through the monthly attendance list, he noticed a name that was of a slave boy. He made some enquires with regard to this positive step and declared that all school masters who admitted slave children would get an additional monthly pay, of one '*fanam*' for every slave boy and half *fanam* for every slave girl.²⁵ The missionaries were at first forced to establish separate schools for the education of the depressed classes. The 1891 census report noted that:

in Perumanur Kalathil *Pulaya* Schoool, situated in the Kanayannur *Taluk*, 17 students belonging to the *Pulaya* caste had studied. They were taken to promote social and economic equality and justice and to provide equal educational opportunities among the *Pulaya* pupil. ²⁶

In 1890 a Department of Vernacular Education was started. No fee of any kind was to be levied from the pupils attending Vernacular schools. The first attempt to introduce the study of the English language into the state was made by a missionary, Rev.J.Dawson who opened an English school at Mattancheri in 1818 and it received a

²⁴Jawarnessa Beegam M.J. 'Social Change in Kerala –A Peep into the Past', *Souvenir*, Department of History Iqbal College, Peringamala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1993, p.78.

²⁵ Samuval Nellimukal,*Keralathile Samoohya Parivarthanam*,(Mal.),K.S. Books,Kottayam,2003,p.201.

²⁶ *Report on the Census of Cochin*, 1891, Part 1, Government Press, Cochin, 1893, p.23.

grant in - aid from Cochin government. In Thrissur, an English school was opened in 1837 and in Cochin an English high school was started at Ernakulam under government auspices in 1845²⁷. It was raised to the status of a college in 1875.

The colonial administrators and missionaries were engaged in proselytization. They also considered these schools as an instrument of spreading their culture and religion. Schools and colleges gradually acquired the status of agencies for modern education, and learning of English became the necessary means for upward social mobility and entry into the level of power²⁸. The missionaries in Kerala had made great impact on the transformation of depressed castes:

The arrival of the missionaries into Kerala had opened up opportunities for the lower castes to move out of their discriminatory societal space and they opened the doors of their schools to pupils of all castes and creeds²⁹. The interaction of slave castes with the missionaries and their own steady efforts into developing social movements for upward mobility were influential in offering them new knowledge, competence and dispositions³⁰.

According to K .V Eappen the missionaries strove to secure equal rights for the depressed castes. He argues that:

for many who got converted to Christianity, it represented liberation from the dehumanizing conditions of their existence. They were also benefited by the educational facilities provided by the Missions, and the converts from the underprivileged groups made striking progress in their social and cultural life³¹.

²⁷ C. Achutha Menon, *op.cit.*, p.3.

²⁸ K. N. Ganesh, *Culture and Modernity: Historical Exploration*, University of Calicut, 2004, p.155.

²⁹ Sanal Mohan P., *Modernity of Slavery*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2015, p.Xiii.

³⁰*Ibid.*,p.135

³¹ K V, Eappen *Church Missionary Society and Education in Kerala*, Kottayam, 1985, p.28.

The noted literary works in the second half of the 19th century picture the predicament of the *Pulayas*, the intervention of the missionaries and hesitant moves towards social equality. *The slayer slain*,³² *Pullelikunju*³³, and *Saraswathivijayam*³⁴ were some of the works. They deal with the questions of caste, Christianity and social justice. These works also focus the issues of conversion of the lower castes and the promise of a bright future that Christianity brings.

Saraswathivijayam written by Potheri Kunhambu had portrayed the missionary activities of Basel Mission in the Malabar region of Kerala in annihilating caste. The protagonist of the novel, Marathan, was a lower caste who got education from the mission school and that became objectionable to the upper caste Nambudiri Brahmin landlord. The novel also talks of how Christianity and the missionary influence changed the basic appearance of the converts³⁵.

Educational advancement in Cochin State was also a byproduct of the evangelical activities of the Christian missionaries. They were propagating their faith enthusiastically and were attracting the people belonging to the castes of outer circles to accept their faith. Depressed caste families seeking some measure of self-respect chose to convert to Christianity as a way to escape the degradation of being treated as 'untouchable' and 'impure' castes. Though the main objective was proselytization, the work of Christian missionaries did succeed in liberating Scheduled Castes from passive adherence to caste ideology and rituals and introducing them to ideas of equity and the right to dignity.

The missionary education had created a new social consciousness among the *Pulayas*. This engendered the transformation of the status of the *Pulayas* castes from 'slaves' into 'converted Christians'. The mission schools and their activities led to

³² Richard Collins, *Slayer Slain*, Kottayam, 1864.

³³ Koshy, D.D., *Pullelikunju*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 1882.

³⁴ Potheri Kunjambu, *Saraswathi Vijayam*, (Mal.), Edward Press, Cannanore, 1892.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

significant changes including the rise of the discourse on free labour, individual freedom, and social justice. Thus, the missionary campaigns against slavery could be seen as a reflection of the modern order. Consequently there developed a scream for social and religious reforms powerful enough to break off the caste community demarcations that had reached the vulnerable point of unseeability, unapproachability and untouchability. In a sense, the pioneering work by the missionaries may be regarded as a clarion call for the socio-religious reform movements that were accomplished by Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali and others.

Ayyankali's struggle for Education

The improvement of the depressed sections of the Hindu community constituted an important work of Ayyankali. He was the most prominent leader of the depressed classes who more or less succeeded in breaking the upper- caste monopoly in education. He held the view that education is vital to enlighten and awaken the masses against oppression and exploitation. His attempt was to ensure better facilities for education and he also demanded educational facilities for peasants and workers³⁶.The main goal of Ayyankali was to empower his community through education and organization.

Ayyankali advocated free and compulsory education. He and his followers had given petitions to the government highlighting the right of the depressed sections to have access to schools. As a result, the government issued an order in 1910, allowing children from depressed communities to have access to schools³⁷. The upper caste communities were disapproved of the Diwan's sympathetic attitude to the requests of the lower castes. However, the reformers like Mannath Padmanabhan and C.Raman Thampi held the view that the demands of the lower castes should be conceded. But Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai's stand was conservative. He wrote three editorials in *Swadeshabhimani* criticizing the order granting access to lower castes in schools.

³⁶ T.H. P .Chantharassery, *Ayyankali*,(Mal.),Thiruvananthapuram, 1989, p.44.

³⁷ *Diwans Proceedings, 1910*, P.26; *Archives Letters*, 1958, R A E,p.12.

“There is no merit in supporting the view that all children without exception should be allowed to sit together in schools in total disregard of their caste status just because some are demanding equality in the matter of traditions and practices. Putting those who have been cultivating their intelligence for generations together with those who have been cultivating the field for even more generations is like putting a horse and a buffalo together under the same yoke.”³⁸

On the strength of the government order Ayyankali arrived in Ooroottambalam School with a *Pulaya* girl student. But the lower caste student was not allowed to sit with upper caste students. Since Ayyankali noticed that the children of lower castes were not admitted into the existing schools he decided to set up his own school³⁹. The school shed came up without delay and the furniture also arrived. But there was no teacher for dalit students because there were no literate persons among the dalit communities. Later with the effort taken by Kumaran Asan he got a pandit. The school started functioning but the upper castes attacked the school and set it on fire at night. Next day another shed had arisen, but this also was on the fire at night. There were fights and arson from time to time.

The efforts taken by Ayyankali did not succeed and he thought of another form of agitation. He realized that obstruction of the education of the *Pulaya* children came from the land lords themselves. Hence he adopted a strategy which was harmful to the interests of the high castes. He held that,

‘the *Pulayas* would not work for the land lord until their children were given admission to the schools. It was the granaries of the land lords that the lowest castes had toiled to fill for generations. Landlords opposed to the

³⁸ Quoted from Velayudhan Panikkasseri, 'Excerpts from Ayyankali', in Dasan, M., et.al, (ed.), *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012, p.203.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.205.

education of the *Pulaya* children because they feared that the paddy fields would be overrun by weeds if *Pulayas* get access to education⁴⁰.

In June 1913 a strike demanding right to education for the lower castes was launched⁴¹. *Pulayas* realized that their future generations would live as human beings only if sacrifices were made at this stage. Months went by and the strike turned out to be the first long-term strike in the country. Granaries lay empty, income remained low and the land lords began to panic. All attempts were made to bring in local people to work but resulted in strong reaction. This situation was reported in *Mithavadi*, a Malayalam news paper:

‘when the Nairs opposed the admission of the *Pulayas* in school at Venganoor in south Travancore, Ayyankali persuaded the *Pulayas* from undertaking agricultural work for the Nairs. The strike crippled the Nairs. it took the whole day’s labour of six Nair men to compensate the labour of a single *Pulaya* woman. And not used to working in mud and water, they fell ill⁴².’

The Diwan decided to initiate mediation to resolve the issue and appointed the First Class Magistrate as the mediator. Magistrate summoned both sides for detailed talks. As a result, landlords accepted the demands of the workers. This strike was successfully ended by the Magistrate in May 1914, giving admission for the *Pulaya* children to schools both government and aided⁴³. This strike was first of its kind not only in Travancore but in all of India for access to education of lower castes and for their human rights.

⁴⁰A.R.Mohanakrishnan, *Mahathma Ayyankali, The Visionary Dalit Leader*, Buddha Books, Ankamali, 2014, p.107., T.K.Krishnakumar, *Navakeralashilpikal Jeevithapathathilude*, (Mal.), Poorna Publication, Calicut, 2011, pp.54-55.

⁴¹ Though the strike had taken place in Travancore, it had tremendous impact in Cochin State also.

⁴² T.H. P.Chantharassery, *op.cit.*, p.87.

⁴³ Archives Letters in 1914, R A E, p.14.

Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabhha and Education of the Pulayas.

In 1913 Pandit Karruppan and Krishnadhi Ashan launched '*Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha*'⁴⁴. The leaders of the *Pulayas* realized that their petitions and the consequent moderate welfare measures by the government did not improve the condition of the lower castes. They believed that education was an important tool for the emancipation of the community and so they carried on intensive campaigns among the *Pulayas* to send their children to school. The children of the untouchable castes in the society were not given admission to schools or other educational institutions, and even if they were admitted, they were prevented from mingling with or sitting along with the children of the high caste students. Instead, they were forced to sit on the floor in a corner of the class room. Even teachers observed pollution and untouchability in the class rooms. Pandit Karuppan and K.P.Vallon, leaders of the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* raised these problems of the depressed classes in the Cochin legislature.

Mathew Vadakkoot Member of Legislative Council, from Kunnamkulam, requested the government to admit that a heavy responsibility rests up on the government to give special facilities and encouragement for the education of depressed classes. He said that it is the responsibility of the government to take adequate measures for the education of the depressed classes; if necessary, a special officer should be appointed for the purpose. The depressed classes should have access to all public roads, wells and institutions, and the government should make primary education free and compulsory in the state⁴⁵, he demanded.

⁴⁴Kunukuzhi S.Mani ,*Pulayar Noottandukaliloode, Oru Charithra Padanam*, (Mal.),Kerala Cultural Department, Thiruvananthapuram,1989,pp.164-166., Cherai Ramadas ,'Kayalil Roopamkonda Pulaya Sabha',(Mal.),*Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*,Vol.82,No.53,February22-28, 2004.p. 32.,T. K. Ramakrishnan ,*T. K. Rama Krishna Menonte Smaranakal*, (Mal.),Translated by K.T Ramavarma, Kerala Sahitya Academy Thrissur, 2011, p.328.

⁴⁵ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, Budget Session, 29th July 1925*, Ernakulam, 1926, p.19.

Another member of legislative council M.K.Raman requested the government to set apart special fund for education of the lower castes. He demanded for free education to the pulayas, along with books, slates and clothes⁴⁶.

K.P.Vallon was a member of the Cochin Legislative Council from 1931-1940, and he incessantly brought to the notice of the government the matter of education of untouchables. He held that few schools were admitting *Pulaya* children, both boys and girls, and requested the government to throw open all the government schools in the state to the *Pulayas*. He further requested the government to grant special fee concessions to the *Pulaya* students.

In 1931, government had adopted a liberal policy in the matter of giving educational concessions to lower caste students. They were exempted from payment of fee at all levels of education. Lump sum grants were given for the purchase of books and clothes and free meals were provided. Night schools and social welfare centers were opened in the areas where depressed classes lived in large numbers⁴⁷. K.P.Vallon had demanded the creation of a separate department for the welfare of the depressed classes and the appointment of superintendent of Vernacular Education in the state. The demands of Vallon and the Sabha were conceded by the government. In 1931, the Maharaja agreed to the proposal and orders were issued:

- (i) the improvement of the condition of the depressed classes in the Cochin State and to appoint a special officer designated as the 'Protector of Depressed Classes'.
- (ii) The government appointed a full time protector V. R. Maman Chovan to look after the literacy programme meant for the depressed classes.
- (iii) The administration of the depressed class schools was vested upon the Director of Public Instruction while the supply of school requisites, food

⁴⁶ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, Budget Session, Vol. I, 7th August 1925*, Ernakulam, 1926, p.682.

⁴⁷ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 7th October 1930*, Government Press, Cochin, 1931, p.16.

charges and other educational concessions were left to the control of the Protector of the Depressed Classes.

- (iv) In the hill tracts, daily feeding of the depressed class pupils was started, while a weekly one *anna* per pupil in lieu of feeding was given to the parents to induce them to send their children to school⁴⁸.

The necessity for the service of a full –time protector was being felt more and more, as ramification of uplift work was spreading all through the state. The general condition of the depressed classes, in each village, their numbers, the disabilities peculiar to each locality and the various other items of relief have to be systematically studied and charted before taking up any effective measure for their amelioration⁴⁹.

V. R. M. Chovan, the protector of the depressed classes was deputed to undergo a course of training for a period of three months under the District Labour Officer, Malabar. K. P. Karuppan, assistant to the Protector of the Depressed Classes was in charge of the Protector's duties, until Chovan returned after training. As a result of these steps taken by the government, there was remarkable increase in the number of pupils from depressed classes attending the schools.

In 1935 with regard to industrial education, a monthly stipend of Rs. 3 each were instituted to the depressed class pupils attending the government industrial schools and a monthly stipend of Rs. 7 in the Government Trader's School, Trissur. There were 11 rural industrial schools in Cochin State. The work in connection with industrial education had developed so greatly that it had been found necessary to separate it from the educational department and place it under a full -time superintendent of industries. On the protector's initiative, six students of the depressed classes selected by him were allowed to be trained as fitters in the Tramway workshop and were allowed to draw stipends at the rate of Rs.5⁵⁰. For

⁴⁸ *Diwan's Proceedings*, dated 7th January 1931, C. No. 2246/1106, R A E.

⁴⁹ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, Part I*, 1935, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulum, 1936, p.278.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.279.

the special benefit of the depressed class girls, the Abalasaranam Industrial School run by a Thiyya lady was given monthly grant of Rs.55 and a boarding grant of Rs.3 per month for each girl. A new industrial class was opened in the M.S Vijayaraghavapuram colony at Chalakudy⁵¹.

Various concessions were also given for the collegiate education of the depressed classes. The concessions were,

- (i) four scholarships of the monthly value of Rs.10 each, tenable for two years, for the intermediate education on the basis of their marks in the school final examination .
- (ii) full-fee concession already enjoyed by them up to the school final class was extended for the next two years of university education also.
- (iii) a lump sum grant of Rs. 30 to each of these students for meeting the initial expenses connected with the purchase of books, clothing etc., on the assurance of the principal concerned that the amount will be utilized for the purpose intended.
- (iv) exemption from payment of caution money in the case of hostel accommodation.⁵².

The provision of hostel accommodation was admitted by the government as a decisive factor for the advancement of education and it was realized that hostels would promote the education of the depressed classes. Accordingly, on the initiative of the Protector, a hostel was opened at Thrissur for the depressed class students attending the various educational institutions there. The hostel provided accommodation for 15 students. Government was pleased to accept the request of the inmates of the hostel to name the institution after the late C.W.E Cotton Esq, in recognition of the eminent services rendered by him for the progress of the untouchable castes. The hostel thereafter came to be called the 'Cotton Hostel'⁵³.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.280.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Diwan's Proceedings dt. 31st August 1933,R-Dis-252/1107,R A E.*

The establishment of the ‘Servants of the Untouchable Society’, hostel in Ernakulam in 1934⁵⁴ was another favorable step for the benefit of the lower castes pupils and the government recognized and aided this hostel. Government provided the following concessions to the hostel for the benefit of the lower castes students:

(i).in regard to the lower castes students joining the hostel, stipends will be paid to the hostel authorities directly instead of to the students (ii).a hostel building rent subject to a maximum of Rs.20 per month will be given.(iii).a teacher will be allowed to be the warden of the hostel⁵⁵.

But the dearth of contributions and the delay in receiving the government grants affected the smooth running of the Servants of the Untouchable Society Hostel. All the dalit students who were admitted at Maharajas College were not given hostel accommodation. Under these circumstances, Vallon decided to pressurize the government to open a new hostel. The government followed a policy that only ‘ten’ students would be given the privileges, because the number of students seeking admission in colleges has increased. Vallon, a member of the Legislative Assembly presented the issue in the assembly and later the government opened up a new hostel in 1938⁵⁶. Yet the government was steadfast on its decision of not allowing admission to more than ‘ten depressed students’.Vallon was made the administrator of the new hostel. This hostel later turned into the centre of all the organizational activities. Colleagues and aggrieved people all came to meet Vallon here. His efforts led to the establishment of a government hostel for dalits in Ernakulam and the government gave free food and accommodation to the students.

Educational Efforts in the Post-Independence Period

The most important problems in the field of education before the Central Government were to expand facilities for mass compulsory elementary education, to

⁵⁴ *Diwans Proceedings dt .9th January 1934,D-3-4096/1109,R A E.*

⁵⁵ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1935, op.cit., p.281.*

⁵⁶ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, Part III, 1938, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1940, P.87.*

reform secondary and University educational systems, to develop vocational and technical education at various levels, to encourage women education and also to reorganize the structure of educational administration. With a view to fulfill all these objectives, the central and state governments adopted measures to give a concrete shape to various programmes under the Five-Year Plans.

With the dawn of independence, government bestowed immense attention on education among the depressed classes. The pupils studying in the lower secondary and upper secondary classes were not only exempted from payment of fee, but were also given special stipends as an additional encouragement. Due to the policy of the government to grant concessions to all the depressed class pupils attending secondary classes, so rapid had been the increase in the number of these pupils⁵⁷. There were six welfare schools and nine tribal schools functioning in Ernakulum and Thrissur district under the department of Harijan welfare for the benefit of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. There were model welfare training centers at Edappilli, Edavanakkad etc. which offered facilities for training in such trades as carpentry, weaving, rattan work etc. Twenty eight students were admitted in each centre and a monthly stipend of Rs. 25 was paid to each of them. The period of training was two years. The Constitution (article 29) guarantees that no citizen shall be denied admission any educational institution maintained by the state or receiving aid from state funds, on grounds of religion, race, and caste⁵⁸.

As regards collegiate education, concessions granted to depressed class students included the award of stipends of Rs. 5, lump sum grant of Rs. 25 for the purchase of school requisites and clothes, full fee concessions, grant of university examination fee for the senior students and the provision of class fees to students in the aided colleges⁵⁹. Since then, the number of students seeking admission to colleges has increased over the years.

⁵⁷ *Kerala District Gazetteers*, Ernakulum, *op.cit*; p.714.

⁵⁸ K.L. Sharma, *Social Equality in India*, (ed.), Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2011, p.461.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, P.156.

A notable measure taken by the government for improving the educational standard of the backward classes is the provision of financial help by way of scholarships and stipends to students belonging to those sections. Though special measures were taken by the central and state governments to provide employment to the depressed classes, educated unemployment still persists among them. An ameliorative measure taken by the Kerala government in this regard was the creation of an employment cell in the directorate of Harijan Welfare, Trivandrum in 1969⁶⁰. The main objective of the cell is to absorb persons from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in public services as speedily as possible. It gives wide publicity regarding employment opportunities, correlate education and training with employment and explores new employment opportunities.

In 1962 the Government devoted special attention to encourage industrial education among the depressed classes. There were 28 depressed class pupils undergoing technical studies in the Government Trades School, Thrissur and they were receiving training in such subjects as weaving, mat making, carpentry, metal work, drawing motor mechanism etc. The subjects for girls included weaving, needle work, embroidery, mat making and music.

School feeding programme

Government has been encouraging the educational activities with the introduction of a noon-meal programme as early as the 1940s. This was continued and extended after the formation of the present state of Kerala. With the assistance from the Co-operative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE), government continued the noon-meal programme at schools and it covered 72-73 per cent of the LP school children. For many of the *Pulaya* students and the students of the tribal areas, the noon-meal programme has proved to be a real inducement to come to school every working day.

⁶⁰ *Economic Review*, 1969, Government of Kerala, State Planning Board Thiruvananthapuram, 1970, p.62.

Whole promotion system

A large number of the dropouts belonged to the backward communities, mainly the *Pulayas*. The government examined the issue seriously. As a solution to this problem the government devised the whole promotion policy in 1972-73. Initially, it was introduced in standard I and II and later extended to other standards. Owing to this policy, dropout rates significantly came down since 1972-73. In higher classes, the maximum proportion which may be detained in each class was fixed as ten percent of the total strength. Although this policy reduced the drop-out rates, it was highly criticized on the ground that this has led to the deterioration in the quality of school education in the state.

Reservation system

The policy of reservation was not introduced by the British colonial rulers, but native rulers such as Shahu Maharaj(1874-1922), the king of Kolhapur, the justice party in Madras Presidency and the princely states of Mysore, Baroda and Travancore. In 1902 Shahu Maharaj reserved half of the seats for non-Brahmins in his administration in order to promote education among the non-Brahmins .He opened schools and hostels⁶¹. After Shahu Maharaja it gained momentum in the Madras Presidency and in 1910 under the aegis of the Justice Party-led non-Brahmin movement developed the concept of proportional representation for non-Brahmins in the ministries and government jobs.

Provision for the reservations for the depressed classes, was inducted in the Government of India Act of 1935.The provisions ensured representation to the depressed classes in the public services and educational grant for them in every provinces⁶². That was an important step towards reservations for dalits in educational institutions and public employment. Reservations for the dalits in the form of a quota system came into being in 1943 on the basis of their belonging to an administrative category called Scheduled Caste.

⁶¹Anand Teltumbde, *Republic of Caste*, , Navayana,New Delhi, 2018,p.48.

⁶² *Ibid.*,p.49.

In Central Kerala reservation for the depressed classes, as the untouchables were officially termed then, came along with the Education Code introduced in 1911. The Maharaja of Cochin instituted scholarships, special schools and other beneficial programmes for the Depressed Classes⁶³. The progressive minded Princes in the native states like Travancore and Cochin, who were interested in the progress of the disadvantaged sections of the society, took initiatives and introduced reservations in the administrative posts in favour of backward castes and communities in their states as early as in the first quarter of the 20th century. The government of Cochin declared that all schools run by the government shall be open to all classes and castes without discrimination.

Table.3.5. No.of Pulaya students at school and college level in various years

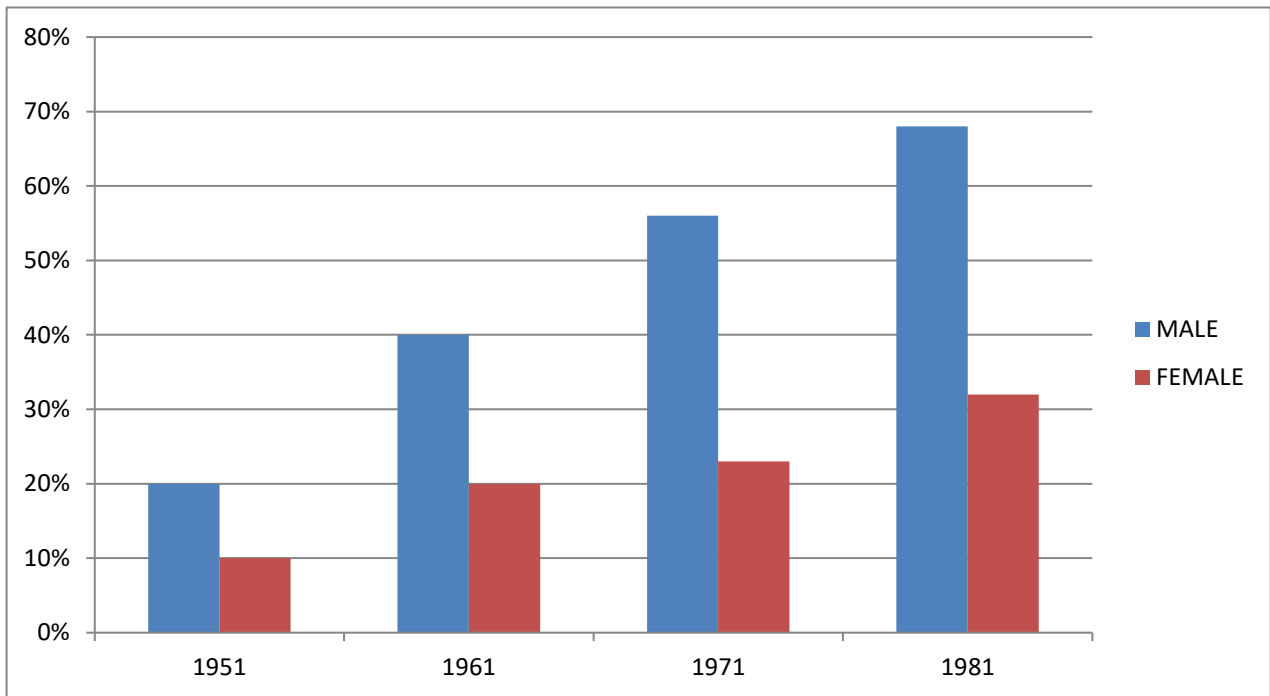
Sl.No.	Year	1-5(Primary)		1 st form to 6 th form(6-11-Upper Primary)		(Collegiate Education) Intermediary +Degree(1961Pre Univerities &1964 Pre Degree)		Total
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
1	1931	2795	3634	320	69	8	2	6828
2	1941	7710	4460	493	225	12	3	13862
3	1951	8013	5031	502	301	20	4	15829
4	1961	9214	6642	603	348	28	7	16842
5	1971	12012	8432	804	452	35	10	21745

Source: *Report on the Census of Native Cochin, 1931-1941; District Census Hand Book Thrissur, 1951, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1957; Kerala District Gazetteers, Thrissur, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1962; Kerala District Gazetteers, Ernakulum, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1965.*

⁶³ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1911, Government Press, Cochin,1912, p.36.*

From the above table it is evident that the *Pulayas* could make remarkable progress in the field of education. Various measures taken by the government of Cochin facilitated the spread of education among the *Pulayas*. *Pulaya* boys and girls were given admission in all government and aided schools. Special schools for *Pulaya* children were opened. However, the number of *Pulaya* students at the level of collegiate education was limited.

Figure.3.2. Literacy Rate of Pulayas in Central Kerala, 1951-1981. (in decennial years)



Source: *District Census Hand Book Thrissur*, 1951, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1957; *Kerala District Gazetteers, Thrissur*, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1962; *Kerala District Gazetteers, Ernakulum*, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1965; *Statistical Hand Book of Kerala*, Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Thiruvananthapuram, 1980.

The above diagram picturises definite rise in the literacy level of the *Pulayas*. While male literacy among the *Pulayas* marked a steady and speedy growth, female literacy indicates an arrested growth.

Table.3.5.Registration and Placement of Pulayas: Employment Seekers through Employment Exchange in Central Kerala in Alternate Years

Year	Registration	Placements	% of Placement out of Total Registration
1951-52	100	20	20
1953-54	522	155	29.69
1955-56	610	172	28.02
1957-58	1587	365	23
1959-60	2617	547	20.90
1961-62	3149	587	18.64

Source: *Report of Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Thiruvananthapuram, 1960; Kerala District Gazetteers, Thrissur, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1962; Kerala District Gazetteers, Ernakulum, Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram, 1965.*

The data given above testify that the *Pulayas* began to be recruited in jobs other than agriculture. The new awareness among the *Pulayas* and the educational penetration in to the community were the contributing factors.

Table.3.6. Appointments of Pulayas from Central Kerala in various government posts in 1970 on the basis of Special Recruitment.

<i>Kerala Legislature</i>			<i>Kerala State Electricity Board</i>			<i>Kerala State Road Transport Corporation</i>			<i>University of Kerala</i>			<i>Total</i>
<i>Last Grade</i>	<i>Non Gazetted</i>	<i>Gazetted</i>	<i>Last Grade</i>	<i>Non Gazetted</i>	<i>Gazetted</i>	<i>Last Grade</i>	<i>Non Gazetted</i>	<i>Gazetted</i>	<i>Last Grade</i>	<i>Non Gazetted</i>	<i>Gazetted</i>	
100	45	8	115	50	10	100	49	14	90	15	5	601

Source: *Report of Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Thiruvananthapuram, 1975.*

In 1970 'Special Recruitment for S C s and S T s was introduced. After the special recruitment drive the *Pulayas* were appointed in various departments of Kerala. Special recruitment drive occurs every year for SC and ST candidates. Table 3.6 illustrates the occupational opportunities provided by the Reservation System. Though the *Pulayas* were recruited to various posts, a substantial part of them were last grade jobs.

The data collected from the Thrissur Engineering College shows the presence of *Pulaya* students and a slight increase in their percentage over the following periods. In 1958-60, out of the total 'Scheduled Castes' students in the first year engineering course, 25 per cent (4 out of 16) were *Pulayas*, 2 boys and 2 girls. In 1962-65, 34 per cent (10 out of 29), 3 girls and 7 boys were *Pulayas*. In 1970-75, 45 per cent (9 out of the total 20) 2 girls and 7 boys were from the *Pulaya* community⁶⁴.

Reservation is governed by constitutional laws, statutory laws and local rules and regulations. Reservation for SCs in direct recruitment was introduced in 1950. For the posts reserved for SC/ST, relaxation of 5 years in upper age limit, exemption from examination fee, application fee and minimum qualifying marks were allowed. With the reorganization of the states in 1956, several changes were introduced in reservation system. During that time, there were 70 backward classes, 70 Scheduled Castes and 38 Scheduled Tribes eligible for reservation and 2 out of every 20 appointments were reserved for SCs and STs, 7 for backward classes and 11 for open competition⁶⁵.

At present, the reservation system in Kerala is as follows; S C s /STs 10%, Ezhavas-14%, Muslims-12%, Latin Catholics-4%, Nadars-2%, Christian Converts from SCs 1%, Dheevera 1%, Other Backward Communities 3%, Viswakarmas 3% and 50% shall be filled on the basis of merit⁶⁶.

⁶⁴ Students Admission register book, 1958-1975, Engineering College, Thrissur.

⁶⁵ R. Krishnakumar, A History of Reservation, *Frontline*, Vol.21, Issue.17, August 14-27, 2004, p.32.

⁶⁶ Kerala Public Service Commission, *Rules for Reservation, K S and SSR Part II, Rules 14-17*. Thiruvananthapuram, 1980.

Reservation of appointments shall apply to any service. Class or category appointments by direct recruitment to such service made on the following basis:

a) The unit of appointment for the purpose of this rule shall be 20, of which 2 shall be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 8 shall be reserved for the other backward classes and remaining 10 shall be filled on the basis of merit. In the absence of candidate to fill up the post reserved for ST candidates, it shall go to a Scheduled Caste candidate.

b) The claim of members of SC/ST's has to be considered for the appointments which shall be filled on the basis of merit.

c) Appointments under this rule shall be made in the order of rotation specified below, every cycle of 20 vacancies⁶⁷.

1. Open competition
2. Other Backward Classes
3. Open competition
4. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
5. Open competition
6. Other Backward classes
7. Open competition
8. Other Backward Classes
9. Open Competition
10. Other Backward Classes
11. Open Competition
12. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

13. Open Competition
14. Other Backward Classes
15. Open Competition
16. Other Backward Classes
17. Open Competition
18. Other Backward Classes
19. Open Competition
20. Other Backward Classes

After the abolition of slavery, the educational efforts of the government and the private agencies helped the *Pulayas* in getting education who had hitherto faced exclusion even from schools. A new era had begun that ushered the *Pulayas* the erstwhile ‘untouchable’ castes, into the sphere of education. The Education Code of 1911 provided special concessions to the *Pulayas* and schools including ‘Night Schools’ were opened for them. The Christian Missionaries had played an active role in the transformation of the *Pulayas*. It was the Missionaries, who had taken the initiative by starting schools for the *Pulayas*. They provided the *Pulayas* free education and rehabilitated them. *Pulayas* acquired new skills at industrial training institutes set up by the missionaries. Ayyankali’s activities created an awareness on the need for education among the *Pulayas*. The struggles led by him compelled the government schools for the *Pulayas* and providing financial assistance in the form of fee concessions, scholarships and reservation of a fixed quota of seats. The *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* played a pivotal role in opening schools and hostels for the *Pulayas*. The setting up of *Harijan* hostels was a favourable step towards the promotion of *Pulaya* education. The graded progress of education among the *Pulayas* enabled them to have occupational opportunities other than agriculture. The Reservation Policy and Special Recruitment considerably enhanced the placement of the *Pulayas*. However a substantial section of them constituted last grade employment.

CHAPTER.4.

ADVENT OF COLONIAL MODERNITY AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST GRADED INEQUALITY.

Since the end of the 18th century, several events have been affecting the socio-religious life in Kerala. Society of Kerala witnessed the British colonialists initiating through-going changes in the ideological sphere and economic domain in that altered in the living conditions of most social groups and classes. The impact of the western culture on the traditional way of life and thought pattern of Kerala was an important factor. Social reformers started attempts to liberate the sufferers from the superstitions and caste discrimination and made them aware of their legal rights and privileges.

Colonial modernity is the unintentional by product of colonialism. Both lower castes and upper castes had been profoundly affected by the colonial modernity. Upper castes faced their own dilemmas and discontents under colonialism. Having imbibed western education and western knowledge, a retreat into the tradition was not possible for them. Therefore a strategic compromise was inevitable. As Partha Chatterjee points out that:

The Bengali upper castes recognized the superiority of the western science and civilization in the material 'outer' domain. However face (soul) of them retreated into inner spiritual domain from which colonial power is excluded. Under colonialism upper castes strived to refashion the tradition and a critical traditionalism emerged¹.

If we contextualize the emergence of the lower castes at the centre of our understanding of colonial modernity then we are faced into unresolved dilemma of belonging which

¹ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and the Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories*, Princeton University Press, 1993, p.6.

continues into independent India. The dichotomy of inner and outer tradition and modernity collapses since lower castes are excluded from the inner spaces of traditional itself.²

It is a pertinent point that it is the colonial modernity that allowed lower castes access to education and public spaces. Potheri Kunjambu's novel *Sarawathy Vijayam* celebrates English education for untouchables as a means of escaping subordination. Tradition virtually subordinated lower castes. However colonial modernity to a certain extent had given freedom to them. There is no doubt that under colonialism the plight of the lower castes was better than the previous period. Colonial modernity gave impetus to various lower castes movements in the Kerala from the last quarter of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century.

Modernity goes along with the formation of the nation states and the establishment of the social organizations that are referred to as capitalism, deepening of urbanization, and the transnational movements of human beings and materials. And also refers to the socio-economic and intellectual transformation of early 20th century as embedded in regional and global relationships. Some scholars have spoken of modernity in non European societies that have undergone colonial experience often referred to as colonial modernity.

Dipesh Chakrabarthy, observes that:

The term modernity involves industrialization, urbanization and political democracy on rural and autocratic societies, the changes in progress by contrasting the modern with the traditional.³

² Dileep M .Menon,'Caste and Colonial Modernity Reading Sarawathy Vijayam', *Journal of Studies In History*, 1997,13:291,p.15.

³ Dipesh Chakrabarthy, *Habitations of Modernity*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2002, p.XXII.

The concept of modernity S.L.Doshi, articulates the fact that:

Modernity will be equated with a rational, scientific and secular view of life. Modernity believes in rationality and the castes which are equipped with education, technology and resources, thus availing of all the benefits of modernity. Modernity has been identified with progress and all sections of society⁴.

P.Sanal Mohan has analyzed the transformation of the slaves such as the *Panas*, the *Parayas* and the *Pulayas* in the colonial period and the new socio-cultural forces that developed under colonial modernity. He argues that:

The *Pulayas* and the *Parayas* were the actual working slaves in the agrarian sector in pre-colonial times and their status as working castes was carried over into the colonial period. The experience of various movements led to the emergence of a new mentality among the slaves. This new mentality transformed the self-perception of the slaves and was expressed in their claim to social equality⁵.

Some scholars have authorized their enduring efforts to trace out the history of social reform movements in India. Analyzing the social and religious spheres of India in the 19th century, A. R. Desai has observed as follows:

.....various socio- religious reform movements which took place in India during the British rule were the expression of the rising national consciousness and spread of the liberal ideas of the west among the Indian people. These movements increasingly tended to have a national scope and programme of reconstruction in the social and religious spheres. In the social sphere, there were movements of caste reform or caste abolition, and a crusade against social and legal inequalities. In the religious sphere, there sprang up movements which combated religious superstitions and attacked idolatry and hereditary priesthood⁶.

⁴ S.L.Doshi, *Post Modern, Perspectives on Indian Society*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2010, p.202.

⁵P. Sanal Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2015, p.11.

⁶ A. R., Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakasan Pvt .Ltd, Bombay, 1994, p.240.

B.Kuppuswamy has attempted to define the social values which have been influential in contemporary India. He observes:

In the era of social reform right from the days of Rammohan Roy in the beginning of the 19th century, the enlightened people of India have been fighting for the equality of the sexes on the one hand, and equality of citizens on the other. It is true there were powerful traditional forces against these new ideals of equality⁷.

He describes the achievements of the social reform movement in India:

The freeing of social life from the dead hand of religious texts is the most notable of them.....education of women has been accepted as a national responsibility. As for the depressed classes, their own awakening is the best promise of future progress....caste has been shorn of its worst terrors by the interdict of excommunication⁸.

The Indian social conference came into being in 1887. The aim of the conference as follows:

Conference was concerned with the uplift of women and the uplift of the *Harijans*. The conference was to reinterpret the *shastras* in the light of reason and humanity. They had implicit faith in the redeeming force of education, whether for raising the status of women or for improving the condition of the depressed classes⁹.

The reformers argued that such democratization of institutions and social relations was vitally necessary to build up sound national unity to achieve political freedom and social, economic, and cultural advance of the Indian people. The reform movements were based on the principle of individual liberty and human equality.

⁷ B.,Kuppuswamy, *Social Change in India*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 1972,p.79.

⁸ *Ibid.*,p.80.

⁹*Ibid.*

The *Pulayas* and other depressed castes were inspired by the ideas of dalit leaders from Jothiba Rao Phule to Ambedkar. The inspiration reformers instilled among the *Pulayas* came from the dire need to catch up with progress and this was backed by the desire for modernization. Jyoti Rao Phule, in his analysis on the social movement has observed as follows:

..... The downtrodden people of India have been fighting for the equality and worked for the civil rights and freedom of the lower caste people¹⁰.

Phule, wanted to transform the basic structure of Indian society by replacing caste based social oppression, economic exploitation and political domination by the upper castes. He revolted against the inequalities in Hindu social structure by the anti-caste struggles and attacks on the oppressive and exploitative ancient institutions and practices spearheaded by him.

Dr.B.R Ambedkar emphasized the aspects of the ideal society and social movements. He says that:

An ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. Ideal of Hindu society without caste and untouchability has not been achieved so far. Religion and caste continue to play havoc in the minds of the masses in villages. He asserted that the Hindu was morally unconcerned about the untouchable. The untouchable does not belong to the society of the Hindus and the Hindus do not feel that he and the untouchable belong to one society. The reformers aim was to revolt against the untouchability and restructuring of society based on justice and equality¹¹.

¹⁰ Eva Mariya Hardtmann, *Dalit Movement in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009, p.49.

¹¹ Padmanabhan, A.,*Dalits at the Cross-Roads their Struggle-Past and Present*, Publishers Poompugar Pathippagam,Madras,1996,p.68.

Ambedkar in his writings explicitly distinguishes between inequality and graded inequality which is inherent and unique to the caste system in India. One of the features of the graded inequality is that it divides the victims of caste system themselves on uneven burden and advantages. Under graded inequality the classes are exploited and sufferer at one level and beneficiary on another level. In such a society advantages and privileges being unequal from caste to caste. It is only the highest caste of Brahmins who are the absolute beneficiaries of the caste system and the lowest caste of the dalit community who are the sheer sufferers of this graded inequality.

One of the significant pioneers of the anti –caste movements in India was Jothi Rao Phule. Panditha Iyothee Thas, Periyar Ramaswamy Naiker, Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Poyikail Yohannan, K.P.Karuppan, Sahodharan Ayyappan, K.P. Vallon and P.K.Chathan Master, among the others who fought against the caste system and its intrinsic feature of graded inequality. However their ideological premise and strategies against the caste system varied from person to person. In Kerala the plight of absolute sufferers of graded inequality that constitute various dalit communities including *Pulayas* continued unabated even in the middle of the 20th century despite of so much hailed social and religious movements. It was only in the second half of the previous century that certain visible changes, if not marginally, occurred in the living conditions of the *Pulayas* and other lower caste communities in Kerala.

In this chapter attempts are made to trace out the nature of challenges which were faced by socio-religious movements and their leaders. Attempts were also made to study the working of the organizations involved in the reforms in the specific regions concentrating on how castes received specific attention in their emancipation programmes.

The socio-religious leaders of the 19th century and the early decades of 20th century in Kerala were moved by humanitarian and national considerations when they fought against social evils. Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali revolted against Brahmin

domination and campaigned for the mitigation of the rigours of the caste¹². Ayyankali, a prominent reformer who worked for the social elevation of the people belonging to *Pulaya* caste vehemently opposed upper caste domination and tried to reform the social structure, social relations and life patterns of the *Pulaya* society.

The effects of Ayyankali movement reflected in Central Kerala. The movement had its impact on the formation of '*Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabhha*' in 1913 and also the formation of '*Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha*' in 1970. The ideological influences resulted in mass mobilization of *Pulayas* in Central Kerala were the outcome of the workers done by Pandit K.P.Karuppan, Krishnadhi Asan, P.C. Chanchen, K.P. Vallon, Dhakshayani Velayudhan and P.K Chathan Master. They fought against the inequalities prevailed in the society and tried to uplift the backward and downtrodden people.

Sree Narayana Guru was born in an Ezhava family at Chempazhanthi on August 20th 1856¹³. He was a revolutionary social reformer who challenged the existing socio-economic order based on exploitation and denial of social justice. At the same time, he adopted a new approach which helped the development of social consciousness and rational thinking. He used religion and caste to revitalize the society as a whole in general and backward castes in particular. In fact, many agitations of 'polluted castes' took inspiration from these movements and they had supportive and sympathetic approach towards the empowerment of subaltern sections¹⁴. In this context, it should be remembered that among different social reform movements, the Ezhava movement assumes pre-eminence as the first powerful protest movement of lower castes which originated in Travancore and acted as an agent of a great social reform in Kerala.

Narayana Guru established an organization for mobilizing the Ezhava community who were subjected to different kinds of social discriminations. *Sree Narayana Dharma*

¹²K.GopalanKutty, 'Samoochika Parishkarangalude Charithramanagal', (Mal.), *Deshabhimani Varika*, Vol.33, No. 5, ,7,2001, pp.34-35.

¹³C.R.,Mitra, *Sree Narayana Guru and Social Revolution*, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1979, p.23.

¹⁴Perumal Nilakan, *A Hindu Reformation*, R. J Ram and Company, Madras, 1937, p.36.

Paripalana Yogam’ (SNDP) started in 1903, was an organization for the propagation of the teachings of Sree Narayana. He exhorted the people to strengthen themselves through organization and free themselves through education.

Sree Narayana Guru’s attack against the Hindu orthodoxy and its harmful philosophy was so severe that it uprooted the old value system which had deep roots in the soil. S.N.D.P brought many changes in the society of Kerala. The work of Guru helped to rouse the Ezhavas and other low castes from their age-long slumber and to give the Hindu religious reform movement in Kerala a social basis and a practical turn.

Ayyankali was born on 28th August 1863 in Venganoor, near Thiruvananthapuram¹⁵. He was born in a *Pulaya* caste. He has been considered as a realistic and action-oriented social reformer. The first step that Ayyankali had undertaken was the fight for social freedom and the struggle for the right of *Pulayas* and other untouchable castes to walk along public roads. He challenged the casteist embargo on dalits using public roads by travelling in a *Villuvandi*¹⁶ along the prohibited road. The incident was in 1893. He conceptualized freedom in a radically new way: it was not through mercy, he said, but through action that freedom is achieved¹⁷. He knew that the powerful caste Hindus or the government would not allow this right, but he organized a group of powerful *Pulaya* youth, defied caste restrictions and walked along the prohibited roads in his native Venganoor village¹⁸. Ayyankali was violating the rule.

‘One morning a cart drawn by two healthy, beautiful white bullocks started moving through the public roads of Venganoor. Ayyankali was inside the cart. In the seat of the driver was a man called Kochappi...the cart moved through the ‘forbidden’ roads. Ayyankali was dressed in a white half baniyan, dhoti and an upper cloth around shoulders and a fancy turban. A dalit wearing white clothes

¹⁵ Velayudhan Panikkasseri, ‘Excerpts from Ayyankali’, in *The Oxford India Anthology of Malayalam Dalit Writing*, Oxford University Press, 2012, p.197.

¹⁶ Roofed cart drawn by the bullocks.

¹⁷ Quoted from, Velayudhan Panikessery, *op.cit.*, p.xv.

¹⁸ R.Radhakrishnan, *Keralathile Navothana Samarangal*(Mal.), Maluban Publication, Thiruvanthapuram, 2010, p.60.

and travelling in a spring-mounted bullock-cart was forbidden to the polluting caste. The caste fanatics were enraged. The cart travelled through the forbidden road and reached back at Venganoor¹⁹.

This act of Ayyankali was his first important engagement with the upper caste dominance for the right over the public spaces. This historic journey marked the beginning of a series of struggles that lasted many years. He travelled all over the area addressing his people in an effort to create awareness of their rights. His words, coming as they did from the depths of his heart, carried a special and unique persuasive power²⁰.

Ayyankali was convinced of the need for an organization to channelize the new found Dalit power through the right course, to spread awareness regarding their rights and to acquire those rights through mobilized strength²¹. He was encouraged into this line of thinking by the advice of Sree Narayana Guru. In 1907 he formed *Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham* to emphasize the reforms of customs and practices of the *Pulayas*, cleanliness was one among them and of protecting the rights of all dalit sections. Ayyankali's politics was about the emancipation of all the oppressed people and a radical transformation of the whole of society which gives space for the dreams of all dalits or other depressed communities²².

Struggle against Inequality: Social Reformers in Central Kerala.

The leaders who belonged to depressed community stood with courage and wisdom to revolt against the brahmanical domination and untouchability. They sought to establish equal rights of all individuals irrespective of caste or sex, recognition of individual liberty, and freedom of unfettered expression of human personality.

¹⁹ Velayudhan Panikkasseri, *op.cit.*, p.199.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.201.

²¹ K. Maheswaran Nair, 'Ayyankalium Kerala Navoathanavum', (Mal.), *Deshabimani Varika*, Vol.40, No.78, September 28, 2008, pp.16-17.

²² K. M. Salim Kumar, 'Jati Bodhanathinte Puthiya Adayalanga', (Mal.), *Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*, Vol .80, No.3, March 10, 2002, p.32.

One of the social reformers in Central Kerala who worked for social change in modern times was Pandit K.P.Karuppan. He encouraged and motivated the *Pulayas* who were unaware of their rights and lived in slavery and darkness. He understood the grievances of the *Pulayas* and their low representation of them in legislative assemblies and other centers of authority. His anthologies of short poems and other literary pieces had magnificently represented this urge for cultural and social symbiosis among the various communities against the dominance of upper castes. In fact, he was sowing the seeds of a revolution both in literary and social fields; his desire was not merely political freedom but social and economic freedom of all castes and creeds with equality, social justice and mutual respect.

Pandit K.P.Karuppan, the first nominated member from the *Dheevera*²³ community became member of the Cochin Legislature in 1925.²⁴ As a nominated member of the Assembly he utilized the floor of the house for criticizing the aristocracy deep-rooted in the caste system. In a caste ridden society, he believed that there was no scope for individual freedom and growth. In the Legislative Assembly Karuppan presented the problems of education of the *Pulayas*. The government was thus forced to take various ameliorative measures for the progress of depressed classes in the educational sphere.

The caste system in Cochin State was much more oppressive than that prevailed in other parts of Kerala. The caste system contains both social oppression and exploitation. The depressed classes were subject to untouchability and other forms of discrimination, despite these being declared unlawful²⁵. The growing consciousness among the depressed classes for emancipation is met with brutal oppression and atrocities. Along with the curse of untouchability, they had no right to entering the streets of Ernakulum or walking on important public roads; they were not allowed to live in the main village inhabited by the

²³ Fisherman community.

²⁴ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, 3rd April 1925, Vol.1, Government Press, Cochin, 1926.*

²⁵ Aravind K.S.Mangalam, 'Jati Dhikaramallayo', (Mal.), *Madhyamam Azchapathippu*, Vol.15, No .757, September 3, 2012, pp.55-56.

upper classes, leading to the lack of access to all sources of economic mobility²⁶. Thus they were subjected to both social exclusion and economic discrimination over the centuries. The new wave of social reformers strengthened this sense of right among the depressed classes.

In 1913, the conference of the '*Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* decided to submit petition to the Maharajas of Cochin demanding the right of untouchables to walk along the public road in the Ernakulum. It also forced the government to take measures from time to time, for the amelioration of the condition of the depressed classes. But they realized that the petitions and welfare measures did not solve the problems, and so they decided to fight for their rights. During that time the government organized an exhibition of agricultural products at Ernakulum in which Diwan W.H Bhore was the guest of honour. Karuppan during his speech, brought to the attention of the Diwan that the *Pulayas* who had labored hard to cultivate the agricultural products showcased them in the exhibition were not allowed to see the exhibition. Touched by the words of Karuppan, the Diwan ordered the organizers to allow the *Pulayas* to enter the grounds²⁷. It was a result of his endeavors that the *Pulayas* and other depressed classes secured the right to walk in freedom along the public roads in Cochin.

K. P. Vallon, describes Pandit Karuppan Master as:

He used to fight using his speeches as well as the might of his pen for the freedom and overall development of the downtrodden. Such struggles met with success quite peacefully. The place assigned to Lincoln who fought for the eradication of slavery in America may be given to Karuppan who fought for the emancipation of the *Pulayas*. Thus he rightfully deserves the honorary title as the '*Lincoln of Kerala*'²⁸.

²⁶T.M.Chummar, *Kavithilakan K.P.Karuppan*, (Mal.), Kerala Sahithya Academy Thrissur, 2012, p.135.

²⁷P.Govinda Pillai, *Navothanum, Yugasanthathigal Yugashilpikkal*, (Mal.), Chintha Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram, 2010, p.236.

²⁸ K .P. Vallon *Smaranika*,(Mal.), Viswakeralam Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981,p.38.

Another important reformer P.C.Chanchen, who belonged to the *Pulaya* community, was nominated the member of the Cochin Legislative Council in 1928²⁹. He mobilized and motivated the *Pulayas* who were unaware of their rights and lived in slavery and gloominess. It was Chanchen who took the grievances of the *Pulayas* to the Legislative Assembly and other centers of authority. It was he who brought attention of the rest of the society to address the grievances of the *Pulayas*³⁰.

Krishnadhi Asan (1877-1937) was a social reformer belonging to the *Pulaya* community at Cochin. In 1913 Pandit Karuppan and Krishnadhi Asan launched '*Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabhha*'.

K.P.Vallon (1900-1940) was an ardent participant in *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabhha* activities with the inspiration drawn from the Pandit Karuppan. In recognition of his outstanding service to the dalit community, Vallon was nominated as the member of the legislative council in 1931. Vallon fought for social freedom which was a struggle for the right of depressed classes to walk along public roads and he raised these problems in the legislature. He fought against the irrational social practices and superstitions among them. He earned the epithet 'Ayyankali of Cochin'³¹. He used his organizational ability and literary talent to fight against social injustice, illiteracy and superstitions. He firmly believed that unless the caste system was destroyed, the social evil of untouchability could not be removed and he realized that to achieve this objective, the depressed classes should have access to political power. He was elected as the leader of sabha in the annual conference in 1924 at Ernakulum Maharajas College³².

Vallon, who was a stone worker, had to travel all over Cochin and other parts of Kerala, mingling with people to understand the miseries of the depressed classes in the

²⁹ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, 2nd July, 1928, Vol.I, Government Press, Cochin, 1929.*

³⁰ Ramadas Cherai, 'Ayithajathikar Niyamasabhail', (Mal.), *Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*, Vol.82, No.32, October 10, 2004, pp.37-38.

³¹ Cherai Ramdas, *K.P.Vallon Niyamasabhayil*, (Mal.), Uparodham Books, Ernakulam, 2009, p.5.

³² Kunnukuzhi S.Mani, 'Cochi Kayal Samellanathinu Nooruvayasu', (Mal.), *Vigjanakairali*, March 5, 2014, p.58.

society. Caste based inequalities were powerful at that time, and divisions were based on economic status and employment³³. Unlike Ezhavas, for *Pulayas* it was difficult to get a job. In many places, *Pulayas* were beaten up by some Ezhavas. He decided to put an end to this and sought the help of the Ezhavas. Vallon spread the idea that the real Sree Narayana message was the emancipation of the oppressed. He tried to bring in awakening among the depressed people and worked for their self- respect and tried to get social justice for them. The social disabilities from which the depressed classes like the *Pulayas*, the *Kanakkans* and the *Nayadis* suffered for centuries assumed vast proportions and constantly sought to make the people realize the denial of elementary rights of citizenship to them amounted to a great social injustice.

K.P.Vallon, introduced a resolution in the Legislative Council on 14th February 1933, for obtaining government aid to students belonging to depressed classes who experienced delay and difficulties in getting stipend from the ‘Protector of Depressed Classes’³⁴. Sahodharan Ayyappan extended his support to this resolution and opined that: the government should make an enquiry into the difficulties of such students and take steps for redressing their grievances. Finally, I.N.Menon, Director of Public Instruction, replied that the government had accepted the demand of the resolution³⁵. Hence the resolution was withdrawn with leave of the House. Much of Vallon’s energy was spent on opposing of V.R.Maman Chovan who was the ‘Protector of Depressed Classes’, who was not actually in favour of the upliftment of the depressed classes.

In 1936 Vallon started a news paper ‘*Adhakrithan*’³⁶ from the Dharmakahalam press for the emancipation of the dalits. He took initiative in forming separate organizations for the *Vettuva* and *Paraya*. Thus *Cochin Vettuva Sabha* and *Sambhava Sabha* came in to

³³P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Chrithram* (Mal.), Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2008, p.278.

³⁴ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings*, Vol.III, February 14, 1933, Government Press, Cochin, 1934, p.644.

³⁵ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings*, March 31, 1933, Government Press, Cochin, 1934, p.1542.

³⁶ K. P. Vallon *Smaranika*, op.cit., p.33.

existence. He was able to give a sense of security to the oppressed classes. He established colonies, reading rooms and *bhajana madoms* with government aid. Vallon was fully supported by young and energetic followers who were even prepared to face violence with violence.

There was a scheme of colonization for the depressed classes under the government control. Special colonies for the *Pulayas* were set up at Chalakudy, Njarakal, Crangannur and Azhicode³⁷. Houses were constructed for them at government expense. Such houses were repaired from time to time and re-thatched annually at government cost. In 1935, there were 51 dalit colonies in the Cochin State. It was under the leadership of Vallon, that the *Pulaya* colony was established at the centre of Irinjalakuda town. He used to go by foot and enquire about the well-being of all the members of the colony. In the words of V. K. Kutty Sahib:

There was no colony or any member of the colony who was unknown to Vallon. All his services were for the upliftment of this colony, and offering solutions to the miseries and agonies of the depressed sections³⁸.

Another important contribution of Vallon was the establishment of the Harijan hostel in Ernakulum in 1938 that paved the way for the educational progress of the dalits. Vallon, a member of the legislative assembly presented the issue in the assembly and later the government opened up a new hostel in 1938³⁹.

Dhakshayani Velayudhan(1912-1978)

Do women have definite place and role in history? Yes, Gerda Lerner, an American pioneer in the field of women's history and the first person to hold a chair in

³⁷ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, Part III, 1925, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulum, 1928, p.82.*

³⁸ *K. P. Vallon Smaranika, op.cit.,p.31.*

³⁹ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, Part III, 1938, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulum, 1940, p.87.*

women's history said 'women have a history; women are in history'⁴⁰. An attempt has been made to ensure the position of women in history by entwining the experiences of women with their social surroundings. The social relationship and the circumstance that enable this evolutionary process are brought in to focus. A comprehensive study of the roles played by women in the social, cultural, political development of society necessitates the importance of gender studies in the analysis of history⁴¹.

The history of women's participation in politics have made considerable advance in women empowerment .As in the case of any individual in society her history plays a large part in determining the social status of the dalit women. Dhakshayani Velayudhan was the first and last dalit woman who was nominated to the Cochin Legislative Council in 1945⁴².She began to fight against the untouchability and social evils in the society. She was the first lady graduate teacher belonging to the depressed classes in Cochin State⁴³. Later she was selected to the Constituent Assembly. Her understanding of untouchability and the steps to tackle it had a depth of its own. She revolted against the unjust caste system; she courageously upheld the cause of the untouchables. She devoted her life for the progress of the most oppressed and suppressed section of society. She took up the experiences of not just one woman that is Dhakshayani; but the experience of all the economically backward dalit women. She was the representative of the suffering dalit women –a woman and a dalit who stood in the forefront in the dalit struggles against all sorts of violence and discrimination directed against them⁴⁴.Dhakshayani had bitter experiences on account of untouchability. One such incident is given below:

⁴⁰ Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, Foundation Books, New Delhi, 1998, p.2.

⁴¹ Ramachandra Kshirsagara,*Dalit Movement In India and Its Leaders*,M.D Publications ,Pvt.Ltd,New Delhi,1994,p.362.

⁴²*Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings,1945*, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam ,1946, P.52.

⁴³ B.Shiva Rao,*The Framing of India's Constitution-Select Documents*(ed.),Universal Law Publishing Co.Pvt.Ltd,Delhi, 2004,P.287.

⁴⁴ Quoted from, Cherai, Ramdas, *Ayyankalike Atharathode*, (Mal.), Uparoodam Books, Ernakulam, 2009,p.104.

When she was a teacher, she was posted in a government school in Peringottukara in Thrissur . The place had a large population of the backward caste of Ezhavas which also meant that there weren't many upper castes who would be displeased by the presence of a dalit teacher in the classroom. Dakshayani, was given accommodation in the house of an affluent Ezhava but she was not allowed to draw water from their well⁴⁵. Dakshayani wrote: "one day when I was going to the school which was a two-three minute walk from the house, a Nair woman met me on the way. On either side of the road were paddy fields. The Nair woman asked me to step down on to the fields to make way for her (as she considered a *Pulaya* unapproachable). I told her, if you want to go, you may get down on to the field and go. As I did not concede to her demand she had to do as I said⁴⁶.

During 1946-1952 she was selected to the constituent assembly which was also the provisional parliament of India. She was one of the youngest members of the assembly and the only dalit woman representative of the constituent assembly. She found this as a golden opportunity to frame laws to declare untouchability illegal and unlawful. She also took measures to emancipate the unprivileged sections of the country. Later she was chosen as the President of the Depressed Classes Youth's Fine Arts Club of Madras. She also adorned the seat of the managing editor of 'Common Man', an English weekly published from Madras. In the 1971 Lok Sabha election Dakshayani contested as an independent candidate from the constituency of Adoor (SC) but did not get elected.

Sahodharan Ayyappan (1889-1968) and Sahodhara Movement.

Sahodaran Ayyappan was born on 22nd August 1889 at Cherai near Cochin⁴⁷. His involvements in social activities were aimed at removal of casteism .He stood for the uplift of the people in general and the lower sections in particular. He never wanted to

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷Quoted from, Sahadevan, M., *Towards Social Justice and Nation Making; A Study of Sahodaran Ayyappan*, Sophia D. G. Publications, Palakkad, 1993, p.28.

discriminate people in the name of caste, creed and colour. He was a stern advocate of the universal brotherhood transcending the narrow limits.

Ayyappan was influenced by the teachings of Sree Narayana Guru in his fight against the caste system, he believed, unlike Guru, that idea about religion and God were irrelevant to the promotion of egalitarian values. He considered that religions, especially Hinduism, had only spread superstitions and magic which supported the caste system. Thus, in the place of Guru's religious rational thought, Sahodharan Ayyappan developed a secular rationalist ideology.

Contributions of Sahodharan Ayyappan were significant in the spread of socio-political movements which helped to create a new generation with progressive ideas. He was championing the cause of liberty. For him any kind of social and political reform could be realized only through the sanctioning of individual liberty with a halting point at where it transforms into anarchy making it meaningless. He described it as follows:

.....social reform is for liberty; religious reform is for liberty political reform is for liberty; and why not, the salvation itself; the ultimate aim of life, is for liberty. Liberty is so desirable condition. Mans spiritual power exudes through three ways- thought, word, and action. That is man wants to think, to speak and to do as he desires. This is the complete freedom of man⁴⁸....

Ayyappan began to think of collective action for the destruction of caste system. He gathered a group of like- minded young men. He suggested the idea of holding an inter dining as a prelude to the fight against caste system. At Cherai in 1917, Ayyappan organized a '*Mishrabhojanam*'⁴⁹. Several people of the area assembled at the venue of the meeting. He had requested the participants to sign an undertaking and take the pledge as follows:

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.78

⁴⁹ '*A grand feast of all castes sitting together under one roof*'. This was a form of challenge against the traditional society which had made food as a taboo and sharing of food and having it sitting with members of other castes as a reason for loss of jati.

“Since I am thoroughly convinced that caste discrimination is against *sastras* and is prejudicial and uncalled for, I myself declare with all intentions and knowledge that I will do whatever I can to eradicate it in ways that are not illegal”⁵⁰.

The people who attended the meeting took the oath and signed an undertaking. At the end of the meeting, Sahodharan Ayyappan informed the gathering, “some among us are prepared to take food with a *Pulaya*. If anybody likes inter dining, he can join us⁵¹”. This event made great provocations among the conservatives of the Ezhava community. For a while thereafter, they nick named Ayyappan as ‘*Pulayan Ayyappan*’ because of his intimate connection with the *Pulaya* community and all the Ezhavas or *Chovans* participated in the event were called ‘*Pulaya Chovans*’.

The result of the inter-dining at Cherayi fell like a bomb shell on orthodox Hindu circles and produced far reaching results in the social set up of Kerala. ‘*Vijnana Vardhini Sabha*’ was the famous organization of the Ezhavas of Cherayi. An urgent meeting of the sabha was held on 5th June 1917 on the basis of a complaint lodged by 18 members. It discussed the complaint of inter- dining with *Pulayas* in the house of Achuthan Raman Pillai. The sabha decided to enforce social boycott on the ‘22 families’ involved in the inter-dining function, directly and through the *Karayogams*⁵². The boycott was a terrible one, the Ezhava community was instructed not to co-operate with the 22 families in the marriage functions and other ceremonies.

On 15th May, 1921, Sree Narayana Guru in his presidential address of *All Kerala Sahodhara Sangham* said that ‘whatever may be the religion, dress or language, etc. of

⁵⁰ Quoted from, Sahadevan M., *op.cit.*, p.65.

⁵¹ Radhakrishnan, ‘Randdam Pulayan Ayyappan’, (Mal.), *Kerala Shabdham*, Vol.51, No .41, , June 2 2013, p.13.

⁵² C.K.Gangadharan, *Navakerala Shilpikal, Sahodharan Ayyappan*,(Mal.), Kerala History Association, Ernakulam, 1984, p.31.

the people, there is no harm in intermarrying and inter dining between them since they belong to one caste'⁵³.

Sree Narayana Guru's message gave a heavy blow to the very foundation of the *Vijnana Vardhini Sabha's* attitude towards the *Sahodhara Sangham* and its inter-dining programme. The progressive minded Ezhavas exerted pressure for a change. Finally, the leaders of the *Vijnana Vardhini Sabha* were forced to have a rethinking on the issue and on 10 Medam M.E 1096 (April 22nd 1921), the sabha took the decision that there was nothing wrong in inter-dining and inter- marriage was desirable between certain sections within the Ezhava community⁵⁴.

Mishrabhojanam conducted by Ayyappan and his fellowmen made great impact on the society. *Mishrabhojanam* was organized in various parts of Kerala in the following years. At Cherthala *mishrabhojanam* was organized in which Ezhavas, Christians and Nairs participated. At Peringottukara, a branch of *Sahodara Sangham* was established after organizing *mishrabhojanam* in which people belonging to Ezhava and *Pulaya* castes participated⁵⁵. It was organized by Ezhava youth under the leadership of Thandasseri Achuthan. On the occasion of the college day at Maharajas College Trivandrum, under the guidance of A.Gopala Menon, members of Nair, Christian, Ezhava and Vellalla communities participated in the common dining⁵⁶.

Ayyappan was sincere in the popularization of the *Sahodhara* Movement. He was well aware of the effective role of the press in the moulding of human thinking. Hence through the columns of *Sahodharan*, he desired to disseminate progressive ideas for the destruction of caste system. Even in the first issue of *Sahodharan*, Ayyappan restated the point that:

⁵³P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram* (Mal.), Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2008, p.532.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.68.

⁵⁵ Manojkumar P.S, Formation of Hindu Religious Identity in Kerala: A study of Socio-Religious Movements (1792-1936) Unpublished Ph.D Thesis submitted to Department of History and Heritage Studies, Kannur University, 2016, p.338.

⁵⁶ Sahadevan M, op.cit., p.60.

The programme of inter- dining was a wonderful medicine to dilute the solid caste mentality of the people. Uplift of the lower castes, destruction of the superstitions of higher castes and promotion of communal harmony were the objectives of inter- dining⁵⁷.

Ayyappan was elected to the Cochin Legislative Council in 1928⁵⁸. After this, he got continuously elected to the Cochin Legislative Council until the integration of Travancore–Cochin on 1st July, 1949. He did his utmost to utilize that position to serve the cause of social reform. Legislation is one of the effective weapons to bring about institutional changes of a far reaching character in a social setup by destroying the old ones and creating the new ones. He was aware of the impact of legislation on social change. Many constitutional reforms of Cochin were the results of his hard work. He became instrumental in the enactment of a series of legislations including the Universal Adult Franchise.

Ayyappan was one who started a campaign for the extension of franchise and the expansion of the powers of the Council. The total membership of the council was limited as not less than thirty and not more than sixty of whom not less than two-thirds shall be elected and the rest shall be nominated⁵⁹. The representative character of council was oligarchic in effect and ‘feudal’ in nature. It was mainly a body of land owners. Educational qualification was not an exception to it as graduates could come only from their class. Universal franchise was not granted. Voting right was restricted to landowners who paid not less than Rs.10/- as land tax, the tenants who paid not less than Rs.10/- or more and those who possessed the minimum educational qualification of graduation⁶⁰.

Universal adult franchise was the ultimate aim of Ayyappan to transform the Legislative Council into a real representative body of the people. He suggested that

⁵⁷ Sahodharan, I, No.1 Kanni, M.E. 1093, North Paravur, p.1

⁵⁸ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, 1928*, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1929, p.56.

⁵⁹ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1925*, Cochin Government Press, 1926, Ernakulam, p.58

⁶⁰ Sahadevan, M., *op.cit.*, p.81.

franchise should be granted to either all adults or all literates or all tax payers⁶¹. Finally, the government adopted a neutral position which was passed by the council; all those who pay an amount towards income tax are eligible for voting right. The right to vote given to those paying a land tax of Rs.10 was further extended to those paying upto Rs.5⁶².

He was very much interested in the social progress of all communities. Hence he actively took part in the discussions affecting the social structure of a particular caste. He criticized the government policy towards the *Pulayas*, which were the measures undertaken by the government for the betterment of the *Pulayas*. The government established a new department for the education for the uplift of the depressed classes. However, 1931 an amount of Rs.55,000/- had been allotted to the department even though the state had a total income of Rs.77 lakhs⁶³.

Sahodharan Ayyappan always shared the feelings of the working class and hence he argued for their cause in the legislature. For instance, V.K. Kutty moved a resolution in the Legislative Council on 29th March 1939, for fixing the minimum wages for beedi makers. M.K. Devassy opined that it was for the sensible public and the government to strike a happy via media, whereby they could stem the tide of the labour movement by wise adjustments. On the other hand Sahodharan Ayyappan declared that for the strengthening of the labour movement, any means could be adopted. Also he demanded for raising the minimum wages for beedi makers⁶⁴.

Ayyappan was an activist-cum-writer. The poems, writings and reform activities of all these social activists were focused against the traditions of caste, social dominance of the upper sections and poverty of the poor. All of them belonged to depressed castes

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁶² *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, 1931, Cochin Government Press, 1932, Ernakulam, p.62.*

⁶³ *Cochin Legislative Council Official Report, Vol I. 30th July, 1928, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1929, p.82.*

⁶⁴ *Cochin Legislative Council Proceedings, 29 March, 1939, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1940, P. 1124.*

and literature was a powerful instrument in their hands to reshape the existing society. Sahodharan Ayyappan adopted different methods – simple and effective speeches, direct actions or interferences like the inter-dining, inter- caste marriage, burning of the effigies of caste monster and spreading of ideas through mass media for the spread of his revolutionary ideas among the people.

Impact of Literature

Social and political upheavals demonstrated the power of dalit assertion and resistance in different parts of the country through literature. Literature played a significant role in the social revolution of Kerala. The literature in the new form of novels served as a mirror to the contemporary society and as a hammer to change and reshape with a humanistic touch. This humanistic touch has made the society more progressive. It helped to wipe out the tears of the economically depressed and degraded of the society. The large volume of reform literature owed itself largely to men like Chagampuzha, Muloor S.Padmanabha Panikkar, Pandit K.P.Karuppan, Kumaran Asan and Pirappencode Murali.

The great poet Chagampuzha was the first among the many writers who had raised their voices against the atrocities heaped up on the poor landless peasants in the ‘feudalist’ set up. His poem “*Vazhakula*” narrates the story of the downtrodden (*Pulayan*), under privileged farmers who fought for their rights over the production and the ownership land in which they had toiled for years⁶⁵. “*Vazhakula*” reflected the exploitative and oppressive ‘feudal’ social order in which the members of the depressed castes had to make ‘gift’ to his land lord⁶⁶. It was of course not a voluntary gift. It was an oppressive practice internalized by the depressed castes fostered by the ‘feudal’ social order. He wrote,

⁶⁵ Chagampuzha, *Vazhakula* (Mal.), Sahithya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sangham ,National Book Stall ,Kottayam,1937,p.7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*,p.8.

*“Oh! Depressed for all these would be a vendetta
From the generations to come”⁶⁷.*

Mulloor S. Padmanabha Panikkar was a social reformer and poet. He showed keen interest in social and community related issues. In the social field the caste system operated at its worst denying to the people of the lower castes opportunities for self expression in society. The *jenmi* system had brought into vogue a large body of underprivileged tenants who were at the mercy of the land lords. His poem *Pulavrittham*⁶⁸ exposed the evils of caste and miserable conditions of life of the *Pulaya* community. This work encouraged enlightenment and confidence among the *Pulaya* to raise voice against the untouchability and caste discrimination.

The struggle against the social injustice reflected in one of Pandit Karuppan’s poems in 1912, titled ‘*Jati Kummi*’⁶⁹. He used his pen to fight against the endemic discriminatory practices and Brahmanical hegemony. He strove for the development of the depressed classes through his sermons and preaching. He questioned the basis and authenticity of caste-ridden and inequities society which were exploiting the people in the name of religion. They were suffering from segregation of caste –tyranny and ‘feudal’ oppression⁷⁰. His another poem ‘*Udyanavirunu*’, implores for the removal of social inequalities prevailed in society. He had criticized the institution of caste, poverty of weaker sections, bondage of women in the family and male dominance.

Theatre had a powerful influence on audience and it has played a significant role in Kerala in promoting national sentiments and effecting social change. *Balakalesham* is one of Pandit Karuppan's significant works; Karuppan decided that his theatre was not for entertainment but for the emancipation of depressed classes and

⁶⁷ K.K.N, Kurup *Nationalism and Social Change – The role of Malayalam Literature*, Kerala Sahithya Academy, Thrissur. 1998, p.101.

⁶⁸ Mulloor S. , Padmanabha Panikkar, *Pulavrittham*(Mal.), Publications Sarasakavi Muloor Memorial Committee, Elavumthitta, 1911.

⁶⁹Jati means Caste, Kummi is a folk dance in Kerala.

⁷⁰V.V. K. Vallath, Navakerala Silpikal, *Pandit Karuppan*, (Mal.), Kerala History Association,Ernakulam, 1985, p.55.

workers. His works created an awareness and confidence among the depressed classes to question the practices of untouchability and caste discrimination⁷¹.

Kumaran Asan made use of poetry as an instrument of social transformation. His works '*Duravastha*' and '*Chandalabhikshuki*', fought against such social evils as untouchability and pleaded for social change. Kumaran Asan and his works have greatly inspired dalit movements in contemporary Kerala. The theme of the poem '*Duravastha*' is the marriage of a Namboothiri woman with a *Pulaya* youth and it came as a bomb shell in orthodox circles⁷². He says:

*There are untouchables and unapproachable,
Those whose sight itself is damnation,
And those who do not mix in marriage
Or even in eating food.*

In the '*Chandalabhikshuki*' which has a unique theme, a Buddhist monk drinking water from an untouchable girl, Asan makes a strong indictment of the caste system⁷³.

Pirappancode Murali's, '*Malayapulayanum E.M.Sum*' portrays the traditional society and its new dimension of social change. It played a constructive role in transformation of the downtrodden and the depressed as a matter of humanism and brotherhood dominated in the minds of masses. He had exposed the evils of caste and miserable conditions of life of rural people. The sufferings of *Malaya Pulayan* and *Azhaghi* are described in this drama as the typical grievances of their class. Apart from such sufferings, the work portrays the insecurity of their women folks owing to immoral and unruly behavior of high caste land owners⁷⁴. He pictureises the condition of subaltern women, marginalized further by the caste based society.

⁷¹ T.K.Krishna Kumar, *op.cit.*, p.106.

⁷² N. Kumaran Asan, *Asantne Padhyakritikal* (Mal.), D C Books, Kottayam, 1975,p.484.

⁷³ N.Kumaranasan, *Chandalabhikshuki*, (Mal.), Gandakavyam, Interpretation, N.M.Namboothiri, Pravarthaka Sangham, National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1984, p.78.

⁷⁴ Pirappancode Murali, *Malaya Pulayanum E M S um* (Mal.), Calicut, 2008, p.6.

Poems and dramas portraits the caste atrocities during those periods, and urged the people to work for the breakdown of the caste hierarchy. In fact, the readers are compelled to look back into the past history of these depressed classes. The works are also remarkable for the nature of descriptions and the patriotic fervor they contain. Their desire was not mere political freedom but social and economic freedom of all castes and creeds with equality, social justice and mutual respect. These poems, lyrics, speeches and writings championed the cause of social reforms and nationalism.

Role of Caste Organizations

The influence of western thinking and the social movements developed among the untouchable groups resulted in the emergence of caste organizations. Aim of the caste organizations were the improvement of the social and economic standing of depressed caste.

The important organizations were Sree *Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam* (SNDP on May 15, 1903) by Sree Narayana Guru, *Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham*(S J P S, 1907) under the leadership of Ayyankali, *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* (C P M S,1913) led by K.P.Karuppan and Krishnadhi Asan,*Nair Service Society* (NSS on October 31, 1914) by Mannath Padmanabhan, *Sahodhara Sangham* (S S,1917) by Sahodharan Ayyappan ,and *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha* (K P M S,1970) under the leadership of P.K.Chathan Master.

In organizing the lower castes in Kerala the most important problem has been the existence of numerous such castes among them leading to divisions and differences. Depressed classes in the state of Cochin were such as *Kanakkan, Prayan, Vettuvan, and Pulayan or Cheruman*. Even among the same sub-castes there were different organizations in different regions of Kerala. The existing sub-castes kept their marital relationship and social interaction within a limited circle, thus maintaining very rigid caste boundaries.

The first step was that, they realized their common position in the larger caste hierarchy and organized themselves. Formation of common organization gained importance under the influence of modernity. In Central Kerala, the *Pulayas* were organizing for reform and in 1913 Pandit Karruppan and Krishnadhi Asan launched ‘*Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha*’⁷⁵. *Pulayas* were prohibited from entering the streets of Ernakulum or walking on important public roads. They were not allowed to assemble in any common place for meetings. To keep such meetings away from the eyes of the land lords, meeting was conducted in backwaters, Karuppan asked the *Pulayas* to come in row boats to the expanse of the Ernakulum backwaters and tie their boats together. There he addressed them on a wooden –planked platform and charted out strategies for their emancipation by forming a sabha⁷⁶. Their main aim was initially to improve the socio-economic conditions of their communities. This movement generated a great social awakening among the ‘polluted’ castes like the *Pulayas*.

Sahodaran Ayyappan formed an organization called ‘*Samastha Kerala Sahodhara Sangham*’. His aim was to unite the human beings under a common brotherhood. This movement was known as the Brotherhood movement or ‘*Sahodhara Prasthanam*’⁷⁷. These movements were effective in bringing about solidarity among the *Pulayas* and Ezhavas. They fought against ‘*jati*’ identities to bring about and construct an effective identity based on an altogether new conception of society. It means, in those days even among the Ezhavas whom the *savarnas* treated as out castes, there were so many orthodox people who treated the *Pulayas* and *Parayas* as untouchables, with

⁷⁵Kunukuzhi S.Mani, *Pulayar Noottanduhaliloode, Oru Charithra Padanam*, (Mal.), Kerala Cultural Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1989, pp.164-166., Cherai Ramadas, ‘Kayalil Roopamkonda Pulaya Sabha’, (Mal.), *Mathruboomi Azchapahippu*, Vol. 82, No.53, February 22, 2004, p.32., T. K. Ramakrishnan T. K. *Rama Krishna Menonte Smaranakkal*, (Mal.), Translated by K T Ramavarma, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur, 2011, p.328.

⁷⁶P.K.GopalaKrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram*, (Mal.), Kerala Basha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 2008, p.512., Cherai Ramadas, ‘Kochiye Nayicha Mulavukadu’ (Mal.), *Deshabimani Varika*, Vol.39, No.13, August, 26, 2007, p.56.

⁷⁷C.R.Mitra, *Sree Narayanaguru and Social Revolution*, Sheertallai, Kottayam, 1979, p.126.

extreme derision and bias. He held that caste is highly destructive, unscientific and unnecessary. His Brotherhood Movement propagated these ideas among the masses.

Another important organization was *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha* (KPMS) was established in 1970 under the leadership of P.K.Chathan Master⁷⁸.

Influence of the caste organizations raised the status of untouchables and prevented low castes from conversion to other religions. Traditional system was not entirely ceased, but mobility was possible for groups and individuals. Though the scopes for individual and familial mobility have increased, caste continues to be relevant in subtle and indirect ways even today.

Movements against Untouchability

Untouchability has received more attention from sociologists and social anthropologists rather than historians. The disciplines of sociology and social anthropology offer a detailed description of untouchability. One of the influential books on untouchability is Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchies*. He says that:

‘Impurity of the untouchable is conceptually inseparable from the purity of Brahmin. Dumont focuses exclusively on the concept of purity and pollution as determinants of the entire Hindu caste system. Untouchables are necessary for the purity of Brahmins. Untouchability will not truly disappear until the purity of the Brahmins itself radically devalued’⁷⁹.

The view of Dr. B R Ambedkar is that the roots of untouchability lie in the deliberate policy of the Brahmins, who were full of contempt and hatred towards those who continued to eat beef and isolated themselves from Brahminical traditions by embracing Buddhism. When Brahminism became dominant in the 4th century A.D untouchability has

⁷⁸ Details of the K P M S are given in chapter 5.

⁷⁹ Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchies: The Caste System and its Implications*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1980, p.53.

intensified. Ambedkar's ultimate objective was to annihilate caste system. Regarding untouchability, he says that:

'it is one of the heinous manifestations of the essence of caste should be fought through social struggles. For Ambedkar the solution lies not in morality, on the contrary, it is fundamentally political. However, for Gandhi, the solution lies not in political but in the moral. Gandhi chooses the moral route that does not centrally take on the essence of untouchability-that is caste. He does not seek to attack the roots of the problem: instead he chooses to prune its rough edges. In Gandhi, it is pruning rather than uprooting, while in Ambedkar the reverse is the case. In other words, Gandhi finds the solution of untouchability through moral changes of the mindset of the people while Ambedkar suggests the annihilation of caste, of which untouchability is one of the most abominable and humiliating practices.'⁸⁰

G.S.Ghurye also underlines the idea that purity and impurity gave birth to untouchability. He says:

'Ideas of purity, whether occupational or ceremonial which are found to have been the genesis of caste are the very soul of the idea and practice of untouchability'⁸¹.

According to Kosambi the concept of untouchability :

'is a logical extension of the social hierarchy envisaged in terms of pure and impure functions. The untouchables were condemned to carry out filthy and menial work on a hereditary basis. But its main function has been to ensure the availability of a large labour force for hard agricultural labour'⁸².

⁸⁰ Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarakkai, *The Cracked Mirror:An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*,Oxford University Press, New Delhi,2012,p.215.

⁸¹ Gurye, G.S.,*Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan Bombay, 1932,p.307.

⁸² Suvira Jaiswal, 'Kosambi on Caste' in D. N Jha (ed.),*The Many Careers of D. D .Kosambi*, Leftword Books, New Delhi,2011,p.141.

R.S.Sharma argues that:

‘The higher castes such as Brahmins and Kshatriyas gradually not only discarded manual and artisanal labour and hated those who practiced it and they came to be known as untouchables. Those who were engaged in certain types of dirty professions were considered as untouchables. The labour of the lower orders ultimately degenerated into the practice of untouchability’⁸³.

A novel and different approach to the study of untouchability is enunciated in the book ‘*Cracked Mirror: An Indian Debate on Experience and Theory*’, a noted scholarly work co-authored by Gopal Guru, a social theorist, and Sundar Sarakkai, a philosopher. This book is an exploration of the politics of experience and the ethics of theorizing. One of the interesting characteristics of this book is that it is a philosophical attempt to understand untouchability.

In the chapter titled ‘Archaeology of Untouchability’ Gopal Guru employs archeological method to unravel untouchability. He distinguishes the Brahmins as *deferential* or *ideal* untouchables and the dalit as *despicable* or *real* untouchables. The aim of archeological method is to unearth subtle form of untouchability which is more prevalent than ever before. He explains what archeological method is and why it is relevant for understanding untouchability.

Let me begin by arguing that archeology as a method of discovering the essence of caste becomes intelligible only in certain contexts. For example, archeology may become redundant in the rural context; where caste hierarchies play out openly through resorting to blatant untouchability practices, and hence caste does not require untouchability to adopt subtle forms for its own expression..... archeological method requires a spatially ambiguous context for its success⁸⁴.

⁸³ Sharma, R. S., *Sudras in Ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidas Publications, New Delhi, 1958, p.140.

⁸⁴ Gopal Guru and Sundar Sarakkai, *op.cit.*, p.219.

Archeological method becomes intelligible in the social context where every other person appears a stranger to every other person of social relations. The urban context makes it difficult for the pure untouchable to remain in touch with despicable untouchable. The public sphere provides space for archeological investigation put it differently, public sphere is where archeological method is most effective because subtle forms of untouchability is most expressive but hidden in the public sphere.

Untouchability was the greatest curse of Kerala society; Hindu society was featured by the predominance of the upper castes and the relatively subordinate positions of the lower castes. The principles of social freedom and equality found no place in Hindu social organization. The social evils of untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability continued to be a disgrace to the Hindu society. The result was that there was the complete segregation of the Hindus of one caste from their brethren belonging to the other castes in society⁸⁵.

Gandhiji was the greatest fighter of their cause. He started a crusade against the curse of untouchability⁸⁶. His aim was to uproot the present practice of untouchability from the country. He maintained that, ‘the nationhood I am dreaming about will not have even the small of the *varna* system, there the workers and peasants shall rule, there will be no Brahmin, no *Harijan*, no *Kshatriya* there every one will be an Indian’⁸⁷. But one of the problems was that the untouchable considers him as low and wants to keep away from the higher castes. Gandhiji strongly supported the temple entry movement. Gandhi organized a net work of societies throughout the country to serve the cause of the untouchables called ‘All India Anti Untouchablility League’, which later came to be known as the *Harijan Sevak Sangh*. Their goals were to open out public wells, roads,

⁸⁵ A Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala History and its Makers*, D C Books, Kottayam, 2008, p.201.

⁸⁶ S .C .Ray Choudary, *Social Cultural and Economic History of India*, Surjith Publications, Delhi.1978, p.15.

⁸⁷ Imtiaz Ahamad and Shashi Bhushan Upadhyaya, *Dalit Assertion in Society, Literature and History*, Orient Blackswan, New Delhi, p.184.

schools and temples to the untouchables⁸⁸. Gandhian ideas influenced the *satyagraha* movements in different parts of Kerala. A number of struggles took place against the inequities of the caste system during the colonial period, which helped the lower castes improve their social status⁸⁹. The important struggles for temple entry took place at Vaikom, Paliyam, Guruvayur and Kuttamkulam.

Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25).

Vaikom was selected as the centre of inaugurating the anti-untouchability programme of the *avarnas*. The *satyagraha* began on March 1924, a truly glorious fight to establish the dignity of man and his right of free movement. The temple authorities of Vaikom exhibited notices prohibiting the entry of 'polluting castes'⁹⁰. The lower castes could not use the temple roads or even the paths leading to these roads. They had to take devious and lengthier routes from one point of the town of Vaikom to another. The leaders of the agitation contended that the roads around the temple were public and were used by Christians and Muslims. But the roads were closed to *Ezhavas*, *Pulayas* and *Parayas*.

The Vaikom *Satyagraha* of 1924-25 represents the first major success of the campaign to officially denounce untouchability. In this struggle, large sections of *savarna* classes joined hands with *avarnas*⁹¹. T.K.Madhavan, K.P.Kesava Menon, Mannath Padmanabha Menon, Cheganassery Parameswaran Pillai, C.V.Kunhi Raman and K. Kelappan were associated with this *sathyagraha*. Its aim was to access to the roads to the Vaikom temple opened up for the *avarnas* of the Hindu community. The

⁸⁸ P. K. Baskhi, *Dalit and Human Rights*, New Delhi, 2010, p.110.

⁸⁹ Nambeeshan, T. P.R, 'Keralathile Harijanagalude Nila', (Mal.), *Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*, October 3, 1976, p.26.

⁹⁰ S. Ramachandran Nair, *Freedom Struggle in Colonial Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, 2004, p.95.

⁹¹ K.K.Kochu, 'Vaikom Sathyagraham: Punarvayanayude Padanagal', (Mal.), *Madhyamam Azchapathippu*, Vol. 10, No .58, April 2, 1999, pp.21-22.

*savarnajatha*⁹² organized under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan by the caste Hindus supported the movement. The *sathyagraha* finally ended successfully in 1925, thanks to the intervention of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi visited Travancore and held discussions with the Rani and state officials and he also met Sree Narayana Guru at Varkala. Finally on 23 November, 1925 three roads, except one around Vaikom temple were thrown open to all Hindus; irrespective of caste. Vaikom *Sathyagraha* of 1924 gave people more confidence and enthusiasm to start similar *sathyagraha* in other places of Kerala.

Guruvayur Satyagraha (1931-1932)

Another major event was the Guruvayur *Satyagraha* which was under the leadership of Kerala Provincial Congress. The *satyagraha* was started on 1st November, 1931 to gain entry for all Hindus to the temple. Led by K. Kelappan and A.K. Gopalan, it attracted countrywide attention, people from all parts of India came to Guruvayur in support of the *satyagrahis*⁹³.

On 1 November, 1931, the *satyagraha* was inaugurated under the leadership of K. Kelappan at Guruvayur⁹⁴. T. Suramanian Tirumumb, captain of the temple entry campaign was arrested at Guruvayur on 7th November. Unnikrishnan, a *Harijan* boy of twelve who was observing *satyagraha* along with other volunteers was beaten by a person. From that time onwards gradually physical force came to be used against the *satyagrahis*. P. Krishnapillai, one of the founders of the communist movement in Kerala walked into the inner sanctum of the temple reserved for Brahmans and tolled the bell which was an exclusive privilege of the Brahmans. There was an uproar among the conservative sections. As a result, the temple was closed for a month and the puja

⁹²Kilimanuur Viswambaran, *Kerala Samskara Dharsanam*, (Mal.), Kachanagiri Books Kilimannur, 1990, p.243.

⁹³A. Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala Samskaram*(Mal.), DC Books Kottayam, 2007, p.214.

⁹⁴K.K.N. Kuruppu, 'Guruvayur Sathyagrahavam Keraleeya Samoohavum', (Mal.), *Deshabimani Guruvayoor Supplement*, Vol.33, 2001, pp.9-11.

suspended. Kelappan began a fast unto death at the temple gate from 21st September, 1932. This quickly created solidarity throughout Kerala and outside. Later Gandhiji telegraphically asked Kelappan to end his fast, which he did on 2nd October, 1932⁹⁵. A limited referendum was held among Hindus of Ponnani. About 70% of the people supported the temple entry for *avarnas*, which facilitated the creation of a climate favorable for the eradication of untouchability⁹⁶. The movement for temple entry resulted in the overwhelming victory of the reform movement in the history of Kerala.

On 12th November, 1936 the Maharaja of Travancore, Sri Chitra Tirunal Balarama Varma issued the famous temple entry proclamation as follows:

profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of Hindu religion believing that it is based on divine guidance and on an all comprehending toleration, knowing that, in its practice, it has throughout the centuries adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should by reason of birth or caste or community be denied the consolation and relief of the Hindu faith, we have decided ,declare ordain and command that subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals there should hence forth be to restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering or worshipping at the temples controlled by us and our government⁹⁷.

Temple entry proclamation gave a message of hope and good spirit to the down-trodden and other backward classes. However it took more than a decade for such a reform to be introduced in Cochin and Malabar. In 1946 and 1948 two important struggles were organized in Cochin State. They were Kuttamkulam Struggle and Paliyam Struggle.

⁹⁵ R.Vinodkumar, *Keraleeyam* (Mal.), D C Books, Kottayam, 2008, p.168.

⁹⁶A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, D C Books Kottayam, 2007 p.316.

⁹⁷ *The Temple Entry Proclamation Memorial Souvenir*, Thiruvananthapuram, R A E ,1942,p.3.

Kuttamkulam Struggle (1946)

One of the most important struggles connected with the campaign for the eradication of untouchability was the '*Vazhinadakkal Samaram*' in 1946. P.K.Chathan Master and his followers demanded for the right of the untouchables to walk along the public road to *Kudalmanikyam* temple. Later the lower castes were able to travel through Kuttamkulam road⁹⁸.

Paliyam Struggle or '*Vazhinadakkal Samaram*' (1947-1948)

An important struggle connected with the campaign for the eradication of untouchability was at Paliyam. In 1947 a *satyagraha* was organized against untouchability at Paliyam in Chennamangalam. *Satyagrahies* demand as follows:

To get open the road in front of the main residence of the Paliyath Achan, the erstwhile hereditary Chief Minister of Cochin for *avarnas*. Their demand was not for the right to entry in to the temples in Cochin, but for the right of the untouchables to walk along the public road in Paliyam⁹⁹.

The Paliyam *swarupam* being the headquarters of the traditional prime ministers of Cochin they played a significant role in the political and administrative affairs of the state and were the biggest land lords of the state. They did not permit the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus to walk along the Paliyam roads; nor did they permit the untouchables to enter their temples. They firmly believed that if the non-caste Hindus got entry into the temples, the temples would be polluted.

The people who hailed from different social and political organizations of the state formed an action council to organize a *satyagraha* to force the Paliyam family to throw open the road to all people, irrespective of caste or religion. It led to the formation

⁹⁸ Details of the agitation are given in chapter 5.

⁹⁹K.V.Kunjhikrishnan, 'Paliyam Samaram: Paschathalavum Pradhanyavum', *Deshabimani Varika*, Vol. 41, No.7, July 12, 2009, pp.57-58.

of a working committee having representations from several organizations like Communist Party, the *Vettuva Mahasabha*, the Weaving Workers, S N D P Yogam and the *Dharma Poshini Sabha*. The committee appointed U. R.Narayanan as president and Karunakaran as secretary and they decided to conduct peaceful Gandhian *satyagraha* till the goal was achieved. Communist Party started a *sathyagraha* in 1947. C.Kesavan inaugurated the *sathyagraha* and leaders like K.A.Jaleel, Balan and Ayyappan Master had participated. Communist Taluk Union Secretary T.K.Ramakrishnan from Kanayannur, T.N.Kumaran from Kodungallur and P.K.Kumaran from Thalapilly had also attended.¹⁰⁰

The *sathyagraha* went on for hundred days during the period of December-April 1948. The volunteers who took part in it were subjected to repressive measures like arrest, lathi-charge etc. Willing participation of even the princes of the Royal families (Ravi Varma and Kerala Varma) of Cochin and Kodungallur as well as other several members of Namboothiri families, Arya Pallam, Devasena Antharjanam, Ezhumavil Saraswathi Antharjanam, and Rama Thaburatti and Indira Thamburatti in Kodungallur Kovilakam was notable.¹⁰¹

One of the major incidents connected (the hundredth day) with *satyagraha*, was that a freedom fighter by name A.G.Velayudhan met with tragic death in a police lathi-charge. He played a vital role in organizing of the factory and harbor workers courted martyrdom in March 1948. It is significant that a communist leader of the harbor workers of Cochin died at the hands of the police while leading a squad of working class volunteers in the venue of the *satyagraha*. At last the temple entry proclamation promulgated by Sri Rama Varma, the Maharaja of Cochin on 14th April 1948, put an end to the historic Paliyam *satyagraha*. As a result, the *avarnas* and non- Hindus got the

¹⁰⁰ Balan Payyappili, *Paliyam Samaram*, (Mal.),Chintha Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1988, pp.101-103., Velayudhan Panikkaseery, *Kerala Charithrum*, (Mal.),D C Books Kottayam, 2006, p.120.

¹⁰¹ Ravi Kuttikkad, 'Paliyam Samaram', (Mal.),*Mathruboomi Azhchapathippu*, Vol. 60,No.3, April 4-10, 1982, p.221.,C.K.Gangatharan, *op.cit.*, pp.152-155.

right to walk along the Paliyam road and it had helped to create a climate in favour of the eradication of untouchability¹⁰².The government order as follows:

The high streets of all towns were the property, 'not of any particular caste, but of the whole community, and that every man, be his caste or religion what it may, has a right to the full use of them'¹⁰³.

The latter half of the 19th and early half of the 20th centuries witnessed the powerful social reform movements in Kerala. The first attempt of Ayyankali was to assert the right of using public roads for himself and his people who were denied this right for a long time. Moreover, the *Pulayas* who remained as Hindus lacked a leader who could organize them to claim this right. The fight against caste disabilities and inequalities which prevailed in Central Kerala was waged by enlightened reformers like, Pandit K.P Karuppan, Krishnathi Asan, P.C.Chanchen, K.P.Vallon, Dhashayani Velayudhan and P .K Chathan Master. They created a new spirit among the depressed section of the people in Central Kerala. They devoted their entire time for the propaganda against these social evils in the whole of Kerala. They revolted against Brahmin domination and campaigned for the mitigation of the rigours of caste. In the beginning of 20th century, the *Pulayas* also began to organize themselves. They realized that this would impart courage and confidence among them, that they would be able to improve their own socio-economic position through various kinds of organized welfare measures .They would be able to exert sufficient social and political pressure to effect structural changes to remove social inequalities and disabilities.

Sahodaran Ayyappan encouraged inter -marriage and inter dining among the Ezhavas and *Pulayas* so as to weaken the evils of casteism. The role of literature, Gandhian ideology and anti caste struggles engendered awakening of the *Pulayas*. The social reformers came from time to time to guide and sustain the movement against landlords and social justice. They ignited the depressed class movement in the whole of

¹⁰²A.Sreethara Menon, *Political History of Modern Kerala*,Viswanathan Publications,Madras 1987,p.53.

¹⁰³ Archives News Letter, 1950,R A E ,p.7.

Central Kerala and educated the people to fight for self respect and liberation from oppression. A person does not feel at ease when he starts realizing that there is a difference between the needs conceptualized by him and prescribed for him by the society. As the *Pulayas* were gradually becoming more conscious about their rights, they did not want the status quo to continue but aspired to bring about radical changes in the existing social structure by removing all vestiges of social inequality.

CHAPTER 5

STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, SELF RESPECT AND UPWARD MOBILITY

The present chapter is divided into two parts. First part focuses on P.K.Chathan Master's activities in Central Kerala through, the formation of the *Cochin Karshaka Thozhilali Union* of agricultural labourers in Cochin State and anti-land lord struggles. Besides the social organization, *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha* (K P M S) and its progress under his leadership have also been discussed. The second part deals with the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1969 and its impact on the *Pulayas*.

The socio-economic disabilities experienced by the downtrodden would continue as long as they remain unorganized. It was precisely the organizational strength of the agricultural class that helped them to fight against the exploitation. The social struggle for equality by the depressed classes in Central Kerala was led by P.K.Chathan Master.

P.K.Chathan Master (1920-1988) and Struggle for Upward Mobility.

P.K.Chathan Master was born in 1920, in Mukundapuram *taluk* in Irinjalakuda¹. He was a primary school teacher for some time, earning him the sobriquet 'Master'. He was active in the political movements, serving as a *Harijan* leader, before becoming a member of the communist party of India in 1948. He was the President of the Porathissery Grama Panchayat during 1953-1957. He was also the Member of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly (1954-56). In 1957 he became the *Harijan* Welfare Minister in the E.M.S.Namboothiripad Ministry. He was Minister for Local Self Government and *Harijan* Welfare from 1957 to 1959. Later, he was elected to the Kerala Legislative Assembly from Kilimanoor constituency in 1970. He also served as the

¹ Remani, K.K., *Influence of Dalit Movement in Irinjalakuda: A Historical Perspective*, Minor Research Project, submitted to University Grants Commission, Bangalore, 2013,p.63

Chairman, Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes (1974–76) and as the Vice Chairman, Kerala Khadi and Village Industries Board ²(1977-78).

The deprived sections of the society, who had been subjected to social disabilities over the centuries, became increasingly aware of their rights as well as their power in society. His objectives were to fight against the social inequalities that prevailed in the society and to awaken the marginalized people. Chathan Master had the right conviction that to mobilize the *Pulayas* an organization was imperative. In 1970 Master founded the *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha*. K P M S, the organization he founded for the betterment of all the depressed classes including the *Pulayas* had made an exceptional attempt to channelize the dalit aspirations and had ventured to spread awareness among the *Pulayas* about their rights³. Master occupied a unique position as he belonged to a lower caste and he had an understanding of the torturous practice of untouchability .

P.K.Chathan Master's activities in Central Kerala were channelized through the social organization, '*Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha*'. '*Vazhinadakkal Samaram*'(1946), *Nadavaramb Karshaka Samaram*(1946),*Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram*(1948), *Vazhani Canal Samaram* (1955), *Christain-Pulaya Conflict in Porkulam Panchayath* (1957) and *Mekkad Samaram* (1963)were the important struggles carried on under his leadership.

Kuttamkulam Struggle or *Vazhinadakkal Samaram* (1946)

The Kuttamkulam struggle (*Vazhinadakkal Samaram*) in 1946 was started as a dissent against untouchability in the premise of the Kudalmanikyam temple in Irinjalakuda⁴. The untouchable castes were not permitted to pass through the roads surrounding the temples. The caste rules and ordinances were severe and their observances were rigorously enforced. The growing awareness among the depressed classes and the consequent desire for emancipation was met with brutal oppression and atrocities. Along with the curse of untouchability, they had no right to entering the streets

²*Gramolsavum Smaranika ,Sanghanadham*,(Mal.),Porathissery Gramapanchayath, Irinjalakuda, 2010,p.9

³ *Chathan Master Smaranika*, (Mal.), Irinjalakuda, 2010, p.11.

⁴ Remani, K.K.,*op.cit.*,p.65.

of Kuttankulam or walking on important public roads; they were not allowed to live in the main village inhabited by the upper classes⁵. The members of the lower castes had not even the right to walk along the approach roads leading to the temples. Thus they had been subjected to both social segregation and economic inequality over the centuries. The emergence of the social reformers had reinforced the sense of righteousness among the depressed classes. P.K.Chathan Master, leader of the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* and his followers demanded the right of the untouchables to walk along the public road to Kudalmanikyam temple⁶.

The temple authorities exhibited a board *Theendal Palakas*⁷ at the corner of the Kuttankulam road. It warned that the untouchables were prohibited to walk through Kuttankulam road to west and the east road to Kudalmanikyam temple⁸. Thus, the *Pulayas* and other lower castes were not allowed to travel through these public roads. However, Christians and Muslims had permission to walk through these roads. The district Magistrate of Cochin had issued an order in 1911, imposing several restrictions on the low castes as follows:

- (i)The low castes people have no right to use roads open to the higher castes.
- (ii)They are not permitted to enter or approach within a certain distance of courts and public offices.
- (iii)They are excluded from public service⁹.

In 1929, this order was questioned by the members of the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Saha* in the Cochin Legislative Assembly. The president of Cochin Legislative Assembly clarified that there was no objection to the people of any castes passing through the high

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Chathan Master Smaranika, op.cit.,p.32*

⁷ *Untouchability Signboards*

⁸ *Order No. 1722/1102 Dt.17th August 1927, in Report on the Administration of Cochin, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1928, p.86.*

⁹ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1919, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam,1920,p.85.*

ways and other public roads¹⁰. However, he added that certain minor restrictions remained as part of the custom in very few localities. Panampilly Govinda Menon, the leader of *Prajamandalam* council, remarked that the 1911 order had no legal validity and that even the government had no authority to order permanent restrictions.

During the 1930's as a result of the efforts taken by the S N D P, the lower castes were allowed access to public roads except some important ones relating to temples and palaces. Sahodaran Ayyappan was the president of the Cochin S N D P branch at that time and a resolution was passed in a meeting presided over by him in which stated 'this meeting vehemently opposes the move which restricts the freedom of movement of the lower castes during the festive occasions which ignore all the existing protests all over the country. Also we appeal to the government to put an end to this practice'¹¹. Ayyappan and K.P Madhavan Nair, leaders of the *Kochi Prajamndalam*, focussed their attention on getting the approach roads to temples opened to the *avarnas* as a prelude to the bigger campaign for temple entry.

Two major factors had led to the *Kuttamkulam Samaram* in 1946. One of them was the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha's* annual convention which was held at Irinjalakuda. *Pulaya* girls came in large numbers to attend the convention and all of them had broken the established traditions and wore blouses to cover their upper body. The upper caste people did not like this and they openly abused them and a clash ensued between the lower castes and upper castes¹². Besides, the temple authorities were adamant that the lower castes people should not walk through the temple roads .The restrictions were strictly implemented in the year 1946 during the time of Kudalmanikyam festival¹³.

¹⁰ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1930*, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1931, p.96.

¹¹ *History of Freedom Movement in Kerala, 1938-1948, Vol.III*, State Archives Department, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2006, p.255.

¹² S.K., Vasanthan, *Namal Nadanna Vzhaikal*, (Mal.), Malayala Gavashana Kendram, Thrissur, 2006, p.336.

¹³ Information gathered from P.C.Kurumba, Kuttamkulam freedom fighter, Irinjalakuda, 20-1- 2010.

The people under the leadership of P.Gangadharan, M.K.Kattuparanbhan, P.K .Kumaran Master, Saradha Kumaran, K.V.Unni, P.C.Kurumba, and P.K.Chathan Master protested against this untouchability and conducted a procession against it.¹⁴ The caste organizations like SNDP, and the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha*, political parties like *Prajamandalam*, Labour organizations, and Beedi workers organizations had staged protest against this heinous exclusion. The procession was brutally suppressed by the police who resorted to lathi charge¹⁵. The people who hailed from different social and political organizations of the state formed an action council to protest against the policy of Kudalmanikayam authorities. They wanted to get the road open to all people, irrespective of caste or religion¹⁶. The popular pressure in support of the agitation compelled the government to interfere.

Many meetings were held in Cochin under the leadership of the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* and the Cochin government had no options left but to pass a resolution in favour of temple entry. Later the 'Temple Entry Authorization Proclamation of Cochin' was issued by Sree Kerala Varma, Maharaja of Cochin in an unusual gazette on 20th December 1947. But this act did not come into force at that time. It came into force only on the first day of Medam 1123 (April 14th 1948)¹⁷. The provisions of the Act are as follows.

"whereas it is our desire that the disabilities imposed by custom or usage on certain classes of Hindus against entry into Hindu temples in Cochin State should be removed; the practice of pollution or *theendal* should be removed; public tanks used for bathing purposes should be thrown open; public wells should be thrown open."¹⁸

¹⁴T.K.Sudeesh, Nanma Anija Porratta Veethikal, *Kuttamkulam 70th Varshika Smaranika*, 2016, Irinjalakuda, pp.63-65.

¹⁵ S.K., Vasanthan, *op.cit.*, p.336.

¹⁶Information gathered from Govindha Menon, in charge of Mahatma Library, Irinjalakuda, 16.12.2010.

¹⁷ The Cochin Government Gazetteer, 1947, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1947, p.80.

¹⁸ *Report on the Administration of Cochin, 1949*, Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam 1950, p.58.

‘Temple Entry Authorization Proclamation of Cochin’ was a great step forward in the social life of lower castes. As a result, the lower castes got the right to walk along the Kudalmanikyam temple road. Temple entry could neither completely wipe out untouchability nor eradicate other social evils existed in the society.

Cochin Karshaka Thozhilali Union in Cochin State.

Cochin Karshaka Thozhilali Union, the first agricultural labour union in Cochin was formed in 1933. The activities of the union, in its early phase, were confined to the demand for security of tenure to tenants- at -will¹⁹. The World Economic Depression in the early 1930’s had widespread repercussions on the economy. At the peak of the economic depression in 1933, drought, falling prices of agricultural products, famine and indebtedness affected the peasants and labourers. The situation was worse for the marginal peasants and landless agricultural labourers, mainly the *Pulayas*. Along with the fall in prices for crops, there occurred a devastating drought in Kodungallur, Mukundapuram, Mapranam and Madayikonam.

The plight of the *Pulaya* agricultural labourers in the Cochin State was already dismal even before the onset of the Great Depression owing to insecurity of tenure and frequent evictions. The difficult situation faced by the tenants had become more worse with this catastrophic economic event as they found it impossible to pay the debts. *Cochin Karshaka Thozhilali Union* had taken up the issues of the *Pulayas* tenants like indebtedness and it requested the Cochin government to give more time to the *Pulayas* to pay back the debts. The Cochin government took notice of the woeful condition of the *Pulaya* tenants and took measures to address the problems faced by the *Pulayas*.

The peasants and workers agitated for relief from the burden of indebtedness and necessary reforms had to be introduced to redress their grievances. Propaganda *jathas* were organized throughout the Cochin State. The main centers of agitation were

¹⁹ Though the *Pulayas* were mainly agricultural labourers some of them held simple lease or *Verumpattam* in Madayikonam.

Kodungallur, Mukundapuram, Mapranam and Madayikonam²⁰. Participants of this agitation were the peasants, the small farmers and the dalit labourers. Their demand was for the extension of duration of the repayment of debts. They started a protest march at the northern side of Kochi and the peasants from different parts of the state participated in it. They marched in a procession to Diwan's residence. The government used forces to disperse the march and adopted repressive measures to put down the agitation. However, due to popular pressure the government was compelled to extend the duration of repayment of debts²¹.

The activities of the *Cochin Karshaka Thozhilali Union* prepared the ground for the impending peasant struggles in Central Kerala.

Anti-Land Lord Struggles in Central Kerala.

There were conflicts between the agrarian labourers and land lords in Central Kerala during 1933-1963. The Communist Party had been in the forefront to organize the peasantry as a political force against landlordism. The main slogans of the agrarian struggles were demand for the abolition of landlordism, reduction of debts and rents and stoppage of all evictions²². The traditional relations between the ownership of land and the 'upper' communities continued as strongly as in the past, defying any tangible change in favour of the tenant cultivator. A number of farmers' organizations had emerged in this context. However, *karshaka sangham*, an affiliate of the Communist Party of India, had earnestly taken up the demands of the tenants and agricultural labourers and their grievances against the landlords. In Central Kerala the *karshaka sangham* had been agitating from 1946 demanding proprietary rights over the land for the cultivating tenants²³. This region functioned as a recruitment base for political leaders, and a testing

²⁰ A. K. Gopalan, *Manninuvendi*, (Mal.), Chintha Publications, Thiruvananthapuram, 1975, p.13.

²¹ K.P. Madhavan Nair (ed.), *Kochi Rajya Prajamandalam*, (Mal.), Kochi, 1985, p.98., A Krishnakumari, *Samarapathagalile Penperuma*, (Mal.), Samastha, Thrissur, 2012, p.195.

²² A. K. G, *op.cit.*, p.28

²³ Pothuval A. K, *Keralathile Karshaka Sangham*, (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 1976, pp.138-139.

ground for political ideology. This contributed in a large measure to the politicization of agricultural labourers. The Communist Party in the Cochin State had grown into a mass based organization as a result of the support it enjoyed from the working class and the common people. The party promised radical reforms in the landlord- tenant relations and in other socio-economic fronts. The agrarian labourers had organized under their leaders and started peasant agitations.

In Central Kerala, 40 percent of households belonged to the owner- cultivators, and tenants were only 10.1 per cent of the population. The hutment -dwellers in Central Kerala locally known as *kudikidappukkar* was 20 percent²⁴. Traditionally hutment-dwellers, who were mainly *Pulayas* were attached labourers. They were permitted by the landlords to erect huts on the farm. However, they were not entitled to cultivate the land (surroundings of the hut) or to take any yield therein. Being landless, the hutment-dwellers were entirely dependent upon seasonal agricultural work for their income. With the emergence of caste-based social movements and communist trade union organization in the 1940's they had become 'free' labourers²⁵. The agricultural workers' association created awareness of exploitation among the agricultural labourers and they fought against the eviction from land. This led to agrarian unrest in many parts of Central Kerala.

Nadavaramb Karshaka Samaram (1946)

Nadavaramb is located in the Velookara Gramapanchayath of Mukunthapuram *taluk*, in Thrissur district²⁶. Majority of the people in Nadavaramb were engaged in agricultural activities. The agricultural labourers, were the *Pulayas* who were landless and the most vulnerable group. The living condition of vast majority of tenants was very poor.

²⁴ Archival Source-News Letter, 1946, R A E,p.7.

²⁵ Rammohan, K.T, "Caste and Landlessness in Kerala: Signals from Chengara", *E P W*, Vol.43, Issue No.37, September 13, 2008, pp. 14-16.

²⁶ *Nadavaramb Panchayath Vikasana Rehka,1980,P.12*

In Cochin, the government introduced the Tenancy Act of 1943, by which permanent occupancy rights were given to those tenants who paid the arrears of rent regularly²⁷. Before this Act, the *jenmis* of Nadavaramb had the right to evict any tenant at their will. But after this act of 1943 eviction at the whims and fancies of the *jenmis* were more or less restrained. The tenants who paid the *Pattabacki*²⁸ on a fixed date was given permanent occupancy rights²⁹. The *jenmis* indulged in fraud and showed to the authorities that their tenants did not pay regularly as per the existing rules. They went to the courts and alleged that their tenants did not pay the arrears of rent and the result was the eviction of those tenants³⁰. The tenants were not issued rent receipts by the *jenmis* and could not produce supporting documents in the court.

The eviction of the *Pulaya* was the main reason which triggered the peasant struggle at Nadavaramb. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Act, the *jenmis* had involved in fraudulent means and succeeded in evicting the *Pulaya* labourers. The village units of the *Kerala karshaka sangham* worked against the large-scale illegal eviction of the *Pulayas* by the land lords (landless labourers and *verumpattakar*). The *karshaka sangham* was determined to stop exploitation by the land lords. Under the leadership of K.K.Velayudhan, P.K.ChathanMaster, E.GopalaKrishnaMenon, P.K.Kumaran, V.Raghavan K.V.Unni and P.C.Kurumba the peasants and labourers agitated against the injustice of the landlords. *Karshaka samaram* demanded implementation of a comprehensive land distribution among the lower castes people and to put an end to unjust eviction³¹. One of the important techniques of peasant mobilization was the organization of *jathas* to the houses of the *jenmis*. The ultimate aim of the organization was complete freedom from economic exploitation. Subsequently, *karshaka sangham* organized a network of units at *taluk* and village level. In 1946, Nadavaramb had witnessed a major upheaval in which

²⁷Archival source-News Letter, Part 1, 1900, R A E, p.14.

²⁸ Arrears of rent.

²⁹C.K.Narayanan Namboothiripad, 'Kudiyayma Cochiyl', *Mathruboomi Azchapathippu*, Vol.36, No.42, January 4, 1959, p.17.

³⁰ Ambadi Venu, *Ormacheppu Thurannappol*, (Mal.), Mathilakam, 2016, p.34.

³¹ Information gathered from K. V. Unni, freedom fighter, Nadavaramb, 21.10.2013.

the labourers challenged the authority of the *jenmis*. The labourers and workers participated in large numbers in the processions .But the police took all sorts of oppressive measures against the agitators. Later this agitation was brutally suppressed by the police.

The Nadavaramb agitation exposed the strategy of the *jenmis* to counter the agrarian rulers and regulations favourable to the peasants and labourers.It also symbolizes the unrelenting assertion of the lower castes against the over exploitation and social dominance of the high caste land lords of the region. This struggle and similar such agitations against evictions all across Kerala had a decisive influence on passing the Agrarian Bill in 1959.

Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram(1948).

Pariyaram karshaka samaram took place in the year 1948 at Mettipadam in the Pariyaram Panchayath³².Pariyaram Panchayath included Pariyaram of the Mukundapuram *taluk* of the Thrissur district, Kodaseery and Athirapilly. Pariyaram, which was basically an agricultural village, was controlled by two authorities. In the first sector, land was owned by the Irinjalakuda *devaswam* under Thachudaya Kaimal, who did not undertake cultivation directly. He rented land to poor peasants, mainly the dalit labourers. In the second sector, land was owned by the government, which had leased it out to the poor farmers, mainly the *Pulaya* agricultural labourers and the Christians. The government provided 50 acres of land on lease.

The frequent evictions and levy of excessive rents strained the relation between the landlords and tenants and it led to agitations. Two important issues led to the *Pariyaram karshaka samaram*; the first was the miserable living conditions of the peasants. They could save nothing of their hard labour after paying the lease amount which was fixed by the *jenmi*. They could never raise their voice against this injustice.

³² *Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram Smaranika*, Chalakudy, 2013, P.12.

After the formation of the *karshaka sangham* some positive changes took place. The *Verum Pattam Kudiyan Act* of 1943 protected the interest of the tenants-at-will and granted security of tenure to the leases. The *jenmi* of Pariyaram, Thachudaya Kaimal turned against this Act when he realized that the farmers would be entitled to hold the land permanently. Thachudaya Kaimal asked for a '*vara cheettu*'³³, which would enable the *jenmi* to order the tenants to leave the land or ensure the right of the landlord to evict undesirable tenants and to freely undertake contractual leases.

E.Gopala Krishna Menon was the Cochin State secretary of the *karshaka sangham*. He attended many farmers' meetings to support them and gave a memorandum to Kaimal which included the various demands of the farmers. The organizational strength of the Communist Party and *karshaka sangham*, had forced Kaimal to implement the *patta cheettu*, which allowed the farmers to cultivate the land and it was a huge relief to the farmers³⁴.

The other factor that led to the *pariyaram karshaka samaram* was the attempt of the Settlement Company to capture the dalit colony at Mettipadam. The settlement company which functioned at Aluva requested Raja of Cochin for a stretch of land to facilitate the accommodation of its workers. They were given forest land at Nayarangadi in Chalakudi as per *patta chettu* for a period of 50 years. They cleared the forest and accommodated their employees there. Later on that place came to be known as settlement colony. The company director board and the manger of the settlement colony used to change in the course of few years.

In 1947, the manager of the company, Jacob, visited the settlement colony. He tactfully told the peasants that their land was also included in the land given by the King for the settlement colony and hence they are supposed to leave their land. The farmers responded that their land was not forest land and it was leased from the Thachudaya

³³ A tenant can have the land only for a year and then the *Jenmi* can order him to leave the land.

³⁴ *Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram Smaranika, op.cit;P.23.*

Kaimal. Jacob used his connections with the office of the forest department to intimidate the farmers. In the wake of such events the farmers convened meetings and decided to fight for their land. But the henchmen of Jacob destroyed the fences and usurped the land. In 1948, a peasant agitation took place with the support from the Communist Party under the leadership of M.K. Kattuparamban, P.C. Pailekutty and P.K. Chathan Master against the usurpation of the settlement colony.

Since a complaint was lodged against the peasants, the police went to every house in search of them. Meanwhile, the Central Government banned the Communist Party and the leaders of the party were incarcerated and among them included the leaders of the Communist Party of this region. This opportunity was used by the manager, who gave a petition to the congress government at Cochin, stating that the land belonged to the colony was unfairly enjoyed by the farmers. He also requested the help of the police to oust the farmers from the land. Then the Cochin government took a policy of helping the company to encroach the land with the help of a police man named Sankunni and thereby get rid of many peasant families from their rightful properties. The Settlement Company tried to capture this land and it resulted in *pariyaram karshaka samaram*.

The decision was taken by the Pariyaram Peasant Association to cultivate tapioca on the colony land. This led the police force under inspector Shankunni to prevent them from planting tapioca. Pariyaram peasant association organized demonstration in 1948, against the oppressive measures of the police in the rural areas. There were further movements in Pariyaram village against the police arrests during which a police inspector was drowned to death and that in turn led to more police atrocities on the dalits in the colony. The agitation was brutally suppressed and the leaders of the colony were arrested and sent to jail, the term of imprisonment ranged from three months to seven years. The convicted leaders such as Paingi, P.C. Kurumba and Saradha Kumaran were released only in 1957³⁵.

³⁵ Information gathered from Paigi, Pulaya Agricultural Labourer, Chalakudy, 23-6-2010.

An array of grievances harboured by the peasants of the Pariyaram Panchayath against the landlords of the region led to *Pariyaram karshaka samaram*. Frequent evictions, excessive rents, the attempt to usurp the dalit colony at Mettipadam were the crucial issues that had stirred up this struggle. *Karshaka sangham* and the pariayaram peasant association had effectively intervened to seek redress for the way peasants had been subjected to unfair treatment by the landlords. Though these peasant organizations tried to effect a change in the exploitative measures of the landlords, the final relief came to the Pariyaram dalit peasants and the agricultural labourers only after the Agrarian Reform Act of 1969 (Amendment Act). As a result of this Act *Pulaya* tenants of Pariyaram could obtain up to 50 cents of land. The act provided to protect the *kudikidappukaran* from eviction and gave them ownership rights over the land.

Vazhani Canal Samaram (1955)

Vazhani canal samaram took place in 1955 in connection with the construction of Vazhani Canal. This place is situated in Vellur Panchayath, Thalappilli taluk. The labourers protested against the contractor Kumaran Nair for engaging them at low wages for long shifts. Large number of workers was engaged in the canal project. Many of the workers belonged to the *Pulaya* community. Most of them were women. Scarcity of tools and implements led to clashes between the workers. The labourers organized and formed a union called '*Thalapilli Taluk Vazhani Canal Thozhilali Union*', under the leadership of A.L Francis, A.S.W. Nambeesian, K.S. Sankaran, and Kuttikad Lona. The union raised voice against exploitation of workers and demanded increase in wages³⁶. The union conducted *satyagraha* in front of the office of the contractor. Later picketing and boycott of work were organized. Contractor with the help of police and other government officials suppressed the agitation and the leaders of the strike were arrested. During the strike period poverty swept workers families and they raised public fund to meet the subsistence needs of the workers. In the end negotiations were held between the labour leaders and contractor. The contractor agreed to 50% increase in wage and fixed eight hours as working time for

³⁶ Information gathered from Lonappan, Social Worker, Vazhani, Thalappilli Taluk, 10.3.2014.

them³⁷.The *Vazhani canal samaram* was another successful struggle of the low castes including *Pulayas* against exploitation and towards social justice.

Christain-Pulaya Conflict in Porkulam Panchayath (1957)

Most of the agrarian tensions in the 1950's were caused by the demand by agricultural labourers for increased wages. For instance, hitherto the labourers' share of paddy was one-tenth for harvesting and threshing. The new demand was for one-eighth of total paddy. While these demands were by and large conceded by the bigger landlords, partly because they were helpless in that they could not harvest their fields themselves, the small land-owners often refused to meet the new demands. Some of them tried to harvest their fields by themselves or with the co-operation of relatives and neighbours. The situation had become explosive when a group of *Pulaya* agricultural workers attacked a Christian farmer and his family while they were harvesting a small patch of land they cultivated, in Porkulam village in the Thalappilli *thaluk* of Thrissur district in 1957. The Christians felt humiliated at the defiance of their traditional *adiyans*. It led to communal tension that exploded in the form of *Christain-Pulaya* conflict. This incident marked the end of the traditional coercive and subservient relationship between the farmers and their *adiyans* in Thalappilli *thaluk*.³⁸With the coming of the first Communist Ministry in 1957, favourable conditions were set for increased wages of labourers. The outcome of the struggle was that *Pulayas'* demand for one-eighth of total paddy was conceded and wage hike was secured by the agricultural labourers. The *Pulaya* labourers became more confident of their inherent strength to stand up and fight against injustice.

Mekkad Samaram (1963)

Another important anti-land lord struggle had occurred in the Mala Panchayath in Mukudapuram *thaluk*. Kodassery Kartha, Pambumekkad *Mana*, Sree Kurumba

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸Information gathered from Kuttimon, Pulaya Agricultural Labourer, in Porkulam Village, 12.5.2014.

Bhagavathi were some of the important *jenmis* in Mala. The peasants suffered insults and physical assaults at the hands of the landlords. This led to agitations and protests against the land lords.

In Mala a vast tract of land was owned by the Pambumekkad *Mana*. There were twenty two *Pulaya* families who were the *kudikidappukar* of the *Mana*. The Kerala Land Reform Act of 1963³⁹ guaranteed occupancy rights to the *kudikidappukar* over ten cents of land where they resided. In the light of the provisions of the Act the landlords of the Pambumekkad *Mana* tried to evict the twenty two *Pulaya* families from their huts for fear of the loss of land. The *Pulayas* had no other option but to fight against the landlord under the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* led by P.K. Chathan Master and M.P. Velayudhan for their rights⁴⁰.

Sreedharan Namboothiri was the eldest member of the Pambumekkad *Mana* at the time of the implementation of Agrarian Relation Act. He attempted to evict the *Pulayas* from the lands where they resided. He used force to evict the *kudikkidappukar* and destroyed six huts. The repressive measures of the *jenmis* had provoked the *Pulayas* and that led to a wave of protests against the landlords by the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* of Mala under the leadership of I.K.Ayyappan, M.A Kunjan, M.C Kumaran, and P.C Ayyappan. Participation of women in this strike was significant. Kandankali, Koranchakki, Nadichiri and Ammini were the important women leaders in the struggle.⁴¹

Two causative factors led to the *Mekkad samaram*, the policy of the land lords of Mekkad *Mana* and the other was the issue of land for *Kandankali*. The *Pulaya* resistance against the landlords started as a procession in June 1963. Its main objective was to prevent

³⁹ 1963 Act provided (in Section 75) the statutory protection given to the hutment dwellers (*Kudikidappukars*). Permanent rights of occupancy have been given to them. The rights of *Kudikidappukars* were declared as heritable but not alienable. Eviction of the *kudikidappukars* was not allowed. Sec. 80 provides for a Register of *Kudikidappukars* to be prepared and maintained in each village.

⁴⁰ Jensa T.J, 'Mekkad Bhoosamaram: Struggle for the Rights over the Land by the Pulayas of Vadama', P.G Dissertation Submitted to Calicut University, K.K.T.M.Govt.College Pullut, 2012, P.28.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

the eviction of *Pulayas* from the land. They assembled in front of the Mekkad *Mana* and started a *dharna* on that day, which continued till November, 1963. They constructed a *sathyagraha panthal* in front of the *Mana*. Frequent public meetings of the labourers were convened, where the leaders delivered inspiring speeches. C. Achutha Menon, leader of the Communist Party visited the tent and while addressing the agitators, he said; ‘there should be no more *Patta Bhoomi* and no tenant should be asked to quit the land they possess’⁴². But the movement was not free from harassments by the *jenmis*. The police too supported them. They used elephants to destroy the *sathyagraha panthal*, but *Pulayas* continued their protest. The Mekkad strike gained popular support from various parts of the country. The *sathyagraha* tent was visited by some *savarnas* of Mekkad and other regions, and donated food and money in support of the strike.

Meanwhile, the *jenmis* of the *Mana* informed the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha*, their willingness to give land to the twenty two *kudikidappukar*, nevertheless they refused the claims of Kandankali for land. Sreedharan Namboothiri, the *jenmi* of the *Mana* argued that Kandankali was married, and she still lived with her family, hence she was not eligible for holding land from the *jenmi*.

The *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* under the leadership of P.K. Chathan Master and a group of women Kandankali, Koranchakki and Ammini organized a protest march against the *jenmis* of Mekkad *Mana*. The leaders protested against the decision of the *jenmies* and asserted Kandankali’s right to get land. This anti-landlord struggle came to be known as *Kandankali Bhoosamaram*. The popular slogan of the strike was ‘*Kandankali Thanichalla, Koranchakki Koodeyunde*’⁴³. Immediately police force arrived on the scene and they began to arrest the strikers. Kandankali was arrested and was put in jail for 36 days with her one and a half year child. Finally the *jenmis* of Mekkad agreed to give her land in the presence of P. K. Chathan Master. According to the agreement, the *kudikkidappukar* got land in Koonan Parambu, near Mekkad *Mana*. The twenty two *Pulaya* families

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

including Kandankali got ten cents each and the *Mana* also financially helped the *Pulaya* families to construct houses on the land⁴⁴.

Kandankali samaram was significant; it brought the lower caste *Pulaya* women into the public sphere. They demanded equality and land rights. Their lives and their livelihoods were tied to the land. The *Pulaya* women were uniting; they were organizing and mobilizing to assert their rights over land. Their stories of struggle and their determination to continue the fight even in the face of threats, harassment and violation of their human rights, are really stories of sacrifice, and strong determination. Their resistance has provided a beacon of hope to many others who had continued to struggle against landlordism. These stories of struggle will further contribute to the strengthening of women's participation and leadership in struggles against inequality and will inspire all women everywhere in their own struggles.

This struggle provided an opportunity for the transformation of the mentalities of the *Pulaya* tenants of Mekkad *Mana*. The challenge they posed was not just a resistance against the eviction. It was internalised as an opportunity to challenge the hegemony of the Brahmins landlords and to get rid of the dependence on them. Most of these struggles emerged first as clashes of eviction of the *Pulayas* from the lands, followed by conflicts and tensions of differing nature, which on intensification developed various outlets for unleashing the revolutionary potentials of the *Pulayas* in diverse visible forms.

All these struggles against landlordism betray the class character on the one hand and the underlying caste hierarchy on the other hand. The main demands of these agrarian agitations were abolition of landlordism, stoppage of evictions, reduction of debts and rents, increase in wages etc. This explicitly shows that economic exploitation of the tenants and agricultural labourers by the landlords was one of the basic issues which fomented agrarian unrest in Central Kerala. Another equally important factor was the position of the agricultural labourers, who were predominantly *Pulayas*, in the caste

⁴⁴ Information gathered from Vijayan, *Pulaya Agricultural Labourer*, Mala, 23.4.2014.

hierarchy. Coming from the lower end of the traditional caste hierarchy, caste for the *Pulayas* was a matter beyond kinship and family values. It was a source of deprivation, denial, discrimination and harassment. To put it differently, both economic and social factors had engendered the struggles against landlordism. A remarkable feature was the participation of women, especially *Pulaya* women in these struggles. *Kandankali samaram* is a noteworthy example. Farmers' organizations like *Karshaka Sangham*, an affiliate of the Communist Party of India, had earnestly taken up the demands of the tenants and the agricultural labourers and their grievances against the landlords. *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* had also come out strongly in support of the *Pulaya* agricultural labourers.

Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha (1970)

P.K.Chathan Master was the leader of the *Pulayas* in Cochin who organized the *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha*. The *Pulayas* in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar were distinct and separate entities with organizationally separate *Maha Sabhas*. Many activists of Cochin and *Travancore Pulayar Maha Sabhas* assembled at Nandavanam School in Trivandrum on 17th March 1968 and decided to form a unified organization for the *Pulayas*. *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha* (KPMS) started functioning in 1970 under the capable leadership of P.K.Chathan Master⁴⁵. He tried to bring awakening among the depressed people, worked for their self-respect and tried to get social justice for them. The main objectives of K.P.M.S were as follows:

To work against the social disabilities of the *Pulayas* and to achieve their economic, cultural, educational growth and enhancement of employment opportunities. The organization also aims to ensure the benefits of reservation to SC/STs, to work in close association with other SC/ST communities to

⁴⁵ It was registered in 1970 under the Travancore- Cochin literary, scientific and charitable societies Act XII of 1955.

protect their common interests and to fight against many outdated and expensive customs and traditions of the community⁴⁶.

While analyzing the various programmes of the organization from 1970 to 1988, P.K. Chathan Master observed that the struggle for social justice was the primary duty of the organization and they were determined to utilise K.P.M.S as the central organization in India to begin this struggle. The source of motivation for the movement was the life and teachings of B.R. Ambedkar and Ayyankali. The self-sacrificing services and contributions of great leaders of the *Pulaya* community like P.K.Chathan Master, K.Chandra Sekhara Sastri, P.K. Raghavan, J.R. Das, E.V. Ayyappan Master, M.K. Chathappan, P.M. Madhavan, S.Sasankan, Punnala Sreekumar and others have made the organization stronger in the different stages of its growth.

The administrative set-up of K.P.M.S was hierarchically divided into state executive committee, district committees, *thaluk* unions and branches at the local level. The state executive committee coordinates the activities of the *Maha Sabha* at the state level and its members are elected for a term of 3 years. The state committee composed of 35 members including the president, general secretary, treasurer, working president, organization secretary, 3 vice-presidents, and 3 assistant secretaries. K.P.M.S had 9 district committees in the state except in Palakkad, Malappuram, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasargode in the beginning. Comparing different districts, it is found that Alappuzha, Kollam, Ernakulam and Thrissur were the strongholds of K.P.M.S⁴⁷.

The common criticism pointed against K.P.M.S is that the organization used to maintain a pro-CPI⁴⁸ attitude in terms of its electoral politics and programmes. Of course, the founding president of the *Maha Sabha*, P.K Chathan Master was a member of the

⁴⁶Karivelli Babukuttan, '*Pulayar Charithravum, Varthamanavum*' (Mal.), Poorna Publications, Calicut, 2011, p.52.

⁴⁷ *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha, Rajathajubilee Souvenir*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, p.105.

⁴⁸ Ideological disparity leads to the split in the Communist Party of India in 1964, divided into two groups; one is C P I M (Marxist) and other Communist Party of India (C P I).

Communist ministry in 1957. P.K. Raghavan, the patron of the *Sabha*, for long years, was a minister in the LDF government in 1970 and 1987 representing the CPI. There were Members of Legislative Assembly and other political leaders who belonged to the Left parties, and at the same time maintained a close association with K.P.M.S. The party affiliation has produced positive results in gaining many favours from the government for the *Maha Sabha* and its members. However, the leaders of K.P.M.S have rejected these criticisms leveled against them and argue that their support for left party politics was totally problem-based and they claim that the organization is keen to keep a safe distance from political parties⁴⁹.

It is important to discuss the main land marks in the history of K.P.M.S and various programmes organized by the movement during its different stages of growth. It was consistently involved in confronting different problems faced by the community for a long period. As the largest caste organization of dalits, the *sabha* also took the lead in collaborating with other dalit organizations to address the varied problems faced by the whole dalit community in the state. K.P.M.S also tried to exert pressure on the government to protect the rights of the community to implement varied welfare schemes and to grant several concessions for the downtrodden castes⁵⁰.

The organization prepared its first memorandum concerning the various demands of the community on 30th May 1968. As a result, in 1970 the government took several measures upon their demands as follows:

It assured priority and fixed percentage in land distribution, implemented minimum wages for agricultural labourers, assured reservation for admission in aided private colleges, allowed reservation for *Sainik* School admission, increased reservation for medical and engineering colleges, sanctioned the use

⁴⁹ Tomy Joseph, Empowerment of Dalits and the role of Dalit Movements in Kerala: A study of Kottayam District, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis Submitted to Mahathma Gandhi University, 2010, p.131.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.132.

of 10% of budgetary allocation of other departments for SC welfare in addition to the budgetary allocation of SC welfare department, introduced special recruitment in state service etc. These concessions have been counted as an all-time exceptional gesture of any government aimed at the welfare of SCs⁵¹.

On 12th May, 1976 the K.P.M.S submitted a Charter of Demands to the government which include:

extension of reservation for SCs for another 10 years; distribution of 50 percent of surplus land to *Harijans*; allocation of small scale industries; provision for loan facilities; removal of unemployment; housing for a minimum of 10 families per year and facilities for education and hostel accommodation for SC children⁵².

Though KPMS has been functioning in the state since 1970, the organization marked a vibrant growth and effective action from 1981 onwards only⁵³. The Kerala circle of the Central Post and Telegraph Department rejected the caste certificates of *Pulayas* in Kerala arguing that:

Such benefits were given to the '*Pulayan*' caste, as given in the revised SC list of 1976. Consequently the caste name '*Pulaya*' could not be considered for reservation benefits. Many '*Pulaya*' certificate holders were denied their benefits. In fact, it was

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Keralathile Pathinanchu Laksham Pulayarkkku Oru Ekeekrutha Sanghatana*(Mal),K.P.M.S Publications, Series1, Thiruvananthapuram,1976,p.25.

⁵³ (i) On 7th May, 1981, KPMS organized a massive rally and dharna in front of the Taluk offices, collectorates and secretariat to exert pressure on the government for the various demands of the Maha Sabha as endorsed by the Trivandrum conference. Hundreds of members of the organization had attended the agitation.

(ii)The Maha Sabha also undertook a long agitation against certain early recommendations of the Mandal Commission which were available in 1981.

(iii) Agitation for the reservation in private educational institutions, formation of the state SC/ST commission, reservation of jobs for SC's in public sector companies.

only a technical objection as these two terms were used interchangeably. The term '*Pulaya*' was used as the English translation of '*Pulayan*'⁵⁴.

The Central Government suggested a temporary solution to the problem. Accordingly State government issued an order. The government instructed the authorities concerned to issue caste certificates substituting the term '*Pulayan*' in place of '*Pulaya*'⁵⁵.

P.K. Chathan Master championed the cause of the depressed people, worked for their self respect and tried to get social justice for them. He provided leadership to various peasant struggles in the region and also fought for the right of the *Pulayas* to walk through the public road leading to temple. Chathan Master and the *Kerala Pulayar Mahasabha* strived for the upward mobility of the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala. He was the first in the country who brought all the depressed classes in Kerala under one banner and gave them a political identity of their own. The K P M S under his leadership demanded for higher wages, shorter and stipulated working hours, right to employment and other welfare measures which contributed to social change among the *Pulayas*. He was the pivotal figure who worked untiringly to bring his community into the mainstream of society.

Land Reforms and its Impact on the Pulayas

Land reforms have been launched in response to compelling demands expressed through agitation, struggle and movements'. But, land reform policy being fundamentally a political issue, the state passes legislation only to pacify and neutralize the agrarian tension. In order to monitor the implementation of such measures, the existence of strong social movements was crucial. The entrenched dominant landowning privileged groups would never like to surrender their power and privilege without exertion on them of mounting pressure from the deprived people. Kerala accepted land reforms as an integral

⁵⁴ *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha, Activity Report, 1982, p.15.*

⁵⁵ *Government Orders, No.13194/E2/83/HWD, dt.29th August 1983, Thiruvananthapuram, State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, p.84.*

part of its development strategy of growth with social justice. The government intended to promote and protect the rights of agricultural labourers and lease tenants with regard to the control and use of land.

Kerala has been one of the pioneers in India in the dominion of land reforms. Indeed, it was the first state in the country to get on inclusive piece of legislation aimed at a systematic reorganization of land relations. The first Communist Ministry headed by E.M.S. Namboothiripad (April 5th 1957 to 31st July 1959) had the privilege to introduce such a measure, viz., the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill (1957)⁵⁶. The Bill was introduced in the Legislature on 21st December, 1957 by the Revenue Minister K.R Gouri. The introduction of the Bill gave birth to new issues for political parties as well as, peasant activists in the state. The Agrarian Relations Bill was passed in 10th July 1959⁵⁷. Soon, opposition to the Bill became very vehement and landed interests and others combined together against the agrarian and educational policies of the government which finally resulted in its dismissal in 31st July 1959⁵⁸.

Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill was intended to achieve the abolition of tenancy system, ceiling on land holding, distribution of surplus land and enjoyment of the rights of ownership over the homesteads by hut-dwellers⁵⁹. This objective has been sought to be achieved by tenancy laws hitherto enacted by the government in favour of the actual tillers of the soil. The economic objectives of Agrarian Relations Bill were:

redistribution of land, division of large holdings, abolition of tenancy,
protection of tenants, mobilization of the production potential of the farmer

⁵⁶ Ronald, J.Herring, 'Abolition of Landlordism in Kerala : A Redistribution of Privilege', *E P W* ,Vol.15, Issue No.26, June 28, 1980,p.59; *Kerala Charithram*,Vol.II,Kerala History Association, Ernakulum, 1974,pp.149-150.

⁵⁷which remained un- implemented because of the dismissal of the ministry and later court rulings; A.K.,Pothuval, *Keralathil Jenmitham Avasanihu*, Prabath Book House, Thiruvananthapuram, 1981,p.4; Kurup K.K.N, *Athunika Keralam Charithra Gaveshana Prabanthagal*, Kerala Basha Insitute Thiruvanadapuram ,2011,p.157.

⁵⁸ T.K.Oommen, 'Agrarian Legislations and Movement as Sources of Change: The case of Kerala', *E P W*, Vol.10, Issue No.40,October 4th 1975, p.1577., Somarajan C.M., 'Peasantry and the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill 1957', *XI South Indian History Congress Souvenir*, University of Calicut, 1991,p.83.

⁵⁹ *Kerala Agrarian Relation Bill, 1957*,(chapter 1)Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1958, p.28.

sector, intensification of production, waste land reclamation, abolition of all unproductive payments, streamlining of market channels and diversification of production⁶⁰.

The social structure in Central Kerala was very rigid. The rigid caste system did not allow upper caste landlords to engage in direct cultivation. *Kudikidappukars* (hutment dwellers) were mainly *Pulayas* who resided in huts erected on *jenmis*' land with the permission of the land owners. Sometimes, the huts were constructed by the land owner. In such cases, they were bound to serve the land owners. Except the right of residence they had no other rights over the land⁶¹. They lived there at the will and pleasure of the land-lord, and were liable to be evicted at any time.

Whether from a class perspective or from a community identity perspective, it is undeniably the biggest failure that decades after the land reforms, a good majority of the dalits and *Adivasis* in Kerala, remain fully landless. Land distribution is followed social hierarchy. While the large landowners invariably belong to the upper castes, the cultivators belong to the middle castes and the agricultural workers largely to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Land being the important socially valued asset, its unequal distribution helps maintain the hierarchical structure and strengthen the basis of dominance of the privileged groups by perpetuating inequality and deprivation in various socio-economic sphere⁶².

An important step taken by the government of Kerala to help the weaker sections especially the *Pulayas*. The Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act, 1957 it was passed for

⁶⁰ T.K.Oommen, *A Study of Land Reforms In Kerala*, New Delhi, p.14.

⁶¹ M.J. Javernesa Begom, 'Impact of the Land Reforms of 1958 and 1963', *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol.X, March, 1983, p.41; Unnikrishnan.D, 'Booparishkaranam Booudamakalku Nashtamundakiyo' *Kerala Shabtham*, Vol.52, No.15, December 29, 2013, p.23.

⁶² B. B., Mohanthy, 'Land Distribution among Scheduled Castes and Tribes', *E P W* Vol.36, Issue No.40, October 6, 2001, p.3858.

the protection of the tenants, and *kudikidappukars*.⁶³ The Kerala Stay of Eviction Proceedings Act of 1957 was a prelude to a drastic piece of land reform legislation, the 'Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill' which was passed in the Assembly in 1959. The provision of the Agrarian Relation Bill for conferring ownership rights to the hutment dwellers on his hutment site or *kudikidappu*⁶⁴. The Bill contained specific clauses in protecting the interests of the *kudikidappukars*. They could not be evicted at the likes and dislikes of the landlords. A *kudikidappukaran* could be evicted if he has alienated his right of *kudikidappu* to another person, or he has rented or leased out his *kudikidappu* to another person. If the *kudikidappukaran* is entitled to shift his hut he could claim the expense which he had to meet for shifting to the new site⁶⁵.

After the dismissal of the Communist Ministry the reactionary United Front consisting the Congress, Muslim League and PSP managed to get a majority in the assembly and formed the government in 22nd February 1960⁶⁶. That government prepared a new Land Reforms Bill and got it passed in the assembly in 1963. This Act may be called Kerala Land Reform Act of 1963⁶⁷, had given a number of concessions to the landlords and had taken away many benefit conferred upon the peasants in the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill of 1957. By Section 75 of the Act provided to protection given to the hutment dwellers (Kudikidappukars), and permanent rights of occupancy has been given to them⁶⁸. The definition of the term *kudikidappukaran* was enlarged by substituting a new definition so as to include more occupants under the provision. Accordingly *kudikidappukaran* was a person who has neither a homestead nor any land exceeding in extent three cents in any city or major municipality or five cents in any other Municipalities, or 10 cents in any other area or

⁶³Sunnilukose Cherukara, 'Booparishkarana Niyamam Arkannu Aaswakaryum Shrushtikkunathu,' *Kerala Shabtham*, Vol.46, No.28, March 9, Vol.46, No.28, 2008, p.17.

⁶⁴P.,Prasanan,*Twenty Five Years of Kerala Legislature* ,Government Press, Thiruvananthapuram , 1983,p.13.,K., Saradhamoni, *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1970, p.224.

⁶⁵ *Kerala State Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, Third Session, 1960, Official Report, Vol.X, No.18, p.1834.

⁶⁶ T.K.Oommen,*op.cit.*,p.1576

⁶⁷ *The Kerala Land Reform Act 1963*,(chapter,1,preliminary)p.2

⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

Township, in possession either as owner or as tenant, on which he could erect a homestead⁶⁹. Permission from the person in lawful possession was also necessary to use and occupy such land for the purpose of erecting a homestead. Eviction of tenants and *kudikidappukars* continued. Even though there was a provision to safeguard the tenant against compulsory eviction and surrenders, evictions in large scale continued. These evictions usually took the form of 'surrender' or 'abandonment' which were made under pressure. The causes of eviction in the form of voluntary surrender have been described as below:

This state of affairs can be attributed to such reasons as carelessness or indifferences on the part of the tenant, disinclination on the part of the tenant to antagonize the land-lord, tenants' ignorance about the tenancy legislation, and his feeling that the land-lord has, as birth right, absolute claims on his land, fear of losing the privileges of cultivating land even as tenant at will, promise from the landlord that he would get better land in place of the one from which he is evicted...etc. Again the land-lord being both socially and economically more powerful has been able to take advantage of the tenants' ignorance about the laws and his inability to resort to courts even where land lord is conversant with the provisions of the tenancy Act⁷⁰.

When the Communist government came to power in 1967, (6th March 1967 to 1st November 1969) agrarian reforms were given top priority. The provisions of the 1959 Bill were incorporated in the New Land Reforms Act, through an amendment to the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1963. The Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1969, was implemented with effect from January 1, 1970. The Act visualized a vigorous programme of distribution of excess land under the ownership of the government, public endowments, and private

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, (explanation iii)p.8

⁷⁰ P. N. Prabhakaran Pillai,' Historical Introduction to the Kerala Land Reforms Act and the Working of the Land Tribunals', abridged text of the thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Laws ,University of Cochin, 1973,p.21.

individuals, to the landless. Ownership rights to cultivating tenants and homestead rights to hutment dwellers, is considered as a 'model' in the implementation of redistributive land⁷¹. Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1969 envisaged the implementation of three schemes. These schemes were:

- i) conferment of ownership rights on the cultivating tenants of the lands leased in by them;
- ii) giving option to the homestead tenants (*Kudikidappukar*) to obtain from their land owners three cents of homestead in a city or a major municipality, five cents in a municipality, or ten cents in a Panchayat area;
- iii) taking possession of the surplus lands by the imposition of ceiling laws for distribution among the landless labourers and land-poor peasants⁷².

The core of the reforms in 1969, are as follows:

the abolition of the landlord-tenant social organization of production , the establishment of a relatively low ceiling on holdings to allow redistribution of land to the landless and special measures to provide house and garden sites for a section of the largest and most disadvantaged agrarian class, the field labourers⁷³.

Land Reforms cannot be speedily implemented through the ordinary judicial process, but by administrative process. Hence a Special Land Tribunals and Land Board had been constituted for the implementation of the provisions of the Kerala Land Reforms Act⁷⁴. These Land Tribunals were quasi-judicial bodies. The implementation of the provisions of the Kerala Land Reforms Act, abolition of the tenancy system by conferring full owner-ship on the tenants and the settlement of *kudikidappukars* were huge task on the

⁷¹ T.K.Oommen, *op.cit.*, p, 1579.

⁷² V.V.Kunhikrishnan, 'Agrarian Reforms, economic growth and social change in Kerala', *XI South Indian History Congress Souvenir*, University of Calicut, 1991, p.98.

⁷³ Ronald J Herring, *op.cit.*,p.59.

⁷⁴ *Kerala State Legislative Assembly Proceedings*, Third Session, 1960, Official Report, Vol.X, No.16, p.1708.

part of the government. Number of officers had to be appointed for the implementation of the provisions of the Act, and to mobilize the fund required for the rehabilitation of the *kudikidappukars*. The land tribunals had no inherent powers, other than those conferred under the act and rules.

The work of the Land Board was decentralized by creating *Thaluk* Land Boards which are the main agencies for determining the excess lands in their respective *Thaluk*⁷⁵. The *Thaluk* Land Boards have a majority of non- official members. A Land Review Board was constituted with Minister- in-charge of Land Reforms as president and six non-officials as members to review the work of the State Land Board and the *Thaluk* Land Boards. Additionally, Land Tribunals were constituted at the Panchayat level to offer guidelines for the work of *Thaluk* Land Boards⁷⁶.

Even though the *kudikidappukar* were provided fixity of occupation, and the right to purchase the *kudikidappu*, as per the act of 1969 they were liable to shift the *kudikidappu* under certain circumstances. Sub-section 2 of Sec.75 provides that the *kudikidappukaran* may be requested to shift to a new site belonging to the land owner under 3 grounds:

- i) if the land owner requires the land in which the *kudikidappu* is situated for the purpose of constructing building for him or for any members of his family;
- ii) if that land is required for any purpose in connection with Town Planning Scheme approved by the competent authority;
- iii) if the land is required for any industrial purpose⁷⁷.

All these grounds for shifting a *kudikidappukaran* should be *bonafide* requests. The shifting can be effected only subject to four conditions.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Third Session, 1960, Official Report, Vol.X, No.21,p.2107.

⁷⁶ T.K., Oommen, *op.cit.*,p.1582.

⁷⁷ P. N. Prabhakaran Pillai,*op.cit.*,p.41.

1. The land-lord should pay the price of the homestead if it was erected by the *kudikidappukkaran*.
2. The new site offered should be within a distance of one mile from the existing *kudikidappu* and fit for erecting a homestead.
3. The extent of new site should be the extent of the land that the *kudikidappukkaran* was entitled to purchase if he had not been shifted.
4. The land lord should transfer the ownership and possession of the new site to the *kudikidappukkaran* and should pay a reasonable cost of shifting⁷⁸.

The aim of the reform was to take possession of the land from the landlords for distribution of the landless labourers and lease tenants. It was roughly estimated that there were at least two lakh of lease tenants and one lakh of *Kudikidappukars* in the Central Kerala waiting for settlement of their rights. The following table illustrates the number of applications received and rejected of since the constitution of Land Tribunals after the Act of 1969.

Table.5.1

Details of applications received and allowed rejected of under the various provisions of the Kerala Land Reforms Act 1969.

Particulars	Received	Allowed	Rejected
For purchase of land lords rights by cultivating tenants	4395	1462	1113
For registration of kudikidappu (<i>Pulayas</i>)	98618	67685	22885

Sources: *The Administration Report of the Land Board and Land Tribunals for the year, 1968-69*, published in G.O. M S. 184/70/LRD dated 10-6-1970.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

The number of the hutment-dwellers were estimated as 98618 in 1970 .They were required to submit their applications in the prescribed form, so that necessary steps could be taken to confer ownership rights on them. Till early May 1970, four months after the Act came into force 67685 cases were allowed by the Tribunals.22885 cases were rejected. The rest did not submit the required application. It was widely held by landowners, bureaucrats, and non -Marxists that the hutment-dwellers refused to undergo the prescribed legal requirements because of Marxist pressures. The hutment-dwellers were easily impressed by two arguments put forward by Communist Party. (1) The legal procedure will take a long time and there was no need to wait, and (2) If a hutment-dweller took to the legal procedure it was incumbent upon him to pay 12.5 per cent of the market value of land as compensation whereas if he resorted to forcible occupation both these requirements could be overlooked.⁷⁹It was, mainly because of this mass mobilization that the government was forced to enact the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1971 and the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1972, preventing the eviction of hutment dweller from his homestead, and granting him permanency of occupation⁸⁰.

To assess the impact of the implementation of the Act of 1969 on the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala, a study was conducted in each *taluk*. Though the *Pulayas* were integral to agrarian production, they were prevented from owning land in the traditional agrarian system. This situation did not change in a substantial manner with the introduction of land reforms in the early 1970s.These reforms made former tenants, mostly of upper and middle castes, land owners as they could prove their status as tenants by submitting rent receipts. The *Pulayas*, who were merely agricultural labourers did not have enough documentary evidence to support their claim for obtaining land.

⁷⁹ T.K., Oommen, *op.cit.*,p.1579

⁸⁰ P. N. Prabhakaran Pillai,*op.cit.*,p.26

However the Act provided marginal benefits to the *Pulayas*. The *Pulayas* also became owners of small pieces of land. The present study reveals that the Act provided moderate benefits to the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala in the following methods:

1. Most of the *Pulayas* were given ownership of tiny plots of land that housed their huts. The land they could own varied from 3 cents to 10 cents in all the *taluks* of the former Cochin State.
2. Some of the *Pulayas* were lease tenants especially in Mukundapuram and Talappilli *taluks*. The lease tenants in Mukundapuram and Chittur taluk could obtain up to 50 cents of land and those in Wadakkanchery in Thalappilli *taluk* could gain up to 30 cents.
3. There were *Pulayas* who were attached labourers living in the land of their *jenmis*. They were not allotted their homestead, but given 3 to 10 cents away from their former settlement. This practice was wide spread in Thalappilly, Cochin- Kanayannur and Chavakkad *taluks*.
4. Some of the *Pulayas* were able to purchase small pieces of land varying from 3 to 10 cents from the hands of the *jenmis*. There were such instances in Paravur, and Aluva in Cochin- Kanayannur *taluks* and Chovannur Panchayath in Thalappilly *taluk*.
5. *Puramboke* lands (government lands) were allotted in the range of 3 to 10 cents in the so called colonies designed for them.

In several areas, in Central Kerala hutment- dwellers took forcible possession of 10 cents of land, each, around their huts and erected fences. They plucked coconuts and took other yields from the occupied lands. After the implementation of land reforms, there were some changes in the position of the lower castes in agrarian relations:

The traditional master-slave relationship between landlords and agricultural workers was increasingly being replaced by an employer-employee relationship. The attached labour system was given way to

independent free-floating, causal labour system, providing the requisite freedom and economic security to workers⁸¹.

As a result of the success achieved in the conferment of full ownership on the cultivating tenants, the 'feudalistic' agrarian structure was remodeled by liberating the tenants from their socio-economic subservience to the *jenmis*. Notwithstanding the lurking 'feudal' elements in the agrarian sector, broadly speaking, the erstwhile non-cultivating landowners were replaced by 'owner-cultivators' who directly hired labour and supervised agricultural operations⁸².

The study reveals that the size of landholdings has become uneconomic due to its high fragmentation. In the recent past Kerala has witnessed intergenerational fragmentation of land of dalit communities. The result of this fragmentation is that first generation or second generation of dalits since land reforms are virtually rendered landless⁸³.

Apart from land reforms, there are other sets of economic and social factors including commercialization of agriculture, disintegration of the joint family system, and pressure of high population growth, cropping patterns and left political movements that have played a major role in the transformation of agrarian relations⁸⁴.

Land reform may be considered as an important measure to bring about the right institutional framework in the agrarian society to ensure social and economic development. 'Land to the tiller' has been a widely accepted principle of agrarian reforms in our country in the post-independence era. This principle implies conferring occupancy rights to those who are actual tillers of the soil. To put it differently, this was intended to make actual cultivators, the real owners of the land they cultivate. The actual tillers of the soil failed to get benefits from the redistributive land reforms that bestowed ownership rights on cultivating tenants and homestead rights on hutment dwellers.

⁸¹ J.V Vilanilam, et.al,(ed.), *Introduction to Kerala Studies*, Vol.II,New Jersey ,2012,P.1010.

⁸² T.K., *Oomen,op.cit.*,p.1583

⁸³ Information gathered from Michel Tharakan,12.08.2016.

⁸⁴ Kurup, K.K.N., *Modern Kerala*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1988, P.164.

The study ends with 1975, marked by the completion of the first stage of land reforms which brought within its ambit the landless and homeless agricultural labourer mostly the *Pulayas*, and made them the proud owners of the hutment sites they were living as *kudikidappu*. Agrarian reform is a powerful process by which socio-economic changes could be realized in an agrarian society. It provided protection to the tenants from the exploitation of the land lords' occupancy right to hutment dwellers improvement in their social and economic conditions. The struggle for upward mobility and the changes in the socio-political environment resulted in the enactment of the land reforms of 1969. Without some degree of economic freedom the underprivileged communities are seldom able to take advantage of social legislation conferring new privileges on them.

CONCLUSION

Caste is primarily an older form of inequality such as race, gender or ethnicity. Caste system has indeed changed with time but the reality of caste has certainly not disappeared. This is despite the determined efforts taken by many different actors against it. The elements of hierarchy and inequality continue to be reproduced even today in different ways. Instead of becoming weaker, the public presence of caste has grown in India over the years. Caste is a 'closed system' of stratification where caste groups are unequal, ranked on a scale of hierarchy and often divided on the basis of their occupation. The idea and practice of untouchability is an integral part of the caste system. The imposition of caste system within the religion paved way for the emergence of various castes within the society. Hence, the eradication of caste system first requires its eradication from Hinduism. For dalits, caste is not merely a marker. It is a socio-political system based on exploitation, apathy, discrimination and humiliation. It deprived dalits from social capital, cultural capital, economic capital and symbolic capital. In addition, caste is inextricably linked to certain laws with regard to marriage, food and ceremonies.

Caste is now in a fluid state. Changes are happening in such a rapid succession on account of variety of circumstances and it is impossible to predict how this will settle down after the transition period. Since independence, the process of economic growth and institutionalization of democratic politics have transformed almost every aspect of Indian society, including the caste. Increasing literacy has developed social consciousness among the people. Caste is now fast losing its significance in many domains of social life. The individual position in the system of production and structures of power is no longer tied to caste as in the past. Besides, almost everywhere dalits have become much more assertive about their human and political rights. Today very few dalits would accept

their low status as a naturally given reality or accept it simply as their fate. Nowadays they all aspire to more comfortable material circumstances and all demand more dignity.

The colonial modernity allowed lower castes access to education and to the public spaces in the society. Potheri Kunjambu's novel *Sarawathy Vijayam* celebrates English education for untouchables as a means of overcoming subordination. Tradition virtually subordinated lower castes. However, colonial modernity to a certain extent had given freedom to them. There is no doubt that under colonialism the plight of the lower castes was better off than the previous period. Colonial modernity had given impetus to various lower castes movements in Kerala from the last quarter of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century.

The Slavery Abolition Act of 1872 in Cochin State did effect some changes in the life of the *Pulayas*. Due to colonial intervention in agriculture, labour was to be released from land and land was to be converted into capital. The beginning of industries in Cochin State provided salaried employment to some *Pulayas* as *coolie* labourers. This facilitated a transition from slave labourers to wage labourers. The commercialization of agriculture led to the development of agro-processing industries like cashew, tile, beedi, book making etc., which provided occupational mobility to the *Pulayas*. Changes in the agrarian relations, opportunities for occupational changes and the spread of education by the Christian Missionaries were favourable factors in the betterment of the life milieu of the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala.

In the late 19th century and in the early decades of the 20th century, Kerala witnessed a cultural and ideological struggle against the cultural and ideological hegemony of the upper castes. This struggle was due to the changes in the edifice of the society, which was largely occasioned by the colonial modernity, if not a byproduct of it. The spread of the counter ideology and resistance against the institutions of caste had been particularly strengthened by the movements of Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali. Ayyankali

formed an organization to foster awareness regarding the rights of lower castes and to achieve those rights through organizational strength. He was a fierce reformer, if not a revolutionary who strove to ameliorate the abominable conditions of the *Pulayas* and he was intensely concerned with the dismal plight of all the lower caste people. Nevertheless, he has been depicted in the mainstream historiography as '*Pulaya Raja*'. On the other hand most of the socio- religious reformers in Kerala have been described as Kerala reformers. This depiction of Ayyankali itself indicates subtle caste bias.

Social movements in Central Kerala were started to remove the abuse and exploitation that was prevalent in the caste ridden society and also to restore confidence among the *Pulayas* and infuse fresh vigour among them. They fought against the caste based inequalities pervasive in the society and tried to uplift the backward and the downtrodden. The struggle against social injustice in Central Kerala was led by Pandit K.P. Karuppan, Krishnadhi Asan, K.P Vallon, Dhakshayani Velayudhan, Sahodharan Ayyappan and P. K Chathen Mater. Karuppan's work encouraged and motivated the *Pulayas*, who unaware of their rights lived in caste based slavery and darkness. With the spread of education, the lower castes with much opposition from the *savarna* castes had tried to enroll their children in schools. They hoped that the intermingling and inter dining of students belonging to both upper and lower castes would reduce the feeling of untouchability and would loosen the rigidities of the caste system. However, the plight of the lower castes remained as before until an array of factors intervened.

Sahodharan Ayyappan adopted different methods – simple and effective speeches, direct actions like inter-dining, inter-caste marriage and transmission of ideas through print media and so on to spread his revolutionary ideas among the people. These efforts created a new consciousness among some sections of the upper castes as well.

The activities of Christian Missionaries had played a crucial role, both directly and indirectly, to bring about changes in the social life of the *Pulayas*. They opposed untouchability and caste based discrimination. The missionary-run schools had played

their part in stimulating social reforms in Central Kerala, and in creating an ideological and moral climate conducive to modernization. Christian Missionaries were instrumental in transforming the lives of the *Pulayas* as they tried to improve material and spiritual condition of the same. Material progress would refer to new skills at industrial training institutes, and education in schools opened by the missionaries for improving the social skills of the *Pulayas*. Equally important was the emergence of new spaces for the *Pulayas* that helped them to evolve new relationships with objects and spaces. They acquired modern language, new relationships with the sacred and ritual spaces, and engagement with the public sphere.

Education is a significant social resources and a means of reducing discrimination in the society. It helped/helps the *Pulayas* to improve their social status in various ways. Knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired through education help one to lead a desired quality of life. The educational efforts of the government and the private agencies helped the *Pulayas* in getting education who were hitherto faced exclusion even from schools. The Education Code of 1911 provided special concessions to the *Pulayas* and ‘Night Schools’ were opened for them. Ayyankali led series of struggles for the education of the *Pulayas*, consequently the government was compelled to open its own schools for the *Pulayas*. Ayyankali’s struggles had an influence on the leaders of the Central Kerala who were keen to provide education to the *Pulayas*. Thereafter *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* intensified its efforts to nurture the new energy and confidence of the *Pulaya* community. The establishment of the Harijan hostel in Ernakulam in 1938 was a favorable step towards the educational improvement of the *Pulayas*. The *Pulayas* were appointed in various government posts in 1970 on the basis of Special Recruitment. Though the *Pulayas* were recruited to various posts, a substantial section of them constituted last grade employees. Social and economic conditions of the *Pulayas* had been substantially changed. Visible changes could be seen in their dress, language, appearance, customs, residence, occupations etc. A very significant change has occurred in terms of the continuing decline in the relationship between caste and occupation. As

industries, trade and plantations emerged, the *jati* based occupational divisions have considerably weakened.

The state policy of affirmative action, the reservations, was designed to create a level playing field, where each caste group could compete on equal footing. Affirmative action has indeed had positive impact on the dalits. Reservation becomes significant; establishing employment equality among the Scheduled Castes mostly in government jobs and not in the private sector. Reservation for a particular caste may encourage the students to study or work harder, because they know that they will get a place on the basis of their quota. Education has become a prerequisite and a stimulant for economic development.

Central Kerala was one of the locuses of struggle against oppressive and humiliating practices such as untouchability and economic exploitation such as eviction, landlessness, low wages, usurpation of land etc. in the middle of the 20th century. ‘*Vazhinadakkal Samaram*’(1946), *Nadavaramb Karshaka Samaram*(1946),*Pariyaram Karshaka Samaram*(1948), *Vazani Canal Samaram* (1955), *Christain-Pulaya Conflict in Porkulam Panchayath* (1957) and *Mekkad Samaram* (1963) were the significant struggles against social disabilities and economic exploitation faced by the *Pulayas* in this region. In all these struggles *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* under the leadership of P.K Chathan Master had played a decisive role. Before and after joining the Communist Party of India, Chathan Master had tirelessly worked for ameliorating the living conditions of the most exploited and suppressed sections of the society, especially the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala. Through the organization of *Cochin Pulayar Mahajana Sabha* and later through *Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha* (K P M S), he spread awareness among the *Pulayas* regarding their rights and to achieve these rights through planned organizational strength and struggles. On the one hand the struggle was against untouchability and other humiliating practices and on the other hand the struggles were against eviction, landlessness and low wages.

P. K Chathan Master had also played an instrumental role in organizing K P M S in 1970. The main objectives of the Sabha is to work against the social disabilities of the *Pulayas* and to achieve their economic, cultural, educational growth and enhancement of employment opportunities. Struggle for social justice has been the cornerstone of the organization. Master's politics was about the emancipation of the exploited people and a radical transformation of the whole of society. The K P M S under his leadership demanded for increase wages, shorter and specific working hours, right to employment and other benefit measures which contributed to social changes among the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala.

Land reforms were not meant for people who do not own any land. It was solely for people who had land on lease. Usually those who had leased land were people who belonged to backward classes such as Ezhava/Muslim. Land would be allocated to the lease holder wherever he can prove that he has a lease agreement. That is how Thiyas and Mappilas turned into land owners. The true intention of the land reform act was that once the tenants become owners they would cultivate their land leading to a positive growth of the economy. But the theory and the objective behind land reform completely weakened as people realized that selling their land by dividing it into smaller plots or cultivating cash crops are far more profitable than the traditional mode of farming. They further invested their profit in business, not in farming.

Though the *Pulayas* were the actual tillers of the soil, they were not the actual beneficiaries of the land reforms. Only rarely the land reforms benefit the dalits. The *Pulayas* who were the tillers of the soil did not have enough documentary evidence to support their claim for obtaining land. Hence, though the large majority of the *Pulayas* laboured on land they were not seen as tillers of the land. The Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1969 provided disproportionate benefits to the *Pulayas*. The present study reveals that the Act provided moderate, if not meager benefits to the *Pulayas* in Central Kerala; most of the *Pulayas* were given ownership of 3 to 10 cents of land in all the *Taluks* of the former Cochin State. *Pulayas* who were lease tenants could obtain up to

30 to 50 cents of land. Some *Pulayas* who were attached labourers and lived in the land of their *jennies* were given 3 to 10 cents away from their former settlement. *Puramboke* lands were allotted in the range of 3 to 10 cents in the so called *Harijan' Laksham Veedu'* colonies designed for them.

That said, land reforms brought about certain remarkable transformation in the agrarian relations. Master –slave relationship between land lords and agricultural labourers was replaced by an employer-employee relationship. Along with this, commercialization of agriculture, decline of the joint family system, transforming in cropping patterns and the left political movements have played a definite role in the further changes of the agrarian relations. However, in the last three decades or so, Kerala has witnessed intergenerational fragmentation of land of the dalit communities. This resulted in rendering the first generation or second generation of dalits landless.

The changing status and the social milieu of the *Pulayas* of Central Kerala show that it would be possible for the individuals from an untouchable caste to improve their position in society. In the past, the *Pulayas* were generally required to live at a certain distance from the main village settlement. Residential segregation was somewhat strictly enforced. However, social and economic conditions of the *Pulayas* had considerably changed around the middle of the 20th century. The democratic system, land reforms, nationalism, communism, peasant organization and the social work of the communities did introduce changes in their life. Notable changes could be seen in their dress, language, appearance, customs, residence, occupations, and among others. The prime cause for this change is the separation of one's occupation from the traditional one endorsed in the caste system. It was mainly facilitated by the modern education. The *Pulayas* were convinced that education would fetch them better and more remunerative jobs. The resulting rise in income would make it possible for them to improve their standard of living. Individuals like K. P. Karuppan and K.P.Vallon had tried their best to spread education and enroll the students in schools belonging to untouchable castes. They hoped that the intermingling and inter dining of students belonging to both upper and

lower castes would reduce the feeling of untouchability and rigidities of the caste system. Until independence, this hope had remained a pipedream. Even after independence the situation more or less remained the same till the 1970s.

Subsequent changes in the behavioral pattern of the *Pulayas* can be found by comparing the interaction pattern that prevailed between the *Pulayas* and the higher castes in the middle of the 20th century and the pattern of interaction in the past. The *Pulayas* were earlier persuaded to use some kind of words to show respect, honorific words for addressing higher caste individuals in the past. Thus Namboodiris, Nairs and Syrian Christians were addressed by them as '*Tampuran*'. Later when the *Pulayas* became clerks, teachers and thus economically independent from others, they began to address higher caste persons by name only. There is no restriction on their wearing any type of clothes, ornaments, footwear and their women covering the breasts. Prohibition of intercaste marriage was another barrier which kept the castes apart. There have been some instances of marriages of *Pulaya* males to the females belonging to higher castes like Ezhavas, Christians and Nairs. Substantial changes have occurred in the interaction pattern between the higher castes and well to do *Pulayas*.

To ameliorate the conditions of the *Pulayas*, conscious efforts have been initiated on the part of the government through constitutional provisions, affirmative action in the form of reservations and special development programmes, which are being continued. Reservation is the only opportunity for the *Pulayas* to enter into the mainstream of society. Policy of reservation has provided the *Pulayas* opportunity to find their way into public services to become doctors, scholars, writers, judges, policemen and officers of the civil services and other government services, situations which were unimaginable even few decades ago. Nowadays, it is not rare to find a Brahmin clerk who is a subordinate of a dalit civil servant. This tiny opportunity that dalits have won for themselves washes up against a wall of privileged caste hostility.

The narrative of social progress fails to capture the complex layers of caste practices prevalent in the Kerala temples and the process of social reawakening in the Hindu community. There has been aspiration among the lower castes to become temple priests. The willingness of the state and a section of the upper castes to accept lower-caste men as temple priests is a major step.

One of the preconditions for the annihilation of the caste system is the end of all caste based identities. From the perspective of the *Pulayas*, the end of the caste system is the most radical change that could be thought of. Casteism is powerfully embedded in the collective consciousness of the people and as result of which *Pulayas'* orientation towards caste system is hesitant. For them the caste system is oppressive due to discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, inequality and untouchability, but at the same time it situates them in the system as a collective identity. While the need is to think of a society without caste, the possibility of caste differences without inequality seems real.

In the past, during the so called 'Kerala renaissance' period, social and religious reformers had tried to reform caste –related open discrimination. But the caste practices have become subtle in present day Kerala albeit certain changes occurring in the modern period. Even as open discrimination and blatant casteism are coming back. Recent incidents of open casteism have shown that how the dominant *savarna* castes are allergic not only to living dalits, but to their dead too. The following are the two recent glaring incidents¹. First is the 'caste wall' erected in Vadayambady village of Ernakulum district where 180 dalit families have been living since 1960s and they have been utilizing 95 cent common ground for their celebrations. They also have two deities placed on the ground. However, all of a sudden in February 2017, the Nair Service Society claimed that it is their land and the Nairs erected a temple and also a wall. More heinous was the kind of treatment meted out to the dead body of a well-known artist, Asanthan. When his body

¹ The two incidents do not come under the period of our study. But they do reflect the operation of the complex caste system even today.

was brought to the Kerala Lalitha Kala Academy and placed at the government owned durbar hall arts centre in Ernakulum, a group of caste Hindus protested. The protest was engineered by the administrators at the Ernakulum Siva temple. At last with the help of the police, Asanthan's body was brought to the academy through the eastern entry of the gallery and put on show. Temple authorities' argument was that durbar hall is situated 50 meters away from the Siva temple and so Asanthan's body cannot be brought to the hall through the proper way. It was an explicit form of pollution existed in the past. This incident clearly showed that it is all a fallacy that there is no casteism, if not untouchability and unseeability in Kerala. There is an invisible line drawn in between the dalits and the non dalits making all the claims of 'Kerala renaissance' in problematic.

However, it must be noted that this move comes eight decades after the temple entry proclamation in 1936. The narrative of enlightenment and progress associated with the renaissance fails to capture the complex layers of caste practices prevalent in Kerala temples and the process of social reawakening in the Hindu community.

Caste is constantly being reconfigured in relation to the social conditions of Kerala. This is evident not only in the ascent of lower castes to spaces dominated by the upper castes, but also the changing caste practices of the upper castes. Thus, this is a reconstruction or, even contestation of caste practices, but surely not the eradication of caste.

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ORAL TESTIMONIES

Name	Age	Place and Date	Designation
Ammini	70	Kunnamkulam, 1.5.2012	Labourer in Book making center
Ayya A.K	74	Karuvannur, 4.3.2010	Teacher, (Rtd)
Ayyappan A.C	68	Karuvannur, 10.11.2014	Supervisor of Tile Factory
Appukuttan	72	Mala, 4.8.2011	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Babu M. K	69	Mulavudu, 17.5.2012	Granite worker
Chakki	80	Aluva, 3.6.2012	Tile factory labourer
Chathan, P .C	81	Thozhiyur, 8.2.2010 (Expired in 2018)	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Chandran K .K	65	Pullur, 14.7.2015	Pulaya agricultural labourer

Govindha Menon	78	Irinjalakuda,16.12.2010	in charge of Mahatma Library
Koran M.C	82	Karuvannur,20.2.2012 (Expired in 2014)	Sharisthadar,Irinjalakuda Court, (Rtd)
Kunjamu P .C	72	Porkulam,10.2.2012	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Kalikutty, K. P	73	Olari,23.5.2014	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Kujumon C .K	80	Kodungallur,21.5.2015	Village Officer, (Rtd)
Kurumba P.C.	89	Irinjalakuda,20.1.2010(Expired in 2014)	Kuttamkulam freedom fighter
Kurumba	76	Madayikonam,18.7.2014	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Kumaran, K. C	81	Mulavukadu,12.3.2013	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Kumaran	88	Thrissur,20.10.2015	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Kuttimon K. K	85	Porkulam,12.5.2014	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Kunjamini K.K	81	Chavakkad,10.10.2016	Beedi worker
Kandankali	72	Chalakudy,12.8.2011	Pulaya agricultural labourer
K.V.Unni,	89	Irinjalakuda,8.4.2013	Kuttamkulam freedom fighter
Kunjimol.P. C	70	Kanipayyaur,10.12.2015	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Lonappan M .T	65	Vazhani,10.3.2014	Social Worker
Madhavan A .K	69	Pulayanarkotta,Thiruvananthapuram,9.5.2010 ,(Expired in 2015)	Laizon Officer, khadi Board, (Rtd)
Paigi C.K	85	Chalakudy,23.6.2010 (Expired in 2012)	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Palli and Kuppa	86	Paravur (Expired in 2012)	Pulaya agricultural labourers
Thanku	80	Porkulam,10.11.2013	Pulaya agricultural labourer
Vijayan P.K	66	Paravur, 23.4.2014.	Pulaya agricultural labourer

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GLOSSARY

<i>Aikya Kerala</i>	United Kerala
<i>Adiyan</i>	self- reflective term denoting low-caste submission
<i>Adivasis</i>	primitive dwellers
<i>Adimakasu</i>	slave levy
<i>Ambedkarite</i>	follower of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar, leader of the former untouchables.
<i>Asan</i>	master
<i>Ayitham</i>	untouchability.
<i>Avarnas</i>	caste outside the varna system.
<i>Brahmaswam</i>	property belonging to brahmin jennies
<i>Brahmins</i>	highest caste in hindu society.
<i>Crangannur</i>	Kodungallur
<i>Cheruman</i>	a low caste agrestic slave.
<i>Chera</i>	ancient ruling dynasty of Kerala; period of second Chera Kingdom commenced from 9 th century.
<i>Dalit</i>	self designation by the erstwhile untouchable castes.
<i>Devaswam</i>	literally means belonging to the deity;in usage ‘pertaining to Hindu temple’
<i>Desam</i>	territorial unit refers to the aggregate of villages and hamlets in cultivated areas.
<i>Diwan</i>	Chief Minister of an erstwhile Indian State
<i>Ezhuthupalli</i>	old village school
<i>Jati</i>	caste
<i>Jenmi</i>	land lord; holder of janmam tenure

<i>Jenmam</i>	hereditary proprietorship in land
<i>Harijan</i>	literally means ‘Men of God’ was used by Mahatma Gandhi with reference to the untouchables.
<i>Harijan Colony</i>	settlement of the dalits
<i>Kara</i>	a sub-division of a revenue village
<i>Kudi</i>	house of the depressed classes.
<i>Kudiyam</i>	tenant.
<i>Kudikidappukar</i>	hutment dwellers
<i>Kanji</i>	rice gruel popular in Kerala
<i>Kanam</i>	land tenure based on mortgage or lease
<i>Kettezhuthu</i>	writing after hearing; settlement of land revenue on the basis of personal enquires
<i>Marumakkathayam</i>	matrilineal system of inheritance
<i>Mana</i>	Namboothiri house
<i>Misra Bojanam</i>	inter-dining
<i>Mesthiri</i>	supervisor
<i>Naduvazhi</i>	a local chieftain; ruler of nadu
<i>Namboothiri</i>	Malayala brahmin
<i>Onam</i>	The harvest festival of Kerala which usually falls in the Malayalam month of Chingam
<i>Panchayath</i>	a local self- governing body
<i>Panchamas</i>	untouchables
<i>Pattam</i>	rent; tenancy
<i>Patta chittu</i>	rent receipt
<i>Pattabacki</i>	arrears of rent.
<i>pandaravaka</i>	Government land

<i>Pandit</i>	master
<i>Pulayan</i>	same as Cheruman
<i>Sirkar</i>	Government.
<i>Sahitya</i>	literature
<i>Savarna</i>	upper caste
<i>Satyagraha</i>	Civil disobedience movement, any kind of protest action.
<i>Swarupams</i>	traditional term used for the territories under ruling families in Kerala
<i>Taluk</i>	administrative sub-division of a district
<i>Taravad</i>	a joint family unit
<i>Tittooram</i>	royal writ
<i>Thamburan</i>	upper- caste aristocrat
<i>Thana</i>	Police station
<i>Theendal Palakas</i>	untouchability signboards
<i>Vallon or valiyavan</i>	head of the Pulaya community at the local level.

APPENDICES

പുലയരുടെ സമരനീതൃം

മൃഗങ്ങളെപ്പോലെ മനുഷ്യരേയും വീർപ്പനചരകുകളാകുകയും അവരോട് മൃഗീയമായി ഇടപെടുകൊണ്ട് അവരുടെ അവകാശങ്ങൾ ലംഘിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന രീതി നമ്മുടെ നാടിൽ നിലവിലുണ്ടാവിരുന്നു. പുലയർ(ചെറുമകൾ) എന്ന ജാതികാരുടെ ജീവിതനിലവാരം ഉയർത്തുന്നതിനും അവരോട് അന്യമായി പെരുമാറുന്നതു കുടകരമാണെന്നു കർപ്പിച്ച് ചുവ്വകൊണ്ടും കൊല്ലലുൾപ്പം 1029 കർമ്മം പുറപ്പെടുവിച്ച വിളപ്പരം താഴെ കൊടുക്കുന്നു.

ചെറുമകളുടെ ഉടമകാർക്കു ഭയം കൂടാതെ കടം നമ്മുടെ രാജ്യത്തുള്ള ചെറുമകളുടെ സാമ്പത്തിക ഗുണം വരുത്തണമെന്ന വളരെ കാലമായിട്ടു വിചാരിച്ചുവന്നിരുന്നതാകൊണ്ട് ഞാൻ കാര്യത്തിൽ പൂർണ്ണമായി അംഗീകാരമെടുത്ത പ്രസിദ്ധപ്പെടുത്തുവാൻ നിശ്ചയിച്ചത എന്താൽ

1-ാമത ഈ വിളപ്പരത്തിന്റെ തീയതി മുതൽ പണ്ടാരവക ചെറുമകൾക്കു ജനിക്കുന്ന കുട്ടികളുടെ മെൽ ചെറുമകൾ എന്നുള്ള അവകാശം ഒഴിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

2-ാമത ഈ വിളപ്പരത്തിലെ തീയതി മുതൽ മെലാർ കൊടുക്കലിലെ വിധികളോ കർമ്മങ്ങളോ നടത്തുന്നതിനുള്ള പാടലോ കരമോ പിരിയാനുള്ള വകകൾക്കു സർക്കാരിനും കുടിയേറ്റാലയം വകയും ഊതാലയം ചെറുമകളെയും വീർക്കുകയും ഇല്ലാ.

3-ാമത നമ്മുടെ ഭരണം പ്രജകളെപ്പോലെ ചെറുമകൾക്കും വസ്തുവകകൾ സമാദിച്ച് അനുഭവിക്കുകയും അം- അപ്രകാരം ഉള്ളവസ്തുവകകൾ ചെറുമകളുടെ അകുന്നു എന്നുവെച്ച് ഊതാലയത്തെയും അപഹരിച്ചു കൊടുക്കുകയും അതും-

4-ാമത സമൃദ്ധിയില്ലാത്തവരുടെ നെരെ പ്രവൃത്തിച്ചാൽ ശിക്ഷ ഉള്ള കർമ്മങ്ങൾ ചെറുമകളുടെ നെരെ പ്രവൃത്തിച്ചാലും ഒരുപോലെ ശിക്ഷ ഉള്ളതായിരിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യും.

5-ാമത അവകാശികൾ ഇല്ലാതെ അന്നും വന്ന സർക്കാരിനക മെലാൽ

(മുദ്ര)

ഉള്ളിലെ ചെറുമകളും ശ്രീമാരാജി വീടുകളും ചെടികളും

6-ാമത തന്നെ തള്ളിരെയും കുടികളെയും അവരുടെ സമുദായം കൂടാതെ പിരികുകളെയും ചെറുമകളെ അവർ ഉരിക്കുന്ന ദിക്കിൽ നിന്നും 1-2 നാഴികയിൽ അധികം ദൂരത്ത് പാർക്കുന്നവർക്ക് വീടുകളെയും-ഏർപ്പിച്ചു കൊടുക്കുകയോ ചെടികളെയും അരുത്.

7-ാമത സർക്കാർ വക പണികൾ ചെടിയുന്ന ചെറുമകൾക്ക് സ്വന്തം ശ്രീമാരാജി കൂലിക്കാർക്ക് കൊടുക്കുന്നതിന് സമമാല കൂലി കിട്ടുകയും ചെടികളും.

8-ാമത സർക്കാർവകയോ കുടിപ്പണവൻമാർ വകയോ ഞെഗികളെയും വൃദ്ധന്മാരെയും ഉള്ള ചെറുമകൾക്ക് അവരുടെ ഉടമകാർ ദിവസം ചിലവിന്നുകൊടുക്കേണ്ടുന്ന ശ്രമം ഇതിനാൽ കർവ്വിക്കുന്നതു എന്തെന്നാൽ ചെറു പ്പിമാലയും ശക്തന്മാരെയും ഇരുന്ന കാലങ്ങളിൽ അവർക്ക് കിട്ടിയിരുന്ന ചിലവിൽ പാതി എങ്കിലും ഒരു എടങ്ങഴി നെല്പംകിലും ദിവസം ഒന്നിന് കൊടുക്കുകയും വെണം.

9-ാമത ചെറുമകളുടെ ഉടമകാർ ചെറുമകളുടെ 14 വയസ്സിൽ താഴെ ഉള്ള കുടികളെ അവരുടെ പ്രാധർത്തിന് അനുകൂലമല്ലാത്ത പണികൾക്ക് നിലമിക്കുന്നത ഇതിനാൽ വിരോധിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു.

10-ാമത സർക്കാർവക ചെറുമകളുടെയും അവർക്ക് മെലാൽ ഉണ്ടാകുന്ന കുടികളുടെയും സൂക്ഷ്മമായ ഒരു കണക്ക് വെക്കുന്നത അവിശ്യാമാകകൊണ്ട് ചെറുമകളുടെ ജനനമരങ്ങളെ അധികം ഉണ്ടാകുന്നതു മുതൽ നാൽപ്പത ദിവസം സർത്തിനകം പാർവതുകാരന്മാർ മുഖൻതരം അതാത കൊവിലകർത്തും വാതുക്കൽ തടശിർദാരന്മാർക്കുപൊടൽ ചെടിയൻ ചെറുമകളെ പതിച്ചു വാങ്ങിട്ടുള്ളവരെ ഉൽതരവാദികളാകിയും അപ്രകാരം ചെടിയതെ ഉരിക്കുന്നവർക്ക് ഒരു ശീക്ഷ നിശ്ചയിച്ചും മെൽപ്രകാരം കണക്ക് വെക്കുന്നതിന് വെണ്ടുന്ന നിദാനം വരുത്തുവാൻ നമുക്കു ദിവാന കർവ്വിക്കൊടുത്തിട്ടു ഉണ്ടു-എന്നു 1029-9 മാർച്ച് 6-ാം തീയതി 1854 മാർച്ച് പിപ്രവരിമാസം 16-ാം തീയതി തുടങ്ങിത്തുറന്നു നിന്നും.

SCHEDULDE CASTE IN THE KERALA STATE-1978

SL.NO	NAME	SL.NO	NAME
1	Adi Andhra	34	Kuravan
2	Adi Dravida	35	Maila
3	Adi Karnataka	36	Malayan
4	Ajila	37	Mannan
5	Arunthathiyar	38	Mavilan
6	Ayyansavar	39	Moger
7	Baira	40	Mundala
8	Bakuda	41	Nalakeyava
9	Bandi	42	Nayadi
10	Bathada	43	Pdannan
11	Bellara	44	Pallan
12	Bharatar	45	Palluvan
13	Boyan	46	Pambada
14	Chakkiliyan	47	panan
15	Chamar	48	Panchama
16	Chandala	49	Parayan
17	Cheruman	50	Paravan
18	Domban	51	Pathiyan
19	Gavara	52	Perumannan
20	Godagali	53	Pulayan
21	Godda	54	Pulaya Vettuvan
22	Gosangi	55	Puthirai Vannan
23	Hasla	56	Raneyar
24	Holeya	57	Samagara
25	Kadiyan	58	Samban
26	Kakkalan	59	Semman
27	Kalladi	60	Thandan
28	Kanakkan,Padanna	61	Thotti
29	Karimpalan	62	Vallon
30	Kavara	63	Valluvan
31	Koosa	64	Vannan
32	Koodan	65	Velan
33	Kudumban	66	Vetan
		67	Vetuvan

Sources-the schedule substituted by G.O (Ms)142/78/G A D .dated 15.3.1978.

Published as SRONo.324/78 in Kerala Gazette No. 15 dated 11.4.1978.

HARIJAN WELFARE (E) DEPARTMENT

CIRCULAR

No. 13194/E2/83/HWD.

Dated, Trivandrum, 29th August 1983.

Sub:- Classification of Communities – Issuance of Certificates regarding Caste/Community – Following the approved lists of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes – Instructions issued.

Government have been receiving several representations that certain Departments under the Government of India are not accepting the Community Certificates produced before them by persons belonging to Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes of this State on the ground that the name of the community entered in the Community Certificates is not found in the list of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes notified by Government of India. *For example*, Pulayan is a Scheduled Caste of this State as per the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976, (item No. 54 in the list). But the Posts and Telegraphs Department refuses to accept the Community Certificate wherein the name of the caste is noted as "Pulaya". Even though it is clear that "Pulaya" is only an anglicised version of "Pulayan", the P & T Authorities reject the Community Certificates on the ground that "Pulaya" is not found in the existing list of Scheduled Castes, notified by Govt. of India. This situation has arisen mainly because the Revenue Authorities are not following the approved lists of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes while issuing Community Certificates. All Revenue Authorities authorised to issue Community Certificates are therefore directed to adhere strictly to the approved lists of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes while entering particulars regarding community in the Community Certificates.

C.K.K. PANICKER,
Secretary in-charge.