

**PRINT AND PUBLIC SPHERE IN  
MALABAR:  
A STUDY OF EARLY  
NEWSPAPERS (1847-1930)**

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A Thesis  
submitted to the University of Calicut  
for the award of the Degree of  
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## **C E R T I F I C A T E**

This is to certify that this thesis, "**PRINT AND PUBLIC SPHERE IN MALABAR: A STUDY OF EARLY NEWSPAPERS (1847-1930)**", submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of the University of Calicut is a bonafide record of genuine research done by **STELLA JOSEPH** under my supervision and no part of this has been submitted for any degree before.

Calicut University,  
20.07.2008.

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## **D E C L A R A T I O N**

I, **Stella Joseph**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled '**Print and Public Sphere in Malabar: A Study of Early Newspapers (1847-1930)**', is a record done by me under the supervision of **Dr. S.M. Mohamed Koya**, former Professor and Head, Department of History, University of Calicut, and it has not been previously submitted for the award of a degree, diploma or other similar title of recognition.

Calicut University,  
20.07.2008

**Stella Joseph**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CDS	-	Centre for Development Studies
IGIDR	-	Indira Gandhi Institute of Development and Research
MNNPR	-	Madras Native Newspaper Reports
NAI	-	National Archives of India
NIEPA	-	National Institute of Education, Planning and Administration
NMML	-	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
RAC	-	Regional Archives Calicut
SNDP	-	Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalanam
TNA	-	Tamil Nadu Archives

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Old Indian society was founded upon hereditary relationships which were regulated according to a hierarchy. The social structure, based on castes and communities, was not congenial for the growth of the civil society.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the emergence of the Indian middle class fostered the bonds of voluntary association in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

Induced modernization-bourgeois property, capital accumulation, trade and industry, urban life, modern education and so on, together with the dislocation of peasantry led to the loosening of earlier social bonds. There was no such exodus as in Europe, but people were let loose at varying speeds, from their earlier bonds, from different communities and regions, but everywhere more pronouncedly from the upper castes. This loosening of bonds took various structural shapes,

<sup>1</sup> Neera Chandoke, "The Assertion of Civil Society" in Manoranjan Mohanty, et.al., *People's Rights: Social Movements and the State in the Third World*, New Delhi, 1998, p.30. Neera Chandoke says, "In liberal theory civil society came to embody a whole range of emancipatory aspirations which focused on the defence of human liberties against state oppression and which marked out an autonomous sphere of social practices, rights and dignity for the individual".

Rajeev Bhargava, "Introduction", in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions*, New Delhi, 2005, p.14. Rajeev Bhargava says that civil society is an arena of society constituted outside the public power, a region of society where people have come together and formed associations outside the purview of the state. To be sure, civil society and state do not exhaust all institutions in a society. For example, people are born into family or may involuntarily find themselves in institutions such as castes, or traditional guilds. These social institutions are outside the state but do not form part of civil society. So civil society consists of more or less voluntary associations outside the state. It is a feature of such associations that individuals can join or leave them at will. Since the continued existence of such associations entirely dependent on the choice of individuals civil society is an arena of self regulating voluntary associations.

<sup>2</sup> Rajat Kanta Ray, "Nationalism, Modernity and Civil Society: The Subalternist Critique and After", *Indian History Congress, Presidential Address*, Calicut, March 2007, P.7.

like the formation of new classes, professional groups etc. and was the beginning of the process of individuation in India.<sup>3</sup> It is in this escape that we see the emergence of individuated persons with the accompanying changes in their sense of being a person. Such an emerging sense of person also gave rise to new imaginings about life and society.<sup>4</sup>

Jordons observes that it was among the English educated intelligentsia that several ideas of reform first arose. They were primarily trying to deal with a personal problem that affected their own lives very deeply: constant contact with Britishers and European ideas made them look upon some social and religious characteristics of their own society with horror and disgust. Social reform in this first stage was mostly prompted by the desire of these people to cope with the difficulties which they experienced themselves. There was not as yet any concern for the mass of the people, or any desire to transform the structure of society at large. What they wanted was to reshape their lives according to the new standards and values they were discovering. They sought to clarify their own ideas, and propagate them among their kindred intelligentsia.<sup>5</sup>

A society of self regulating individuals whose relations are contractual and not based on hereditary communal ties implies a new intellectual outlook. The outlook of the emerging civil society was rational, scientific, secular, libertarian and humanistic. These were the values, which inspired the freedom struggle led by the Congress. The leaders of the struggle were uneasily aware that the reformed attitudes

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<sup>3</sup> Javeed Alam, "A Look at Theory: Civil Society, Democracy and Public Sphere in India", in Rajeev Bhargava, and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.351.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.350.

<sup>5</sup> J.T.F. Jordens, "Hindu Religious and Social Reform in British India", in A.L. Basham (ed.), *A.Cultural History of India*, Delhi, 1975, p.366.

were confined among the middle class.<sup>6</sup> Thus although there was some escape from the yoke of the subservience of feudalism the fact of subjection under the British yoke continued. Indians were not still citizens.

As for citizenship, the term the English educated Indians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century commonly used, was 'subjects' in common with Her Majesty's British born subjects. However the notion of citizenship being crucial to the emerging 'public'<sup>7</sup> spirit the term citizen was to appear in the lexicon of the politically aware Indians.<sup>8</sup> Anyhow with the awareness of subjection came the sense of one's rights and respect for one's independence. For Indians however, the process was in a sense facilitated by the nature of British rule. Pragmatic and therefore liberal in its overall stance it granted equality and freedom of thought, speech and association. Pragmatism however made sure that what was conceded in principle was held back or diluted in a variety of legal or extra-legal way. Even when it appeared unsafe to ignore Indian exertions to claim their entitlement, the authorities tended to devise stratagems that made a show of concession and conceded just that little bit of substance. Indeed the better organized became the exertions, the

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<sup>6</sup> Rajat Kanta Ray, "Nationalism, Modernity and Civil Society", *op.cit.*, p.7.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere", in Carolyn M.Elliott, (ed.), *Civil Society and Democracy*, New Delhi, 2003, p.53. Nancy Fraser says that the term public designates what is of common concern, and not just objectively or from an outsider's perspective. So public is what matters to the whole society, or belongs to this whole society.

B. Kuppuswamy, *Communication and Social Development*, New Delhi, 1976, p.73. Kuppuswamy says: The term public refers to a spontaneous collection of people in response to a certain kind of situation. The public is not a group with any kind of membership, rules etc. The public is a collection of individuals without any prescribed tradition or cultural pattern. It arises only when there is some issue confronting the people. As a result public vary depending on the issue or the problem on hand.

<sup>8</sup> Sudhir Chandra, "Subjects' Citizenship Dream", in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.107.

more the British fear of concessions came to the surface. In any case, there would always be the compulsion to extend certain special privileges to Europeans behind the façade of equality. Indians began to learn this lesson quite early, and they could learn the growing contrast between the principles and the practice of British rule. This in turn led to the realization of the more critical dichotomy between what came to be viewed as national and imperial interests. This realization rendered necessary an expanding and exclusively Indian ‘public space’.<sup>9</sup>

### **Emergence of Nationalism and Public Space**

It was sometime in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century that this cultural consciousness began to acquire political trappings, leading eventually among other things to the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885.<sup>10</sup> Congress was the mirror of the emerging civil society. The rule of the law, the emergence of the press, the growth of the voluntary associations and the demand for civil and political rights through the medium of English established the social space in which Congress was formed. This social space was narrow, hemmed in as it was by the persistence of the older social loyalties of caste, community and locality. But however imperfect, the emergence of civil society was a critical development. It was a transition from the closed community to the open society, with all that it implied: a transition even if very partial indeed, from custom to law, from status to contract, from birth to merit, from privilege to justice, from hierarchy to equality, from communalism to individualism, from heredity to association; in short, from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, pp.109-110.

<sup>10</sup> D.I Sheth, “Nation Building and Making of Civil Society” in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.389.

<sup>11</sup> Rajat Kanta Ray, “Nationalism, Modernity and Civil Society”, *op.cit.*, P.8. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century German Sociologist Ferdinand Toennies coined two contrasting terms, *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, meaning thereby the friendly community

The new social relationships did not of-course extend to the whole surface of Indian society. The lower orders of the population were still compartmentalized in localities, communities and castes. It was the group which called itself the educated middle class (the English-educated middle class) that claimed to represent ‘public opinion’.<sup>12</sup> The private, individualistic relationships among their society were complemented by public ties. There was now an Indian Public that did not exist earlier. The class which represented the public (the new class of English educated Indians in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and other towns) shared despite all their regional differences certain common characteristics. The factors that contributed to this commonalty were, first of all, the English educational system of schools and colleges through which they passed. Second, they subsisted materially on the means of livelihood available in the service of the colonial government and in the new professions of law, western medicine, journalism and education to which their degrees were the passport. Third, they had a common lifestyle, which was dictated by the type of education and the type of occupation which sustained them.<sup>13</sup>

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and the anonymous community (or association) respectively. Civil Society is distinct from communal existence because it is based not on birth or status, but on voluntary associations and contractual relations between individuals. It is this which the Indian National Congress embodied in its constitution and ideology and which M.K Gandhi rejected in his manifesto of 1909.

<sup>12</sup> Jurgen Habermas , “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article”, in Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas Mackay Kellner, (ed.), *Critical Theory and Society*, p.137. The expression public opinion refers to the tasks of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally (and, in periodic elections formally as well) practises vis-à-vis the ruling structure organized in the form of a state.

Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere”, in Carolyn M.Elliott, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.53. Nancy Fraser says that through the circulation of newspapers, reviews and books among the educated classes, and scattered, small scale face-to-face exchanges in saloons, coffee houses and political assemblies there emerges a sense of the nation, or its literate segment, an opinion which deserves to be called ‘public’.

<sup>13</sup> Rajat Kanta Ray, “Nationalism, Modernity and Civil Society”, *op.cit.*, P.8.

For the first time since the passing away of the old Mughal nobility a class emerged which could speak in the same language and across the country: not, however, a ruling class, but a subordinate class, and one which spoke the language of rights instead of privileges. The language in which they demanded their rights was the English language. Those who spoke this language were also capable of forming public associations and of maintaining their proceedings in English. They were capable of negotiating politics and of providing leaders (both new-fangled things). They created various political associations especially in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Poona.<sup>14</sup>

Among this the Indian Association of Calcutta assumed some importance. However despite representation from different parts of the country it turned out to be a largely Bengali gathering which failed to attract the foremost public men of the country. But it discussed questions agitating the 'national mind'. This 'beginning of a great experiment' was further hoped would become an annual event. But that did not happen. The Indian Association could only organize its second national conference two years later, just when the Congress held its maiden session. That the two national conventions discussed the same issues reflected the unity of concerns among educated Indians. But their meeting separately showed want of concerted action among them.<sup>15</sup>

Exposing the diversity of interests between the rulers and the ruled these middle class fostered 'citizen like conduct' and created an ever widening public sphere.<sup>16</sup> These issues related to the employment

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>15</sup> Sudhir Chandra, "Subjects' Citizenship Dream", in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *op.cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>16</sup> Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article", in Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas Mackay Kellner, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.137. Habermas says, "By the public sphere we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to

of Indians in the higher branches of the administration and freedom of thought and speech-especially freedom of Press; and Indian representation in legislative and executive decision making. The necessity of efforts to acquire a voice in the country's administration and governance was also stressed as Indians were obliged to bear witness the economic exploitation of their country. About the Parliamentary Government and India *The Hindu* wrote in 1881, "India is a football between the two political factions of England; without enjoying any of the advantages of party government, she is subject to all its disadvantages. She has no voice in the election of the members of parliament, and the motives, therefore of English statesmen in administering the affairs of India are simply those of justice and humanity. England is not bound to us by the ties of a common nationality or a common religion; on the other hand too many of those

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all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body. Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion (that is with the guarantee of assembly and association and the freedom to express their opinions) about matters of general interest. In a large public body, this kind of communication requires specific means for transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. Today newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere. We speak of the political public sphere in contrast, for instance to the literary one, when public discussion deals with objects connected to the activity of the state".

Rajeev Bhargava, "Introduction", in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.14-16.."By public sphere I mean a common space in principle accessible to all, which anyone may enter with views on the common good realized wholly or partially...Persons may bring into the public domain only those issues which potentially concern everybody. There is all the difference in the world between articulation a wrong done to me and a wrong that affects all of us. The public sphere is depersonalized and has a strong dimension of impartiality to it. A public sphere consist of inter communicating spaces available in principle to everybody and into which people may bring issues that concern everyone. They do not command the official apparatus of the state. However because they seek to influence decision making processes of the state they maintain a permanent relation with it. For voluntary association in civil society an engagement with state is only a last resort. The public sphere is outside the institutions of the state but directly concerned with what occurs there".

whom she deposes to exercise her immediate power over us are actuated by the strong impulses of an assumed superiority in civilization and morals.....To us a more independence in the matter of Government seems to be the only remedy".<sup>17</sup>

So well was the lesson learnt that the 'first reform' that the Indian National Congress demanded in the year of its birth was 'to have the power to tax ourselves'. The reform, the Congress explicated, meant that Indians wished 'to have the actual government of India transferred from England to India under the simple controlling power of the Secretary of State and of Parliament'.<sup>18</sup>

Initially, the pattern of Indians to air grievances was through the Press and to petition the authorities. Though European newspapers were exclusive and often uninterested in native society, a number of Indians subscribed to journals such as *The Englishman*, *The Banaras Recorder*, or *The Delhi Gazette*, and the information they purveyed was quickly diffused among the Indian literates. Letters from Indians indirectly critical of the company rule, expatriate attitudes and the princely states were quite often printed in their pages.<sup>19</sup> After years of spasmodic activities organized around specific grievances, there was realization of the need for a permanent agency and this led to the formation of political association, initially in the presidency towns, that were expected to act as regular watchdogs. The presence of non-official Britons, their somewhat antagonistic relationship with the ruling East India Company and their insistence on having the same freedom of the

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<sup>17</sup> G.Kasturi, (ed.), *The Hindu Speaks*, Bombay, 1978, p.15.

<sup>18</sup> *Proceedings of the First Indian National Congress* (Bombay, 1886), NMML, New Delhi, pp.33-37.

<sup>19</sup> C.A Bayly, "Colonial Rule and the Informational Order in South Asia", in Nigel Crook (ed.), *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, New Delhi, 2001, p.303.

Press that they were used to back 'home' acted as a fillip to Indians incipient public activities.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Sudhir Chandra, "Subjects' Citizenship Dream", in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 114-115.

## To Curtail Public Opinion

At the same time the public sphere remained important to the politics of colonial rule too. The colonial state sought to legitimate authority through theatrical public rituals and performance, through durbars and public appearances; it sought to incorporate the public in the practices of domination, responding to public debates on legislation and issues of public concern; it sought to know public opinion, feel the pulse of the people, by finding in the countryside, monitoring publications and keeping a watch on public spaces; and finally it struggled to shape public opinion through propaganda and education. But projects of knowledge were implicated in the practices of surveillance. By the mid-nineteenth century *The Reports of the Vernacular Press in India* had collated, translated and documented the ideas expressed every year in the vernacular press in the different provinces.<sup>21</sup>

In this regard special orders were issued in August 1886 to Chief Secretaries of all Presidencies from the office of the officiating Secretary to the Government of India at Simla. The order asked to submit a report giving a review of the most noteworthy discussions in all the vernacular newspapers published in the Presidency and containing any information and observations which Local Government may wish to lay before the Government of India as to the tone and character of the Vernacular Press. It also asked to add to this report, a statement giving the particulars regarding all the vernacular papers worthy of notice published in the Presidency.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Neeladri Bhattacharya “Notes Towards a Conception of the Colonial Public”, in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp.155-156.

<sup>22</sup> *Letter from A.P MacDonnell*, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Home Dept. (Public) to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 1886, TNA.

Through the evidence collected in these reports the states looked at themselves through the eyes of the public and thought of the ways in which to respond to public opinion and define the limits of public debate.<sup>23</sup> The state sought to censor and control that public opinion through Censorship Act, proscription of literature, arrests and threats. In the 1870's a number of Acts were passed for the control of public opinion, such as the Dramatic Performances Bill 1876 and the Act for the Better Control of Publications in Oriental Languages (1878), also known as the Vernacular Press Act.<sup>24</sup> It was at a time when the Government was viewing the vernacular newspapers elsewhere in India with doubt and suspect that Malabar witnessed the birth of its first vernacular newspaper *Kerala Pathrika* in 1884 and the next one *Kerala Sanchari* in 1888.

### **In Malabar too**

The progenitors of *Kerala Pathrika* and *Kerala Sanchari* were also the middle class leaders that emerged just like anywhere in India. They too had the realization of the expanding and exclusive Indian public space. Infact the ripples of the associations emerged in the metropolitan towns of India had their effect in Malabar too. Even the very inspiration behind the birth of *Kerala Pathrika* was by virtue of the participation of its editor Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon in the meeting of the Indian Association of Calcutta held there in 1884. Many of those who participated in that meeting were editors too. It included the main leaders of the early Congress like Dadabai Navaroji, Mahadeva

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<sup>23</sup> Neeladri Bhattacharya "Notes Towards a Conception of the Colonial Public", *op.cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

Govinda Ranade, Surendranath Sen, Surendranath Banerji, G.Subrahmanya Iyer and so on who were also editors.<sup>25</sup>

Thus it can be seen that when considering the relation of the birth of nationalities in India with the struggle against the colonial domination, the modern Kerala scene is a constituent to the broader Indian spectrum.<sup>26</sup> A public sphere emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Kerala, in which public interest became the key concern, and issues came to be debated in its terms. But this must not be taken to indicate the presence of a full fledged civil society of individuals. Rather it refers to the formation of many fora of discussion in which participants who had acquired certain skills attempted rational deliberation on issues and themes that were identified for limited reasons often as public.<sup>27</sup>

The propagation of the English education naturally facilitated the consolidation of national opinion and the free exchange of ideas. The great treasures of west were opened to the people of this country, which undoubtedly accelerated intellectual growth and cultural development.<sup>28</sup> English education and the principles of equality of men brought into the minds of lower castes a new sense of personality, importance and vitality. This kindled the fire of nationalism and inspired the quest for independence, which ultimately paved the way for self-government.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> V.M Korath, "Pathrangalum Desheeyaprasthanavum", (Mal), in *Kerala Press Academy Souvenir-1985*, Kochi.

<sup>26</sup> B.Rajeevan, "Cultural Formation of Kerala" in P.J Cherian (ed.), *Essays on the Cultural Formation of Kerala*, Kerala State Gazetteer, Vol. iv, Part ii, Kerala State Gazetteers Department, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> J.Devika, *En-gendering Individuals: The Language of Re-forming Early Twentieth Century Keralam*, Hyderabad, 2007, p.6.

<sup>28</sup> Regional Record of Survey Committee, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol. I, Trivandrum, 1970, p.75.

<sup>29</sup> M.J Koshy, *The Genesis of Political Consciousness in Kerala*, Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum 1972, p.19.

The three basic determinants of 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial middle-class life are education, salaried job and print culture.<sup>30</sup> In Malabar which was under direct British rule lower classes had the freedom to achieve progress by way of education and employment. But in the Princely state of Travancore when there wasn't any Ezhava officer getting a monthly salary of Rs.5 there were dozens of Thiyyas (Ezhavas) in Malabar holding major positions in the administration.<sup>31</sup>

Thus in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the middleclass (intellectual class) was born, who re-manifested the tradition basing upon the colonial symbols like English education, religion, moral values, customs, tradition, individual characteristics, costume styles etc.<sup>32</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the public sphere had entirely emerged as the space in which new forces contended with established socio-cultural and political forces for hegemony. It was an arena of 'contested meanings' from the beginning; more importantly, it did not guarantee equal access to all and indeed excluded many groups. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the privileged groups which seemed able to harness public life to their ends were largely the modern educated or those who had gained early access to and familiarity with modern ideas and institutions.<sup>33</sup> The mainstream of social reformation movements were created by the ideals upheld by these people. The consecration of the temple in Aruvippuram by Sri Narayana Guru in 1888, the publication of the novel *Indulekha*

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<sup>30</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, , New Delhi, 1997, p.232, Tithi Bhattacharya, *The Sentinels of Culture, Class, Education and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal (1848-85)*, New Delhi, 2005, p.34.

<sup>31</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *Kerala Patrhrapravarthanam:Suvarnadhyanyangal*,(Mal), Kottayam, 1999, p.145 , Murkoth Kunhappa, "Kerala Samskarika Purogathiyil Achadiyude Panku", (Mal), *Sahithyalokam*, September, 1973.

<sup>32</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Malayala Saahithyathinte Samskaarika Bhoomishasthram" (Mal), in M.N Vijayan(ed), *Nammude Saahithyam, Nammude Samooham* (Mal), Vol. I, Thrissur, 2000, p.628.

<sup>33</sup> J.Devika, *op.cit.*, p.7.

written by O.Chandu Menon in 1889, the presentation of the *Marumakkathaya* Marriage Bill by Sir C.Sankaran Nair in 1890 and the Malayali Memorial in 1891 were the explosive events that transformed the state set out by the above group of people.<sup>34</sup>

The new regulations that those who are competent can study and get employment and thereby achieve progress in fact torn up the monopoly of caste into pieces. The origin of the printing presses created an impression that the treasure house of knowledge and scholarship is not a private property but in turn that of the public; when journalism and book publication became lucrative career, new institutions arose to encourage the writers instead of the old royal fora.<sup>35</sup>

Both the peasants and the middle class of that time became part of the national political agitation which got momentum in all India level. ‘Home Rule Leagues’ were organized all over Malabar. There a situation came into being in which Congress Committees and Tenancy Committees tried to work together.<sup>36</sup> Thus the entrance of the middle class into the political life of Malabar enabled the people who were leaderless after Pazhassi Raja to acquire political leadership through the national movement.

Along with the hike in literacy and print, reading habit also increased on a commensurate level. P.Narayanan Nair elucidates the organic growth of papers along with the creation of public opinion during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. “I was privileged to listen and understand about the First World War when I was a student in the High School. Our neighbour Kalathu Narayanan Nair was an employee of Kodungallur

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<sup>34</sup> B.Rajeevan, “Cultural Formation of Kerala” in P.J Cherian (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.24.

<sup>35</sup> E.M.S., *Sampoorna Kruthikal*, Sanchika 9, Trivandrum, p.264.

<sup>36</sup> B.Rajeevan, “Cultural Formation of Kerala” in P.J Cherian (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.31.

Taluk office. He came to Killimangalam every alternate week. Then he used to bring certain Malayalam newspapers too. One was the *Suprabhatham* newspaper edited by T.C Achutha Menon from Trichur. Sometimes he brought *Lokaprakasham* also. Although in them, there was such writing as bi-weekly and tri-weekly, for want of newsprint and other reasons in the war period, they were published only on and off. But Narayanan Nair had much interest in bringing all the issues of the papers available for him. In them, under the heading 'War News', the translations of the reports in English newspapers were carried. Majority of such reports were about the drowning of the ships, dropping of the bombs and firing of canons. On hearing about the arrival of Kalathu Narayanan Nair, the elders of the neighbourhoods would turn up in our porch. The aged people as well as the young were equally interested in listening to the war news. It was Sundarayyar master of third standard who gave vigour and vitality for reading and discussion. He had some knowledge about the nations of Europe. ...Even though the hearts of many of the Indians were brimmed with British hatred they did not dare to express them overtly as they thought that none could defeat the British Empire in which the sun never sets. These were the kind of dialogues during the discussion. But many of them nursed a secret respect for Germany.

After the reading of the elders, the papers were left at home itself. I used to read them then. The ladies were also very much interested to know the war news. The literate ladies used to come to home and read by themselves. But I had to read out for the illiterate. When will this war stop, which has become a curse was the frequent doubt they raised. Consequent to the war since the shipping was paralyzed, the prices hiked for essential commodities. Rice did not come from Burma. The German submarine Emden which roamed in those days through the

Indian Ocean was a nightmare for the Indians. Many ships were drowned. Madras was bombed. Canon was fired at Bombay. Planes flew near Cochin. Reports like these which disseminated then, became the cause for scare among the natives...Many inhuman incidents also occurred in North India during this time. After the Jalianwala massacre in Amritsar, the British soldiers forced the locals to crawl along the road on their belly. This kind of cruelty of the British was spread throughout the land through the newspapers”.<sup>37</sup>

Robbin Jeffrey also notes the peculiar feature of reading habit of this period. “The demand for reading material had created its own solutions: A wide network of public libraries, reading rooms, schools etc. helps the spread of reading habits. Above all the new reading facilities proved the fact that wealth and urbanization are not a necessary condition for the development of reading culture”.<sup>38</sup>

It is the snowballing of the new spaces created due to the colonial modernity<sup>39</sup> that actuated the national-revolutionary movements which indeed started in late 19<sup>th</sup> century and got intensified from 1920’s. The attitude represented by Madhavan in *Indulekha* is indeed a reflection of

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<sup>37</sup> P.Narayanan Nair, *Aranoottandiloode*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1973, pp.41-52.

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Robin Jeffrey, “Culture of Daily Newspapers in India”, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, 4h April 1987, P.608.

<sup>39</sup> Rajan Gurukkal, “Development Experience of Colonial Keralam”, in M.A Oommen, (ed.), *Re-thinking Development: Kerala’s Developmental Experience*, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1999, p.96. Rajan Gurukkal says the term ‘modernity’ is used to refer to the profound process of cultural transformation which started with the introduction of printing and went on to develop the use of printing and subsequent communications media into a major way of organizing knowledge and culture”. Dilip M.Menon, “ A Place Elsewhere: Lower Class Malayalam Novels of the Nineteenth Century”, in Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia, (eds.), *India’s Literary History*, New Delhi, 2004, pp.485-86. Dillip M.Menon writes what characterizes colonial modernity in India is the specific contradiction between a rhetoric of universal modernity and a practice of accommodation with existing faultiness of power, tradition and custom.

the middle class attitude of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Here Madhavan when criticizing the colonial exploitation he absorbs and contains the cultural values nurtured by the colonialists. In the next stage the middle class group employed the colonial modernity as an instrument of resistance. The scientific awareness created as a result of colonial cultural sphere, rationalism, atheism etc. coerced a section to reject the Indian feudal traditions.<sup>40</sup>

During the last years of 1930's tremendous changes occurred both in the political and cultural spheres of Malabar. In that period anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, national and democratic movements strengthened in an unprecedented fashion all over Malabar. Modern value concepts which were confined to the upper strata of the society in the early phase now began to spread to the lower layers of society. In addition to the middle class, various other sections consciously entered into the mainstream of public life. Consequently political and cultural spheres became more popular based and it acquired democratic character.<sup>41</sup>

As a result "a public sphere was constituted in Kerala due to the collective and comprehensive changes that occurred in the various phases of the colonial period. It was constituted by the blending of various factors like political parties, public organizations, community organizations, clubs, councils, newspapers, periodicals, publications etc. The basis of these public spheres was the dissemination of the written word. The number of those reading and writing Malayalam also increased. Short stories, poems, novels etc. were written in plenty. Also came out so many translations and imitations. Science, Spirituality,

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<sup>40</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Malayaala Saahithyathinte Samskaarika Bhoomishasthram", *op.cit.*, p.629.

<sup>41</sup> B.Rajeevan, "Cultural Formation of Kerala" in P.J Cherian (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.32.

Gandhism, Marxism etc. were written and read. An atmosphere was born which was reverberated by the debates, dialogues and criticisms that appeared in the periodicals”.<sup>42</sup>

### **In Print and Journalism**

The inventions and development of printing opened new horizons in education and in the communication of ideas.<sup>43</sup> The rise of the ‘print culture’ at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had considerably promoted the process of the development of community identities and a public sphere in Kerala.<sup>44</sup> The dissemination of printing led to the beginning of newspapers and magazines. The evolution of press in Malabar as a communication medium was similar to that of the developments in Europe, in phased growth. Elizabeth Eisenstein records that in Europe the monthly gazette was succeeded by the weekly and finally by the daily paper.<sup>45</sup> Just like that *Kerala Pathrika* (1884) was started as a fortnightly.<sup>46</sup> Then it became a weekly. *Kerala Sanchari* (1888) was started as a weekly right from the beginning.<sup>47</sup> *Manorama* (1891) was started as a fortnightly on the second and fourth Mondays of every month.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> K.N Ganesh, ‘Malayala Saahithyathinte Samskaarika Bhoomishasthram’ *op.cit.*, pp.628-631.

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, Cambridge, 1980, p.28.

<sup>44</sup> G.Arunima, “Imagining Communities-differently: Print, language and the ‘public sphere’ in Colonial Kerala”, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 43:1, 2006, pp.63-75.

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth.Eisenstein, *op.cit*, p.131

<sup>46</sup> *Correspondence* 639 dated 18<sup>th</sup> June 1886, RAC.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Champadan Vijayan, “Pathrapravarthanavum Sahithyavum”, (Mal), in Chummar Choondal and S.K Pottekkatt, (eds.), *Malayala Pathracharithram*, Kochi, 1977.

Kunhirama Menon resisted through *Kerala Pathrika* boldly, the octopus of corruption rampant in the bureaucracy. He was successful in intertwining journalism and nationalism by his bi-forked approach of tethering together his paper *Kerala Pathrika* and Indian National Congress. *Kerala Pathrika* in which Kunhirama Menon expressed opinions freely regarding political and social events got wide acclaim and reception throughout Kerala.<sup>49</sup>

*Kerala Pathrika* was a role model in expressing public opinion without fear or fervour. It is a fact that the creation of public opinion naturally will control the limits and character of power politics. During this period (late 19<sup>th</sup> century) itself there were efforts from the part of the government to control the papers. ..The press-book registration act had brought the printing presses in British India under the control of the Government. By this Act the Government was empowered to punish the editors and publishers and to confiscate the publications and the press where it was printed. The Vernacular Newspaper Act introduced by the Governor-General Lord Lytton had given powers to the Collector or Police Commissioner to enforce the withdrawal of news which they feel unfit. They had also powers to punish any such paper unwilling to do so.<sup>50</sup> Kunhirama Menon had to pay Rs.51 as fine for writing an article in *Kerala Pathrika*, criticizing the Government. It may be an incident first of its kind in which an editor in Malabar was penalized for the freedom of the press.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> V.Aravindakshan, “Malayala Sahithyathinte Adhunikeekaranam: Chila Prarambha Prachodanangal”, (Mal), in M.N Vijayan, (ed.), *Nammude Sahithyam Nammude Samooham-1901-2000*, Vol. II, Thrissur, 2000, p.29.

<sup>50</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum Achadi Yanthrangaludeyum Vyaapanathode Malayaliyude Saahithya Sankalpangalilum Bhashavyavaharangalilum Sambhavicha Maattangal” (Mal), in M.N Vijayan(ed.), *Nammude Saahithyam Nammude Samooham*, Vol. I, Thrissur, 2000, p.483.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.482.

*Kerala Pathrika* attacked the highhandedness of the District Police Superintendent Faucet, which was unimaginable for a newspaper in those days. It espoused the cause of tenancy movement and marriage reforms and criticized sectarian institutions. It resisted the double dealing of the British by criticizing the sentence in the Crawford case. To him the press remained an institution of the public itself, effective in the manner of a mediator and intensifier of public discussion, no longer mere organ for the spreading of news only.<sup>52</sup>

*Kerala Sanchari* had also more or less similar motives. Poovadan Raman, the owner of *Kerala Sanchari* wanted to make the people aware of the new constitutional innovations and the rights and duties of the public enshrined in them. Also he wanted the public to imbue with novel thoughts and thereby to lead them to modernity.<sup>53</sup> Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar and Murkoth Kumaran played significant roles in achieving the public commitment of the above papers. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century *Mithavadi* made a great stride in fighting for the dignity of all suppressed communities. As newspapers filled with ardent national fervour *Mathrubhoomi* and *Al-Ameen* also exercised their duty even at the expense of their existence.

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<sup>52</sup> Jurgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article", *op.cit.*, p.140.

<sup>53</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1982, p.147.

## **Aims and Objectives**

1. To trace the connection between education and literacy and the emergence of reading public in Malabar. Founding of an English newspaper and the evolution of an English readership before vernacular dailies and vernacular readership is to be traced. Also emergence of early newspapers and their function in relation to their period is to be studied with the help of various archival sources, Government records and interviews.
2. To trace the part played by the early newspapers in manifesting a public sphere in Malabar. A comparative study of the various issues highlighted by the newspapers would serve this purpose. An in-depth study of this aspect will make it clear whether the early newspapers of Malabar offered a space for the different groups to express their views through debates and dialogues, setting the stage for the evolution of public opinion.
3. To trace the genealogy of print capitalism in Malabar. By analyzing this aspect the hardships faced by the early editors and their perseverance in achieving their various goals can be revealed.
4. To analyse the contrasting and contradictory perspectives and outlooks of various newspapers and editors on the same issue.
5. To analyse the subjective opinions and objective aims of various editors and newspapers.
6. To analyse the collective approach of early newspapers on common issues. An examination and evaluation of the treatment of Malabar Tenancy Bill of 1930 is made here a case study.

## **Study Region-Malabar**

Malabar was a separate area geographically and administratively from ancient times onwards. During the British period Malabar continued as a different District under Madras Presidency, separated from Travancore and Cochin in many aspects. It was here the missionaries started the first newspapers in the vernacular and created a paradigm for the successors. Calicut, the administrative headquarters of Malabar District was the birth place of the first English newspaper *Malabar Spectator* and the first modern vernacular newspaper *Kerala Pathrika*. It is here Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon who is aptly called the ‘father of modern Malayalam Journalism’, laid the foundation not only for *Kerala Pathrika* but also for Congress Movement and thereby to the creation of public opinion articulating journalism, politics and nationalism. During this period numerous newspapers and journals have budded but only a few of them could overcome the test of time. Therefore in this study only those newspapers that have played a major role are included.

The beginning of the missionary newspapers in 1847 is indeed historic. From then onwards the growth and evolution of the newspapers as a separate realm continued until the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1930’s the nationalist sphere of Kerala took up a turning point with the Salt Satyagraha and the subsequent political ramifications of the nationalist movement. Therefore the present study is confined to the period from 1847 to 1930.

## **The Scheme of Study**

The present study lays its thrust on the early newspapers and the part played by them in the formation of public sphere in Malabar. Since

the area of print capitalism and the emergence of public sphere are very extensive, to make the study effective and focused, it is limited in seven chapters. The chapter-wise elucidation of the thesis is arranged in the following way.

**Chapter 1:** The introductory chapter deals with the evolution and general growth of civil society and public spaces which led to the nurture of public opinion and public sphere in India, Kerala and Malabar.

**Chapter 2:** It deals with the growth of education, literacy and the subsequent rise of various communities subverting the Brahminical hegemony. This enabled the lower castes to achieve new social status. In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century English literate was very vibrant in Malabar when compared to vernacular. The presence of the first newspaper of this time *Malabar Spectator* is indeed self explanatory of the above observation.

**Chapter 3:** In the first phase of literacy, the journalistic scenario of Malabar was under the sway of English newspapers even much before the vernacular newspapers could make grip. Then English educated people were the subscribers and readers of newspapers. The impact of new literacy had a spill over effect on Malayalam literates also. During 1893 there were five vernacular newspapers published from Calicut. Various social groups though separated hitherto, by virtue of reading news in the pages of papers, came to know and understand each other. Thus the newspapers were able to play a role in shaping the public sphere and set up a new network of communication. To get popularity and wide audience print capitalists conducted dialogues. Due to further education, literacy and print, the number of readers and the circulation of newspapers increased.

**Chapter 4:** The first two missionary journals *Rajyasamacharam* and *Paschimodayam* were aimed at proselytizing works and colonial subjectivity. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the feudal authority was replaced by wealthy class who came from various castes and they were financially strong enough to start industrial enterprises. Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon is the visionary who started the first newspaper *Kerala Pathrika* from Calicut. Due to the continuous work of *Kerala Pathrika* a style brimming with vigour and vitality was evolved in Malayalam. In all the endeavours of Kunhirama Menon, his right hand was Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar. Adv.Poovadan Raman wanted to have the people of Malabar knowledge in judicial procedures, to enable them to fight against corruption and injustice. For that he started *Kerala Sanchari* with Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar as the Editor. Adv.C.Krishnan and later Murkoth Kumaran succeeded him.

**Chapter 5:** The newspapers like *Kerala Pathrika*, *Kerala Sanchari* and *Manorama* that emerged in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century actively continued in the new century too. Among the new ventures in the new century the *Mithavadi* under Murkoth Kumaran was the first. It dealt with every branch of the upcoming science and every device that made the life modern. It was ceased in 1908. Kumaran later edited almost a dozen newspapers including *Gajakesari*. After an interval of five years *Mithavadi* resurrected under Adv. C. Krishnan. He branded it as a magazine of the Thiyya community. Krishnan and *Mithavadi* raised the voice whenever injustice against Thiyyas was noticed. He believed that if India got independence the Congress would come to power. This will result in the slavery of the lower classes since Congress is led by upper classes. *Mithavadi* was followed by newspapers like *Mathrubhoomi*, *Al-Ameen*, *Kerala Kesari* etc. which propagated nationalism and fought for the eradication of caste discrimination as well as blind beliefs in the

communities. In fact *Mathrubhoomi* and *Kerala Kesari* were started to give apt reply to the anti-nationalistic view of *Mithavadi* and *Gajakesari*. *Mathrubhoomi*, *Al-Ameen* and *Kerala Kesari* tried to identify themselves with the tenants and steered the tenancy movement. The newspapers like *Athmavidya Kahalam* of Vagbhadananda Gurudevan simultaneously supported national movement and tried for the reformation in Thiyya community. Though published from Trichur, which was a part of the princely state of Cochin, newspapers like *Mangalodayam*, *Yogakshemam* and *Unni Namboothiri* had considerable circulation and far reaching influence in Malabar. It was these journals that stood for the cause of the *janmis* during the agitations of tenants and enactment of Tenancy Act of Malabar.

**Chapter 6:** During the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century many issues of debating nature emerged. Tenancy, marriage reforms, prohibition, community school etc. were the subjects of heated debates and exchanges among the public. In all these issues the contemporary newspapers played considerable role. But here as a case study the Tenancy problem alone is attempted. This chapter tries to vindicate the campaigns made by various newspapers standing on opposite sides during various stages of Malabar Tenancy Bill which was finally passed in 1930. To unearth the gravity and depth of the nature of those debates and dialogues which led to the emergence of public opinion, the reports in newspapers are carried in full length as far as possible.

**Chapter 7:** The concluding chapter attempts to lay a theoretical framework for the evolution of public opinion and public sphere within the ambit of the present study.

**Sources:** A study of the early newspapers of Malabar that helped to shape the public opinion and thereby to create a public sphere comes under the purview of this work. Therefore a lot of literary and archival

sources, back volumes of various newspapers and periodicals, Government documents etc. have been used much to make the study effective. Most of the archival sources in and outside Kerala including Tamil Nadu Archives (hereafter TNA) at Chennai and Regional Archives Calicut (hereafter RAC) have been consulted and used in proper places to substantiate the observations. Many of the above records are kept in manuscript form. The proceedings of the Home-Judicial Departments, Revenue and Legislative Departments, the back volumes of some issues of relevant newspapers which are preserved in the form of micro-film in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (hereafter NMML) New Delhi, have been extensively used. Besides, the personal diaries of G.Sankaran Nair and A.C Kannan Nair preserved there, were also helpful for the present study. To make the study more authentic interviews with more than a dozen scholars have been made. Autobiography of K.V.M, Theruvath Raman, biographies of Murkoth Kumaran, C.Krishnan, Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon etc. could shed much light on the present study. Also numerous articles in souvenirs, supplements and periodicals have also been used.

None of the original copies of *Kerala Pathrika* is found anywhere in Kerala or outside. The Madras Native Newspaper Reports (hereafter MNNPR) in TNA and the Native Newspaper Reports preserved in NMML, New Delhi are the only source. Therefore consultation of these reports and the cross checking of the same with the contemporary literature and documents is the system mainly adopted in this study.

Recent transfer of a large collection of documents related to British Malabar from TNA to RAC has made this study more meaningful. The files of the Revenue, Education, Public and Law Departments transferred in the above arrangement helped the study to be more effective. Also the back volumes of the newspapers like *Kerala*

*Sanchari, Mithavadi, Al-Ameen, Yogakshemam, Janmi, Unni Namboothiri, Atmavidyakahalam* etc. kept in various personal libraries, institutions and public libraries have also been referred.

### **Pattern of Documentation**

The pattern of documentation followed in this thesis is mainly according to the conventional method. The Latin abbreviation *Ibid* (abbreviation for Latin term *ibidem* meaning ‘in the same place’) is used to mention the book just referred to before. The Latin abbreviation *op.cit.* (abbreviation for Latin term *opera citato* meaning ‘the work cited’) is used to indicate the work which has already been cited in the same chapter. The non-English words used in the study are italicized and their corresponding meanings in English are given in the text/glossary in the end. Some information though not inevitable but may illuminate the study is given as appendix in the end.

### **Review of Literature**

Print and public sphere have been the subjects of study, by many. But scholarly works regarding the evolution of print and journalism in Kerala are a few. Though these books are of-course profound and scholarly they lack historical cohesiveness. They are very similar in the style and presentation. Also they do not have much of a critical and analytical approach pertaining to the emergence of public opinion and the role played by the newspapers in manifesting the public sphere.

*Kerala Pathra Pravarthana Charithram* (Journalistic History of Kerala) by Puthuppalli Raghavan is more or less a chronological narration of the newspapers of Kerala. It provides a lot of information and insight. But it is more journalistic in approach.

*Kerala Pathra Pravarthanam: Suvarnadhyayangal* (The Golden Chapters of Kerala Journalism) by G.Priyadarshanan is of course a

store-house of knowledge. He exposes so many new pieces of information by hard work and research but many are not substantiated by documental evidences.

*Malayala Pathrathinte Katha* (The Story of Malayalam Newspapers) by Perunna K.N Nair is brief when compared to the above works. Though it is an attempt to trace the development of journalism in Kerala, it does not describe as to how the interventions of newspapers resulted in the formation of public opinion.

*Samskara Tharangini* (Sea of Culture) and *Samskara Navoathanam* (Cultural Renaissance) by Murkoth Kunhappa are also great works more or less tracing the growth of Malayalam journalism in a commendable manner. But the book is written in relation to the growth of the newspaper *Malayala Manorama*.

The evolution of print and its multifarious ramifications have been the thread of discussion and study of so many scholars outside Kerala. Because of its research relevance we witness new studies also coming up now.

*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* by Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* by Benedict Anderson, *Print, Folklore and Nationalism in Colonial South India* by Stuart Blackburn, *Language, Politics, Elites and Public Sphere : Western India under Colonialism* by Veena Naregal, *Newspaper Revolution: Capitalism, politics and the Indian Language Press* by Robin Jeffrey etc. are scholarly works that have been made mostly on the context of people other than Kerala and Malayalam. But the insights and inferences they provide are of much value and help in the present

study about the manifestation of public opinion and evolution of public sphere in Malabar under the influence of early newspapers.

## CHAPTER II

### RESURGENCE OF THE DESERTED

Compared with most of India, Kerala had an unusually high proportion of literate people in the traditional period.<sup>1</sup> The culture of Kerala in the pre-British period had fostered wide-spread school-going.<sup>2</sup> The upper-caste Hindus had an excellent organized institutional arrangement for educating their wards, especially the male ones.

In the descending order of literacy the position was like this: Brahmin, Kshatriya and Ambalavasi followed by Nair and then Ezhava and the so called slave-castes. The Christians were, of-course, ahead of the Muslims and in-fact right behind the Nairs.<sup>3</sup> Caste rituals, pollution etc. were very predominant in those days. Malayalis distinguished themselves in two kinds of pollution viz; by people whose very approach within certain defined distances causes atmospheric pollution to those of the higher castes and by people who only pollute by actual contact. The following were the prescribed distances at which each caste must stand, viz: the Nayadi (dog-eaters)- 72 feet, the Pulayan (agrarian slave)- 64 feet, the Kanisan (astrologer)-36 feet and the Mukkuvan (fisherman)-24 feet.<sup>4</sup>

A Brahmin should take bath if he happens to touch outsiders. He cannot step into the household of the Sudras. For Carpenters 14 feet and for Cherumas 64 feet were the distances to get rid of the pollution.<sup>5</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Gough, "Literacy in Kerala", in Jack Goody, (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, London, 1968, p.151.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Wellbeing*, New Delhi, 1993, p.58.

<sup>3</sup> V.K Ramachandran, *Kerala's Developmental Achievements: A Review*, I.G.I.D.R, New Delhi, 1978, p.47.

<sup>4</sup> William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1995, p.118.

<sup>5</sup> K.V.M, *Aatmakatha*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1966, p.7.

the novel *Saraswathi Vijayam* there is the depiction of ‘Kuberan Namboothiri’, the villainous character examining the Cherumas, keeping them at a distance of about 64 feet.<sup>6</sup> Among the second class are ranked Muhammadans, Christians and foreign Hindus who defile only by touch....Pollution, however acquired, by the near approach of a low-caste man or by touch, can only be washed out by complete immersion in water.<sup>7</sup>

Although the Nairs were a privileged class, they also had to suffer caste evil like un-approachability. The Brahmins and the Kshatriyas kept the Nairs at some distance apart while talking. If they touched a Nair they had to take bath.<sup>8</sup> Nair should stand 16 feet, Ezhava 32 feet and Pulayas 64 feet away from Brahmins.<sup>9</sup> The whole framework of Hinduism was for the comfort and exaltation of Brahmins.<sup>10</sup> The authority and power vested with the Namboothiris to put anyone to death on the spot, those who did not obey even their cruel orders, and the ease they enjoyed in society made them pleasure lovers.<sup>11</sup>

The Brahmins had a monopoly of learning for many centuries and doubtless this was one of the ways in which they managed to secure such commanding influence in the country.<sup>12</sup> Brahmins held monopoly over knowledge during the feudal period particularly in important fields like astronomy and its baser form astrology, political science,

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<sup>6</sup> Potheri Kunhamboo, *Saraswathi Vijayam*, (Mal), Kottayam, 2004, p.34.

<sup>7</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.118.

<sup>8</sup> Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1964, p.105.

<sup>9</sup> M.S Nair, *Vagbhadananda guruvum Navoathanavum*, (Mal), Trivandrum, 1998, p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Jacob Canter Visscher, *Letters from Malabar*, Madras, 1862, p.68.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Buchanan, *Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*, Vol. ii, translated by C.K Kareem, 1981, p.325.

<sup>12</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.108.

mathematics etc. Sanskrit language and the written word were some methods employed to retain their authority. Sanskrit was a secret code that prevented knowledge from spreading among the lower castes.<sup>13</sup>

A. Ayyappan comments on these customs, “In Kerala there was the most pernicious ritual method of keeping the lower caste constantly at a distance of several yards from the person, residences and institutions of the higher castes, the economic method of preventing them from owning land with severe occupancy rights and the intellectual method of excluding them from all sources of knowledge enshrined in the Sanskrit language”.<sup>14</sup> This is very clear in the portrayal of the character Kuberan Namboothiri, in the novel *Saraswathi Vijayam* who furiously asks the Cherumas who studied writing and singing in the *ezhuthupalli* (the traditional school) of the *Saiv* (white man), “As per rule you are not allowed to learn writing. If you learn writing starvation will be the result, not only for you but elsewhere in the land. Don’t you see the decreasing rain fall? Also don’t you see thunder and lightning too much now? Will it not come, if people do against caste rules? What these abominable white people are doing?”<sup>15</sup>

The Brahmins made sure that as long as the lower classes remained ignorant they were submissive. The lower castes had no option but to accept the suzerainty of the Brahmins to escape from his wrath. Even the Kings had to pay respect to the Brahmins. They ranked virtually above the Kings and were to some extent above and outside the political system of the kingdoms. The rulers were dependent on them for

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<sup>13</sup> Shibu Muhammed, “A Critical Enquiry into Popular Journalism in Kerala with Reference to Malayalam Newspapers and its History”, in *Calicut University Research Journal*, Vol.3, Issue 1, July 2002, p. 106.

<sup>14</sup> A.Ayyappan, *Social Revolution in a Kerala Village: A study in Cultural Change*, New Delhi, 1965, p.123.

<sup>15</sup> Potheri Kunhamboo, *op.cit.*, p.35.

the administration of justice. So they were in a position to exercise control over the rulers and enjoy a privileged position.<sup>16</sup>

The Brahmin students were usually educated from the institutions like *salais* (traditional school) and *madams* (monasteries from where education was imparted to Namboothiri boys). They also practised *gurukula* (traditional way of learning at the abode of the guru) type of education. The Brahmins became the absolute interpreter of the religious texts and thus they became the powerful class in the society. They seem to have embodied in the Sanskrit language, rules of life regulating their most trivial actions.<sup>17</sup> The occupational list of Kerala's traditional scholars shows that literacy was designed to conserve custom, to organize and sanction the feudal kingdom and to provide artistic entertainment and religious and philosophical enlightenment to the ruling castes.<sup>18</sup>

The lower class people learned reading, writing and arithmetic and also acquired some competence in agricultural and meteorological sciences through the medium of local languages. The latter type of education was to help the lower class in the practice of their traditional occupation, mainly cultivation of the land.<sup>19</sup> Indigenous institutions were rooted in pre-colonial social order, aimed at functional knowledge and vocational orientation corresponding to the caste hierarchy.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> R.N Yesudas, *People's Revolt in Travancore; A Backward Class Movement of Social Freedom*, Trivandrum, 1975, p.7.

<sup>17</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.119.

<sup>18</sup> Kathleen Gough, "Literacy in Kerala", in Jack Goody, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.141.

<sup>19</sup> P.R Gopinathan Nair, *Education and Economic Changes in Kerala*, C.D.S Trivandrum, 1978, p.28.

<sup>20</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Kerala", in K.N Ganesh, (ed.), *Culture and Modernity, Historical Explorations*, University of Calicut, 2004, p.178.

In those days generally everybody aimed at an education that caters to the need of doing *karyastha* (supervisor) job in the household and property of *janmis* (landlords). In that kind of educational system study of geography, history and arithmetic were enough. The knowledge that such and such *mana* (abode of Brahmin) has that much of area of *janmam* (hereditary property right of the landlord) land was their geography. The study of the stories and the heroic deeds of various *janmi* Namboothiripads and their predecessors was their history and the knowledge about the *paattam* (lease) share of each *janmi* was their arithmetic.<sup>21</sup> The Nair students were educated at the *kalari* (the traditional school for martial arts). In the *kalaris* instructions were given both in warfare and letters.<sup>22</sup> The Ezhavas had also their own *ezhuthupallis* (the traditional school).<sup>23</sup> *Ezhuthupallis* provided education in reading, writing, preliminary arithmetic and a smattering of calendrical science.<sup>24</sup>

There were also vast sections of the population at the lowest stratum of society belonging to the agrarian slave class who received little education of any kind other than that handed down to them from generation to generation by word of mouth.<sup>25</sup> By denying right to education to the Sudras, the Brahmins could easily suppress them and exploit their services for the benefit of all the other divisions of society.<sup>26</sup> But there were exceptions. Even certain sections of the

<sup>21</sup> K.V.M, *op.cit.*, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> P.K.S Raja, *Medieval Kerala*, Calicut, 1966, p. 248.

<sup>23</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1975, p. 29.

<sup>24</sup>

K.N Ganesh, "Literacy and Social Formation in Thiruvithamcore", in C.Balan, (ed.), *Reflections on Malabar: Society, Institution and Culture*, Mangalore, 2000, p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> P.R Gopinathan Nair, *op.cit.*, p 28.

<sup>26</sup> K.K Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1973, p.19.

backward communities like those belonging to the Ganaka caste were educationally advanced.<sup>27</sup> In those days the only one caste who had 100% literacy was Malayaas. The girls and boys of this community learnt writing.<sup>28</sup>

In the Mappila schools called *othupallis*, the local *mulla* or leader of the mosque taught children to recognize the Arabic letters, carved on wooden planks. He gave instruction in Malayalam grammar and syntax, logic, the traditions of the prophet, and the chanting of the Quran. The wealthier trading and landowning families employed tutors to educate their wealthier children. Some of these learned to speak and write Arabic fluently.<sup>29</sup>

Thus indigenous education had deep roots among various communities in Malabar. Since literacy was limited within a few communities, literature was also in their purview. During the medieval period majority of the books reflected the voluptuous life of the upper class people.<sup>30</sup>

### **Ezhuthachan- An Iconoclast**

The above kind of literary scenario of Kerala is seen drastically changed with the advent of the *kavithrayams* (three poets) namely Cherusseri, Ezhuthachan and Kunjan Nambiar. It is interesting to note that Ezhuthachan and Kunjan Nambiar did not belong to the Brahmin community. William Logan writes, “It was no less than a revolution when in the 17<sup>th</sup> century one Tunchath Ezhuthachan, a man of the Sudra

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<sup>27</sup> M.S.A Rao, *Social Movements and Social Transformation- A study of two backward class movements in India*, Delhi, 1987, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *op.cit.*, p.10.

<sup>29</sup> Kathleen Gough, “Literacy in Kerala”, in Jack Goody, (ed), *op.cit.*, p.138.

<sup>30</sup> Raghava Warriar and Rajan Gurukkal, *Kerala Charithram*, (Mal), Sukapuram, 1992, p.263.

caste boldly made an alphabet (the existing Malayalam one-derived chiefly from the *Grantha*-the Sanskrit alphabet of the Tamils, which permitted of the free use of Sanskrit in writing) and boldly set to work to render the chief Sanskrit poems in Malayalam....It was in consequence of his influence and success that Malayalam as a written language obtained its most recent development.”<sup>31</sup>

Thunchath Ezhuthachan wrote epics keeping a bird in front because the low caste people were supposed not to see Saraswathy, the Goddess of knowledge.<sup>32</sup> Actually Ezhuthachan is the Sri Narayana Guru of Nairs- the Guru who consecrated other gods for the Sudra Nairs.<sup>33</sup> The trio in fact, actuated a shift in the aesthetic realm by the presentation of stories related to the moral values and social criticisms which are palatable to the lower *savarna* castes like Nairs. This literature helped greatly towards the dissemination of knowledge. By the effective use of literature, Ezhuthachan was erecting a parallel power centre<sup>34</sup> at a time when Brahmins held sway over letters and literature. The Sanskrit literature was, after this, no longer a secret, and there was perhaps no part of South India where it was more studied by people of many castes during the eighteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Also the Malayalam script became the medium of literary Malayalam for high-caste Hindus, and gradually spread to the lower castes and the non-Hindus during the British period, especially with the popularization of printing after the mid-nineteenth century. The spread of government-sponsored schools

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<sup>31</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, pp.92-93.

<sup>32</sup> E.M.S Namboothiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhoomi*, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1981, p.53.

<sup>33</sup> M G.S Narayanan, “Adhinivesham vyavasaaya viplavam desheeyatha vijnana visphodanam”, (Mal), in Scaria Zakaria(ed.), *500 varshathe Keralam: Chila arivadayaalagal*, (Mal), Changanacherry, 1999, p.18.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>35</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, pp. 93-94.

during the British period also helped to gain universal acceptance for the Malayalam script.<sup>36</sup>

### **Sprouting of Colonialism and Modernity**

In Kerala the horizons of this knowledge transmission became wider and wider by the arrival of missionaries, English language, European culture and print. In-fact the print had created a revolution elsewhere. By 1455 John Guttenburg, the inventor of printing could produce only about 200 copies of Bible. But around two crore books had already been printed by 1500 A.D and its number increased to 20 crores in 1600 A.D.<sup>37</sup>

The history of print in India begins after the advent of the Portuguese. They brought many Jesuit groups to India. The Jesuits adopted several methods to propagate their faith. As a measure they started the first printing press at Goa in 1556.<sup>38</sup> They introduced the first printing press in Kerala at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These presses were in Cochin, Quilon, Vypikkotta and Ambezhakkad.<sup>39</sup> Although print reached India in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century it got an impetus only under the British. It is a truth that the British who came to India primarily for trade happened to be the rulers of this vast region and subsequently started the colonialism.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Kathleen Gough, "Literacy in Kerala", in Jack Goody, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.135.

<sup>37</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities; Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1996, p.37.

<sup>38</sup> Stuart Blackburn, *Print, Folklore, and Nationalism in Colonial South India*, New Delhi, 2003, p.33.

<sup>39</sup> K.M Govi, *Aadhimudranam-Bharathathilum Malayalathilum*, (Mal), Thrissur, 1998, p.31.

<sup>40</sup> D.K. Field House, *Colonialism (1875 - 1945), An Introduction*, London, 1981, p. 6. He says colonialism means the condition of a subject people and is used exclusively of non-European societies, when under the political control of European states or American.

Malabar came to the hands of the British with the Treaty of Seringapattam in 1792.<sup>41</sup> Tipu Sultan of Mysore relinquished to the English company control over Malabar. In 1800 it became a district in the Madras Presidency. Covering an area of 5795 square miles, it was divided into nine *taluks* (sub-division of a revenue district): Chirakkal, Kotayam, Kurumbranad, Calicut, Wynad, Ernad, Valluvanad, Ponnani and Palghat.<sup>42</sup> According to 1881 census 23.3 lakhs was the population out of which 11.58 lakhs were males and 11.75 lakhs were females.<sup>43</sup> Of this 69.15% were Hindus, 29%, Muslims and 1.8% Christians. The district proper is bounded on the north by South Canara, on the east by Coorg, Mysore, Nilgiris, and Coimbatore, on the south by the Native state of Cochin and on the west by the Arabian Sea.<sup>44</sup> It was such a vast area having a sea board of about 150 miles and having an extreme breadth of 80 miles (from Ponnani to Valayar) that the British got. Once the power and control was gained in Malabar it was the sole aim of the British to maintain undisrupted and unchallenged authority.

When the British began to reign over India they had to face multifaceted problems and challenges owing to the diverse nature of the Indian society. For the proper and effective administration they had to collect details of the colonized people which may lead to a better understanding about them. “This was actively pursued during the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by bringing to life a network of cultural institutions and practices which might ensure easy access to knowledge about the colonized. To begin with, attention was focused on textual knowledge and how it could be made available to

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<sup>41</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, p. 473.

<sup>42</sup> C.A Innes and F.B Evans, (ed.), *Madras District Gazetteers: Malabar District*, Vol.II, Madras, 1933, p.71.

<sup>43</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.VIII.

<sup>44</sup> *Statistical Atlas of Malabar*, Sl.No 1779, Book No. C/142, RAC.

officials engaged in bringing natives under the colonial cultural umbrella”.<sup>45</sup>

With the above purpose they started the study of Indian languages. Bernard S.Cohn says that then more and more British officials were learning the classical languages in India (Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic) as well as many of the ‘vulgar’ languages. More importantly this was the period in which the British were beginning to produce an apparatus: grammars, dictionaries, treatises, class books and translations from the languages of India.<sup>46</sup> He also noticed that they used these texts for their own purpose and converted Indian forms of knowledge into European objects.<sup>47</sup> The cultural identities of the dominated Indians were restated as colonial knowledge, thus obfuscating, the historical reality of the dominated cultures.<sup>48</sup>

Even when the Europeans were pilfering our treasure-houses of knowledge to depict it as their own original creations, they considered India as an uncivilized country. The colonialists appropriated indigenous knowledge, denying the dominated people the right to represent their knowledge, and on the other hand, imposed the knowledge of the colonialists using the epistemic space apparently created by the decline of a civilization.<sup>49</sup> By then the East India Company was moving away from the task of acquiring knowledge about the subjected to the Anglicist task of imparting knowledge to them. The concern of the state

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<sup>45</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth-Century Malayalam Novel”, in R.Chempaka Lakshmi and S.Gopal, (eds.), *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology*, New Delhi, 1996, p.92.

<sup>46</sup> Bernard S.Cohn, “The Command of Language and the Language of the Command” in Ranajit Guha, (ed.), *Subaltern Studies IV*, Delhi 1985, p. 282.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 283.

<sup>48</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam”, *op.cit.*, p.154.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*.

was now the construction of a colonial subject, a cultural symbol for Indians in quest of modernity.<sup>50</sup> In their efforts to civilize India they introduced many novel ideas and brought many institutions. As a part of this ‘colonial modernity’ most of the parts of Malabar was connected by road which originally aided the troop movements of Tipu but later facilitated trade.<sup>51</sup>

William Logan says, “The Joint Commissioners of East India Company drew up regulations for the administration of the revenue, founded on the Bengal code, modified so as to adopt it to the circumstances of the country. These were followed by regulations for the civil and criminal administration of justice. Among the last acts of the Joint Commissioners was the inauguration of the postal establishment”.<sup>52</sup> And with the opening on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1862, the section beyond Podannur, the West Coast was put into direct railway communication with the presidency town<sup>53</sup> which made a great leap in the transportation facilities of Malabar. The momentum and acceleration of this encroachment of colonial rule in every aspect of social life was great. The reforms in administrative, economic and judicial fields heralded a revolutionary change during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century throughout Kerala and among all communities.<sup>54</sup>

In the early days of colonialism in India, the educational policy of the East India Company was manifested in such a way as to enable

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<sup>50</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel”, *op.cit.*, p.92.

<sup>51</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Agrarian Society in Kerala 1500-1800”, in P.J Cherian, (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History, The Second Millennium*, Vol. II. part II, Trivandrum, 1999, p.174.

<sup>52</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, pp. 495-498.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>54</sup> R.K Sureshkumar, “Swaathanthrayathileykkulla Vazhi”, (Mal), in *Samakaalika Malayalam Vaarika* special supplement, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2000, Kochi, p.44.

paradigmatic influence defining spaces and establishing channels of cultural and political negotiation between the rulers and their subjects. Mount Stuart Elphinstone's (Governor of Bombay) minutes of 1823 contained a series of exhaustive proposals that impressively enunciated the full scope of appropriate intentions.<sup>55</sup>

But the British rulers in practice managed to topsy-turvy the above proposals in Malabar. The British did not support the old system of indigenous education since it was not beneficial for the colonial administration. British rule while exploitative had set in motion economic forces leading to the destruction of the traditional Indian society.<sup>56</sup> Actually the government needed English educated people to rule the illiterate masses in a better way. So they were interested in imparting English education forsaking the traditional one. Lord Macaulay said, "I feel that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern- a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Extract minute by Mount Stuart Elphinstone in Aparna Basu (ed.), *Indian Education in Parliamentary papers*, part I, Bombay, 1952, p.197. These were the proposals- 'the following are the principle measures required for the diffusion of knowledge among the natives: first, to improve the mode of teaching at the native schools, and to increase the number of schools; second, to supply them with school books; third, to hold out some encouragement to the lower orders of the natives; fourth, to establish schools for teaching the European sciences and improvements in the higher branches of education; fifth, to provide for the preparation and publication of books of moral and physical sciences in native languages; sixth, to establish schools for the purpose of teaching English to those disposed to pursue it as a classical language and as a means of acquiring knowledge of European discoveries; seventh, to hold-forth encouragement to the natives in the pursuit of those latest branches of knowledge.

<sup>56</sup> M.N Srinivas, *The Dominant Caste and other Essays*, Delhi, 1991, p.23.

<sup>57</sup>

H.Sharp, *Selections from Educational Records*, Part I, 1781-1839, Calcutta, 1920, p.116.

Thus the British government held the opinion from the beginning itself that it had no responsibility to make education universal. It said that the people who had interest in education should build schools; the government would extend small financial assistance. As a result the colonial system in India failed to introduce a system of public instruction among the rural population and neglected even the town centres in Malabar like Tellicherry, Cannanore and Calicut.....Therefore public instruction in its modern sense was given last priority by the British in India during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>58</sup> Wedded to the policy of higher education and indifference to the indigenous education the British Malabar neither witnessed any significant government efforts nor that of the Christian missionaries. Secondly the British economic policy left the landlord among the caste Hindus to take care of their educational needs in the handful of British schools established by the Christian missionaries while the vast majority of the population were the most rack rented in the world and too poor to afford English education.<sup>59</sup>

Since the government did not show interest in the mass education, the Christian missionaries and the private managements were entrusted with the above responsibility. So the progress of elementary education acquired a slow momentum in Malabar during the subsequent period. The fact that the educated people leaned towards English education was also a reason for the retarded growth of primary education. Infact mass literacy needs mass school-going which began only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>60</sup> But even at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was no mass

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<sup>58</sup> K.K.N Kurup, "The Basal Mission and Social Change in Malabar with Special Reference to Dr.Gundert", in K.K.N Kurup and K .J John, (eds.), *Legacy of Basel Mission and Hermann Gundert in Malabar*, Calicut 1993, p.59.

<sup>59</sup> N.I.E.P.A, *History of Educational Development in Kerala*, New Delhi, 1987, p.83.

<sup>60</sup> V.K Ramachandran, *op.cit.*, p.48.

literacy.<sup>61</sup> Mass education is not possible in Indian society without suppressing the great barriers to mass education –gender, caste discrimination and class oppression.<sup>62</sup>

The British policy in Malabar and other rural districts was not in favour of structural transformation of society through industrial development and popular education. Therefore there was no development of human capital, one of the essential features of economic growth also. In brief, the social transition was not accelerated in rural areas by the British. It was against this social background that the Basel Mission has acted as a catalytic agent that introduced changes and social progress.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Advent of Missionaries**

The Charter Act of 1833 of the British Parliament facilitated the European missionaries to carry out evangelical work in the territories governed by the English East India Company.<sup>64</sup> Encouraging such agencies was the government policy in those days because the colonial rule was not ready to bear the huge financial burden for public instruction. It was also necessary to encourage the missionary work to appease the locals of England.<sup>65</sup> In the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century a lot of missionary societies were founded in England in order to save the heathen souls as part of the colonial strategy of evangelicalism. This new strategy was active both within and outside the church.<sup>66</sup> The Basel

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

<sup>63</sup> K.K.N Kurup, “The Basel Mission and Social Change in Malabar”, *op.cit.*, p.59.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

<sup>65</sup> K K.N Kurup, “Vidyaabhyaasavum purogathiyum thiyya samudhayathil” (Mal), in M.G.S Narayanan, (ed.), *Malabar Mahotsav Souvenir*, Calicut, 1993 p.435.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Van Der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, Delhi, 2002, pp.6-7.

Evangelical Mission, established in Switzerland in 1815, began its activities in North Malabar a quarter of century later, establishing a network of elementary and high schools by the end of the century.<sup>67</sup>

The Local Board Act of the Madras Govt. in 1834 was the base on which the educational activity began.<sup>68</sup> The new historical situation introduced the German Basel Mission in South India by 1835. Malabar which had been governed directly by the British and where no evangelical activities were undertaken formerly by any other mission opened new venue promoting the gospel.<sup>69</sup>

The Basel Mission undertook many social service activities as running of educational institutions, printing and publishing houses, hospitals, orphanages and old age homes. The Basel Mission took a strong stand against caste. The mission rejected outright the pattern of caste related occupations and experimented creating a group of persons without castes. The Basel Mission was responsible for setting up the first weaving and tile factories in Malabar largely to provide employment for its converts.<sup>70</sup>

In Malabar the Basel Mission under the guidance of Dr. Hermann Gundert started the first school at Tellicherry on 14<sup>th</sup> May 1839.<sup>71</sup> It was the primary object of the Basel Mission to place education within the reach of the masses, and to impart a thorough elementary education in

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<sup>67</sup> Dilip M.Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India, Malabar 1900-1948*, New Delhi, 1994, p.64.

<sup>68</sup> Thaayatt Sankaran, *Bharatheeya vidyaabhyaasam charithravum varthamaanakaala prashnangalum*, (Mal), Trichur, 1989, pp.171-2.

<sup>69</sup> K.K.N. Kurup, "The Basel Mission and Social Change in Malabar", *op.cit.*, p.58.

<sup>70</sup> Jai Prakash Raghavaiah, *Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara 1834-94*, New Delhi, 1990, p.55.

<sup>71</sup> Wilma John, "Contribution of the Basel Mission to the Socio-Cultural Life of the West Coast of India", in K.K.N Kurup and K.J John, (eds.), *Legacy of Basel Mission and Hermann Gundert in Malabar*, Calicut 1993, p.73.

the people's vernacular.<sup>72</sup>The objectives of the establishment of schools by missionaries were several. The first and probably the most important was that intervention in the process of dissemination of knowledge was the best way for proselytisation. Thus the objective was to convey through the medium of education a great amount of Christian truth to the native mind. Every branch of knowledge communicated was made subservient to the desired end.<sup>73</sup> When the Basel Mission concentrated on its programmes at Tellicherry they found it essential to start primary educational institutions... Primary education was also considered by them as a matter of priority in spreading the Gospel in a region like Malabar.<sup>74</sup> At Nettur, Calicut and Palakkad also the Mission started schools. The Basel Mission opened 42 elementary schools in Malabar between 1839 and 1914.<sup>75</sup> In 1862 Brennan set up the Brennen School at Tellicherry. In 1872, the government directly controlled the affairs of the school. The high schools and colleges built later were the results of private enterprise and generosity.<sup>76</sup> During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the missionary schools were the only source of education for the lower castes as well as for girls.<sup>77</sup> Noted writer and journalist Murkoth Kumaran reminisces the services of the Basel Mission with gratitude in his biography. He says that most of us do not think much about the benefits to the country done by the Basel Mission Society by starting

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.77.

<sup>73</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam", *op.cit.*, p.168.

<sup>74</sup> K.K.N.Kurup, "The Basel Mission and Social Change in Malabar", *op.cit.*, p.58.

<sup>75</sup> Chummar Choondal, "The Basal Mission", in M.G.S Narayanan, (ed.),*op.cit.*, p.140.

<sup>76</sup> Regional Record Survey Committee, *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol. I, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1970, p.74.

<sup>77</sup> N.I.E.P.A, *op.cit.* pp.46-7.

higher education institutions like Basel Mission High School at Tellicherry even before 75 years ago.<sup>78</sup>

The Basel Mission had its difficulties in the field of education. Their reports stated that many of the higher caste people were afraid of the school. However, the intermediary castes like the Thiyyas sent their boys and girls to these institutions. Most of them were drawn to the school by the hope of worldly advancement to be obtained by a little proficiency in English.<sup>79</sup> The Mission had even organized schools for children exclusively belonging to the depressed castes. During the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the educational activities of the Mission culminated in the establishment of Malabar Christian College at Calicut.

The success and popularity of Basel Mission schools depended a great deal upon the personalities of two great men Rev.Samuel Hebich and Dr.Hermann Gundert.<sup>80</sup> Although the instruction imparted through these institutions (primary educational institutions) were not strictly secular in the modern sense they contained some of the modern trends of English education which were incorporated in the modern educational policy of the British in India.<sup>81</sup> The missionaries were always by the side of the lower classes to espouse their cause. Education also spread among

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<sup>78</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, (Mal), *op.cit.*, p.36. Kumaran reminds: "In the early period there was not much who understood about the need and the greatness of English education. The rich did not want that, the poor could not afford.....The Thiyyas who had not any scare of losing the caste, studied English right from the beginning. In such a period many poor students were given free education and thus many reached the top ladder of power and as a result the local people were enlightened about the benefits of English education. Fifty years ago when I was a student here the Brennen High School was meant for the children of the rich and big officers and the Mission school for the children of the poor."

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Eleventh Report of the German Mission, Mangalore, 1851, p.32.

<sup>80</sup> Wilma John, "Contribution of the Basel Mission to the Socio-Cultural Life of the West Coast of India", *op.cit.*, p.79.

<sup>81</sup> K.K.N.Kurup, "The Basal Mission and Social Change in Malabar" *op.cit.*, p.60.

them and beyond everything else this paved the way for their betterment...the missionary schools afforded ample facilities for the education of the converts.<sup>82</sup>

Thus despite the discouragement from the part of the government, the children of the lower castes received education through missionary schools which were open to all communities. This helped the backward communities to increase their awareness of the world and imbibe modern ideas. The spread of education made the lower castes conscious of the importance of overcoming their economic and social backwardness.<sup>83</sup> Among the lower castes more literate were those who became the members of the Mission. Though their literacy was meant for reading Bible and prayers it did not confine within the imagined limits. Due to this kind of modern education and interaction with the Mission societies, the Dalit sections got a social space in the 'colonial modernity'. But this was made possible only by the continuous tussle with the hegemony. Simultaneously they got a virtual liberty from the customary system of slavery and became agricultural labourers.<sup>84</sup>

In fact it was the expulsion of converts from the traditional caste-related occupations that prompted the Basel Missionaries to initiate economic activities. The social engineering effected here was in creating a casteless group of converts. This was achieved by the spread of literacy, intermarriages of converts with different caste back grounds and the factory environment under which the converts worked.<sup>85</sup> Many

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<sup>82</sup> Ananda E.Wood, *Knowledge Before Printing and After: The Indian Tradition in Changing Kerala*, New Delhi, 1985, p.124.

<sup>83</sup> P.Chandramohan, "Growth of Social Reform Movements in Kerala", in P.J Cherian, (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History, op.cit.*, p.459.

<sup>84</sup> Sanal Mohan, "Keezhaala Saamoohya Prasthanangal" (Mal), in *Samakaalika Malayalam Vaarika*, Kochi, January 7, 2000, p.47.

<sup>85</sup> Jaiprakash Raghaviah, "Basal Mission Industries in Malabar", in M.G.S Narayanan, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.144.

observers of Basel Mission have highlighted the fact that there have not been instances of mass conversions. Calvinist theology lays emphasis on individual salvation. The chosen individual has to prove his selection through his activities in life. This would deny the possibility for mass conversion. From the 1<sup>st</sup> table given below, it is very clear that conversions were not too much as it is believed and from the 2<sup>nd</sup> table it can be understood that the majority of converts belonged to Thiyyas and Cherumas.

Table 1

**Conversions up to 1914 are included.<sup>86</sup>**

Cannanore	1615
Tellicherry	649
Chombala	549
Calicut	2735
Manjeri	121
Codacal	1255
Caniyamkulam	241
Palaghat	430

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.

Table 2<sup>87</sup>

**The following table gives the caste background of converts of Codacal Parish as on 17-12-1893.**

<b>Caste</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Nair	22	4.9
Chetti	13	2.9
Thiyya	206	45.5
Carpenter	11	2.4
Goldsmith	8	1.8
Vettuvan	1	-
Cheruman	128	28.4
Vannan	33	7.3
Kaniyan	15	3.3
Unspecified	16	35.0
Total	453	100

Infact the extent of conversion of Basel Mission was small. As in 1914 the total number of converts was less than 20,000. The direct social impact was primarily among the converts who were a microcosm among the society of Malabar and South Canara. The real impact was by way of a demonstration effect which could in turn make the depressed castes more strongly challenge the existing authoritarian structure.<sup>88</sup>

Dr. Hermann Gundert along with Mrs. Gundert played an important role in the educational activities of Basel Mission over a decade in Malabar. As it was a formative period which had inter-related to the British educational policy the seminal role played by the Gunderts became a legacy in this region. Under their direct supervision day

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p.149.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.144.

schools, female schools and boarding schools were started by the Mission. They were categorized as Malayalam school and English free school.<sup>89</sup>

It can be said that the missionaries were the cultural leaders of colonialism. The link between the European imperial power and the missionary groups dates back to the time of Portuguese. To shatter the overwhelming Brahminical hegemony of feudalism and to install a new alternative instead, the colonial cultural practitioners or the missionaries developed two zones of activity in the field of knowledge: one was education and the other printing and journalism.<sup>90</sup>

There is no doubt that the missionaries regarded their educational activities as an important means for proselytization.<sup>91</sup>In respect of education the missionaries evolved a bi-forked approach to penetrate into the life of the masses of Malabar. One was to propagate English language highlighting it as an ideal language and the other to manifest a new Malayalam prose style palatable to anyone.<sup>92</sup>

The missionaries were not only interested in educating the illiterate and ignorant but also to educate them in their way. There was already existing indigenous curriculum which imparted knowledge in the local cultural context, which could be countered only by developing a new culture of knowledge which was disseminated through a new institution in the western model, the school. However the school could exist in the local cultural context only when the culture of knowledge disseminated through the school assumes dominance. For this the

<sup>89</sup> K.K.N.Kurup, "The Basal Mission and Social Change in Malabar", *op.cit.*, p.60.

<sup>90</sup> Shibu Muhammed, *op.cit.*, p.105.

<sup>91</sup> Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1936*, New Delhi, 2000, p.87.

<sup>92</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Malayala Saahithyathinte Samskaarika Bhoomishasthram", *op.cit.*, pp.626

missionaries sought the aid of as yet unused methodology of translation and the technology of printing.<sup>93</sup>

### **English supersedes**

For the dissemination of English education during the 1850's the missionaries started a few Anglo-vernacular schools. These schools were models on the English schools and the text books used here were translations from the English books.<sup>94</sup> Thus the function of the new school system was the introduction of modern colonial culture. The principal feature which symbolized was the introduction of English.<sup>95</sup> English was the only medium for higher education at that time. Veena Naregal says, "The emergence of English as the sole language as higher learning meant the relegation of the vernaculars as 'fit' only for primary education."<sup>96</sup> English was depicted not as a language of the clerks but as a cultural language of the aristocrats that propagate universal virtues.<sup>97</sup> All these ensured the highest status of English. Gauri Viswanathan observes: "English represented both a language and a system of knowledge against which native cultural and social practices were to be measured and then reformed".<sup>98</sup> English was then the medium of instruction in the upper and lower secondary schools. The education department advised the managers to adopt vernacular as the medium up

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<sup>93</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam", *op.cit.*, p.173.

<sup>94</sup> Koji Kawashima, *op.cit.*, p.90.

<sup>95</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam", *op.cit.*, p.171.

<sup>96</sup> Veena Naregal, "Vernacular Culture and Political Formation in Western India", in Abijit Gupta and Swapan Chakravorty, (eds.), *Print Areas: Book History in India*, Delhi, 2004, p.148.

<sup>97</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Malayaala Saahithyathinte Samskaarika Bhoomishasthram", *op.cit.*, p.626

<sup>98</sup> Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest; Literary Study and British Rule in India*, New Delhi, 1998.

to third forum or 7<sup>th</sup> standard.<sup>99</sup> In those days also learning in English was a symbol of status and prestige. So the suggestion was unheeded.

By 1870's political, economic and legal transactions were made in English. Thus English education became the necessary criterion for communication and securing a job. This fact is elaborated by Murkoth Kunhappa: "Under the East India company there were many officers among the Thiyyas including Churayi Raman Tahasildar who did not know English. But during the time of Churayi Kunhappa, the son of Raman Tahasildar (1870's) English was necessary to argue in the courts. It was a time of transition of court language from Malayalam to English.<sup>100</sup> In general those who played a leading role in literary, social and political spheres underwent English education after their indigenous education. English clearly replaced Sanskrit as the elite language, language of knowledge and culture, a displacement symptomatic of the cultural transformation under colonialism. Higher learning had to be knowledge imparted in English, Western science, technology, humanities and Law.<sup>101</sup>

Besides propagating English education the missionaries developed a new prose style palatable to laymen and the downtrodden. This missionary prose was projected as a language which could be used by everybody, unlike Sanskrit and Prakrit. This re-ordering was originally the work of the missionary who had to express his ideas as simply possible in an alien language, but gradually became the language of pedagogic and later literary communication.<sup>102</sup> K.N Ganesh observes, "the missionaries played a new method of communicative strategy by

<sup>99</sup> Education Dept. File No. A 809, p.21-RAC.

<sup>100</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit.*, p.52.

<sup>101</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam", *op.cit.*, p.180.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.179.

converting the oral language directly into written language which was different from those methods of Arnos Pathiri and Paulinose Pathiri in which they used an aristocratic language profuse with Sanskrit words. Another intention was to create an easier medium for the missionaries who were compelled to study a language like Malayalam with numerous diversities. In the schools founded by the missionaries they developed a curriculum according to this prose form. Missionaries like Dramont, Benjamin Bailey and Dr.Hermann Gundert prepared vocabularies. And this was given wide propaganda by their presses. Indeed the missionary prose to a large extent influenced the linguistic style of the periodicals and the books published during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>103</sup>

By the advent of ‘colonial modernity’ thus there occurred the first phase of transition. “The missionary-colonial culture gave importance to colonial, economic and social adjustments forsaking the regional aspects. There came a common nature for agricultural relations and social interactions. Also there developed institutions and offices of hegemony like courts, police, education and officials for various departments. The customary laws and precedents were replaced by written regulations. Colonial forms of knowledge took the place of indigenous knowledge. The dispensation of justice was transferred to courts from the institution of *natvar* (traditional judge) and the Brahminical Sanskrit tradition gave its way to colonial mundane culture and English”.<sup>104</sup>

A dialogue in *Indulekha*<sup>105</sup> between the characters Panchu Menon and Shinu Pattar indicates the fact that due to the establishment of

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<sup>103</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Malayala Saahityathinte Saamskarika Bhoomishastram”, *op.cit.*, pp.625-6.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.626-7.

<sup>105</sup> The first novel in Malayalam written by O.Chandu Menon in 1889.

courts, even among the ordinary people legal awareness had been reached by 1880's. The importance of the study of English is also underlined. The context is the heated discussion between Panchu Menon and Shinu Pattar, when Panchu Menon objects Madhavan's (hero) idea of sending Shinu's son for English education. Antagonized by this, Panchu Menon bans Shinu from coming to his *oottupura* (the dining place of Brahmins attached to temples) or to the temple. But Shinu retorts that a Brahmin can go to all *oottupuras* and temples and if he is prevented he will lodge a petition.<sup>106</sup> If it were the feudal system Shinu Pattar would not have dared to threaten a feudal landlord like Panchu Menon by telling that he will file a suit. But with the installation of the British government in Malabar and the establishment of offices and courts, legal awareness enhanced, even among the ordinary people. Another dialogue in the novel *Lakshmikesavam*<sup>107</sup> (first published in 1892) also highlights the above truth.

The above dialogues shed light on the transition in the society of Malabar during the 1880's. The legal awareness had increased to such an extent that it enabled one Kumaran Nair to file a case in 1892 and that against *Kerala Pathrika*, the famous newspaper. The report in the *Kerala Pathrika* in May 1892 said that, that a complaint has been lodged in the Deputy Magistrate's court Calicut, by one Kumaran Nair

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<sup>106</sup> O.Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, translated from Malayalam by Anitha Devassia, New Delhi, 2005, p.44.

<sup>107</sup> Padu Menon, *Lakshmikeshavam*, (Mal), Kottayam, 2004, p.30. The dialogue is as follows. Landlord: Why not bring here and give him(Narayanan) four blows for abusing us?

Manager: Now it is not the old period. Apart from that since he has studied English he has connection with many men of eminence. If you do so it may lead to some litigation which may malign your image.

Landlord: While I was a child I have seen some of my uncles doing so.

Manager: Now we cannot do like that. Since the country is under the company, the freedom and knowledge of people has considerably increased.

second complainant in the Feroke case, against *Kerala Pathrika* for not inserting in the paper the name of the Printer and Publisher of the paper.<sup>108</sup>

In this process of transition the contribution of print was substantial. The roads, canals, and railways which formed the arterial network of colonialism helped the promotion of print media. The aim of printing itself was to disseminate knowledge in the quickest possible manner. At the same time the arterial network accelerated the tempo of achieving the purpose of print by several times. In such a propitious environment, by setting printing houses the missionaries targeted the propagation of Christianity easily among the natives.<sup>109</sup>

The introduction of print broke through the barriers of knowledge, built into the pre-colonial curriculum. English became the language of honour and self-advancement. The growth of English as a form of social control ensured the cultural hegemony of Western thought and values. English became the medium of dissemination of advanced scientific and technical knowledge, which successfully eliminated the Brahminical-Sanskrit system of higher knowledge.<sup>110</sup> Hitherto Brahmins held monopoly over knowledge. The first threat to this monopoly came from the missionaries. Newspapers, the most developed form of printing communication introduced by them in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were centres of colonial knowledge formation born outside the feudal communicative system.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1892, MNNPR, TNA.

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Shibu Muhammed, *op.cit.*, p.105.

<sup>110</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam", *op.cit.*, p.183.

<sup>111</sup> Shibu Muhammed, *op.cit.*, p.106.

The Basel Mission and the Church Mission Society developed journalism as a form of cultural discourse for the first time in Kerala using printing press. The first Malayalam magazine *Rajyasamaachaaram* and the second news magazine *Paschimodayam* were the newspapers published by Basel Mission. The language and content of the missionary newspapers and curriculum followed in their schools were similar. Science, geography, Malayalam, English and Bible were the subjects in the curriculum.<sup>112</sup> The Basel Mission educational institutions gave an emphasis to catechetical instruction including Bible history, geography as taught by the Greek, but it included English, Malayalam, arithmetic and particularly needle work for girls.<sup>113</sup> The author Joseph Mooliyil also gives a vivid account of the system of curriculum followed in the mission schools, in his novel *Sukumari*<sup>114</sup> which is a mirror of the mission activities of the 1860's. In the novel it is said that catechism, Malayalam reading, arithmetic, handwriting, English reading, geography, history, health science, needle work and music were the topics included in the syllabus of standard five.<sup>115</sup>

*Rajyasamachaaram* largely contained Christian principles. The contents of *Paschimodayam* included astrology, traditions of ancient Kerala, geography, star gazing, evolution of the Malayalam alphabet, foreign news etc. To put it briefly missionary journalism can be interpreted as the informal form of colonial education.<sup>116</sup> For the creation of colonial information and formation of subjectivity the policy

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<sup>112</sup> K.K.N Kurup, "Vidyaabhyaasavum purogathiyum thiyya samudhayathil", *op.cit.*, p.435.

<sup>113</sup> K.K.N.Kurup, "The Basal Mission and Social Change in Malabar", *op.cit.*, p.60.

<sup>114</sup> The novel in Malayalam written by Joseph Mooliyil in 1897.

<sup>115</sup> Joseph Mooliyil, *Sukumaari*, (Mal), Calicut, 2003, p.51.

<sup>116</sup> Shibu Muhammed, *op.cit.*, p.108.

of the missionary newspapers was to ridicule the feudal overlords and their faith on the one hand and to present justification and logic for colonialism on the other. For the overlords, the formation of subjectivity was caste based. By gaining beyond caste divisions and creating a common subjectivity, colonialism could easily win support from the subject people.<sup>117</sup>

The missionary colonial culture was a new experience for a society that had been grown under the influence of Brahmin Sanskrit tradition. It is because of the diversity in experience, that people were ideologically fascinated by the above culture, though it was grown as a new form of hegemony. To those who were lying in the bottom ladder of Brahmin-Sanskrit tradition it was a means of emancipation. The Christian ethics, spread by missionary colonial culture became instruments to criticize the feudal culture. Infact the sharp criticism against *janmi* system and matrilineal system was born out of the concepts of private wealth and gender relations proposed by the colonial ethos. The religious and cultural 'mission' works among the untouchables gave a novel orientation for the growth of a new consciousness.<sup>118</sup>

### **Alternative for Feudalism**

Thus the 19<sup>th</sup> century makes and marks revolutionary changes in the customs of a feudal society based on traditions and shows many symptoms heralding its death. And the missionary-colonial culture installed an 'alternative' instead. It was by way of this 'revolution' that the lower classes got emancipation from the hegemony of Brahmanical feudalism. "In the landlord system the inferiority of the lower classes

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Malayaala Sahithyathinte Saamskaarika Bhoomisasthram", *op.cit.*, p.622.

was an accepted fact. It was also agreed that they were not equal to the upper classes in respect of education, life style and behaviour. But in the new circumstances it was difficult to establish that the lower classes were not eligible for English education and for new employments”.<sup>119</sup>

Since the advent of the British government in India in 1857 the following tendencies were very conspicuous in the early years of its rule. 1. By the streamlining of the Nair force and disarmament (revenue, police enactments) they could curtail the strength of the landlords and the *janmis*. 2. By new legal enactments they could streamline the political influence of caste and religious institutions and could entrust it to a bureaucracy not at all dependent upon the landlords leading to the creation of capitalist system. 3. Modernization through the introduction of English education and by the discouragement of customs like matrilineal system and slavery. 4. Showering encouragement upon the middle class like the Thiyyas who rose to the ladder of progress through trade with the company.<sup>120</sup> The English Government allowed the lower classes to enter into state services for various jobs, which were denied to them earlier. This meant the opening up of state services to people who were hitherto kept outside, and thereby enabled them to share power and prestige of position in the hierarchy. This process helped to instill a sense of equality among them.<sup>121</sup> The commercialization and the growth of capitalistic relations in the colonial period improved the financial status of communities like Ezhavas. The lower classes too wanted representation in the rule of the land.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> K.N Ganesh, *Kerala Samooha Padanangal*, (Mal), Pathanamthitta, 2002, p.39.

<sup>120</sup> M.G.S Narayanan, “Malabar Samooham Kazhinja Noottandil”, (Mal), in M.G.S Narayanan,(ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.413-14.

<sup>121</sup> M.S.A Rao, *Tradition, Rationality and Change*, Bombay, 1972, p.135.

<sup>122</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Malayala Sahithyathinte Saamskaarika Bhoomisasthram”, *op.cit.*, p.622.

Infact the English East India Company from the very beginning, chopped the wings of the rulers of the various kingdoms thereby making them as titular *naduvaazhis* (local chieftains). It was done by vesting the political power in the hands of the company. But they did not make any change in the case of the *janmis* and tenants. At this juncture it can be seen that the large communities of Nairs were getting split into three variant groups. Majority of the *sthaani* (big landlord) Nairs were stripped off from power, like the Namboothiris who were engaged in extravaganza and pomposity utilizing the land under their control. They wasted their time and money by engaging in polygamy and spending time in *kathakali* (a Kerala art-form) and poetry.<sup>123</sup> At the same time many of the Nairs who were deprived of the army work with the landlords, were making a *jihad* (holy war) with the new government. They were making an exodus to the medieval dreams by turning off their faces to English and modern world. But a minority among the Nair community ‘fighting against a sea of troubles’ managed to send their children for English education.<sup>124</sup>

But the Thiyyas could explore the most, the new avenue of education opened to them, due to various reasons. In Kolathunad a sizable Eurasian population grew up as a result of marriages between Englishmen and women of Thiyya matrilineal caste. The offspring retained Hinduism and their matrilineal kinship system, but they learned English and some of them became prosperous military leaders, merchants, cash-crop farmers and professionals even before British rule.<sup>125</sup> The great leap forward of the Thiyyas starts when the English East India Company and later the British government took over the

<sup>123</sup> M.G.S Narayanan, “Malabar Samooham Kazhinja Noottandil”, *op.cit.*, pp.414-17.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Kathleen Gough, “Literacy in Kerala”, *op.cit.*, p.151.

reigns in Malabar. Dr. Hermann Gundert's dictionary defines the Thiyya as a community which rose to prominence by serving the British in India.<sup>126</sup>

### **Thiyyas Ascend the Ladder**

The period from 1840 to 1890 can be regarded as the flourishing period of Thiyyas. The Thiyyas of Malabar, though were *avarnas* (the lower caste) and much inferior in the social structure, had a traditional background in the study of Sanskrit and other subjects. This community had contributed scholars, therapists, and soldiers. Therefore the Thiyyas had culturally come up to a position to acquire English education and there existed no caste barrier to hinder them from venturing for a new experimentation.<sup>127</sup>

But the high caste people of Malabar did not respond to the call. Caste practices and the weight of tradition prevented the Namboothiris from acquiring English education although they were able to afford the same.<sup>128</sup> Perhaps the feeling of the loss of political power and other rights may have made them to cling more to the illusionary vanities of caste-community and to hide in the shell of conservatism than accepting English education to ascend the ladder of success.<sup>129</sup> The *ambalavasis* (a temple-connected community) and other castes that performed various services in the temple stuck to their traditional loyalty to the Brahmins.

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<sup>126</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, "Thiyyas of Kerala", in M.G.S Narayanan, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.161.

<sup>127</sup> K.K.N Kurup, "Vidyaabhyaasavum purogathiyum thiyya samudhayathil" *op.cit.*, p.434.

<sup>128</sup> K.Gopalankutty, "National Movement in Malabar,-1930-47", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1986, p.33.

<sup>129</sup> M.G.S Narayanan, "Malabar Samooham Kazhinja Noottandil", *op.cit.*, p.416.

The intimate connection of the Nairs with the Namboothiris also led them to stay away from government service.<sup>130</sup>

But there was not any scare among the Thiyyas of losing any caste sanctity and it was easier for them to meddle with the Europeans. The financial situation of the Thiyyas was much improved by the new political situation. Cannanore, Tellicherry, Calicut and Palghat were the main centres of European activities then. There was great possibility to get employment in these centres during the early stages of European activities. Some of the Thiyyas now became contractors and they procured monopoly contract for providing spices, toddy, liquor and vegetables to the Company agencies. Some others did menial jobs under European bosses and another few worked as peons in the European army.<sup>131</sup>

Thiyyas engaged in various kinds of trade other than toddy tapping. Majority of the Thiyyas were farmers. Some of them who had cultivated in leased lands amassed riches later by encroaching forest lands and doing farming activities there. Those who had worked as agricultural labourers also started to cultivate themselves in leased paddy fields. During the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was steep rise in the price of agricultural commodities. By the surplus money they purchased new lands. There was a time when 10 rupees was enough to purchase one acre of land. In that way also some became rich. Thus Thiyyas became landowners in many a way.<sup>132</sup> Those Thiyyas who did not own lands got progress through various trades; some carved laterite stones from farm lands and some engaged in the shaping of those stones.

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<sup>130</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, "Thiyyas of Kerala", in M.G.S Narayanan, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.158.

<sup>131</sup> K.K.N Kurup, "Vidyaabhyaasavum purogathiyum thiyya samudhayathil", *op.cit.*, pp.434-35.

<sup>132</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, *op.cit.*, pp.27-28.

When those stones were used for building houses the Thiyyas became masons and contractors. Those who made pathways in the paddy fields earlier, became road workers. Head-load workers became bullock-cart drivers and horse-cart drivers. When trains were introduced Thiyyas became engine drivers followed by the British and the Anglo-Indians. When motor cars were introduced Thiyyas who were expert in bullock-cart driving became their motor-car drivers too.<sup>133</sup>

Among the Thiyyas there were certain important officers in the early period. There were many Thiyyas who held the post of *Subedar* and *Jamedhar* in the local militia under the East India Company and Tellicherry was a strategic centre of the company in Malabar. At Mayilankunnu, Morakkunnu, Dharmadamkunnu etc. Thiyyas were appointed as army sentinels. Thiyyas were army officers under the East India Company. The letter of the Govt. of Madras in October 1936 throws light on the fact that the Thiyyas had a regiment in Malabar earlier.<sup>134</sup>

As there was a super-stratum of Thiyya Pandits throughout the lands the Englishmen used them as *munshis* (teachers) to learn Malayalam. Naturally therefore clerical jobs, positions in the police department, junior executive posts in the revenue sections etc. were filled by the Thiyyas. It was in 1857 that Queen Victoria assumed sovereignty over India. Within two years (1859) we find a Thiyya

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>134</sup> Public Dept., D.O.No. 22111-1 dt 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1936, Govt.of Madras, RAC. The text of the letter follows, "Public dept. D.O.No.22111-1 dt.22 October 1936, Govt.of Madras.HIS EXCELLENCY LORD ERSKINE, G.C.I.E GOVT. OF MADRAS. Thiyyas represent one of the most important and educated communities of North Malabar and until lately, there was a special regiment (Thiyya) in Malabar, which has done useful service. Now that this regiment is being disbanded, it is only proper that Thiyyas should be given sufficient representation in both the ranks of the Malabar battalion, especially in view of the fact that Malabar has a special Territorial Force of its own".

member, Kuria Kanaran-becoming a deputy collector. The decades that followed witnessed a spate of this untouchable community filling all sorts of posts under government. At one time all the ten *taluks* (subdivision of a revenue district) of Malabar were ruled by men belonging to this untouchable community as *Tahasildars* (head of a revenue sub-division) which is perhaps a unique phenomenon in India in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>135</sup>

Churayi Kanaran, Uppott Kannan (Deputy collectors), Panangaadan Kannan, Diwan Bahadur E.K Krishnan (Sub-Judges), Churayi Raman, Karai Govindan, Ondane Kunhampoo (*Tahasildars*), Principal P.Sankunni, eminent teachers like Panangaadan Raman, Thatha Kanaran, Mooliyil Krishnan and so on belong to the above list. Churayi Kunhappa, Kottiyathu Ramunni, Oyitti Krishnan, Potheri Kunhampoo, C. Krishnan and so on were important lawyers of that time. Some of the Thiyyas started English and Malayalam newspapers. Adv. Poovaadan Raman, the founder of *Malabar Spectator* and *Kerala Sanchari* and C.Krishnan, the editor of *Mithavadi*, other journalists like Kallaatt Raghavan and Murkoth Kumaran and so on belong to this community. Ayyathan Janaki and Murkoth Madhavi of this community were the first ladies to take degree in modern medicine from Malabar.<sup>136</sup> In short this was the period that witnessed the rise of bureaucrats.<sup>137</sup> In Malabar all these men of eminence who were in pursuit of English education were the contribution of the untouchable community- the

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<sup>135</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, *op.cit.*, p.161.

<sup>136</sup> K.K.N Kurup, "Vidyaabhyaasavum purogathiyum thiyya samudhayathil", *op.cit.*, p.436.

<sup>137</sup> K.K.N Kurup, "Aadhunika Keralam: Charithra Gaveshana Prabandhangal", *op.cit.*, p.23-4.

Thiyya. These new elites were born out of the colonial and missionary presence in North Malabar.<sup>138</sup>

Among the Thiyyas those who were financially marching forward utilized the educational opportunities to the maximum. Also among those who have passed matriculation examination, Thiyyas were the majority. Considering their qualifications many of them got posting in the government service. This in a way helped the rise of a new salaried class. In the government service their inferior caste status was not yet a problem in Malabar.<sup>139</sup> (But things were much different in the princely state of Travancore. In 1891 in Travancore the literacy of Ezhavas and Pulayas were 1.5% and 0.09% respectively.<sup>140</sup> It is a truth that in order to get more government appointments for the Ezhava community Dr.Palpu and others furnished Ezhava memorandum which did not find any fruits.<sup>141</sup> This pathetic condition in Travancore is very explicit from a powerful editorial in *Malayali* comparing the Ezhavas of Travancore with those of the Thiyyas of Malabar. “What we are obliged to bring to the public notice is the utter indifference which the Diwans of Travancore and the Madras Government have been and are showing in this matter to the half a million (Ezhavas) out of the two and a half million in Travancore. The two distinct grievances are non-admission into all Government schools and non-admission into all Government services”.)<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Dilip M.Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India, Malabar 1900-1948, op.cit.*, p.64.

<sup>139</sup> K.K.N Kurup, “Vidyaabhyaasavum purogathiyum thiyya samudhayathil”, *op.cit.*, p.435.

<sup>140</sup> P. Chandra Mohan, “Growth of Social Reform Movements in Kerala”, *op.cit.*, p.463.

<sup>141</sup> P.J Cherian, “Radical Political Movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, in P,J Cherian, (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.512-13.

<sup>142</sup> P.K.K Menon, *The History of the Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol. ii, (1885-1938), Thiruvananthapuram, 2001, p.19.

Lower caste employees utilized the advantages of the new postings in the government service, for their redemption from their inferior status. Even a peon of inferior caste in the revenue department was allowed to visit a Brahmin house by virtue of being in that post. Strict caste rules had not permitted such visits so far. So indirectly government service could elevate them from the inferior status. Therefore the Thiyyas by way of English education and government employment tried as far as possible to liberate themselves from the clutches of the caste.<sup>143</sup>

### **Nairs too Come up**

When the Thiyyas were busy school-going and were in pursuit of employment many of the forward communities remained idle at home. The Brahmins and the Nairs who were much ahead in the indigenous education did not rush for the English education due to the constraints of their caste.<sup>144</sup> But a few of the poor Nairs who were able to possess some land by working in the army or in the offices of the company dared to send their children for English education.<sup>145</sup> This situation acquired a momentum by 1870's and the Nairs also started to attend schools in plenty and they too got jobs in government services.

In 1884 the Government made a declaration that English educated people would get priority in the government service.<sup>146</sup> Since the posts were reserved for the English educated, a thinking was developed among the people that modern education would ensure them a job in the government service. The Nairs responded to this call very positively.

<sup>143</sup> K.K.N Kurup, "Vidyaabhyaasavum purogathiyum thiyya samudhayathil" *op.cit.*, p.436.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p.434.

<sup>145</sup> M.G.S Narayanan, "Malabar Samooham Kazhinja Noottandil", *op.cit.*, p.417.

<sup>146</sup> N.V Sovani, "British Impact on India", in *Studies in the Cultural History of India*, New Delhi, p.322.

A noticeable feature in Malabar during the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was the rise into prominence of a section of the *kanakkar* (one who held land on kanam-tenure). These *kanakaar* were the intermediary tenants. Mostly belonging to the Nair caste, especially in south Malabar, they were the first to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by English education. They got into the bureaucracy or studied law and became advocates thereby strengthening their economic position and enhancing their social prestige.<sup>147</sup>

The overwhelming majority of the 1000 graduates, undergraduates and matriculates in the Malabar district at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century came from the upper caste Hindus.<sup>148</sup> Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of officials drawing a salary of more than 10, 20 and 50 rupees a month were 1063, 245 and 90 respectively, the majority of whom were Nairs.<sup>149</sup> In several families, the first generation started as village officials, but the second and the third were able to rise to higher positions of munsifs, magistrates, judges and senior civil servants.<sup>150</sup> The bulk of the English educated middle class came from this social stratum; they had the necessary financial resources as well as social vision to send their wards to institutions which imparted English education.<sup>151</sup>

The opportunities were thus opened up in government

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<sup>147</sup> K.Gopalankutty, "National Movement in Malabar,-1930-47", unpublished, Ph.D. thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1986, p.17.

<sup>148</sup> *The Malabar Marriage Commission Report*, 1891, p.9, TNA.

<sup>149</sup> K.N Panikkar, "Land Control, Ideology and Reform: A Study of the change in Family Organization and Marriage System in Kerala", *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. IV, No. I, July, 1977, p.38.

<sup>150</sup> K.N Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*, New Delhi, 1989, pp.30-31.

<sup>151</sup> K.N Panikkar, "Creating a new Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel", *op.cit.*, p.98.

employment and professions and a new worldview, informed by the individualism and liberalism was imbibed from the Western thought. The Nair *taravads* (joint family of Nairs) of Malabar had access to modern culture to the extent in such a way to make the activities of Congress a thread of discussion in the first major Malayalam novel *Indulekha* itself.<sup>152</sup> Its significance and success are to a great extent rooted in its ability to capture the cultural and political experience of the intelligentsia, nuanced by the contradictions, ambiguities and uncertainties inherent in it.<sup>153</sup>

By 1890's the Muslim community also started to wake up. The noted Muslim social reformer, Makthi Thangal not only promoted the study of English and Malayalam but also encouraged the Muslims to join the government service. He presented a scheme for the primary education and published it in the journal *Salahul Ikhwan*. In this scheme he had included Malayalam, English, Arabic and arithmetic. In order to get fluency in Malayalam he suggested to read the stories from *puranaas* and *ithihasas*.<sup>154</sup>

When the missionaries were engaged in establishing schools there were also many persons belonging to Thiyyas and Pulayas who had obtained opportunity to acquaint with English language in an informal way. The novels like *Sukumari* and *Saraswathivijayam* are in support of the above view. Though written in the 1890's the story of *Sukumari* is that of the 1860's. In the novel the character, Sathyarthi (earlier Raman) is a cook of an English doctor. Fascinated by the brilliance of Raman the doctor made him able to read, write and speak English. It is said that the

<sup>152</sup> M.G.S Narayanan, "Keralam Irupatham Noottandil", *op.cit.*, p.31.

<sup>153</sup> K.N Panikkar, "Creating a new Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel" *op.cit.*, p.107 .

<sup>154</sup> M.Abdul Samad, *Islam in Kerala: Groups and Movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, Kollam, 1998, p.46.

doctor was a good friend of the German missionary who founded the mission centre at Kannur in 1841. This missionary baptized Raman and converted him to Christianity. The missionary in the novel who converts Raman is a representative of Dr.Hermann Gundert who was the instrument behind establishing the mission centre at Kannur in 1841. From the novel it is understood that Raman got employment as a clerk only because of his knowledge in English language which he acquired through informal education.<sup>155</sup>

In *Saraswathivijayam*<sup>156</sup> there is a reference of the character Marathan who learnt to read and write in the *ezhuthupalli* at Ancharakkandy established by the German missionaries for teaching Cheruma children. This fictional story co-relates with the historical truth which refers to the works of Dr.Gundert at Ancharakkandy.<sup>157</sup> Marathan later becomes Yesudasan, and after formal collegiate education becomes the sessions judge.

Thus the colonial rule up to 1890's was a period of transformation for Malabar bringing revival as well as change. The Thiyyas had already got educated in missionary schools in large numbers and were decorating the coveted offices of the British Government. By then the Nairs were able to understand the error they made in the judgment of English education. With a sense of repentance, with a new found vigour and with a 'military spirit' they strove for education. The novel *Indulekha* indirectly depicts this 'Nair conquer and victory'. About *Indulekha* Robin Jeffrey writes: "Malayalam's first major novel, *Indulekha* also celebrated education. Indulekha, the heroine knows

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<sup>155</sup> Joseph Mooliyil, *op.cit.*, p.139.

<sup>156</sup> Potheri Kunhamboo, *Saraswathi Vijayam*, (Mal), Kottayam, 2004.

<sup>157</sup> C.K Moosad, "Nikhandukarthaavaaya Dr.Gundert", (Mal), in M.G.S Narayanan, (ed.), *op.cit.*, 1993, p.423.

English; her suitor Madhavan is a graduate in Arts and Law; and together they struggle successfully to overcome the prejudices of old Kerala. .... The book ends with Madhavan's and Indulekha's marriage, Madhavan having just heard that 'he would shortly find himself gazetted to the civil service.'<sup>158</sup>

“These incidents capture complimentary aspects about the popularity of education in Kerala. First, a genuine belief in the worthiness of education pervades Malayali attitudes. As early as 1890, school for small boys was seen as a good thing and an educated Indulekha was a fitting heroine. At the same time education leads to rewards. Madhavan is admitted to the Indian civil service. People with educational qualifications bring both profit and prestige to their families”.<sup>159</sup> “...Female education in Malabar has been more popular than in other parts of South India. The Nairs especially are very earnest in the education of their sisters and nieces. No girl is permitted to grow up to womanhood without a fair knowledge of reading and writing. Knowledge of Sanskrit and of music, vocal and instrumental is also added in all well-to-do households... As might be expected the missionaries were the first to establish Girl's Schools.<sup>160</sup>

Thus the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century constituted a historical conjuncture wherein colonial interventions as well as indigenous developments radically transformed the polity, economy and the lifestyle of the society. Then Malabar was a melting pot in which the people were also melting together. Among the literates English knowing people were more than those who knew Malayalam. The emergence of

<sup>158</sup> Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well Being; How Kerala Became 'A Model'*, Delhi, 1993, p.151.

<sup>159</sup> Robin Jeffrey, *The Decline of Nair Dominance: Society and Politics in Travancore-1847-1908*, New Delhi, 1976, pp.121-9.

<sup>160</sup> Ananda E.Wood, *Knowledge Before Printing and After*, op.cit., p.122.

this class created a paradoxical situation in which English newspapers were more widely read and circulated even when the brutal majority was speaking Malayalam. At this period Malayalam journalism was making tiny tots and crippled steps to emerge as a mighty influence in the social, economic and political scenario of Malabar; a giant leap to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PERVADING INFLUENCE OF PRESS

The most powerful force in the world is thought. The more forms of expression it finds, the more that force can manifest itself. The invention of printing was a milestone in human history.<sup>1</sup> While we will be looking at the debates around print and education, they both undoubtedly possessed unquestionable significance.<sup>2</sup>

The colonial domination and the spread of education by the missionaries brought about drastic changes in Malabar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The colonial rule introduced entirely a new system of public administration, a new economic order which was characterized by British bureaucracy, commercialization of agrarian economy, development of transport and communication and western concept of private property in land. Such transformations were attempted to ensure the consent of the colonized, as distinct from physical control exercised through military success and territorial conquest.<sup>3</sup>

The activities of the missionaries resulted in the emergence of an intermediary middle class in Malabar society during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Education was an important factor in the process of this social change. Culture and politics, integrated in the process of domination was not perceived or realized by the colonized.<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to see that the printing as well as reading culture developed

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<sup>1</sup> Leo Tolstoy, quoted in the article "A Century-old Riddle Eludes an Answer," in *The Hindu*, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2008, p.11.

<sup>2</sup> Tithi Bhattacharya, *The Sentinels of Culture, Class, Education and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal (1848-85)*, New Delhi, 2005, p.34.

<sup>3</sup> K.N Panikkar, "Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel", in R.Chempakalakshmi and S.Gopal, (eds.), *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology*, New Delhi, 1996, p.89.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

as a site of colonial discourse amongst the Malayalees of Kerala.<sup>5</sup> Print, education and salaried job were the three main areas of ‘primitive accumulation’ of class awareness.<sup>6</sup>

The fundamental technological change of modern times connected with literacy was, of course, the development of bulk printing. Its significance became felt in the 1880’s with the popularization of daily newspapers and weekly journals.<sup>7</sup> English education remained the catalyst for the success of the modern education system, even after the spread of Malayalam schools. This was apparent in the tendency among children going to *ezhuthupallis* and *kutipallikootams* (traditional schools) to take admission in English schools after elementary stage. Some people resigned their jobs to enter English schools.<sup>8</sup>

Though the first school in Malabar was established at Tellicherry in May 1839<sup>9</sup> the pace of growth of literacy and education was not fast until 1860’s. During the 1850’s there was none in Malabar who could read and write English as there were no English schools during those days. The Basel Mission Society had then only just started English elementary schools at Calicut, Tellicherry and Cannanore.<sup>10</sup>

### **An exploration in search of English and modernity**

<sup>5</sup> C.I Issac, “The Press as a Site of Colonial discourse-A Case Study on the Experience of Keralam”, in *Journal of South Indian History*, Vol. I, Issue I, September 2003, p.31.

<sup>6</sup> Tithi Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, p.30.

<sup>7</sup> Kathleen Gough, “Literacy in Kerala”, in Jack Goody, (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, London, 1968, p.156.

<sup>8</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam”, in K.N Ganesh, (ed.), *Culture and Modernity, Historical Explorations*, University of Calicut, 2004, p.179.

<sup>9</sup> Wilma John, “Contribution of the Basel Mission to the Socio-Cultural Life of the West Coast of India”, in K.K.N Kurup and K.J John, (eds.), *Legacy of Basel Mission and Hermann Gundert in Malabar*, Calicut, 1993, p.73.

<sup>10</sup> Article by C.Krishnan in *Mithavadi* Special Supplement, 1925, p.47.

Due to the educational activities in Malabar for the 25 years starting from the academic year 1857-58 a flow of scholars from high schools and university took place. The progress obtained is evident from the following table<sup>11</sup>.

Table 1

Years	Uty. Pupils	H.S Pupils	Middle School Pupils
1857-58	--	205	580
1862-63	--	381	577
1867-68	10	753	2012
1872-73	32	562	3698
1877-78	55	295	1180
1882-83	149	431	1431

William Logan adds: “Of the pupils in 1882-83, 5270 were girls. Many Malayali youths proceed to Madras and elsewhere to complete their education and if the number of these were added, there would be a considerable increase in the number shown in the column headed university pupils”.<sup>12</sup> In such a situation one proposal of Tellicherry municipality was to raise the standard of local municipal school to F.A class. It was said that the proposal seemed to have emanated from some of the councillors who had sent up their sons or nephews to the late entrance examination and wanted to get higher education at a cheap rate.<sup>13</sup>

This exodus of youths to Madras and other places is widely discussed in the contemporaneous literature also. Since it is the mirror

<sup>11</sup> William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1995, p.106.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

<sup>13</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1887, MNNPR, TNA.

that reflects the eventful life of those periods they are to be seriously considered and studied. In *Indulekha*<sup>14</sup> the hero Madhavan and the heroine Indulekha, in *Lakshmikesavam*<sup>15</sup> both the hero Kesavanunni Nair and the heroine Lakshmi, in *Saraswathivijayam*<sup>16</sup> the character Marathan who later becomes the sessions judge, in *Parangodiparinayam*<sup>17</sup> the main character Parangodan vakkeel are examples of those who studied outside Malabar. The characters Krishnan<sup>18</sup>, Kandankudungi<sup>19</sup>, Puthiyedathu Kochukrishna Menon<sup>20</sup>, P.V Kuttikrishna panikkar<sup>21</sup> and so on of early Malayalam short stories also come in this list.

The craze for education and the study of English is also a thread of discussion in the first Malayalam novel *Indulekha* and many of the novels and short stories that immediately followed it. Indulekha, the heroine of this novel studied English, read piano and even smiled in English. Madhavan, the hero felt it is the best to get into government service after acquiring a degree in law.<sup>22</sup>

Indulekha could drum out her suitor, the 45 year-old Suri Namboothiripad because of her prudence obtained by English education.

<sup>14</sup> The first novel in Malayalam written by O.Chandu Menon in 1889.

<sup>15</sup> The novel in Malayalam written by Padu Menon published in 1892.

<sup>16</sup> The novel in Malayalam written by Potheri Kunhampoo published in 1892.

<sup>17</sup> The novel in Malayalam written by Kizhakkeppatt Ramankutty Menon, published in 1892.

<sup>18</sup> Ambadi Narayana Poduval, "Ente adhyathe lekhanam" (Mal), in Dharmaraj Kaloor, (ed.), *Ambadi Narayana Poduval Kathakal*, Calicut, 2003, p.28.

<sup>19</sup> Ambadi Narayana Poduval, "Bodham vanna bhootham", (Mal), in Dharmaraj Kaloor, *op.cit.*, p.46.

<sup>20</sup> Oduvil Kunhikrishna Menon, "Kalyanikutty", (Mal), in K.V Thomas, (ed.), *Oduvil Kunhikrishna Menonte Kathakal*, Calicut, 2003, p.16.

<sup>21</sup> Oduvil Kunhikrishna Menon, "Narayanikutty", (Mal), in K.V Thomas, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.74.

<sup>22</sup> M.G.S Narayanan, "Keralam Irupatham Noottandil", in *Samakalika Malayalam Vaarika*, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2000, Kochi, p.31.

The other character Kalyanikutty became his victim because she lacked the same. Thus Indulekha espouses the cause of independence in sexual life by rejecting Suri Namboothiripad. And that echoes the emergence of independent family system by liberating the individual from the grip of joint family system.<sup>23</sup> When Indulekha uses the first-person singular as she rejects the advances of Suri Namboothiri, the attitude reverberates across Nair society, much as the door Nora would slam a few years later when she leaves her ‘doll’s house’<sup>24</sup> echoes through Europe.<sup>25</sup>

In the novel *Lakshmikesavam*, the heroine Lakshmi mercilessly rejects the unilateral proposal from the fifty one-year old Nair landlord Akkarappatt Kelunni Nambiar.<sup>26</sup> She ensures the independence in marriage by accepting the man of her choice Kesavanunni Nair, after absconding from home and living in exile for one year. Soon after the incident, the landlord’s friend ‘Itti Vasu Namboothiripad made a comment that, had she not been taught English, she would not have defied the words of her uncle ‘Chathara Menon’ and absconded. It means that it was her English education that enabled her to revolt against the existing social order.

In *Sukumari* (1897) written by Joseph Mooliyil there is a dialogue between Sathyapalan (the hero) and Sukumari (the heroine). The story is that of the 1860’s. Sathyapalan says, “The government had decided to propagate here English education. English education is good. But it is bad that our people abusing the mother tongue and mimicking English because many of the locals believe that English culture means

<sup>23</sup> P.Soman, “Indulekha- Swapnavum Yaatharthiyavum”, in P.V Velayudhan Pillai, (ed.), *Indulekha Padanam*, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1990, pp.100-101.

<sup>24</sup> *Doll’s House*, a drama by Henri Ibsen.

<sup>25</sup> Susie Tharu, “Foreword”, in O.Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, (translated to English by Anitha Devassia), New Delhi, 2005, p. XI.

<sup>26</sup> Padu Menon, *Lakshmikesavam*, (Mal), Kottayam, 2004, p.71.

that it is wearing their costumes and following their food habits. To speak in English, to smile in English, to dress in English and to walk in English is a new style becoming prevalent now.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus one undisputed and significant development of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Kerala was the emergence of an English educated class which began to review the existent social order, ideas and institutions in sharply critical terms.<sup>28</sup> It was a process of culture shift in which the English educated minority transferred the merits and advantages they already attained to their subordinates in the society.<sup>29</sup>

The print house of Kerala popularised western values, notions, clothing, behaviour and ways of life as superior features of modern life by facilitating the circulation of literary creations embodying practices of modernity. The western values were soon internalized by native writers who began to reproduce them. Apart from representing social reality, novels or fictional narratives in general, also exercise social control by projecting symbols and modes of life into the life of the community, particularly in those less easily defined but basic areas such as norms, values, and personal and interpersonal behaviour.<sup>30</sup> O.Chandu Menon’s novel *Indulekha* is a good example for this. It created an impression in the native minds that English education is essential for good living. This novel reproduced western values as superior leading to social progress.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph Mooliyil, *Sukumari*, (Mal), Kozhikode, 2003, p.74.

<sup>28</sup> J.Devika, “*Imagining Women’s Social Space in Early Modern Keralam*”, in Working paper series-329, CDS, Thiruvananthapuram.

<sup>29</sup> C.I Issac, *op.cit.*, P.40.

<sup>30</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “From Region to Nation and Beyond, Allegories of Power in Malayalam Fiction”, in M.A Oommen, (ed.), *Rethinking Development: Kerala’s Developmental Experience*, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1999, p.37.

<sup>31</sup> C.I Issac, “The Press as a Site of Colonial Discourse-A Case Study on the Experience of Keralam”, *op.cit.*, p.39.

In fact *Indulekha* is a work that evinces the influence which English language and western thought has made in the land of Kerala. “The book begins with a dispute over education. The elderly manager (Panchu Menon) of the matrilineal joint family refuses to waste money on sending a distantly related boy (Shinnan) to school. Madhavan (hero) protests that his uncle has ‘no idea about this small boy.....except to bring him up like a bull calf.....I will take him away myself and have him educated.’<sup>32</sup> Madhavan’s claim is that since the *taravad* property is earned by the ancestors, the children of Shinu Pattar also is entitled for its share. So Madhavan vehemently says that Panchu Menon is obliged to send Shinnan (son of Shinu Pattar) for studying English. Madhavan here challenges not only the orders of the *karanavar* (head of the Nair joint family) but also his financial monopolistic authority. The culture of Madhavan acquired by English education shines here when he makes such denials. Here the dispute symbolizes a struggle between the status quo and change. This is the curtain raiser to the central concern of the novel: an exploration of the different ways in which Malabar society was trying to grapple with the cultural situation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>33</sup>

*Indulekha* ends with Indulekha’s (heroine) marriage with Madhavan and after a month of honey moon, they get settled in Madras. This is an indication of the beginning of the ruin of *taravads* and joint family system, which was preserved intact as an institution by the feudal society. The result is the acquisition of private wealth for wife and children and subsequent birth of nuclear families. This is again substantiated by William Logan, “And the fashion is daily becoming

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<sup>32</sup> Robin Jeffrey, *Politics, Women and Well Being; How Kerala Became ‘A Model’*, Delhi, 1993, p.151.

<sup>33</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel”, *op.cit.*, p.99.

more and more prevalent for the woman to leave her ancestral home for that of the husband of her choice although as matter of law the husband occupies no recognized legal relation involving rights and responsibilities in regard either to his wife or his children”.<sup>34</sup>

The cultural impact of the new literacy was not confined to English literates. There was a spill over effect on vernacular readers. The new cultural essence invariably found its way into the Indian languages and through them to a larger audience. The growth of printing facilities in these languages during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century furthered this process, for the new cultural taste could thus enter the arena of ‘popular reading’.<sup>35</sup>

It was this awareness in Western literature that inspired the early novelists of Kerala to write books like *Indulekha*. Within three months of its publication the first edition of *Indulekha* was wholly sold out.<sup>36</sup> Between 1889 and 1892 nine novels are written in Malayalam out of which the six are from Malabar. Among this the first edition of the parody novel *Parangodiparinayam* was sold out within months as in the case of *Indulekha*. The above sequence of events in the publishing field vivifies the fact that the Malayalam readership in Malabar was considerably increased by the 1890’s consequent to the increase in the literacy rate.

Apart from above reasons the eminent English teachers of Malabar made the dissemination of English more quick during the fag end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thatha Kanaran who belonged to Thiyya community is a better example for this. Thatha Kanaran who was the

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<sup>34</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.136.

<sup>35</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel”, *op.cit.*, p.93-94.

<sup>36</sup> O.Chandu Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 241-44.

headmaster of the Tellicherry Basel Mission High School from 1887 onwards had written an authoritative work entitled *Comparative study of English and Malayalam as a guide to Reciprocal Translation*. “Since he became the headmaster of the school his popularity as a unique scholar in English attracted so many students to this school”.<sup>37</sup>

The impact of the colonial rule and English education was tremendous upon the realm of social life in Malabar during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The establishment of courts influenced not only the economic and social structure but also the mindset of the society. Even in small towns there appeared lawyers’ groups wearing black gowns. From nephews and *sambandhakkar* (the Brahmin boys involved in the contract marriage with Nair women) threats for partition of *taravad* echoed. *Janmis* employed the assistance of courts for evicting the tenants. Everywhere there arose a new class of middlemen connected with courts. Many of the first novels and dramas of Malayalam were either written by lawyers or depicted the lawyers in main roles. And those who acquired some legal knowledge later, either engaged in the preparation of memoranda or in the issue of press statements and thereby they became either public servants or leaders.<sup>38</sup> During those days (1870’s) Thiyyas practised polygamy. It was the spread of English education that put an end to that abominable custom.”<sup>39</sup>

The speedy introduction of modern English schools accelerated the process of the fast vanishing of indigenous schools in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Considering this topical interest Vengayil

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<sup>37</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1975, p.39.

<sup>38</sup> M.G.S Narayanan, “Malabar Samooham Kazhinja Noottandil”, (Mal), in M.G.S Narayanan,(ed.), *Malabar Mahotsav Souvenir*, Calicut, 1993, p.418.

<sup>39</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *op.cit.*, p.3.

Kunhiraman Nayanar wrote the short story *Nattezhuthassanmar* (teachers in indigenous schools)<sup>40</sup> and Murkoth Kumaran wrote another short story entitled *Malayalam Munshimar* (Malayalam teachers).<sup>41</sup> K.V.M (K.Vasudevan Moosad) recalls this situation in his autobiography. “By 1900 new types of schools were only in the towns. If one wanted to study Sanskrit or any other in the traditional mode, teachers were a few and the natives had little wished to send their children”.<sup>42</sup>

### **In style English, the rest local**

The acquaintance of the educated class with English style and habits enabled them to speak and write English. They were more accustomed to English dress code. An excellent example of this category is Adv. Poovadan Raman who founded two newspapers in Malabar, the first English newspaper the *Malabar Spectator* (later *West Coast Spectator*) and the second Malayalam newspaper *Kerala Sanchari*.<sup>43</sup>

Murkoth Kunhappa gives a vivid explanation of this charismatic personality. “During that time (last quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century) there was a daring and cultured lawyer in Malabar named Poovadan Raman. He was the first in Malabar to cut the hair and grow the moustache in European style and to follow the western dress code”.<sup>44</sup> (His son Govindan was the first Malayali to go to England for higher education).

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<sup>40</sup> Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, *Kesari*, (Mal), Trichur, 1945, pp.23-32.

<sup>41</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *op.cit.*, p.148.

<sup>42</sup> K.V.M, *Atmakatha*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1966, p.13.

<sup>43</sup> A newspaper published from Calicut from 1886.

<sup>44</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1982, p.141.

Among these educated people many of them were genuine in thinking and behaviour. But there was a few who were blindly imitating the western habits. For them it was a matter of status to speak English and read English newspapers. Many of the literary works of that period mock such habits. There is one such depiction in a scene in *Parangodiparinayam*<sup>45</sup> . “That time Parnagodikutty (heroine) was reading with much interest the *London Times* paper, reclined on a couch. It was about Gladstone’s speech about Home rule movement”.<sup>46</sup> Parangodikutty is a true representative of the imitating class.

K.C Narayanan Nambiar satirized this blind imitation of western style in his poem *puthiya parishkaara chihnangalathre*<sup>47</sup> (new cultural signs) published in an early issue of *Kerala Sanchari*. In the poem *ardhakshauram* (half shave), *melmeesha* (upper moustache), krop, shirt (crop and shirt) etc. were mockingly denoted as symbols of modern culture.

There are several dialogues in the novel *Sukumari* about the fondness of educated and literate people here, to imitate the English systems. In this novel *Sukumari*, the heroine comments about the craze for English dress, “I have no objection in locals switching over to a different dress. Yet it is too much that the locals wearing the chest open dress, tie and cap as the English people wear. There is no doubt that the pants is better than the local *dhothi* and wearing shoes is a protection for the feet. But an ordinary shirt and turban will better suit our people”.<sup>48</sup> In this novel there is another youngman in European dress, speaking to Sathyapalan (the hero) a conglomeration of English and Malayalam.

<sup>45</sup> Kizhakkeppatt Ramankutty Menon, *Parangodiparinayam*, (Mal), Kottayam, 2004.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*,p.69.

<sup>47</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, p.150.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph Mooliyil, *Sukumari*, *op.cit.*, p.105.

Later Sathyapalan discloses to Sukumari that this youngman absconded some time back from Tellicherry committing some crime. Later he studied some English from somewhere else and now he is working as a writer in one coffee estate in Wayanad. Sathyapalan mockingly calls that youngman's language as his *manipravalam* (mixture of Malayalam and Sanskrit), a language of those who studied Malayalam and a bit of English.<sup>49</sup> In the dialogue between the character Karuna and Sukumari there is a mention of people going to Belgaum, changing their local names by English names. Then the names like Vasu becomes D'vaz, Raman becomes Raimond, Achuthan becomes Atchison and Perayan becomes Pereira.<sup>50</sup>

In the novel *Parangodiparinayam* the author makes fun of the young people blindly imitating the English style. The character Pangassa Menon says, "If one is intelligent, without much hard-work he can study the lessons and get a promotion. After passing one or two examination he boards a train to Madras. There his endeavour is to become one like European. Subsequently he forgets Malayalam. Even when he speaks to the servant he deliberately uses a few English words. Thus he develops an English-Malayalam mixed style which neither English people nor Malayalis can understand. Thus by the time he finishes B.A, B.L and comes out, the *taravad* will be in ruins".<sup>51</sup> The novelist sarcastically calls this class *koothankeeri jaathi* (a class of persons Indians in blood and colour but English in taste and opinions).<sup>52</sup> "Lord Mecauly in the education minutes of 1837 has recorded that the creation of such a community is the aim of English education in India."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-5.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103.

<sup>51</sup> Kizhakkepatt Ramankutty Menon, *op.cit.*, p.62.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

<sup>53</sup> V.C Haris, "Preface" in Kizhakkepatt Ramankutty Menon, *op.cit.*, pp.13-14

The novelist makes fun of both Parangodan and Parangodikutty for their blind craze for English habits. He says that the impression of Parangodikutty is that since her being an English lady all the young men in the country are always tarrying to be her servants.<sup>54</sup> The novelist also makes fun of Parangodan who is not ready to marry his lady love Parangodikutty without following the English custom of ‘courting before marriage’. Parangodikutty reluctantly agrees with that since she is forced to pretend that she too knows that foreign custom.<sup>55</sup>

### **Tide of English Newspapers sweeps Malabar**

The above examples convince the overwhelming influence of the English education in Malabar and the craze of the locals to imitate the English habits. It may be that genuine or artificial enthusiasm that coerced the so-called elite class of Malabar to subscribe and read English newspapers. The newspapers tuned by the colonial masters were appealing to the emerging section of new readers. The practice of communication through English has been fashionable since then. Leading newspapers of Common Wealth Countries of Asia and Africa are still published in English language. In India even the vernacular newspapers changed into English as they grew up. Our present day largely circulated leading national dailies like *The Hindu*, *Amrithabazar Pathrika* etc. which had been originally vernacular shifted to English later.<sup>56</sup>

Even in Calicut there were three English newspapers. The veteran journalist Theruvath Raman says, “During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century three

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.71.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83.

<sup>56</sup> C.I Issac, “The Press as a Site of Colonial Discourse-A Case Study on the Experience of Keralam”, *op.cit.*, p.43.

English newspapers *Malabar Spectator*, *West Coast Reformer*<sup>57</sup>, and *Champion* were circulated in Calicut. The launching of an English weekly *Malabar Spectator* almost six years prior to the starting of *Kerala Pathrika* indeed upholds and corroborates the craze for English in Malabar. It was the English newspapers that nurtured reading habit among the people of Malabar”.<sup>58</sup> When Adv.C.Krishnan converted the *Mithavadi*<sup>59</sup> magazine into a weekly newspaper in 1921 one page was dedicated for English news alone.

During the 1880’s apart from *Malabar Spectator* there was many an English newspaper read by the educated class in Malabar. In the reminiscences of the famous writer M.R Nair who used to write under the pseudonym ‘Sanjayan’ there is the portrait of his father reading the English newspaper *Amrithabazaar Pathrika*<sup>60</sup> when Sanjayan was a child. M.R Nair in his article *njanagalude aashan* (our teacher) writes, “Sanjayan (M.R Nair) reminds one of the nights when he was a child. He is lying on the bed resting his head on the pillow. In the corner of the room near a table Sanjayan sees his father behind an unfolded newspaper. That newspaper was *Amrithabazaar Pathrika*. It was the first English newspaper that Sanjayan ever heard of”.<sup>61</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, a scholar in Malayalam journalism writes that *Amrithabazar Pathrika* was a largely circulated daily in Calcutta. It was widely circulated among the English educated people in Malabar too.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> An English newspaper started from Calicut.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>59</sup> A vernacular newspaper started first from Tellicherry in 1908 and later shifted to Calicut.

<sup>60</sup> An English newspaper published from Calcutta started in 1768.

<sup>61</sup> M.R Nair, *Sanjayan*, (Mal), Vol. I, Kozhikode, 1986, p.289.

<sup>62</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *Kerala Pathrapravarthanam: Suvarnadhyayanga,l* (Mal), Kottayam, 1999, p.1.

*Madras Mail* <sup>63</sup> which sharply criticized the Congress and its publications was the newspaper which Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon, the founder of *Kerala Pathrika* everyday read.<sup>64</sup> Theruvath Raman reminisces that K.P Krishnan who was the assistant editor of *West Coast Reformer* and *Harbinger*<sup>65</sup> later became the Calicut reporter of *Madras Mail*. He continued in that post until the publication of the *Madras Mail* was ceased.<sup>66</sup> Raman added that in those days *Madras Mail* had very good circulation in Malabar. Government officers used to subscribe this newspaper. When circulation increased more Malabar news started to appear.<sup>67</sup>

In the novels that were published in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the newspaper reading habit of various characters has been displayed. In *Lakshmikesavam* there is a scene where the heroine Lakshmikutty reads the newspapers sitting on a chair in her room.<sup>68</sup> Since Lakshmikutty is a character, proficient in English language, and as it is said in the story that more than one newspaper exist, probably there might have been at least one English newspaper among them. In the story of Ambadi Narayana Poduval<sup>69</sup> entitled “Ente Aadyathe Lekhanam” (My first article) also there is the portrayal of a context in which an English educated youngman Krishnan who unreasonably mocks the vernacular books and newspapers. “Anchalkkaran (postman) brought a few books and papers and placed them before Krishnan. He selected only those in English among them and pushed to a corner the

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<sup>63</sup> An English newspaper started from Madras in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>64</sup> V.T Bhattathirippad, *V.Tyude Jeevitha Smaranakal*, (Mal), Kottayam, p.95.

<sup>65</sup> An English newspaper started from Calicut.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Padu Menon, *Lakshmikesavam*, *op.cit.*, p.68.

<sup>69</sup> One of the first short story writers in Malayalam.

books and papers in Malayalam even without removing the wrapper. There were many old papers of that kind lying already there. Then I asked whether he does not want those in Malayalam. Then Krishnan said, “Those are non-sense rubbish. It is because of my dignity that I have not sent them back. If you like you can take”.<sup>70</sup> In the story of C.S Gopala Panikkar, “Melvilasam Maari” (address changed), the central character mentioned as ‘I’ is reading an English magazine reclined on a chair. The other character Lakshmikutty reads *Vidyavinodini* sitting on another chair lying near.<sup>71</sup>

It was a practice in those days also, to send copies of newspapers to men of eminence in different parts of the country. Thus Dr.Hermann Gundert used to get by post every week, newspapers printed in almost 18 languages. Gundert read these regularly and used its crux in his articles.<sup>72</sup> It is almost certain that they might include English newspapers one or more.

Along with the increasing literacy, employment opportunities and return from land and other investments, the purchasing capacity of the people had also increased. This is evident from the considerable number of professionals and other people engaged in various income generating activities, at that time. In the census returns of 1881, the population has been classed according to actual occupations.(Appendix-1).<sup>73</sup> Among the professionals, 7206 were employed in Government and 2274 in the Defence Department. Both of these groups collectively came to 9480.

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<sup>70</sup> Ambadi Narayana Poduval, *Ambadi Narayan Poduvalinte Kathakal*, (Mal), Calicut, 2003, p.28.

<sup>71</sup> C.S Gopala Panikakar, “Melvilaasam maari”, (Mal), in Sreejith K.Warier, (ed.), *C.S Gopalapanikkarude kathakal*, Kozhikode, 2003, p.16.

<sup>72</sup> C.K Moosad, “Nighandu Karthavaya Dr.Gundert”(Mal), in M.G.S Narayanan, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.429.

<sup>73</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.117.

Many of these groups had the financial affluence to subscribe newspapers.

The facts furnished in the *Statistical Atlas* of Malabar (based on the 1881 census) also corroborate that there were many who had sufficient income to subscribe newspapers either English or Malayalam. It states that among the population 31.9% are land holders and 16.75 are traders. In the industrial class the number of persons who live by the supply of food and drink, fuel and forage is very large. They account for 12.4% of the people. So also are the workers in wood and the like who number 4.0% of the people. Workers in leather and cotton fabrics are few, but there are large numbers engaged in the manufacture of coir, as well as numerous tailors and umbrella-makers".<sup>74</sup>

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of officials drawing a salary of more than 10, 20 and 50 rupees a month were 1063, 245 and 90 respectively.<sup>75</sup> Some of the people in the above categories had the capacity to subscribe a newspaper. Also they being affluent and literate it was also a prestige for many of them to have a paper in their houses. In the beginning it was the English newspapers that had fair circulation in Malabar. In those days most of the Government employees used to purchase *The Madras Mail* which mostly favoured the Government. The fact that even Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon, the man behind the Congress Movement in Malabar during the 1880's subscribed *Madras Mail*, which criticized the Congress the most, is an indication of its influence in Malabar.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Statistical Atlas of Malabar*, Sl.No. 1779, Book No.C/142, RAC.

<sup>75</sup> K.N Panikkar, "Land Control, Ideology and Reform: A Study of the Change in Family Organization and Marriage System in Kerala", *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. IV, No. I, July, 1977, p.38.

<sup>76</sup> V.T Bhattathirippad, *op.cit.*, p.95.

When the circulation of various English newspapers showed signs of increase some of them appointed their own staff correspondents in Malabar during the 1890's. This fact is corroborated by many of the reports published in those days by *The Madras Mail* with the credit-line, 'From Our Correspondent'. It is not sure whether they were full time correspondents stationed at Calicut or if they were roaming reporters. G.Priyadarshanan, writes that the eminent journalist Murkoth Kumaran had been the reporter of *Madras Mail* for three decades.<sup>77</sup> This is again corroborated by the noted journalist K.P Kunhimoosa that the function held in connection with the inauguration of the Tellicherry Mubarak High School by Maulana Shaukath Ali was reported in the *Madras Mail* by its reporter Murkoth Kumaran.<sup>78</sup> However it be, *Madras Mail* published various kinds of news items from Malabar, some with maximum haste and some with reasonable speed, considering the gravity and seriousness of the news item.

The arrival of the economic reporter to the Government of India, at Calicut is a news item in *Madras Mail* under the heading, 'The Economic Reporter in Calicut'.<sup>79</sup> Since the news is a little serious it appeared in the paper without delay. The report is seen sent from Calicut on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1889 which is published on 11<sup>th</sup>. It means that it took only a single day to have it published in the paper. During the 1890's there were no telegraph facilities from Calicut to Madras. Train was the

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<sup>77</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.80.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with K.P Kunhimoosa on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2005.

<sup>79</sup> *Madras Mail*, 11<sup>th</sup> December 1889-Micro-film, NMML, New Delhi. The text of the item is as follows. "Calicut, 9<sup>th</sup> December:- Dr.George Watt, Economic Reporter to the Government of India, arrived here on 5<sup>th</sup> and left yesterday after gathering a deal of valuable local information on economic and industrial subjects and collecting several specimens for the commercial museum at Calcutta....He carried away from here fried bananas, wooden sandals, coconut and palmyra jaggery, *pappadams*, native under-linen etc."

only means to send the reports to Madras from where that paper was printed and published. So the speed is of-course wonderful.

The F.O.C (From Our Correspondent) report entitled ‘Wayanad Planting Notes’ published on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1899, endeavours to depict the deficiency of rainfall in Waynad.<sup>80</sup> On the same day among the general news items there is another report about the decision to introduce a special syllabus of studies in all fisheries schools of Malabar coast.<sup>81</sup> The above news items although seen as sent from Malabar on December 23<sup>rd</sup> appeared only four days after. From this it can be deduced and deciphered that it took four days for the news dispatch from Malabar sent by the correspondent, to appear in the paper.

The *Madras Mail* was able to carry the news item regarding the publication of the first Malayalam novel though a bit late. The historic publication of *Indulekha* was on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1889 at Calicut. The news item appeared on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1890 under the title ‘A Malayalam Novel’.<sup>82</sup> It is very pertinent to note that an English paper published from Madras carried the report of the publication of a Malayalam novel from Calicut with due importance. This has happened only because it had a wide audience in and around Calicut.

*The Madras Mail* even during the 1890’s carried the doubts of the readers of Malabar regarding the scholarships to which they are entitled.

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<sup>80</sup> *Madras Mail*, December 27, 1899, “ Malabar-Waynad 23<sup>rd</sup> December:- Though the rainfall in the district for the entire year is only about 10%, below the average of the past ten years, this shortfall represents a very serious deficiency in the quantity which usually obtains during the North-East monsoon.....The Collector of Malabar shown his sympathy with the difficulties of landholders all over the country, addressed to the Board of Revenue advocating considerable remissions of taxation should be sanctioned”.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Madras Mail.*, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1890. News item says, “Mr.O.Chandu Menon, the District Munsiff of Parappanangady, in Malabar has published a novel in Malayalam entitled *Indulekha*, printed at Spectator Press”.

Example is the letters in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ column. One such letter entitled ‘Christian College Scholarship’ is seen published in the issue of February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1890.<sup>83</sup> It is very conspicuous that the letter was written from Calicut only on 29<sup>th</sup> January. It means that the letter took only three days to reach Madras and for being published in the paper. The importance attached to such silly letters from Malabar during those times is quite amazing. All the more amazing is that the letter was followed by the reply also.<sup>84</sup> In the news item on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1890 the staff reporter makes an elaboration of his ‘on the spot’ study of the sanitation problems in Minicoy and Malabar especially among the towns of Calicut, Ponnani, Guruvayur and Cochin.<sup>85</sup> The advertisement

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<sup>83</sup> *Madras Mail*, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1890. The letter says, “Sir, It is well known that the Madras Christian College holds out an annual scholarship, for the ‘benefits of students from Malabar’ as set forth in the extra collegiate scholarship scheme of the college, of-course by a competitive examination. Can a non-British born (Cochin born) subject who passes his F.A from an institution of Malabar, compete for the same. - A Candidate, Calicut, 29<sup>th</sup> January”.

<sup>84</sup> *Madras Mail*, 1<sup>st</sup> February 1890. The reply was this: “We have made enquiries and ascertained that the scholarship rules are not absolutely clear on this point. In the only case of the point being raised, it was provisionally ruled that if the student had studied for the length of time prescribed in a college of the district to which the scholarship is assigned, he was eligible even if born elsewhere. If such cases should occur often, perhaps the question may have to be definitely settled by the council of the college--Editor”.

<sup>85</sup> *Madras Mail*, January 30, 1890, The report says, “.....In regards to sanitation the condition of things which the Surgeon-General deplors as ‘too horrible to contemplate’ reigns, the Collector says. In all the large towns in Malabar, even in Calicut itself the Mappilas attached a sort of sanctity towards the wells in their sacred graveyards and habitually uses the water for drinking in preference to any other. In Calicut, Ponnani and many other places, the graveyard wells are in sandy soil, and graves new and old thickly surround them on every side. Drinking water is drawn from these wells by the Mappilas, not only without repugnance, but as a matter of choice. At Angadipuram I saw lately a grave, in which the feet of the corpse (newly buried) actually rested against the wall of the well, from which all the neighbouring houses draw their drinking water. The case of such water for drinking is a horrible practice; but it would require special legislation to stop it. Perhaps there is not a filthier tank in the country than the peculiarly sacred one attached to the famous Hindu temple of Guruvayur. I make bold to state that the general sanitation of Minicoy is superior to that of Calvetti in the heart of Cochin Municipality and is exactly similar to that of the fisherman’s quarter in the town of Calicut and most of the towns along the coast”.

published by Calicut Basel Mission Manufacturers on 27th January 1890 convincingly and conclusively establishes the fact that there was circulation for the *Madras Mail* especially in and around Calicut and generally in Malabar.<sup>86</sup>

Stalwarts like Adv.C Krishnan used to write articles in *Madras Mail*. K.R Achuthan, biographer of C.Krishnan, has noted that *Madras Mail* was the favourite newspaper of Krishnan. Occasionally he wrote articles in that paper.<sup>87</sup> This fact is established by N.K Damodaran in an article on C.Krishnan. He brings to notice the article Krishnan wrote in *Madras Mail* on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1900 under the heading ‘Malabar Janmi’<sup>88</sup>(Malabar landlord) while he was a student.

All the above references undoubtedly establish that the journalistic scenario of Malabar was under the sway of English newspapers published either from Malabar or outside, even much before the vernacular papers could make performance and grip in its own heartland. The main reasons for this contradictory phenomenon were that elementary and primary schools were fewer in number then. Malayalam vernacular schools in structure and content were carbon copies of the English schools.<sup>89</sup> Malayalam was not encouraged much in those days in the English schools and as a consequence vernacular literates were also comparatively fewer in number. English education remained the catalyst of the success of the modern education system even after the spread of Malayalam schools.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Madras Mail*, January 27, 1890. The body of the advertisement was this: “CALICUT BASEL MISSION MANUFACTURERS, Trouserings, Table Napkins, Face and Bath Towels”.

<sup>87</sup> K.R Achuthan, *C.Krishnan*, (Mal), Trichur, 1970, p.289.

<sup>88</sup> N.K Damodaran, *Mahacharithamala*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1984, p.85.

<sup>89</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam”, *op.cit.*, p.178.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.179.

### **Tiny trots of vernacular**

But the efforts of the missionaries to the introduction of wide-scale school network during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the spread of literacy in Malayalam. In their schools students were admitted irrespective of caste, creed and sex. They made the people conscious of their deplorable condition and the necessity to better themselves through education.<sup>91</sup> In Malabar the growth of education, although slow, during the early years of the British rule, gradually picked up by the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>92</sup>

Table 2<sup>93</sup>

<b>Years</b>	<b>Middle School Pupils</b>	<b>Elementary Pupils</b>
1857-58	580	116
1862-63	577	--
1867-68	2012	1013
1872-73	3698	11671
1877-78	1180	27527
1882-83	1431	37136

From the above table it is clear that during the academic year 1882-83 there was a steep increase in the percentage of those ‘under instruction’ when compared to the corresponding figures that of five years back, i.e., 1877-78. The same pattern of increase is noted during the five years prior to the academic year 1877-78 also. These facts vindicate indirectly that the number of the Malayalam literates increased considerably during the above stipulated periods and in a way that led to considerable increase of Malayalam readers.

<sup>91</sup> R.N Yesudas, “Christian Missionaries and Social Awakening in Kerala”, in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, Part I-IV, pp.195-201.

<sup>92</sup> *Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency for 1872-73*, No. XXXVIII, p.63, TNA.

<sup>93</sup> William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.106.

The following table shows the state of education in Malabar as per the census of 1881.

Table 3<sup>94</sup>

<b>Taluks</b>	<b>Under Instruction</b>	<b>Instructed</b>	<b>Illiterate</b>	<b>Total</b>
Chirakkal	9486	17772	245411	272669
Kottayam	5567	12764	147444	165775
Kurmbranad	7944	20206	232874	261024
Waynad	1370	3853	82868	88091
Calicut	6384	18721	180857	205962
Eranad	5114	14823	276206	296143
Walluvanad	7117	19149	281836	308102
Palghat	11018	25703	305733	342454
Ponnani	12769	27762	352123	392654
<b>Total</b>	<b>66769</b>	<b>160753</b>	<b>1447496</b>	<b>2332874</b>
Instructed				6.89%
Under instruction				2.862%

Table 4<sup>95</sup>

### Literacy in Malabar from 1891 to 1931.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>
1891	22.08%	3.92%	13.00%
1901	17.24%	3.02%	10.13%
1911	22.57%	3.46%	13.02%
1931	22.92%	6.36%	14.64%

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Census Reports* of relevant years. Statistics for Planning, Kerala.

From the third and fourth table it is clear that during the years between 1881 and 1891 the literacy rate increased to 13% from 6.89%. Also high appreciation is given for education in the *Statistical Atlas of Malabar*. “As to education the people of Malabar are much ahead of the Presidency generally; only 77.9% of male and 96% of the female population being illiterate”.<sup>96</sup> The Malabar area could boast of its education status compared to other districts. Of all the districts of Madras, Malabar had 20% and more of pupils of school-going age attending educational institutions. In majority of the districts in the state the percentage was less than 12.<sup>97</sup>

In such a social and educational situation that existed during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it was difficult for any Malayalam journal to make a debut. Murkoth Kunhappa comments, “Then there was only a few who spoke Malayalam language. Among them the rich and those who had interest in reading newspaper used to read only English newspapers. And the landlords who were devoid of English education had no fair opinion about newspaper reading. In the lower strata there were only illiterates and a few literates who had no financial capacity to subscribe a newspaper. It was from a section of people between the above two extremes that the subscribers for Malayalam newspapers were to come. Among them the ladies had not used to read papers at all<sup>98</sup>....When *Malayala Manorama* was started in 1890 newspaper reading was not at all a habit among Malayalis<sup>99</sup>....only a few were interested even in reading prose texts. Majority of the people were fond of poetry.”<sup>100</sup> In

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<sup>96</sup> *Statistical Atlas, Census of 1921-Malabar District Village Statistics*, RAC, p.6.

<sup>97</sup> File No.A806, Chart I, RAC.

<sup>98</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Navothanam*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1988, p.52.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.89.

such a situation, it was interesting to look at the condition of *Kerala Pathrika* started six years back. Even after two years since its inception *Kerala Pathrika* could get a circulation of only 904 copies.<sup>101</sup>

Mannalath Sreedharan, a veteran journalist also ascertains the above fact. “In the period when *Kerala Pathrika* was launched many of those who could read Malayalam newspapers were not able to write the language. In those days Malayalam newspapers were regarded as a comic effort of the Sanskrit scholars. Then many of the scholars did not know how to write prose. Even the letters were written in poetry. Therefore the duty to create genuine interest in Malayalam reading was also undertaken by this paper. Since the prose was rarely used, the readers were few in the beginning”.<sup>102</sup>

### **Bilateral growth of press and prose**

Alongwith the growth of vernacular newspapers the prose style in language also grew. Infact the growth of the both is intertwined and complimentary. The prose style created drastic changes in Malayalam literary sphere. Only in a language very much penetrated among the people, can a literary language originate. The public sphere emerged as a result of the propagation of newspapers and journals are indeed a creation of this prose style.<sup>103</sup>

The decline of indigenous education as a cultural construct and the ascendancy of modern Malayalam education, are signified by the transformation of Malayalam language, particularly prose. Scholars

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<sup>101</sup> *Correspondence* 639 dated 18<sup>th</sup> June 1886, RAC.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Mannalath Sreedharan on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2005.

<sup>103</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum Achadi Yanthrangaludeyum Vyaapanathode Malayaliyude Saahithya Sankalpangalilum Bhashavyavaharangelilum Sambhavicha Maattangal” (Mal), in M.N Vijayan, (ed.), *Nammude Saahithyam Nammude Samooam*, Vol. I, Thrissur, 2000, pp.484-485.

have pointed to Kerala Varma as the initiator of simple Malayalam prose. An equally strong case has been made for the missionaries as the initiators of Malayalam prose.<sup>104</sup>

It was the missionary activities that contributed much to the development of modern Malayalam prose and to the increased readership in Malayalam. For the propagation of Christianity they made contacts with the common man. Thus they had evolved a new prose style out of the speech of the vulgar populace and fashioned it as a medium for descriptive, narrative and discursive writing.<sup>105</sup> The most developed form of missionary Malayalam prose style is to be seen in the missionary newspapers”.<sup>106</sup>

This new lucid style was easily understood by the common people. The new missionary prose style was popularized through the schools and newspapers and was backed by the use of print. “It was from this ‘missionary prose’ and Sanskrit language that the present day literary language evolved. The grammar, style, diction etc. required for a language were developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and were disseminated through the medium of print. The ‘middle class’ that developed during this time made transactions in the new language”.<sup>107</sup> Prof.V.Aravindakshan says, “Prose, a popular medium for the manifestation of ideas is a creation of this age. The contribution of the prose, born and incubated in the pages of newspapers and journals, in conveying to the ordinary public thoughtful articles and imaginative

<sup>104</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Kerala”, *op.cit.*, pp178-179.

<sup>105</sup> V.Aravindakshan, “The Literary Tradition of Kerala”, in P.J Cherian, (ed.), *Essays on the Cultural Formation of Kerala*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999, p.82.

<sup>106</sup> Shibu Muhammed, “A Critical Enquiry into Popular Journalism in Kerala with reference to Malayalam Newspapers and its History”, in P.K Pokker, (ed.), *Calicut University Research journal*, Vol. III, Issue 1, University of Calicut, July 2002, p.107.

<sup>107</sup> K.N Ganesh, *Kerala Samooha Padanangal*, (Mal), Pathanamthitta, 2002, p.105.

works is invaluable. It represents the liberty of the language from the framework of customs. The most solemn representative of that liberty is the novel, narrated in prose. It is the modern criticism that creates a public sphere among the ordinary reader, by transmitting the crux of literary works and thereby imbuing in him, thoughts about good and evil”.<sup>108</sup>

The contribution of newspapers in the creation of modern literature and its dissemination is indescribable. Prof.N.Krishna Pillai says that the development of journalism was one of the main reasons for the renaissance of Malayalam literature during the time of Kerala Varma. The close nexus of Malayalis with the western culture nourished the growth of newspapers and journals in Malayalam. Due to the above access an environment congenial and convenient for the multi-faceted growth of literature was created. Indeed, journalism was very much useful and fruitful for the fast propagation of literary works among the public, for the engendure of a prose style which is able to discuss political, social and cultural tastes, and for the enrichment of other literary areas like articles, biographies and stories”.<sup>109</sup> As in the case of novel, literary criticism of the modern type also, was born and brought up in the pages of periodicals. It is only in a society that contains democratic characters and that has bid farewell to feudal culture, literary criticism can grow. Due to modern education and journalism a favourable atmosphere for criticism was getting evolved in that period.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> V.Aravindakshan, “Malayala Sahithyathinte Adhunikeekaranam: Chila Prarambha Prachodanangal”, (Mal), in M.N Vijayan, (ed.), *Nammude Sahithyam Nammude Samooham-1901-2000*, Vol. II, Thrissur, 2000, p.31.

<sup>109</sup> N.Krishna Pillai, *Kairaliyude Katha*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1975, p.259.

<sup>110</sup> V.Aravindakshan, “Malayala Sahithyathinte Adhunikeekaranam: Chila Prarambha Prachodanangal”, *op.cit.*, p.34.

Along with the educational institutions the missionaries gave a fillip to printing and journalistic activities. L.M.S Missionaries established a press at Nagercoil in 1820.<sup>111</sup> Benjamin Bailey installed the C.M.S press at Kottayam in 1821 and started printing subsequently.<sup>112</sup> In Malabar Dr.Hermann Gundert made pioneering efforts in the field of printing and started a litho press at Tellichery in 1845.<sup>113</sup> These missionary presses printed hundreds of religious publications to propagate Christianity. Journalism was also introduced by these missionaries for the benefit of their followers and to convince them of the glory of Christian religion.<sup>114</sup> The first Malayalam periodical *Rajyasamacharam* was published from June 1847 to December 1850. It was printed from Basel Mission Press Nettur, Tellichery.<sup>115</sup> The next journal *Paschimodayam* was also brought out by Basel Mission from Tellichery from October 1847 to August 1851.<sup>116</sup> Gundert was closely involved in the publication of these two journals.<sup>117</sup>

It was during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the colonialist administrators introduced with a new found vigour, enterprises like factories and plantations, transporting systems like roads and railways, communication systems like telegraphs and *anchal* (post). Construction of railways and roads took a tremendous pace under the British than under the Rajas of Kerala. Therefore to cope up with this great leap, the spread of information with a maximum speed was necessary and the

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<sup>111</sup> K.M Govi, *Adimudranam Bharathathilum Malayalathilum*,(Mal), Kottayam, 1998, p.119.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p.130.

<sup>114</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, p.95.

<sup>115</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, *Kerala Pathrapravarthana Charithram*, (Mal), Thrissur, 1985, p.31.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>117</sup> P.K.K Menon, *The History of Freedom Struggle in Kerala*, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 1992, pp.580-81.

colonial rulers utilized print for this end. In-fact, print and print media were after all the resultant product of colonialism. C.A Bayly comments, “print itself did not create an information revolution. Rather it speeded up the velocity and range of communication among existing communities of knowledge”.<sup>118</sup> In fact the advent of mechanical duplication of knowledge did encourage the spread of literacy and it caused the growth of a reading subject in the state.<sup>119</sup>

Thus the components of ‘colonial modernity’ were related to each other and therefore each one was inseparable. For gathering and disseminating information the government began to publish its Acts, munsiff records, manuals, gazetteers, regulations and so on. The introduction of print under colonial rule produced wide effect. The simultaneous introduction of public instruction, the printing press, public debate in newspapers, the English language, libraries and dense archives transformed Indian society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century more thoroughly than colonial capitalism transformed its economy”.<sup>120</sup> The overall output of all these factors combined was the formation of public sphere.

Before the arrival of the missionaries Malayalam was not developed as a standard language. It was the colonial government that had taken the initial steps to standardize the Malayalam language. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the Treaty of Seringapatana in 1792, the whole of Malabar came under the hands of Bombay Presidency. During that period since the Company Government lacked a press of its own the printing works were done for the company by the Courier press at Bombay. When Malabar came under the British, the Courier press owners expressed their wish to have printing facilities in

<sup>118</sup> C.A Bayly, *Empire and Information 1780-1870*, Delhi, 1999, p.243.

<sup>119</sup> C.I Issac, “The Press as a Site of Colonial Discourse-A Case Study on the Experience of Keralam”, *op.cit.*, p.33.

<sup>120</sup> C.A Bayly, *op.cit.*, pp.8-9.

the language of the newly annexed area also. They said to the Government in March 1798 that in order to print the government notices and regulations they will require Malayalam types. Immediately the Governor Jonathan Duncan sanctioned 5000 rupees. He was seeking the convenience of printing in order to propagate the new regulations and rules among the locals.<sup>121</sup>

It was in 1857 that the Madras government appointed Dr. Hermann Gundert as the first Inspector of Schools in Malayalam-Karnataka districts. He continued in that post until 11<sup>th</sup> April 1859.<sup>122</sup> In Travancore a text book committee was constituted in 1867. In 1868 Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran became the chairman of this committee. Under his leadership the committee printed stories, essays, poems and even novels which were translations or adaptations of English books.<sup>123</sup> Kerala Varma's text books not only gave thrust to prose form but also exempted religious and mythological contents.<sup>124</sup> The work of Keralavarma Valia Koyi Thampuran, who was the chairman of this committee, has to be reviewed from the perspective of effectively popularizing the missionary educational methods through his twenty odd text books.<sup>125</sup>

The printing presses which were actively involved in the publication of books meant for proselytization by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>

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K.M Govi, *op.cit.*, pp.96-101.

<sup>122</sup> C.K Moosad, *op.cit.*, p.428.

<sup>123</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Literacy and Social Formation in Thiruvithamcore" in C.Balan, (ed.), *Reflections on Malabar: Society, Institution and Culture*, Mangalore, 2000, p.112.

<sup>124</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, "Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum Achadi Yanthrangaludeyum Vyaapanathode Malayaliyude Saahithya Sankalpangalilum Bhashavyavaharangelilum Sambhavicha Maattangal", *op.cit.*, p.486.

<sup>125</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam", *op.cit.*, p.178.

century started publishing books with a secular perspective like travelogues, biographies, autobiographies and those connected with the extension of knowledge. It was during the 1860's that Kerala Varma started giving importance for prose in curriculum. Through the above text books, a literary culture mainly prose centred, became more prominent. The buyers of these books were not the rich and the newly elevated middle class groups alone.<sup>126</sup>

Yet it took some more time for the ripening of a 'print culture'. During the fag end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the locals dared to start presses like Keralavilasam, Keralakalpadrumam, Vidhyavilasam, Vidhyabhivardhini etc. Several books came out of these presses. Though in a limited extent, it heralded the rise of 'print capitalism' here. Even then, the presence of a vernacular reading public was not felt. Ananda E.Wood says, "It is doubtful whether there was a good bookshop even at the larger towns like Trichur. Books were generally available through salesmen who walked from house to house selling the books that were carried in bundles on their back and heads".<sup>127</sup>

K.V.M provides a description about how his education was lagged by six months due to non-availability of the copy of a text book. "In those days (around 1903) to purchase a book one should go for Guruvayur *Ekaadhashi* (a Hindu religious observation). One day *ezhuthassan* (teacher) told my father that it was time for me to initiate the *magham* study (a stage in the study of Brahmin students). But the *ezhuthassan* had not with him a text book. Thus the studies were lagged by six months as the book was not available".<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, "Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum ....", *op.cit.*, p.485.

<sup>127</sup> Ananda E.Wood, *Knowledge Before Printing and After: The Indian Tradition in Changing Kerala*, Delhi, 1985, p.42.

<sup>128</sup> K.V.M, *op.cit.*, pp.15-16.

Gradually the situation changed in favour of Malayalam language and literature. The print capitalists printed many orally transmitted texts and manuscripts and sold them among the people. S.T Reddiar printed the works of Kunchan Nambiar and Ezhuthachan and sold them at festival places, *angaadis* (markets) and seasonal fares. Vidyabhivardhini published not only classics but also popular works like *vanchippatt* and *thiruvathirappatt* (folk songs) and also translations of prose writings from other languages. The book *Nerampokku vishayamaaya criminalcase pusthakangal* (Interesting Criminal Case Books) brought out by S.T Reddiar is the forerunner of detective stories in Malayalam.<sup>129</sup>

In Malabar hitherto there was not any vernacular newspaper to satiate the tastes of Malayalam readers. The missionary journals had no other objective other than religious propagation. It was at this time Chenkalath Valiya Kunhrama Menon made a bold step to start a Malayalam newspaper from Calicut which became a giant-leap in the history of Malayalam press and journalism. He found that, for newspapers Malabar is a virgin soil not yet upturned.

### ***Kerala Pathrika-Harbinger of a New Era***

The vibrant and dynamic period of social transformation starts with the beginning of national movement. It can be said that the powers of social transformation got more vigour and vitality with the national consciousness getting an organized structure in 1885. The *Kerala Pathrika* of Chenkalath Valiya Kunnhrama Menon started from Calicut in 1884 heralded the advent of this new era of transformation.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, "Varthamanpathrangaludeyum.....", *op.cit.*, p.485.

<sup>130</sup> Chummar Choondal and Sukumaran Pottekkatt, *Malayala Pathracharithram*, (Mal), Kochi, 1977, p.268.

It was from nothingness Menon built a mighty journalistic edifice the *Kerala Pathrika*. He had constraints many and so he had to strive much. His work was a sacrifice in the altar of public cause and human love. P.V Krishna Warier says, “When *Kerala Pathrika* was started there wasn’t a facile style in Malayalam. It was *Kerala Pathrika* that cleared and created a new avenue”.<sup>131</sup>

About his Herculean task Kunhirama Menon himself commemorates in the preface of the famous book *Vrithandapathra Pravarthanam*. He writes about the constraints he had faced when he started the paper. “The difficulties that I and my assistants had to face in the beginning were not at all little. It was a truth that because of the efforts of my friends we had a considerable circulation in the beginning itself. But difficulties were much due to the scarcity of reporters who were able enough to write reports and articles from the villages. Those who were proficient in English did not use to read vernacular newspapers nor contribute to them under the impression that it was something below their status. Even if a few were ready they were not trained at all in the vernacular style. The poets knew Malayalam but they had little knowledge in the art of prose writing. And the ‘advocate clerks’ style was not at all befitting to the media. Because of these reasons I was put into much trouble in the early period. We were coerced to rewrite wholly the articles and news reports that were sent from country sides. Sometimes we had to publish news items in poetic stanzas.....”<sup>132</sup>

It was not Kunhirama Menon alone who had to undergo these kinds of trials and tribulations. His contemporary K.V.Moosad portrays

<sup>131</sup> P.V Krishna Warier, “Keralathile Pathrapravarthanam”, (Mal.), in *Mathrubhoomi Rotary Special Supplement*, 1950.

<sup>132</sup> K.Ramakrishna Pillai, *Vrithandapathra Pravarthanam*, (Mal), Kochi, 1984, pp.xxxv-xxxvi.

a similar situation in his autobiography. He writes, “In those days vernacular journals were seemed to be making a death at its infancy itself. Scarcity of printing press and lack of assistance from the part of writers were the main reasons. In order go get rid of the first, *Mangalodayam* installed a press of its own at Trichur. To overcome the second it was necessary to make an approach based upon the time, region etc. In those days Sanskrit scholars were many. But among them those who were able to utilize their scholarship in the laymen’s language were few. There were a few who had won spectacular success in important examinations through English education but they felt contempt for Malayalam. Those who seemed to be civilized were even reluctant to write letters in Malayalam; then how can we think of them writing articles for newspapers? Those who were able to write were not ready to write; those who were ready to write were in-fact incompetent to write; this was the situation. Yet the eminent hands behind the journals like *Vidhyavinodini*, *Rasikaranjini*, *Bhashaposhini* etc. made relentless efforts to transform those English pundits into lovers of vernacular language. Thus a countable number of adepts who could write about modern subjects were groomed”.<sup>133</sup>

The pathetic situation of the vernacular journalism even at the fag end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is depicted by a reader, in an early issue of *Kerala Sanchari*. He writes in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ column extending best wishes to *Kerala Sanchari*: “Although newspapers have been published in Malayalam long since, it is a pity that they could not instill much inspiration or patience in the readers”.<sup>134</sup> “Due to the continuous efforts of *Kerala Pathrika*, *Kerala Sanchari* and *West Coast Spectator* there occurred a revolutionary change in the mind set of the

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<sup>133</sup> K.V.M, *op.cit.*, p.62.

<sup>134</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1888.

people. To realize this achievement plentiful assistance was extended by writers like Appu Nedungadi, Oyyarath Chandu Menon, Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, Kannambra Kunjunni Nair, Mooliyil Raman, Potheri Kunhamboo and so on”.<sup>135</sup>

Thus when the people came to enjoy the fruits of journalism a situation engendered in such a way that they were tempted to subscribe them and to wait anxiously for their arrival. Such a situation is narrated by a reader in the ‘Letters to the Editor’ column of *Kerala Sanchari*. “Best wishes for you (Editor) and your journal. Since the advent of *Kerala Sanchari* many are very eager to know the everyday news. In the day break of Thursday people are thronging in the post offices and in the houses of subscribers. “Didn’t *Sanchari* come? Is there anything about officers? What is the local news? etc. were the types of comments they make while waiting for the paper”.<sup>136</sup>

Observing the explosion in the journalistic scenario during 1890’s, Kandathil Varghese Mappila comments: “The fact that at present we have 17 papers is something amazing when compared to the size of this region and population. Among the 17 papers six are weeklies. Except *Malayala Manorama* all the five are published from Calicut. Therefore it is very clear that there is no other land other than Calicut so fertile for the birth and growth of newspapers”.<sup>137</sup>

Thus during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers were the vehicle to represent the intensity and the extensiveness of social relations. Various social groups though hitherto separated far and wide, by virtue of reading news came to know and understand each other

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<sup>135</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, *op.cit.*, p.89.

<sup>136</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1888.

<sup>137</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1893.

which helped them to come closer. People belonging to various castes and religions before dining from one table could appear in the columns of one paper and thereby started to build strong friendship and solidarity by acquainting each other, exchanging opinions, engaging in arguments and sometimes making discords.<sup>138</sup>

It was at that juncture, instead of the old social segmentations like caste, religion and village, there evolved alternative social relations. When people who lived in the villages as separate castes shifted to urban areas, their thread of discussion became the news of the city. When people who belong to various castes and religions started to work together in the factories, their success and failure became the general news. The virtues and vices of the British rule affected all communities alike. Thus administrative matters became local news. The means of information and communication has the power to mould the human beings into a single family. In fact the very nature of the press is to make the people united and enable them understand the meaning of life.<sup>139</sup>

This period also witnessed the appearance of several literary periodicals like *Rasikaranjini*, *Sujanandini*, *Mangalodayam*, *Vidyavinodini*, *Bhashaposhini*, *Vidyavilasini* and so on. “The first literary magazine of the kind we see today was the *Vidyavilasini* launched in 1881...But the two excellent journals that nourished the modern literature were *Vidyavinodini* of C.P Achutha Menon started in 1890 and *Bhashaposhini* of Kandathil Varghese Mappila started in 1893. It was Achutha Menon who initiated a separate regular column for

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<sup>138</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5.

book criticism”.<sup>140</sup> The beginning of newspapers and magazines not only could explore new possibilities for knowledge information but also could shift the literary manifestations from *kovilakams* (the abode of *Kshathriyas*) to ordinary men”.<sup>141</sup>

The Muslims of Kerala who were witnessing the multifarious developments in the field of printing could not keep aloof from the mainstream. The first Muslim press was established at Tellicherry by one Kunhammed. He learned the art of printing from the Basel Mission press.<sup>142</sup> Soon after this, the printing activities spread across the Muslim strongholds like Calicut, Kondotty, Malappuram, Thirurangadi, Tirur, Ponnani etc. Before 1900 there were 15 Muslim presses in Malabar.<sup>143</sup>

### **Print Capitalism Blooms**

By 1890's the literacy rate of Kerala ascended new heights. The development of printing played a central role in spreading the cultural content of the new literacy. Its cultural possibilities were realized by the printed word, by setting up new networks of communication, facilitating new options for the people and a new means of controlling the people. By facilitating easier access to literary products, print contributed to the making of a new cultural taste and sensibility and thus a new cultural personality.<sup>144</sup> The print capitalists published novels, short stories,

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<sup>140</sup> V.Aravindakshan, “Malayala Sahithyathinte Adhunikeekaranam....”, *op.cit.*, p.32.

<sup>141</sup> K.N Ganesh, *Kerala Samooha Padanangal*, *op.cit.*, p.103.

<sup>142</sup> C.N Ahamed Maulavi and K.K Muhammed Abdul Kareem, *Mahathaya Mappila Sahithya Paramparyam*, (Mal), Calicut, 1978, pp. 44-45.

<sup>143</sup> O.Abu, *Arabi Malayala Sahithyacharithram*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1970, p.71.

<sup>144</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel”*op.cit.*, p.93.

travelogues, biographies, dramas and so on. Half a dozen novels were written between 1887 and 1892.<sup>145</sup>

Like the missionaries the new publishers had no permanent readers or money. For them publication was a new kind of risky business. Therefore for getting popularity and wider audience the ‘print capitalists’ conducted dialogues between the leading literary figures of the time and those were published in their periodicals. Kerala Varma, A.R Rajaraja Varma, Muloor Padmanabha Panicker, Subrahmanyam Potti and so on were involved in these dialogues.<sup>146</sup> Dialogues thus become the artifact of the ‘printer-editor’. Although he takes no part in it he encourages the same as it promotes the publication itself.<sup>147</sup> The development of ‘print culture’ during the last decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century created a group of writers like Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, Murkoth Kumaran, Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna pillai, Appan Thampuran and so on.

The newspapers and magazines not only reinstalled the literature to new secular heights but also made possible the standardization of the types and style of Malayalam.<sup>148</sup> The evolution of a prose style which even the laymen could understand was accelerated by those prose writers who deliberately worked for it.<sup>149</sup> This situation encouraged even the Namboothiris for the promotion of ‘print capitalism’. K.V.M explains how the Mangalodayam publishing house was formed. “The people of Deshamangalam Mana were very eager to acquire more

<sup>145</sup> Thumpaman Thomas, *Malayala Novelil oru Punaparishodhana*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1992, pp.16-20.

<sup>146</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Socio-Politics of Laughter: Sanjayan and Cultural Transition in Modern Kerala”, in *Calicut University Research Journal*, Vol. I, Issue 2, October 2000, pp.40-41.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “Varthamanpathrangaludeyum.....”, *op.cit.*, p.486.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge about the world by reading books and newspapers. It was a period when Cheriya Narayanan Namboothirippad of Deshamangalam was very enthusiastic in erecting a press and starting a Malayalam magazine. Without much delay, in the eastern *pathayappura* (granary) of Deshamangalam Mana a press was installed and started the *Mangalodayam* magazine in that *Thulam* of Malayalam era. At that time a community congregation named *Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha* had already been started due to the encouragement extended by Kuroor Unni Namboothirippad, Mathur Vasudevan Namboothirippad and Deshamangalathu Namboothirippad. *Mangalodayam* magazine was intended as an official organ of that *sabha*. But in the magazine literature, science, history, poetry, short story, literary criticism etc. were treated as main items”.<sup>150</sup> Under the initiative of Appan Thampuran, Kuroor Damodaran Namboothirippad and a few others *Mangalodayam* Company was started and Kerala Kalpadrumam press was merged into it. After 22 months, Desamangalam press and *Mangalodayam* magazine were also transferred to the company.<sup>151</sup>

It is a pity that to a greater extent this ‘print capitalism’ made its successful march at the expense of poor writers. K.V.M gives an elaboration of how print capitalists exploited the writers then. “Frequent editions published for the stories I wrote based on epics is a proof that they were warmly welcomed in the world of literature. In that context my well wishers even made comments that my writing efforts meant only to inflate the pockets of book-publishers”.<sup>152</sup>

Murkoth Kumaran darted sharp attacks against the publishers who exploit the gifts and talents of poor writers. He called such publishers

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<sup>150</sup> K.V.M, *op.cit.*, p.55.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.

<sup>152</sup> K.V.M, *op.cit.*, p.125.

‘blood-suckers’.<sup>153</sup> The article of Murkoth Kumaran entitled *Kunchan Nambiarude Vikruthi* satirically attacked the print capitalists. In it he said that there are a few who hold the version that Kunjan Nambiar deviated because his only aim was to entertain the readers. Now Murkoth Kumaran flings a question who the readers are. Also he asks, was Kunjan Nambiar made his *thullal* stories with the intention that the readers should read and enjoy his poems in the books to be published and circulated by Reddiar and Mangalodayam companies.<sup>154</sup>

### **Two forms of Communication channels**

As the print capitalism got new dimensions newspapers and journals sprouted on a larger scale during this period. They could manifest an ‘authority’ which permeates in all spheres of culture. Apart from newspapers and journals, literary forms like novels and short stories also exhibit this aspect. This authority is two-dimensional. One of ‘private’ and the other that of ‘public’ or ‘outward’. It is through the prose forms like novels, short stories and articles that the internal-entity gets exposed, which was so far hidden in the communicative language alone. The words used in many of the short stories resembled very much those of the colloquial language. It required a new communicative language to find out the ‘individuality’ in the life of Malayalis. This internal-entity existed earlier. It gets a form and existence when it is represented by means of a literary transaction.<sup>155</sup>

Parallel to this private world there arises an external sphere of public life. It is this world which newspapers defines and detects. When we say that the private and outward worlds are the two sides of the same

<sup>153</sup> Ulloor, *Kerala Sahithya Charithram*, (Mal), Vol. IV, Trivandrum, 1990, pp.391-92

<sup>154</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1975, pp.230-31.

<sup>155</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “Varthamanpathrangaludeyum.....”, *op.cit.*, pp.485-86.

authority it implicates a world of contradiction which one definition can contain. This becomes explicit when we remember the connection of the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Indulekha* with other chapters. The comprehensiveness of the novel is possible because of the perspective that it is within the public spheres of nationality and connected events that the private worlds of romance and discord exist.<sup>156</sup> In fact the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter of the novel carries a debate on several issues such as atheism, English education, and the Indian National Congress. The relevance of this digressive discussion lies in the fact that it integrates into the plot ‘the vital issues Indian society faced at that time’<sup>157</sup> It is not accidental that the language of this chapter follows the analyzing style employed by newspapers and magazines in respect of various contemporary political and social topics. It is because of the fact that the cultural life of Malayali in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a history of evolution of that public sphere and its politics which gradually evolved through journalism.<sup>158</sup>

### **New cultural Taste and Sensibility**

Print enabled to expand the new cultural tastes created by colonial literacy. K.N Panikkar says, “The influence of English on early novels in India is unmistakable, but this literary form was not generated exclusively here by external stimulus; it was rooted in the intellectual needs and aesthetic sensibility of the burgeoning middle class. Naturally the contradictions, ambiguities and uncertainties of the middle class in their social and cultural life, which arose out of the mix of a hegemonizing colonial culture and contending traditional cultures, formed the context in which a literary sensibility found expression in the

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p.486.

<sup>157</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “From Region to Nation and Beyond, Allegories of power in Malayalam Fiction”, *op.cit.*, p.37

<sup>158</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum...”, *op.cit.*, p.487.

nineteenth century”.<sup>159</sup> Chandu Menon’s account in *Indulekha* is self explanatory as to how he could sow the seeds of a new literary taste and through that a new cultural taste was developing among the vernacular intelligentsia. Around the end of 1886, after Chandu Menon left Kozhikode to Parappanagadi, he began reading a large number of English novels while not engaged in work related to his government job. This new-found love of literature in him supplanted the normal leisure time activity of *vedi parayal* (gossip) among friends and members of the family. Consequently Menon’s circle of intimates felt somewhat neglected. To offset this he says that he ‘attempted to convey to them in Malayalam the gist of the stories of novels’ he had been reading. Initially they were not particularly interested in these stories of English romantic encounters, but they soon developed a taste for them. One of them, was greatly taken with Lord Beaconsfield’s ‘Henrietta Temple’ and the taste then acquired for listening to novels translated orally, gradually developed into a passion. Inspired by this interest in Beaconsfield’s novel, Menon decided to translate it, but he soon gave it up as an impossible task. Instead, he undertook to write a new novel after the English fashion.<sup>160</sup>

Even Chandu Menon was amazed by the speed with which the first edition was sold out. He says, “When I finished writing the preface to the first edition of this book on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1889, I did not expect to write a second preface to this same book. Even if I had to write one, I did not have even in my wildest dreams thought that I would have to write one so soon. The first edition of this book which was put on sale in the beginning of January 1890 was sold out before 30<sup>th</sup> March. There was still a great demand for this book and this led to a second edition

<sup>159</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel”, *op.cit.*, p.93.

<sup>160</sup> O.Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, pp.237-238 .

and therefore also to the writing of this preface. Malayalis who had not read in Malayalam any book in the manner of English novels earlier, immediately read and enjoyed this book and praised it”.<sup>161</sup>

*Indulekha* of Chandu Menon imported a new movement to Kerala which the Malayalis hitherto had not seen or experienced. The character sketch in *Indulekha* and *Sharada* by Chandu Menon (the sketches of Surya Namboothiri, Panchu Menon, Shinu Pattar, Kandan Menon) was like a bomb flung against the landlord system and other social evils which reeled round it.<sup>162</sup> After *Indulekha* there occurred a spate of novels in Malayalam. Indeed the wide spread literacy and the availability of printed literature contributed to a change in attitude towards leisure itself. Leisure in the past had been defined mainly in terms of participation in group activities, be it gossip within the family or with friends or sports and games in the locality.<sup>163</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa depicts such a scene in the biography of his father Murkoth Kumaran. “At night the house of Adv.Kunhappa (father-in-law of Murkoth Kumaran) becomes a venue for the get together of scholars. Officials, lawyers and scholars used to engage in arguments, criticisms and reciting stanzas. It is very reminiscent that Nairs and Nambiars adorned the venue in the above such get together held between 1870’s and 1900’s at this Ezhava abode. His (Adv.Kunhappa’s) son-in-law Murkoth Kumaran also participated in those get-togethers.”<sup>164</sup>

But the increasing number of printed literature in different forms enabled the literate middle class to make reading as a form of spending

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p.241.

<sup>162</sup> E.M.S Namboothiripad, *Sampoorna Kruthikal*, (Mal), Sanchika-9, Trivandrum, 1998, p.259.

<sup>163</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel”, *op.cit.*, p.95.

<sup>164</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, *op.cit.*, p.52.

the leisure time. In the novel *Sharada*<sup>165</sup> there is a vivid description of learned people reading in a library even in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “When Thassen Menon looked into the room lifting the mat, he saw eight to ten learned gentlemen seriously reading newspapers and books. Among them one or two persons sitting on the edge of a table lying in the middle of the room. And one person sitting on a three-legged chair reads a newspaper holding it with his left hand. His other hand clutches a wooden plank so as to enable him to sit balanced. Another youngman Harihara Pattar reads sitting on a paddy box. Another one reads sitting on folded towel since he did not get anything to sit”.<sup>166</sup> These reading rooms functioned as a popular mode of diffusion of knowledge at the grass root level.<sup>167</sup>

Thus it can be deciphered that during the period between 1884 and 1889 a drastic change took place in the reading habit and sensibility of Malayalees, from the cold reception received by the newspaper *Kerala Pathrika* in 1884 and in contrast to that the warm welcome accorded to the first Malayalam novel *Indulekha* in 1889. It may be factors like the growing literacy, the availability of copies due to duplication facility by print, the new cultural taste developed among the people and the proximity of reading rooms, materialized during the five years from 1884 that paved the way for the triumphant march of *Indulekha* through the minds of Malayalees. It is true that by the time *Indulekha* was published, print technology was well entrenched in literary production.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> A novel written in Malayalam by O.Chandu Menon and published in 1892.

<sup>166</sup> O.Chandu Menon, *Sharada*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1892, pp.103-104.

<sup>167</sup> C.I Issac, “The Press as a Site of Colonial Discourse-A Case Study of the Experience of Keralam” *op.cit.*, P.36.

<sup>168</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Creating a New Cultural Taste: Reading a Nineteenth Century Malayalam Novel”, *op.cit.*, p.96.

The development of 'print culture' created a wide impact on existing society. The expansion of 'print culture' undermined the existing court culture and the monopoly of elites over the written tradition. The court culture was confined to a few but the 'print culture' had a wide audience. The widespread literacy facilitated the shift of writers and other cultural artists from the court of princes to the fora created by the print capitalists.<sup>169</sup> Also there has been an intimate transaction between periodical journalism and the novel. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the appearance of several journals in Malayalam points to the emergence of a new type of subjectivity in the society. Journals like *Kerala Pathrika*, *Malayali*, and *Malayala Manorama* contributed towards the deepening self-awareness of the literate middle class which came to be increasingly mobilized both politically and socially. These periodicals call the attention to the regional identity of Kerala and to the linguistic homogeneity of Malayalam which are recognized as an important factor contributing towards political destiny.<sup>170</sup>

Indeed the evolution of press in Malabar as a communication medium was in several phases. It was started off as a mechanism in litho-press to duplicate the Bible and scriptures. Gradually it turned into a communication medium, the history of which from *Rajyasamacharam* to modern Malayalam journalism has a story of several ups and downs. *Rajyasamacharam* and *Paschimodayam* of the Basel Missionaries of Tellichery were magazines, the first a religious journal and the second a secular periodical. In course of time multifarious changes occurred. The 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary discourse of progress, reform and new religious sensibility together with the spread of literacy helped the growth of

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<sup>169</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Socio-politics of laughter: Sanjayan and Cultural transition in Modern Kerala", *op.cit.*, p.39.

<sup>170</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, "From Region to Nation and Beyond, Allegories of Power in Malayalam Fiction", *op.cit.*, p.37.

newspaper industry in Kerala.<sup>171</sup> The result was the English newspaper *Malabar Spectator* that started in 1879. But it was only on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1884, Malabar could witness the birth of a Malayalam newspaper in its true sense, *Kerala Pathrika*<sup>172</sup>. This paper was a guide and guardian to the subsequent newspapers. Press and literacy in the context were mutually complementing factors. The orthographic and typographic modifications leading to the standardization and the spread of popular education paved the way for the wide acceptance of newspaper culture here.<sup>173</sup> The result was that *Kerala Pathrika* was followed by *Kerala Sanchari* in 1888 and *Manorama* (both published from Calicut) in 1892. Although Kerala can claim a prolonged history of writing and reading it is in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that they get universalized here. As a result it is in the mid-half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the new book-centred culture evolves. Consequent to the invention of print, what happened in the west during five centuries was happened in India in one century and in Kerala within a period less than that.<sup>174</sup>

Thus due to education, literacy and print the number of readers and subsequently the circulation of newspapers increased. As a result new newspapers like *Mithavadi* and *Gajakesari* from Tellicherry, *Yogakshemam* and *Unni Namboothiri* from Trichur, *Mathrubhoomi* and *Al-Ameen* from Calicut, *Kerala Kesari* from Vadakara etc. were launched. Also numerous books were published from different parts of Malabar.

The educational standard of Malabar was scaling new heights in the beginning of the 20th century. Indigenous system of education was

<sup>171</sup> Robin Jeffrey, “ Culture of Daily Newspapers in India”, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1987, p.608.

<sup>172</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum...”, *op.cit.*, p.481.

<sup>173</sup> Robin Jeffrey, “ Culture of Daily newspapers in India” *op.cit.*, p.608.

<sup>174</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, *Aksharavum Adhunikathayum*, (Mal), Kottayam, 2001,p.12.

almost extinct. Almost all the *ezhuthupallis* were converted into primary schools by this time.<sup>175</sup> By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century numerous changes had occurred in the society. Literacy increased. Literary sphere dilated. Cultural life got a new vigour.<sup>176</sup>

An article in the *Janmi* news magazine also gives a nutshell of the state of education in Malabar in that period. During the last 20 years literacy has increased considerably. Earlier the literates were 7% but now it is 10%. If the literate women were eight per thousand now it is increased to 30 per thousand. In the case of women's education Malabar tops all other districts in the Presidency. It is also mentioned in the report that many of the schools out of the present 13 High Schools and 46 Lower Secondary Schools were started during the last twenty years.<sup>177</sup>

To accelerate and strengthen the process of modern education in Malabar, various steps were taken by the Government. Aid was extended to private managements. Such schools were named Grant-in-Aid schools. Thus the missionaries established 150 schools for the backward classes by the turn of the century.<sup>178</sup> *Kerala Pathrika* was always vigilant in pointing out the lapses in the implementation, to make the process more effective and efficient. In the report it said that the primary education in Malabar is in a retrograde condition...the grants have been reduced, teachers get low remuneration and the number of schools is gradually decreasing. It is therefore absolutely necessary that the educational authorities should increase the salaries of village school

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<sup>175</sup> *Janmi*, May 1912, (M.E 1087 Edavam).

<sup>176</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskarika Navoathanam*, (Mal), op.cit., p.2.

<sup>177</sup> *Janmi*, May 1912, (M.E 1087 Edavam).

<sup>178</sup> N.I.E.P.A, *History of Educational Development in Kerala*, New Delhi, 1987, p.47.

masters and also endeavour in all other ways to spread primary education throughout the District.<sup>179</sup>

As a result more initiative was taken by the Government in raising the educational standard of the schools. The Director of Public Instruction in Madras wrote in his annual report that there was satisfactory progress in the number of educational institutions in Malabar but a slight decline in the collegiate education due to the large failure in the 1903 matriculation examination.<sup>180</sup> During this period the representations of various sections of people in the schools were like this: The landlords constituted the largest number of scholars 41.3%, Coolies 23.9%, traders 12.9%, officials 11.8% and the artisans 7.7%. Over the 83.6% of the male population in the collegiate and the upper secondary stages belonged to the landlords, trading and official classes.<sup>181</sup>

At this period the condition of the schools managed by the Local Board deteriorated much. Then *Kerala Pathrika* warned the Government with an editorial about the pathetic condition of schools managed by Local Boards. It said that unless the Government increases the grants for these schools and takes upon itself the management, any innovation introduced by Government in the matter of improving and spreading primary education in the country would be quite futile. It also highlighted the need to improve the present staff of supervisors appointed to inspect such schools and to give proper instructions to the teachers.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1894, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>180</sup> *Report of the Director of Public Instruction*, Madras for 1904-05, p.39.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>182</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1904, MNNPR, TNA.

The genesis and spread of newspapers sowed the seeds of modern ideology among the people. Consequently very novel literary tastes sprouted, which paved the way for new movements. Due to the acquaintance with the English books awareness about freedom, equality and fraternity engendered in the minds of our people also. Thereafter each one started to say proudly, 'our land, our language and our culture'. After the Russo-Japanese war the general awareness had germinated generally in the Orient which indirectly influenced our land also. Thus instead of the old culture of caste and *janmi* a new popular culture started arising. The movements like *khandakavyam* (poem of medium length), novel and journalism are its excellent examples.<sup>183</sup>

From 1906 onwards the national leaders showed great interest in the education of the people. They formed National Education Commission and began agitation for the introduction of compulsory education. In 1910 Gopal Krishna Gokhale introduced, in the imperial council, a scheme for compulsory education.<sup>184</sup> Even though schools were in plenty the members of the lower castes could not attend. In 1911-12 the Government removed restriction in admitting the pupils in schools on the basis of caste.<sup>185</sup> Even at that time Kumaran Asan and the S.N.D.P were fighting in Travancore and Cochin for the entry of Ezhava children in Government schools.<sup>186</sup>

In the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Malabar witnessed great progress in the elementary education and secondary education owing to

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<sup>183</sup> E.M.S, *Sampoorna Kruthikal*, (Mal), Sanchika 9, Trivandrum, pp.264-65.

<sup>184</sup> *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Malappuram, pp-34-35.

<sup>185</sup> P.R Gopinathan Nair, "Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala", C.D.S Working paper No.181, Trivandrum, 1981, p.33.

<sup>186</sup> Meera Velayudhan, "Growth of Political Consciousness among Women in Modern Kerala", P.J Cherian, (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History, The Second Millennium*, Vol. ii, Part ii, Trivandrum, p.491.

the encouragement given by the Madras Government.<sup>187</sup>The Government's attention to promote Malayalam education began only after 1920's. The Government of India Act of 1919 popularly known as Monford Reforms of 1919, transferred education portfolio to the Indians.<sup>188</sup> With the passing of Madras Village Panchayath Act of 1920 Panchayath Boards and District Boards were set up in almost all parts of Malabar.<sup>189</sup> Primary education was given greater care. The District Board maintained elementary and secondary schools. Consequent to that the elementary education had marked progress as is evident from the following table.<sup>190</sup>

Year	Number of Schools	Percentage of Increase
1923-24	455	--
1925-26	774	38
1927-28	1045	33
1928-29	3336	66.5
1930-31	4134	19

The above table shows an increase of 88.72% from 1923 to 1931. Although general education showed spectacular hike, the Muslims and the depressed communities did not take to education early, owing to serious economic and social hindrances.<sup>191</sup> According to the report of the Mappila Education Committee compulsory education was introduced among them. Thus the number of public elementary schools for the

<sup>187</sup> *Kerala State Gazetteers*, Malappuram, p.712.

<sup>188</sup> J.Allen, *The Cambridge Shorter History of India*, New Delhi, 1964, p.683.

<sup>189</sup> C.A Innes, *Madras District Gazetteers: Malabar District*, Vol. II, Madras, 1933, p.ix.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> P.R Gopinathan Nair, "Universalisation of Primary Education in Kerala", *op.cit.*, p.75.

Mappilas rose from 1239 to 1365 and their strength went up from 86315 to 96794.<sup>192</sup>

Due to the increased activities of many agencies mass education rapidly increased during the period from 1921 to 1939.<sup>193</sup> All municipal schools were made accessible to all classes of children irrespective of caste or creed.<sup>194</sup> At this time the Chirakkal Taluk Board School faced a problem of caste and religious discrimination. When one Pulaya student was admitted to the school, parents of Mohamedan and Thiyya communities immediately withdrew their children from the school. When the authorities happened to hear about it, they allowed admission to more Pulaya students.<sup>195</sup>

At this juncture the growth of higher education is also to be considered, though their number was less. By the year of 1931 there were four colleges and 62 secondary schools including 34 aided, in the whole of Malabar. Also there were 4134 elementary schools and 11 training schools.<sup>196</sup> As a result, Malabar had a high percentage of general literacy. In 1931, there were 5,09,051(14.45%) literate persons out of which 51,821 were literate in English.<sup>197</sup>

For all these decades Malabar was only a district under Madras Presidency. In the process of the fast growth of Tamil nationality Malabar was neglected and dishonoured. At the same time through

<sup>192</sup> File No. A 825, pp.5-6, RAC.

<sup>193</sup> A.R Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1998, p.151.

<sup>194</sup> *Malabar Gazette*, 1923, p.7.

<sup>195</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1925.

<sup>196</sup> *Kerala State Gazetteer*, Malappuram, p.750.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p.276. The number of literate persons among the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christian were as follows: Hindus 3,94,297 out of 23,03,754 or 17.11%, Muslims 87,694 out of 11,63,453 or 7.53%, and Christians 26,720 out of 65,895 or 40.545%. Among the Hindus the Nairs were the most literate. Out of 44,27,969 (over seven years old) 1,65,743 or 37.43% were literate. Of this 20,68,694 or 67% were literate in English.

literature and journalism people of Malabar got an access and solidarity with Travancore and Cochin, both culturally and linguistically.<sup>198</sup>

This, in turn, assisted the propagation of newspapers of Malabar in the princely states of Cochin and Travancore and vice versa. Infact it was through print that awareness about the entity of the Malayalam speaking people was felt.<sup>199</sup> The print-language laid the bases for national consciousness.<sup>200</sup> The convergence of capitalism and print technology created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which is the basic morphology, set the stage for the modern nation.<sup>201</sup>

In Malayalam at various periods several publications came out which helped the social transformation and the eradication of evils in various communities.<sup>202</sup> By and large, the fast growth of literacy and education and subsequent inflaming of nationalism inspired the patriots to start the next generation of news papers like *Mathrubhoomi*, *Al-Ameen* etc. Within one decade *Mathrubhoomi* got wide acceptance and fairly good circulation. The District Magistrate of Malabar in his letter agrees that *Mathrubhoomi* has a considerable local circulation and is more widely read in the district than any other vernacular paper.<sup>203</sup>

It was a time when many political and social events that affect the public life continuously broke out in Kerala. In such a situation there is

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<sup>198</sup> M.G.S Narayanan, “Adhinivesham Vyavasayaviplavam Deseeyatha Vijnanavisphodanam” in Scaria Sakaria, (ed.), *500 varshathe Keralam: Chila Arivadayalangal*, (Mal), Changanasserry, 1999, p.21.

<sup>199</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, “Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum.....”, *op.cit.*, p.497.

<sup>200</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1991, p.44.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

<sup>202</sup> Chummar Choondal and Sukumaran Pottekkatt, *op.cit.*, p..269.

<sup>203</sup> *Letter from Russell, Dt. Magistrate of Malabar to the Chief Secretary to Government*, Public Relations Dept. Madras, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1932, TNA.

no wonder that newspaper carrying news items and criticisms pertaining to those events would fetch wide circulation very quickly. Newspapers were very vigilant in informing the public about the day to day news breaks and also in enlightening them with the practical knowledge about various things that they are supposed to know.<sup>204</sup> As a result the growth of some of the papers was much more fast.

Newspapers like *Yogakshemam*, *Unni Namboothiri* etc. were the sharp swords used for the social transformation in the Namboothiri community. When papers like *Service* and *Swabhimani* concentrated in the Nair community, *Mithavadi*, *Gajakesari* etc. laid their thrust on the community that was regarded as backward. The *Prabhatham* weekly of E.M.S Namboothripad gave invaluable contribution in propagating socialist ideology. The *Athmavidyakahalam* of Vagbhadanandan also fought against blind beliefs and evil practices.<sup>205</sup> Many of these newspapers and journals that started during the decades of renaissance are no more now. But what have been done by them is inherent in our cultural life and remain as their legacy.

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<sup>204</sup> N.Krishna Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.314.

<sup>205</sup> Chummar Choondal and Sukumaran Pottekkatt, *op.cit.*, p.272.

## CHAPTER IV

### **GENESIS AND EXODUS OF EARLY NEWSPAPERS (1847-1906)**

Men of 'literary culture' start journals and magazines and become leaders of society in course of time. The 'true greatness of a nation' consists in the number of its literary men, and the journals and newspapers, which the reading public supports and encourages. If you wish to criticize the action of 'men-in-authority' you should do so either by a speech or by contributions in the columns of a 'Newspaper'.<sup>1</sup> It is this unrelenting urge that motivated the stalwarts like Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon, Adv.Poovadan Raman, Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, Murkoth Kumaran, Adv.C.Krishnan and so on to launch newspaper institutions that sowed the seeds of revolution and change in Malabar in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

An important factor that contributed in no small measure to the general political awakening of the people and the shaping of public opinion in Kerala was, as in other regions, the rise of newspapers. The *Malayala Manorama*, *Malayali*, *Western Star*, *Nazrani Deepika* and *Kerala Tharaka* in Travancore, *Satyanadam* in Cochin and *Kerala Pathrika* in Malabar stimulated the political education of the people and developed in them a critical attitude towards the arbitrary features of Government and the prevalent evils of society. Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon at Calicut and Kandathil Varghese Mappila at Kottayam in Travancore were the two pioneers in the field of Malayalam journalism, who raised its standard to a very high level. Fearless, independent, and

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<sup>1</sup> Tithi Bhattacharya, *The Sentinels of Culture, Class, Education and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal (1848-85)*, New Delhi, 2005, p.34.

of an unsullied character Chenkalath Valiya Kunhrama Menon wielded a powerful pen. A dispassionate judge of men and things, an ardent patriot and eminent scholar, he never hesitated to criticize and clash with the government. The *Malayala Manorama* at Kottayam devoted its attention in those days mainly to social and literary affairs. Infact a large majority of the newspapers had no ‘politics’; some among them championed the cause of the depressed classes.<sup>2</sup>

### **Missionary Newspapers and Colonial Modernity**

Eventhough the press that was started off as a mechanism to duplicate the Bible and religious texts gradually turned into a communication medium, the history of which from *Rajyasamacharam* to modern Malayalam journalism has a story of several ups and downs, ebbs and tides. The German Basel Missionaries of Thalassery in Malabar started *Rajyasamacharam* as a magazine. It seemed to be purely a missionary journal with mission news from various centres in India. Another Malayalam magazine of Basel Mission was *Paschimodayam*. It also appeared as a secular periodical with the project of transmitting western/new knowledge. *Rajyasamacharam* had a premature death. From 1847 June to 1850 December it could publish 42 issues. Though the effort and labour, the missionaries had put forth for the publication was much, they did not collect any subscription fee. From the first issue onwards they had disclosed their intention behind the journal. The objective was given in the form of a special statement in the first issue. “It is not known whether you may understand the actual meaning. It is not our idea to convey the news happening everyday in various countries. Also do not think that it is an effort to inform the various innovations in *Malayalarajyam*. Our country is

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<sup>2</sup> P.K.K Menon, *The History of the Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol. II, (1885-1938), Thiruvananthapuram, 2001, p.21.

God's country (*Deiva Rajyam*), in other words Heaven (*Swargarajyam*). That country is not limited to Kerala or India. Jesus Christ, the King is reigning amidst his enemies. We feel that it is nice to convey these pieces of news to praise the King and to make his subjects happy. May God bless us".<sup>3</sup>

The part played by the missionary newspapers is evident from the testimony of a Telugu Brahmin boy named Jagannathan, as carried in the article in the first issue of *Rajyasamacharam*. "In praise of Jesus Christ the King, and for the happiness of the subjects:-Heyi Bodhkar writes from Vishakapatanam in Telugu *desam* (Andhra Pradesh). A Brahmin boy named Jagannathan came to my school in 1042 (1867 A.D) to study English. He was diligent and learnt a lot. In 1044 he started learning along with other small kids. Although he was learning the truth quite for a long time, he continued to remain stubborn in the belief of his ancestors and espoused idolatry. When he could gain some knowledge dependent on *vedantha* he pretended that he was an *advaitha jnani* (one who knows the concept of non-duality). But that belief did not sustain. It became clear for him that his soul was not part of the supreme soul. Also he grieved much due to the demise of his brother a few months back. He did not get relief from the Hindu Gods too. One day he read that Christians are aliens seeking their native land, the heaven. Then he wept pondering over his doubts and said that he had been playing with God for such a long time. He understood that Christ sacrificed his life for us."<sup>4</sup>

Every such testimony could pierce into the heart of the reader. Murkoth Kunhappa says, "The Christian community of Malabar was a new one, a mix of several individuals baptized from various other

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<sup>3</sup> *Rajyasamacharam*, June 1847.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

communities. These individuals on conversion had to forsake the family and caste in which they were born. Naturally this led to their social and mental alienation. They lost the reins of their life when they deserted the rituals and beliefs that they so far followed. Therefore, the very aim of *Rajyasamacharam* was to extend them moral inspiration according to the new faith...In *Rajyasamacharam* the narration of the above kind of events was intended to compensate the moral stories which they learnt so far.”<sup>5</sup>

By dedicated work, Basel Mission could convert more people and as a result the membership in the Christian society was multiplied. When the Hindu believers espoused the new religion they were excommunicated from their own community denying for them a return. Thus they were in a way stranded between their ancestral Hindu background and the new Christian faith. This truth became an eye-opener for the missionaries and to solve the problem they started industries in many places to give employment to the new believers thereby providing them a new means of livelihood, habitation and name. For that the missionaries explored the literary means also. The second journal in Malayalam *Paschimodayam* was the result of such an exploration. *Paschimodayam* was the second child from the family of *Rajyasamacharam*. It was Dr. Hermann Gundert, the ‘foster father’ of Malayalam language who nourished its growth. It started publishing in October 1847 and died a premature death in August 1851.<sup>6</sup>

In appearance it was just like *Rajyasamacharam*, but in contents it differed much.<sup>7</sup> *Rajyasamacharam* strengthened the foundations of the

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<sup>5</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1982, p.100.

<sup>6</sup> K.P Vareeth, *Dr.Hermann Gundert*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1973, p.95.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

newly evolved Christian society in Malabar by expanding the horizons of their knowledge. *Paschimodayam* was started as a measure for the dissemination of scientific knowledge to its new members. For that they prepared various lessons of science and new inventions and published them in *Paschimodayam*. In a way *Paschimodayam* is the first science magazine in Malayalam. It may seem wonderful that such a journal was started one and a half centuries ago in Malayalam when Keralites could not even imagine a world outside. The various topics in *Paschimodayam* included astronomy, geography and etymology of Malayalam. By tracing the origin of Kerala along mythological and scientific lines, the missionaries published in *Paschimodayam* the books like *Keralappazhama* and *Keralolpathi*. It was indeed *Paschimodayam* that made accessible its history and tradition. One of the most important topics on which *Paschimodayam* laid its thrust was geography. Various countries in the continents of Asia and Europe were well explained in the issues of this journal. Also descriptions about the climate, rivers, mountains, deserts and oceans of Asiatic continent were given in detail. Thus a general awareness about the outside world was created before the Malayali and through this they could shed the superstitions, irrational customs, rituals and traditions. In a way *Paschimodayam* was a mirror for the Malayalees to behold the west.<sup>8</sup>

Though these reading materials primarily devoted themselves to the dissemination of the gospels and the ethical postulates, they communicated a new socio-cultural sensibility. The overall content of the printed texts of the missionary didactics were not simply religious alone, but considerably socio-cultural. They carried the Christian ethos

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<sup>8</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, *Kerala Pathra Pravarthana Charithram*, (Mal), Trichur, p.45.

of reform and power of modernization and transformation.<sup>9</sup> Thus not merely religious conversion, but virtually every other subject was presented in the missionary newspapers in the context of colonialism.

The reading practice facilitated through mechanical duplication was acting as a self-articulated force of one's own transformation. Conveying the new knowledge about the world and the people, the mechanically produced texts were discharging the function of both the medium and the message of the colonial/Western culture. Since it was a message of transforming influence leading to the reconstruction of the people into colonial subjects, the medium turned out to be an instrument of subjectification. The fundamental level of the organization of thought about the people and the world was the colonial discourse which shaped contemporary cultural practices.<sup>10</sup> Spreading the Western values and passion, missionaries cultivated a generation within the social structure who could view their culture and tradition through the eyes of the Westerners. This involved what has been called a reordering of the nature of Indian knowledge by which the existing body of knowledge was rendered in the form acceptable to the colonialist, which resulted in studies in philology, grammar, history, philosophy and science.<sup>11</sup>

The news on the religious conversion of a Brahmin youth as carried in the first issue of *Rajyasamacharam* is a discourse on the formation of colonial subjectivity. Two opposing worlds get depicted here. The first is one of *vedantha*, *adwaita*, idol worship and ancestors replete with evil thoughts, wrong deeds, sorrow and untruth. The second

<sup>9</sup> C.I Issac, "The Press as a Site of Colonial Discourse-A Case Study of the Experience of Keralam", in *Journal of South Indian History*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, September 2003, P.32.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> K.N Ganesh, "Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam", in K.N Ganesh, (ed.), *Culture and Modernity, Historical Explorations*, , University of Calicut, 2004, pp.153-154.

is heaven, the world of truth and the life giver, Jesus Christ. The Brahmin boy moves from the first to the second. But in the news item, this conversion is not merely that. The first is an old religion where as the second is new. Christians are foreigners and they wander in search of heaven. Therefore, those who are against them are in search of hell. In short native land is hell and foreign land, heaven. The fact that the boy went to the school to learn English is also significant because that was how he came to know the truth. The *Rajyasamacharam* brackets English, school and foreigner along with Jesus Christ, Christianity and the Christians.<sup>12</sup>

It is pertinent to note the declaration in the first issue of *Paschimodayam*, described as the first science magazine in Malayalam: “It is surprising that light comes not only from east but from west as well. By God’s grace this Kerala has come under the British sway, and a bridge is being made, through which many things reach here from the West which were unknown to this land so far. There are many things in England besides the techniques and science you see here. There is much difference between both. In Hindu scholarship it is quite customary to meditate on *Jeevatma* and *Paramatma* and make slokas (divine verses) and thereby amuse the scholars. But based on keen observation to explain the physical phenomena for the benefit of the children in the prose style is the English way. If you like to read this kind of things we will bring to the Malayalees every month in printed form suitable items taken from British science in a way they can understand. Annual subscription fee is half a rupee”.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Shibu Muhammed, “A Critical Enquiry into Popular Journalism in Kerala With Reference to Malayalam Newspapers and its History”, in *Calicut University Research Journal*, Vol.3, Issue 1, July 2002, pp.108-109.

<sup>13</sup> *Paschimodayam*, October 1847.

*Paschimodayam* attempts to make colonialism look natural and to gain popular consent for it. It is mentioned that Kerala came under the English influence due to Divine grace. A bridge was built to bring knowledge, thanks to the British administration. In *Rajyasamacharam*, if it is through the Hindu-Christian contrast that the formation of colonial subjectivity was affected, in *Paschimodayam* it is the east-west contrast that controls the discourse. Knowledge is divided as English and Hindu (Indian). Indian knowledge comes out of meditation whereas English knowledge emerges from a keen observation of the world around. The first is in the form of *slokas* and is meant to entertain whereas the second is in prose and intended to help. In short two contrasting points are put up-Indian knowledge: meditation, *slokas*, amusement; and English knowledge: observation, prose, and help.<sup>14</sup> Under the guise of criticizing the limitations of Indian knowledge formation, *Paschimodayam* tries to array reasons favourable to colonialism. Edward Said's observation is relevant in this context: "... most of what the West knew about the non-western world it knew is in the framework of colonialism: the European scholar therefore approached his subject from a general position of dominance".<sup>15</sup> The declaration in *Paschimodayam* testifies to the attitude of colonial superiority with which the missionaries approached Kerala.

The scientific progress of the West is upheld as the greatness of the white race. For instance, some lines in an article on astrology in the first issue of *Paschimodayam* are worth quoting. "Those who have pursued knowledge have understood that astrology is ridiculous. Therefore right-thinking astrologers should recede from it and seek knowledge from observation and by the study of mathematics as far as

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<sup>14</sup> Shibu Muhammad, *op.cit.*, p.110.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, New York, 1981, p.163.

possible. Realizing that human eyes require external support, the white man invented the telescope and scans the sky day in and day out using it.”<sup>16</sup> Astrology was the means adopted by the feudal set up to consolidate its authority. In comparison with modern astronomy it has no relevance. The article in *Paschimodayam* projects astronomy as the greatness of colonialism. It says that the white man invented the telescope to help the human eyes. Thus the picture of decline and degeneration of the dominated peoples, and the conviction that Europeans possessed superior knowledge and value systems enabled the colonialists to embark on a programme of civilizing mission.<sup>17</sup> Science and technology was more a cultural instrument in emphasizing the superiority of western knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

Thus the press in the hands of the missionaries was an instrument effectively working up the people’s minds to be convinced of the benefits of reform and progress as defined within the regime of colonial epistemic order. In food habits, rationality, dress, games, furniture, nature of dwelling and other major as well as minor aspects of the general social life, the natives began to mimic the Westerners.<sup>19</sup> Their notions of progress and reform generated demand for western goods and services are a topic of detailed inquiry. Nevertheless, how the press culture, managed and controlled by the missionaries, helped colonial resource expropriation and market expansion is relevant here. It is in that context the practice of advertisements through the colonial press, what is direct in terms of colonial market expansion is instanced in the case of western medicine. What is indirect is the preparation of society

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<sup>16</sup> *Paschimodayam*, October 1847.

<sup>17</sup> K.N Ganesh, “Cultural Encounters Under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam”, *op.cit.*, p.153.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.180.

<sup>19</sup> C.I Issac, *op.cit.*, pp.39-40 .

of western values and passion.<sup>20</sup> The aftermath of all, was the setting up of the ‘colonial modernity’.

Journalism was the social seed that colonialism sowed among us. Kerala began to experience its results by the end of the 19th century. It was around this time that Keralites began to acquire the power of knowledge production. Whatever takes birth in history, be it technical knowledge, cultural form or political ideological theories, can develop only according to certain social rules. Newspaper was one of the western plants that took root in Indian soil. But the plant grew contrary to the wishes of colonialism. The Keralites who had become ‘slave of circumstances’, first under feudalism and later colonialism, became their masters by the end of the 19th century. Newspapers became tools in the hands of these new masters to protest against the king and the minister, to initiate the social renaissance movement and later to lead the struggle for independence as well as rights for the common man. The missionaries, their papers and printing press were merely the ‘unconscious tool’ in the history of the media in Kerala just as the Britishers were in the history of the growth of Indian society.<sup>21</sup>

The economic, political and ideological interventions of the colonial agent radically altered the caste based social ensemble of Kerala from early 19th century.<sup>22</sup> The financial, political and cultural activities triggered by the colonial forces reduced the power of Brahmin class and gave though only in a limited way, the backward classes new spaces in society.<sup>23</sup> At the end of the 19th century the feudal authority

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, P.42.

<sup>21</sup> Shibu Muhammad , *op.cit.*, P.113.

<sup>22</sup> P.J Cherian, “Radical Political Movements in the 20th century”, in P.J Cherian (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History: The Second Millennium*, Vol.II, Part II, Trivandrum, 1999, p.426.

<sup>23</sup> K.N Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal*, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1997, pp.198-207.

was replaced by the wealthy class who came from various castes and was strong enough to influence the society. As a result an economic order favouring commerce and industry was evolved by this time parallel to the agrarian one. In *Indulekha* the character Kesavan Namboothiri admits that he invested his money in one spinning company.<sup>24</sup> Therefore it is very clear that the natives were able enough to invest money in newspaper establishments also. Infact newspapers require two types of investments: intellectual and financial. By 1860 the affluent classes in Kerala had acquired the wherewithal for both investments. *Paschimatharaka* (1864) and *Sandishtavadi* (1867) both published from Cochin, were newspapers with Malayali share-holding. The fact that there were 17 newspapers in Malayalam in 1893 indicates the growing entrepreneurial capability of the natives.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Kerala Pathrika* and Kunhirama Menon-Harbingers of Transition and Change**

It was by 1880's that Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon made his debut in journalism by experimenting with *Kerala Pathrika* from Calicut. "*Kerala Pathrika* along with *Kerala Mithram* (published from Cochin) could create an impression that free and fair journalism is a task with social commitment towards public welfare".<sup>26</sup> During this period in addition to the primary task of making the news available to the readers, the Malayalam press had to enable them to analyse the right and wrong in public life. Also it was the main obligation of the newspapers to highlight any work detrimental to the public cause irrespective of the

<sup>24</sup> O.Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, (Mal), Kozhikode, 1995, p.93.

<sup>25</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, 11<sup>th</sup> February 1893.

<sup>26</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, "Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum Achadi Yanthrangaludeyum Vyaapanathode Malayaliyude Saahithya Sankalpangalilum Bhashavyavaharangelilum Sambhavicha Maattangal" (Mal), in M.N Vijayan, (ed.), *Nammude Saahithyam Nammude Samooam*, Vol. I, Thrissur, 2000, p.481.

position of the person it commits.<sup>27</sup> In that sense *Kerala Pathrika* is a model for *Malayala Manorama* in Travancore and *Kerala Sanchari* in Malabar, in expressing opinions without fear and making criticisms against the bureaucracy.

The last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was an age of new learning and change. In a way *Kerala Pathrika* marks the transition of the society to modern period. It witnessed the twilight of feudalism and the dawn of the Renaissance Age. The main objective of the journals like *Rajyasamacharam* and *Paschimodayam* was religious propagation. But with the publication of *Keralamitram* from Cochin in 1881, *Kerala Pathrika* from Calicut in 1884 and *Malayala Manorama* from Kottayam in 1890 the above scenario got totally changed. It was to highlight the corruptions in the Law and Justice Department in the princely state of Cochin and to bring them to the notice of the public that a Gujrathi merchant named Devji Bhimji started *Kerala Mithram*.<sup>28</sup> But it was indeed Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon, the founder editor of *Kerala Pathrika*, the first visionary who upheld the idea of public opinion. With his magic wand, ‘the pen’ he guided the Malayalees to a new threshold to enter into the limitless realm of vernacular journalism. He dedicated the pages of *Kerala Pathrika* not only to publish news aimed at fighting corruption but also to encourage the writers of that period. A fearless person and a nationalist, Kunhirama Menon was a daring personality of Malabar during that period.<sup>29</sup> Kunhirama Menon was the harbinger of momentous changes in the

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<sup>27</sup> *Malayala Manorama* editorial by Kandathil Varghese Mappilai, 14<sup>th</sup> February 1891.

<sup>28</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, *op.cit.*

<sup>29</sup> K.P Kesava Menon, *Samakaleenaraaya Chila Keraleeyar*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1974, pp.18-19.

realm of thought and opinion. In the formative epoch of this new era he successfully combined practical journalism and public opinion.

He was born as the son of Mullasserry Karunakara Menon, the supervisor of Kottackal Kizhakke *Kovilakam* and Chenkalath Narayani Amma in August 1857. Chenkalath is a famous family known throughout Malabar. After passing F.A examination he joined as a teacher in Calicut Basel Mission High School. It was from Madras Presidency College that he completed B.A. It is learnt that he was one of the first among those who passed B.A from Malabar. In those days (latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) there was no difficulty for a B.A holder to enter into the government service, to get promotion and thereby to acquire money, pomp and power. But Kunhrama Menon who was interested in human values and public service started his career as a teacher.<sup>30</sup> It was when Kunhrama Menon was working as a teacher in Calicut Basel German Mission High School and Zamorin's School that he got an idea about the cultural backwardness of the parents of his students and felt the need for the cultural and epistemological upliftment of the local people.<sup>31</sup> He was very sure that this situation can be resolved only through newspapers and journals. It was with that belief and confidence that he started the *Kerala Pathrika*.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from many other aims intended for a newspaper *Kerala Pathrika* had two other primary objectives, one the strengthening of Congress Movement and the other a crusade against corruption. The very source behind the birth of *Kerala Pathrika* is Kunhrama Menon's fervour for the national movement. There is no other paper in Malayalam other than *Mathrubhoomi* that is born and brought up for the

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<sup>30</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *op.cit.*, p.136.

<sup>31</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, *op.cit.*, p.85.

<sup>32</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *op.cit.*

promotion of Congress Movement. The only difference is that whereas *Mathrubhoomi* is begot and nurtured during the climax of national movement, *Kerala Pathrika* was born when Congress was in its infancy. Also *Kerala Pathrika* had to start from scratch as far as newspaper readership and subscription was concerned since it was the first of its kind, whereas *Mathrubhoomi* had only to stand on the shoulders of its predecessors like *Kerala Pathrika*. In a sense *Mathrubhoomi* can be regarded as a grown up version of *Kerala Pathrika* during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

About the inception of *Kerala Pathrika* V.Karunakaran Nambiar says, “It was Kunhrama Menon who introduced modern journalism and in it a vibrant and dynamic style. He can be called the ‘father of the modern Malayalam journalism’. While he was working as a teacher in *Kerala Vidyasala*, (the present Zamorin’s Guruvayruappan College) he participated in a conference on nationalism held at Calcutta in 1884. He was exhilarated by it and after return founded *Kerala Pathrika* infact one year before the inception of the Indian National Congress. *Kerala Pathrika* made incessant struggle against the bureaucratic overlordism; instilled a national awareness among the public and fought against evils”.<sup>33</sup> The statement of Karunakaran Nambiar is corroborated by the observations of Murkoth Kunhappa, “From Calcutta he came back instilled with vigour and pride for national service. Also he had got a definite shape and programme for his long cherished wish to start a newspaper. In those days *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* was a widely circulated paper in Calcutta which advocated the Indian cause forcefully and fought for the rights of the Indians”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> V.Karunakaran Nambiar, “Nayanmarum Pathrpravarthanavum”, (Mal), *Nair Service Society golden Jubilee Souvenir*, Perunna, 1964, p.277.

<sup>34</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *op.cit.*, p.136.

The founders of *Amrithabazaar Pathrika*, Basant Kumar Ghosh and his brothers did not confine their journalism to social sector alone but extended to political and administrative sectors also by publishing articles and reports related to the same. The fearlessness they showed in highlighting the cause of public interest, resisting the wrong steps of the bureaucratic overlords and exposing the corruption of the authorities was marvellous. *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* also played a major role in inspiring the national consciousness among the Bengalis. All these deeds invited great displeasure of the Government. It did everything possible to make *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* inactive and deaf. Though the Vernacular Press Act of Lord Lytton in 1878 was aimed at generally on vernacular newspapers its main intention was to suppress *Amrithabazaar Pathrika*. But the owners of *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* rescued it from the clutches of that black law by converting it into an English newspaper overnight.<sup>35</sup> It is not coincidental that many of those who participated in the Indian National Conference (which was the harbinger of Indian National Congress) held at Calcutta were editors too. It included the main leaders of the early Congress like Dadabai Navaraji, Govinda Ranade, Surendranath Sen, Surendranath Banerji, G.Subrahmanya Iyer and so on who were also editors.<sup>36</sup>

It is true that right from the beginning itself, our newspapers have a blood relation with the national movement. In course of time it was more strengthened and intensified. It is quite imperative that since many of the newspapers were either owned by the national leaders or under the control of them they worked hard to nurture national consciousness among the public and thereby to intensify the freedom struggle. Therefore it is not amazing that many of the newspapers of the last

<sup>35</sup> V.M Korath, "Pathrangalum Desheeyaprasthanavum", (Mal), *Kerala Press Academy Souvenir-1985*, Kochi..

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

phase of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were the playground of the great national leaders like Bala Gangadhara Thilak, Lala Lajapath Roy, Gopalakrishna Gokhale, Vipin Chandrapal, Pandit Malaviya and so on. The national movement became more vibrant with the advent of Gandhiji. The first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were in fact a decisive period of the national newspapers. It was during that time the main newspapers that played a crucial role in the freedom movement were born. The main organ of the Indian National Congress, *The Leader*, the main organ of the Home Rule League, *New India*, the mouthpiece of non-Brahmin Sangh, *Justice* etc. are included in the above list. It was during this time that Gandhiji started *Young India*.<sup>37</sup>

This period also witnessed the birth of many vernacular newspapers with a national vision. In Bengali *Nayak*, *Vasumathi*, *Navashakthi*, *Anandabazaar Pathrika*, in Marathi *Induprakash*, *Lokamanya*, in Hindi *Bharatha Mithra*, *Vishwa Mithra*, in Tamil *Swadesha Mithran*, in Telugu *Andhra Pathrika* etc. were such papers. They appeared in various parts of the nation and contributed energy for the national movement. The list of papers in Malayalam include *Swadeshabhimani*, *Mathrubhoomi*, *Al-Ameen* etc..<sup>38</sup>

It is said that Kunhirama Menon was very much fascinated and inspired by the conference on nationalism and the newspaper *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* at Calcutta. There is no doubt that in Kerala if there was any situation that discouraged Kunhirama Menon from starting a newspaper, the history and policy of *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* was enough to instill in him new inspirations to overcome the same.<sup>39</sup> *Amrithabazaar Pathrika* had a considerable circulation among

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *op.cit.*, p.137.

the English educated people of Malabar also. Imitating the name of *Amrithabazaar Pathrika*, Menon also thought of naming his paper as *Kerala Pathrika*. His friends too liked this name.<sup>40</sup>

*Kerala Pathrika* which was started on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1884 is the first Malayalam newspaper from Calicut.<sup>41</sup> It was started as a fortnightly.<sup>42</sup> Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon, Member in the Calicut Municipal Council and Assistant Master in the Zamorin's College was the Editor. A wealthy landlord and a Local Fund Board Member Kannambra Ramanunni Nair, K.N Chathukutty, Kareimbetta Sankunni Menon (both respectable men and employees in the District Court, Calicut) and *Vidya Vilasam* Press Manager Koshi were the proprietors.<sup>43</sup> The author of *Kundalatha* Adv.P.Appu Nedungadi, the later Deputy Collector Rao Bahadur P.Velayudhan and so on were a few among the editorial board. "P.V Krishna Warier says that though by birth the third, *Kerala Pathrika* could acquire the patriarchal position within no time. The writers like Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, Rao Bahadur O.Chandu Menon, and Kochi Diwan Peshkar C.Achutha Menon and so on were its early reporters. *Kerala Pathrika* also got the co-operation of the later Deputy Collector T.C Varghese, Mooliyil Raman, Vattampoyil Chathukutty Vaidyan, Kannampra Krishnanunni Nair and so on. Mahakavi Ulloor S.Parameswara Iyer is of the opinion that *Kerala Pathrika* had an advantageous situation as if it got the blessings of the 'trinity' (the lords Brahma, Vishnu and Siva) by the blending in it the short and pleasant style of Kunhirama Menon, the

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<sup>40</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *Kerala Pathrapravarthanam: Suvarnadhyayangal*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1999. p.1.

<sup>41</sup> P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), *Kerala Charithram*, (Mal), Vol.II, Ernakulam, 1974, p.777.

<sup>42</sup> *Correspondence* 639, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1886, RAC.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

serious type of sentences of Appu Nedungadi and the humour brimming articles of *Kesari*. Dr.T.M Nair wrote a Malayalam series in *Kerala Pathrika* about the style of pedagogy and the food programmes in the medical college at Edinborough”.<sup>44</sup> *Kerala Pathrika* was printed from the *Vidya Vilasam* Press of Kalahastha Muthaliyar. It was in *Kerala Pathrika* that Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar made the display of his mettle.<sup>45</sup>

Appu Nedungadi by assisting finance, contributing articles and participating in the shaping of policy was like the ‘Godfather’ of *Kerala Pathrika* right from the beginning. Many of the articles in *Kerala Pathrika* that enlightened the public in respect of political, social and cultural matters were contributed by him. Mooliyil Raman who was the translator in District Court, by extending advice, contributing articles and making discussions with the editor helped *Kerala Pathrika* a lot. Kannambra Kunhunni Nair also contributed many articles.<sup>46</sup> The articles written in *Kerala Pathrika* by Dr.T.M Nair about *Indulekha* and by Chandu Menon about *Mayooram Sandesham* were of-course commendable. Moorkoth Kumaran who wrote under the pseudonym ‘Gajakesari’, P.Velu B.A, C.P Achutha Menon and so on enriched *Patrika* by contributing many invaluable articles. By carrying articles on politics, community, literature etc. *Kerala Pathrika* tried to wake up the people and thereby made them enlightened in public affairs.<sup>47</sup>

Kunhirama Menon claims, “My newspaper *Kerala Pathrika* is the first of its kind in Malayalam language and Malayalam district. Even though there were one or two vernacular papers in Travancore and

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<sup>44</sup> P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.777-779.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.781.

<sup>46</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, pp.134-135.

<sup>47</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.4.

Cochin their circulation was considerably little among the Malayalees”.<sup>48</sup> Kunhirama Menon’s claim of this kind may be due to his lack of knowledge about the origin of *Rajyasamacharam* and *Paschimodayam* almost four decades back and considering the fact that the publication of *Keralopakari* was from Mangalore.... Perhaps since these were the facts that made Menon claim that *Pathrika* is the first real journalistic vernacular newspaper in Malayalam it can certainly be justified.<sup>49</sup> Perunna K.N Nair also agrees with the above stand. He says that *Kerala Pathrika*, a weekly started in 1884 by Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon is the first newspaper from Malabar. “The earlier publications like *Rajyasamacharam*, *Paschimodayam* and *Keralopakari* were just magazines”.<sup>50</sup>

### **Journalism and ‘Ripples of Nationalism’**

*Kerala Pathrika* which is infact a progeny of the nationalists’ conference held at Calcutta was true to its work also. “Indian National Congress was founded at Bombay after one year since the founding of *Kerala Pathrika*. It was Menon who translated the name ‘Indian National Congress’ to Malayalam as *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha*. From that day onwards *Pathrika* became the Congress organ in Kerala”.<sup>51</sup> Policy followed by *Kerala Pathrika* is almost evident from the above mentioned statement of Ulloor S.Parameswara Iyer. Also it can be read from this statement that it was *Kerala Pathrika* that made Congress a popular movement among the people of Kerala”.<sup>52</sup> Henceforward

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<sup>48</sup> Swadeshbhimani Ramakrishna Pillai, *Vritthanda Pathrapravarthanam*, (Mal), “Preface”, Cochin, 1984, p.xxxv.

<sup>49</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, op.cit., p.134.

<sup>50</sup> Perunna K.N Nair, *Malayala Pathrathinte Katha*, (Mal), Cochin, 1987, p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> Mahakavi Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer, *Kerala Sahithya Charithram*, (Mal), Vol.iv, Thiruvithamcore University, 1957, p.442.

<sup>52</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, op.cit., p.86.

*Kerala Pathrika* used to use in its pages the name *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha* for Indian National Congress and *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* for Kerala Pradesh Congress. The Malayalam version of Indian National Congress as *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha* was acceptable to other papers also and they too started writing it henceforward.

In those days *Kerala Pathrika* was indeed the paper of the Congress Movement. The only 'political work' in those days was holding meetings to select delegates to attend the annual sessions of the Congress. In one such meeting held in 1903, twenty-one delegates were elected to attend the eighteenth annual session of the Congress.<sup>53</sup> Kunhirama Menon participated regularly in the first few conventions of the Indian National Congress.<sup>54</sup> When a Congress Committee was formed at Calicut he was selected as its Secretary and he continued in the post for the first eight years.<sup>55</sup> Kunhirama Menon's fervour for Congress is very evident from the series of news items carried in *Kerala Pathrika* to activate the Congress campaigns.

By strengthening the Congress Movement he wanted to achieve self rule and representation in Legislative Councils. For him Congress was the best instrument to fight for the Indian cause and to find solutions for the public problems. The selection of the delegates from Malabar to All India Congress Conventions was made through prior announcement as news item in *Kerala Pathrika*. In such meetings he wanted to pass resolutions in respect of their demands so as to submit them before the Government as memorials and to get redressed.<sup>56</sup> *Kerala Pathrika* was of the opinion that when there is any public

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<sup>53</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Eighteenth Indian National Congress*, quoted in K.Gopalankutty, *The National Movement in Malabar, 1930-47*, unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1985, p.36.

<sup>54</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.3.

<sup>55</sup> K.P Kesava Menon, *op.cit.*, p.24.

grievance people should hold meetings, consider the grievance, and then lay it before the central committees of the *Sabha* existing in the Presidency towns. In the case of Madras Presidency, the *Mahajana Sabha* at Madras should be made acquainted with all public grievances while public contributions should be made generally towards a public fund to be established for carrying out the proposals of the *Sabha*.<sup>57</sup>

But when the genuine grievances are not at all redressed despite various representations, *Kerala Pathrika* is forced to call for agitation. And for this end the paper itself took the initiative for mobilizing funds. In an editorial in August 1890 *Kerala Pathrika* said that the landlords and tenants in Malabar should at once pay up the subscriptions they have promised towards the *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* Fund. They should bear in mind that the *Sabha* has to get up for an agitation against the survey and settlement as early as possible. People should try to give a permanent existence to the *Sabha* as such an institution is necessary to represent popular grievances. In another report on the same day it listed the various problems and said that it is the *Mahajanasabha* which is now left to resolve them. “The British Government rules the country regardless of the welfare of the people. The survey and settlement are sure to ruin the people of Malabar. It is unjustifiable to disarm the whole population as a punishment for the outrage committed by a few

<sup>56</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1889, MNNPR, TNA. In the article published in *Kerala Pathrika* dated 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1889 Kunhirama Menon invited the attention of the public to the necessity for holding meetings in Calicut to nominate delegates to represent Malabar at the forthcoming *Mahajana Sabha* meeting in Madras. It is even thought that the delegates should lay before the *Mahajana sabha* the grievances of the people consequent upon the disarmament of the inhabitants of certain *taluks* in Malabar, that this subject should be considered in the meeting and that a memorial should be adopted to submit before the Government in this connection together with the resolution passed there. In the paper dated 8<sup>th</sup> November 1890 a correspondent writes that the leading men of Calicut should convene a meeting to consider what they should do in the matter of the forthcoming National Congress.

<sup>57</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, March 1886, MNNPR, TNA.

Mappilas, and to throw into the sea all the weapons so collected. Respectable natives are prohibited from carrying arms, though East Indians are allowed to do so. Government have given arms to the princes and the native chiefs who are to certain extent capable of rising against the Government but not to poor ryots who have a necessity for arms to protect their crops from the ravages of wild animals. The school fees have been so increased that poor people find it difficult to educate their children. *The Kerala Mahajana Sabha* should take up all these matters”.<sup>58</sup> The branch *Mahajana Sabha* meeting held at Cannanore also passed a resolution highlighting that the survey carried on Malabar is unnecessary.<sup>59</sup> In short *Kerala Pathrika* apart from exercising its mandatory duty of carrying news, leaps up amidst people’s problems, first informing and interacting with the authorities and subsequently bracing them up to fight for their rights.

Kunhirama Menon wanted the simultaneous growth of the Congress Movement inside the country and abroad. He welcomed the works of London Indian Political Agency invigorated for furthering the works of Congress in England. Through an editorial Kunhirama Menon called upon the people of Malabar to contribute lavishly towards the funds for keeping up the Agency live.<sup>60</sup> For Kunhirama Menon, *Kerala Pathrika* and Congress were inseparable. Also the works of both were intertwined. *Kerala Pathrika* was then working as an active vehicle and

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<sup>58</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 23<sup>rd</sup>, August 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>59</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>60</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1890, MNNPR, TNA. The leader says that it is of absolute necessity for furthering the work of the Congress in England. It also tells them that the money so collected is neither to be expended on decoration on the occasion of a Governor’s visit nor on constructing tanks or buildings in commemoration of a jubilee, but it is to be expended in meeting the charges incidental to the working of an agency pressing the introduction of the representative element into the Indian Legislative Councils.

agent of the Congress, publishing even the silly news like the details of subscription fee from Congress workers.<sup>61</sup>

*Kerala Pathrika* condemned the unjust Government order not letting the teachers of local board from attending political meetings so as to prevent them from the activities of the Congress. The order treated these teachers as Government employees in respect of their presence in political meetings only. At the same time it denied them all other privileges due to Government servants. *Kerala Pathrika* wrote that this ruling would be reasonable if Government were to consider them as public servants in other respects also. It is unjust of Government to issue orders which are purposely meant to show that Government dislikes such meetings.<sup>62</sup>

Thus although Kunhirama Menon dedicated his prime of youth and the annals of his paper for the growth of Congress he deliberately kept a distance from it gradually when he found it difficult to adjust with its ideals in the later years. He became a staunch opponent of Gandhi's non co-operation movement during 1920's.<sup>63</sup> Because by then, the style of the liberal leaders like Kunhirama Menon who led Congress in the first phase and also Constitutional Liberal Democrats became out of date. The Satyagrahis although espoused non-violence were ready to breach the law.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1890, MNNPR, TNA. On August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1890 there is the news item of the Palghat Congress Committee which published the names of 36 subscribers with the amount (aggregating only Rs.60) of their subscription towards the Congress fund. Most of the subscribers are vakils. One Namboothiri Brahmin also showed his interest in the Congress Movement by subscribing 4 annas. (A coin in British India).

<sup>62</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>63</sup> K.P Kesava Menon, *Samakaleenaraaya Chila Keraleeyar*, (Mal), *op.cit.*, p.24.

<sup>64</sup> P.Govinda Pillai, *Kerala Navoathanam, Oru Marxist Veekshanam*, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, p.66.

## Exorcising Corruption

Other than Congress Movement the topic that attracted Kunhirama Menon the most was ‘corruption’. Dr.Chelanatt Achutha Menon reminds that Kunhirama Menon was not only very enthusiastic in attacking the corrupt officials but also encouraged others to participate in this fight. He narrates his experience about one of his meetings with the Editor Kunhirama Menon in connection with the publication of an article. Achutha Menon had written in *Kerala Pathrika* during the previous week an article *Udhyogathimiram* (Official Cataract) which dealt with the impudent and impolite behaviour of an officer. When he again reached the newspaper office with the new article he was directed to the Editor Kunhirama Menon and was introduced to him as the author of *Udhyogathimiram*. Immediately he asked Achutha Menon who was the officer in his mind when he was writing the article *Udhyogathimiram*. Without waiting for a reply Kunhirama Menon then immediately said, “In Calicut there are two, three more persons like that. You write about them too”.<sup>65</sup>

In order to exorcise the demon of corruption *Kerala Pathrika* did hard work by writing editorials and articles. In this endeavour of Kunhirama Menon his right hand was Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar who was known by the name ‘Kesari’. He was instrumental in creating a healthy administrative environment in the District by jumping amidst the officials and by rebuking, advising, mocking and congratulating them.<sup>66</sup> In fact by the witty and sarcastic articles of Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar and the fearless editorials of Kunhirama Menon, the officials were imbued with scare.<sup>67</sup> In those days in the new set up of

<sup>65</sup> Chelanatt Achutha Menon, *Smarananjali*, (Mal), Kozhikode, p.38.

<sup>66</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, p.138.

<sup>67</sup> K.P Kesava Menon, *Samakaleenaraaya Chila Keraleeyar*, *op.cit.*, p.23.

the British, when power was extended to bureaucracy, many of the officers became corrupt and despotic. To bridle them *Kerala Pathrika* tried its best. The performance of *Kerala Pathrika* is elaborated by Murkoth Kumaran in one sentence. “Kesari’ pounced upon the bureaucrats, slain some of them, chased some, blessed others and made a few virtuous. He trampled over the scene and set everything right eventually”.<sup>68</sup> Kunhirama Menon utilized his sharp pen against the corruption and the dictatorial rule of government officers.<sup>69</sup>

The stinging attacks made by ‘Kesari’ invited the venom of some bureaucratic overlords. It in turn was sometimes directed towards even Kunhirama Menon also and resulted in many fearful incidents. One fine morning in 1891 Police Sub inspector Itti Rarappan Nair went to Chenkalath house at Chalappuram in search of Kunhirama Menon. In the porch then there was only a small girl, Kunhirama Menon’s niece. She told the inspector that Menon had gone out. But in fact he was in the toilet. Hearing what she said he went to the *mutt* (abode of Tamil Brahmins) of Anantha Narayana Pattar, the Government Pleader of Calicut. On sight itself the inspector pulled the trigger of the gun and killed the Pleader. It is thought that this bullet was actually reserved for Kunhirama Menon. The reason for his venom was that *Kerala Pathrika* had criticized that officer for his unscrupulous way of collecting evidences in a criminal case. But the reason for his venom towards the Government lawyer so as to shoot him was not known. Later the inspector was convicted to death.<sup>70</sup>

### **Exploring other Avenues**

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<sup>68</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, p.148.

<sup>69</sup> Perunna K.N Nair, *op.cit.*, pp.32-33.

<sup>70</sup> P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.780.

*Kerala Pathrika* highlighted world news and local news and along with it gave space for criticism and evaluation. The editor Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon used to make free and fair comments about political and social events and their further developments.<sup>71</sup> Along with politics and public topics he gave prominence for literature, epistemological subjects, world news etc. also.<sup>72</sup>

He wrote several reports in *Kerala Pathrika* advocating the cause of proportional representation on the basis of merit and the genuine exercise of franchise. He advised the females in the Calicut Municipality to exercise their right to franchise at Municipal elections.<sup>73</sup> *Kerala Pathrika* could visualize the absurdity of electing the members to local bodies only on the basis of the amount of land property irrespective of competence and calibre. Also it lampooned the idea of increasing the strength of such mediocre *janmis* in the Legislative Council in the name of increasing people's representation. It observed that if these bodies should be of any use to the people, it should enable discerning, courageous and self-respecting people to enter them.<sup>74</sup>

*Kerala Pathrika* was the first representative of the media that highlighted the grievances of the tenants which gathered momentum in the later years and snowballed as a movement. In an article in 1886 *Kerala Pathrika* accused the committee at Madras engaged in considering the Malabar Land Tenure System for not making decision in any of the important points on the subject. It said that the people are eagerly expecting the issue of the Commission. The same article

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<sup>71</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.3.

<sup>72</sup> Perunna K.N Nair, *op.cit.*

<sup>73</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>74</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1916, MNNPR, TNA.

highlighted the insufficiency of the compensation ordinarily awarded to tenants for their improvements on the lands they held.<sup>75</sup>

*Kerala Pathrika* extended moral support to *Malayali Memorial* of Travancore. It is this interest that protrudes in the editorial ‘*Bhoopanmaarum Rajyabharanavum*’ (Kings and their reign). In it Kunhirama Menon accused the practice of giving major posts to those from outside. In the absence of eligible local candidates this can be justified. But rejecting their claims and appointing the outsiders is meaningless. When the outsiders are appointed in the major posts it is the local people and the country at large that bear the loss because these outsiders have only one consideration, to take back the savings to their own land. But when locals are appointed since their savings will not go outside it will be shared among the people here itself and so ultimately beneficial to the country.....Under the British government since the major posts are given to the Europeans they take back their savings to England. In the earlier period since the rulers belonged to this land they did not take back the savings to an alien land...It is the same thing that happens in Cochin and Travancore because of this kind of foreign rule.....When outsiders are posted they have only an intention to finish the tenure somehow and so they do not have any genuine earnest desire for the welfare of the local public. So the postings of a country should be given to eligible locals only.<sup>76</sup>

*Kerala Pathrika* took efforts to publish the foreign news even in the 1890’s. “Dr.T.M Nair while he was a medical student in Scotland regularly wrote articles in *Kerala Pathrika* under the pen name ‘Madhavan’. The readers had the same eagerness to read the articles of ‘Madhavan’ as that they had for the articles of ‘Kesari’. After reading

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<sup>75</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, April 1886, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>76</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, June 1894, MNNPR, TNA.

several comments about ‘*Indulekha*’ of Chandu Menon he wrote an article in *Kerala Pathrika*, the conclusion of which was like this, “I, living far away could not see *Indulekha* so far. But at last *Indulekha* will certainly come to ‘Madhavan’”. Reading this Chandu Menon laughed loudly shaking his belly and immediately he sent a copy of *Indulekha* to Dr.T.M Nair.<sup>77</sup>

During the early days of *Kerala Pathrika* many of those who could read Malayalam could not write it. Also many of the scholars did not know how to write prose. Even the letters were written in poetry. Therefore it became the duty of *Kerala Pathrika* to instill an interest among Keralites for Malayalam language. Also the people were not at all aware of their rights and duties. They were scared of the British officers thinking that they will be penalized if something appears against these officers in the paper they subscribe.<sup>78</sup> To overcome such a situation Kunhirama Menon identified and recruited to his institution, a few daring persons who were able to read and write. He encouraged them to become good and courageous journalists by allowing them to write free and fair reports in *Kerala Pathrika*.<sup>79</sup> E.M.S Namboothirippad is of the view that stalwarts like Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon (*Kerala Pathrika*), C.P Achutha Menon (*Vidyavinodini*), Kandathil Varghese Mappila (*Malayala Manorama*) and K.Ramakrishna Pillai (*Swadeshabhimani*) made literary service through journalism. Using the papers they encouraged the writers and laid the foundations for a new movement called journalism.<sup>80</sup>

### **Evolution of public opinion**

<sup>77</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1975, p. 236.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Mannalath Sreedharan on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2004.

<sup>79</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, p.139.

<sup>80</sup> E.M.S Namboothirippad, *Sampoorna Kruthikal*, (Mal), Sanchika-9, Trivandrum, 1998, p.261.

Due to the continuous work of *Kerala Pathrika*, a simple style brimming with vigour and vitality evolved in Malayalam and got propagated gradually.<sup>81</sup> Kunhirama Menon was very proud of the excellent service rendered by *Kerala Pathrika* for the first twenty five years since its inception. “The transformation that occurred in Kerala in respect of public opinion and the general awareness of the people during the last twenty seven years can be very well deciphered if we make a perusal of the situations then and present. Today I can proudly say that in Malayalam there is some public opinion although not much predominant. Also now there is no scarcity of reporters or articles. Now even among those who are not acquainted with English language there are competent persons who can write excellent articles on various subjects and who can present arguments in a fair manner in debates and dialogues. Many of the articles published usually in my paper are an evidence for the same. Also the public has now aversion in making abuses and insults. They are now happy to see and evaluate the world news with more seriousness. The number of corrupt bureaucrats is decreasing day by day and the people have now started feeling detestation towards the corrupt officials and respect towards honest and gentlemen officers. Also the people have neither hesitation nor fear to write to the papers about corrupt officials and unjust landlords and thereby making them to stop such evil practices. Respect for truth and freedom is also scaling new heights everyday. These kinds of changes although evolved in the course of the transition of time it cannot be said that newspapers have not played a considerable role in that. There is no doubt that the main reason for the increased awareness of national news among public is the newspapers”.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.10

<sup>82</sup> Swadeshbhimani Ramakrishna Pillai, *Vritthanda Pathrapravarthanam*, (Mal), “Preface”, Cochin, 1984, p.xxxvii.

Being very much pleased in Kunhirama Menon's efforts towards social reformation and in his earnestness to make the officials responsive and responsible, Travancore Maharaja Vishakham Thirunal subscribed 200 copies of the paper aimed to circulate among the Government officials of Travancore.<sup>83</sup> Kunhirama Menon's sincere journalistic exercises made him known even outside Malabar. It was because of this reason that he was invited to the world conference of editors as a delegate, held in London in 1895.<sup>84</sup> He was one among the three invitees from India. The editors of *The Hindu* and *Amrithabaazar Pathrika* were the others. There is nothing wrong in considering Kunhirama Menon's journey to London as the first abroad journey of a Malayali journalist. He got the opportunity to acquaint with Swami Vivekananda when he was in London. He spent there one year.<sup>85</sup> The fact that Kunhirama Menon was invited by the Government to help the Civil Service Commission with his views on the subject is also a proof, of the importance they attached to the paper.<sup>86</sup> It is pertinent to remember that this rare invitation from the British authorities was received only when *Kerala Pathrika* was only three years old. It was in such a short period that this paper ascended such heights. In the coronation ceremony of George V at Delhi, Kunhirama Menon was a special invitee from the editors.<sup>87</sup>

While he was in London to participate in the world conference of newspapers, his younger brother Komu Menon was in charge of *Pathrika*. During that time sharp criticisms were darted in *Kerala*

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<sup>83</sup> Perunna K.N Nair, *op.cit.*, p.33.

<sup>84</sup> K.P Kesava Menon, *Samakaleenaraaya Chila Keraleeyar*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1974, pp.19-21.

<sup>85</sup> G.Priyadarshan, *op.cit.*, p.4.

<sup>86</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, February 1887, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>87</sup> P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.777.

*Pathrika* against Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran's works *Amarashathakam* and *Mayurasandesham*. Enraged by this Keralavarma made the Travancore Government to stop the subscription of the 200 copies of the paper. It was after his return from London that Kunhirama Menon learned about the retaliation but he was not at all unhappy. Enduring what happened, he made a daring reply that he does not want the help of those who do not honour the freedom of expression.<sup>88</sup>

*Kerala Pathrika* was a role model for *Malayala Manorama* in the expression of public opinion and in the making of criticism against the bureaucracy and feudalism without any fear. *Pathrika* was once forced to pay a fine of Rs. 51 for publishing an article against the Government. K.P Kesava Menon is of the opinion that this may be the first case in Malabar in which an editor is inflicted with punishment for the freedom of press. By this time itself the newspapers undertook the task of analyzing the good and evil in public life besides carrying news items.<sup>89</sup>

Any amount of praise showered upon the begetters of *Kerala Pathrika* would not be too much when we think of the adverse situation in which a vernacular paper in Malabar was started.<sup>90</sup> P.K Gopalakrishnan says in the book *Chandu Menon* that *Pathrika* was a newspaper which could go in par with the most progressive ideas that evolved in India during that time.<sup>91</sup> As a result of hard work *Kerala Pathrika* earned name and popularity throughout Kerala and Kunhirama Menon got the honorary title, 'the father of Malayalam journalism'.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Perunna K.N Nair, *op.cit.*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>89</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, "Varthamaana Pathrangaludeyum Achadi Yanthrangaludeyum Vyaapanathode Malayalyude Saahithya Sankalpangalilum Bhashavyavaharangelilum Sambhavicha Maattangal", *op.cit.*, p.482.

<sup>90</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, (Mal), *op.cit.*, p.140.

<sup>91</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.4.

<sup>92</sup> Perunna K.N Nair, *op.cit.*, pp.32-33.

Kunhirama Menon could present a daring journalistic paradigm before the people of Kerala. The policy and opinion of *Kerala Pathrika* and its editor Kunhirama Menon and the related events are milestones in the history of Malayalam journalism. Newspapers in the west which were started for the dissemination of information in fact dared to make opinions and criticisms only after a prolonged time. But *Kerala Pathrika* right from birth itself fought for the freedom of expression.

### **In the New Century**

*Kerala Pathrika* changed a lot in the new century. Though it was like a ‘scavenger’ of society cleaning it from the garbages of corruption, and a fighter of Congress Movement working towards the national cause, it seems that *Kerala Pathrika* did not show much concern for the depressed classes in the first phase of its life. It may be due to many reasons. At the same time it started to attack the caste and caste-related problems in the later years although not in an aggressive way.

It is a truth that caste discrimination is the major obstacle that hinders the progress of India even today. Kunhirama Menon is the great visionary who explicitly told nearly a century back that without cutting the roots of caste discrimination the country cannot make a march towards progress.<sup>93</sup> It is this anti-caste stance and enthusiasm for secular education that made Kunhirama Menon to publish article against the attempt to establish sectarian universities in India. In it he said that establishment of sectarian universities in India, would not be an imperative necessity if provision could be made in the existing institutions for imparting religious instructions. The proposed institution

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<sup>93</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, December 1917, MNNPR, TNA. Kunhirama Menon wrote in December 1917 on the topic, ‘caste related evil practices’: “The main reason for the retrogression of India and its people is the caste discrimination. Only by eradicating that demon, our nation can achieve progress”.

cannot expect to have any greater liberty in matters of education than existing ones enjoy. He concluded that on the above grounds the paper is constrained to give its support to the resolution passed at the meeting held in the Calicut Town Hall to oppose the movement for the establishment of sectarian universities.<sup>94</sup>

Kunhirama Menon always emphasized and tried to establish morality in journalism. He responded strongly when the journalistic sphere of Travancore became communal and sectarian. He wrote in *Kerala Pathrika* that when the British implemented Press Acts in Malabar everybody protested and condemned the Government. But when we think of the state of some of the vernacular newspapers of Travancore and Cochin we can understand the vacuum felt there due to the lack of Press Acts. It is a truth that there are a few newspapers in Cochin and Travancore which are run in the most cultured way and as a result highly respected by the people. But there are a few papers engaged in igniting the communal hatred and tension among the public by abusing the gentlemen and tarnishing the honourable communities even saying the names. One paper abuses the Nair community; another paper abuses the Namboothiris by using words which will not be digested by decent people and gentlemen; another paper abuses Thiyyas, Thiyya leaders and their Guru in the most absurd fashion. Actually in doing these the perpetrators may have some happiness, but they don't think about the aversion and detestation invoked in the minds of gentlemen by such reports. If the words and sentences used by the newspapers in Travancore are used by some scoundrel or alcoholic in the public streets here, the police would have certainly arrested and charged them. It seems very amazing that the Travancore Government permits such newspapers to print this kind of abominable articles and to send it to

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<sup>94</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1911, MNNPR, TNA.

other states with the impression of Government seal....If this system continues it will result in the inflaming of communal tension and thereby riots may break out. It is unimaginable to people in Malabar to think about how in Travancore under the reign of Diwan Bahadur M.Krishnan Nair, these newspapers carry such malicious reports and articles.<sup>95</sup>

### **Journalist Uncle-A Role Model**

Chelanatt Achutha Menon comments, “For about thirty years in Calicut city it was Kunhirama Menon alone was the ‘Journalist Uncle’....Today it seems very amazing when we think of the fairly large circulation that *Kerala Pathrika* enjoyed at one time. Everybody loved, respected and feared its editor. He did not rebuke anybody unnecessarily. Those who harm the public whoever it is automatically became the subject of his rebuke. In Malabar there was no family which was not known to him. When you meet him if you tell your family name immediately he will ask you whether you are not the nephew or the brother of so and so. He was familiar to everybody due to his public service as Municipal Councillor and Bench Magistrate. In short as Sanjayan says he was metaphorically a ‘Grand Uncle’ of Malayalam joint family. In him harmoniously fused the commanding power, affection and the seriousness due to an uncle”.<sup>96</sup>

Kunhirama Menon spelt out guidelines for gentlemanly and meaningful journalism in Malayalam. In connecton with the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of Kunhirama Menon, K.C Mammen Mappila wrote in *Malayala Manorama* an editorial with the heading ‘*Kerala Pathrika*’. “Journalism is a very decent and dignified profession abroad. The

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<sup>95</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1916.

<sup>96</sup> Chelanatt Achutha Menon, *op.cit.*, p.47.

editorship of *London Times* is much respected and valued than the Prime Ministership of England. The American President Roosevelt after quitting the post became the assistant of the Chief Editor of a newspaper named *Outlook*. But in Malayalam journalism during the days of its infancy the reins were controlled by those who were mediocre and not much educated. Journalism was then not lucrative enough to attract the competent hands that are able to get some other professions. In such a situation by becoming the Editor of *Kerala Pathrika* Menon has certainly enhanced the image of Malayalam Journalism. Had Kunhirama Menon who passed B.A thirty years ago entered the government service, he would have now climbed the ladder of power and reached unimaginable heights. It may be agreed by everybody that Kunhirama Menon is a role model in the running of *Kerala Pathrika*".<sup>97</sup>

The Herculean task of Kunhirama Menon in establishing a newspaper from nothingness cannot be compared to anything. It was a decade after Kunhirama Menon's advent to journalism that Kandathil Mammen Mappila, a B.A degree holder like Kunhirama Menon, was initiated into the *Malayala Manorama* newspaper as a successor to Kandathil Varghese Mappila. This has been portrayed as a great sacrifice in those days.<sup>98</sup> Yet he came to take the reins of *Malayala Manorama* due to persuasions. No doubt, if the task of Mammen Mappila is regarded great Kunhirama Menon's task is much greater. Because Kunhirama Menon, a B.A degree holder during the 1880's, had a more excellent future. In British Malabar the scope for government job was comparatively better and unlimited. Yet he was voluntarily dedicating his life to make the people more cultured. Also Kunhirama Menon, a great visionary was laying the foundation for the first

<sup>97</sup> *Malayala Manorama* 21st July 1917.

<sup>98</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskarika Navothanam*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1988, p.10.

newspaper when Mammen Mappila was just following the footsteps of the founder of *Malayala Manorama*, Kandathil Varghese Mappila, with paradigms more than one before him.

Kunhirama Menon's relations with national movement became sour later on. He did not like the tide of non co-operation movement at all. With the help of his son Padmanabha Menon he somehow managed to run the paper. He retired totally from the editorship in 1932. Without much delay he was bed ridden due to paralysis. His drinking habit also affected his health. He was dead on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1935.<sup>99</sup>

### **Poovadan Raman-To Fill the Vacant Space**

*Kerala Sanchari* was started four years after the birth of *Kerala Pathrika*. In respect of style, outlook and approach prima-facie *Kerala Sanchari* was not much dis-similar to *Kerala Pathrika*. In this context there is a striking question then why *Kerala Sanchari* was founded by Adv.Poovadan Raman. We cannot imagine that it was just to closely follow the heels of *Kerala Pathrika* raising little amount of competition and at the same time extending support and help so as to strengthen its mission. Only on a serious analysis of reports it published and the audience it anticipated we can find if Poovadan Raman had any agenda other than mere dissemination of news. If it was to command respect in the society was his aim, then his English newspaper *Malabar Spectator* itself was enough for him. But on close analysis it can be presumed that he had some other far reaching aims in starting *Kerala Sanchari*.

Poovadan Raman had started in 1879, five years before *Kerala Pathrika*, an English weekly named *Malabar Spectator*. It is true that it was not a Malayalam paper. Yet it has a prominent place in history since it was a trend setter in journalism in Malabar. Later it was renamed as

<sup>99</sup> K.P Kesava Menon, *op.cit.*, p.34.

*Westcoast Spectator*. The founder of this paper Adv. Poovadan Raman, the most cultured and daring advocate was the genius who laid the foundation for modern style of journalism in Malabar although it was in English.<sup>100</sup>

Raman was a rich, educated cultured and talented Thiyya. He had acquired the experience in running a paper by publishing *Malabar Spectator*. Also he had obtained wider network of connections with the Europeans as well as native officials in that capacity. He was a daring fellow, an ardent fighter and he was willing to go to any extent in championing a cause. This is evident from his posting of Dr.Kees, a fellow exiled from the neighbouring state of Travancore, as the editor of *Malabar Spectator*. It is true that he respected the talent, and when it was lacking in Malabar he was ready to borrow the same from Travancore and impart it to his local people. His vision was in such a way very far-sighted.

Murkoth Kunhappa traces the history and origin of *Malabar Spectator*. “Poovadan Raman started in 1874 the ‘Spectator Press’ in Calicut. From there he started the English weekly *Malabar Spectator* in 1879. It was just before that Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran, Dr.Kees and so on became subject to the hatred of the Maharaja of Travancore. Kerala Varma was put under house arrest at Harippad in 1875. Dr.Kees was banished from the country. Dr.Kees had the popularity as one able to write very sharp articles in English. It was that quality of him the very reason for his banishment. Hearing the news of banishment Poovadan Raman invited Dr.Kees to Calicut and made him the editor of *Malabar Spectator*”. The last days of the rule of Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja in Travancore were marked by several intrigues and counter intrigues in the government service. Then Dr.Kees was also in

<sup>100</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, *op.cit.*, p.87.

the government service. He was a friend of both Kerala Varma and Crown Prince Vishakham Thirunal. He used to write in various papers of India articles criticizing the mal-administration of the Princely States. It is known to many that Vishakham Thirunal too wrote in the pen name of 'Brutus' many articles against the King. Ayilyam Thirunal was under the impression that Dr.Kees was behind all these stratagems. It was in such a circumstance that Dr.Kees was banished and Kerala Varma was put under house arrest. It was almost at the same time Malabar witnessed the birth of *Malabar Spectator*. Kees who was banished from Travancore for subverting peace was immediately posted as Editor of *Malabar Spectator* at a very high salary. Rolo Platel was appointed as his assistant.<sup>101</sup>

Dr.Kees was the first journalist banished from Travancore. The reason was his bold and independent criticisms showered against the despotic rule of Ayilyam Thirunal. The most noticeable quality of Poodvadan Raman was his indomitable courage. He was brave enough to invite to British Malabar, the very same person who was banished from Travancore which was also under the British Crown. And that too, was for his calibre to criticise the injustice in eloquent words. Thus the charge levelled against him there, happened to be his merit here. Indeed Poovadan Raman was a visionary who did many things ahead of time aimed at the forward march of the nation on the path of progress.

*Malabar Spectator* raised its voice against all kinds of injustices in the land. Numerous enlightening articles in modern science, culture, politics, literature, sociology etc. were published in it. Also it darted sharp criticisms as part of campaigns. In fact it was a trend setter for the vernacular newspapers, *Kerala Pathrika* and *Kerala Sanchari*. During

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<sup>101</sup> Murkoth Kumaran, *Kerala Bhasha Pranayikal* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1931, p.11.

the 1890's these three papers created ripples throughout Malabar and thus became a mile stone in the journalistic history of India.

Anyhow the five years period from 1879 to 1884 marks the unquestioned and undisputed sway of *Malabar Spectator* here. During the 1880's Raman sometimes had not even in his imagination to start a vernacular newspaper. Had he anything like that, he could have done it without any difficulty as he had gained from *Malabar Spectator* the intellectual capital and experience in the running of a paper. Also he was a very rich man having enough financial capital. It was he who provided a major chunk of land for Cannanore Railway Station on public interest. He is the first Malayali who sent his son abroad for higher studies.<sup>102</sup> His daringness to start an enterprise is evident from his way of launching of *Malabar Spectator* and inviting Dr.Kees, a persona-non-grata in Travancore. Therefore it is to be presumed that there was nothing that could have hindered Raman from starting a vernacular newspaper if he had any interest and imagination.

At the same time since its birth in 1884 *Kerala Pathrika* and Kunhirama Menon were actively engaged in the strengthening of Congress, in waging a battle against corruption and in creating public opinion. Among the leaders of the Renaissance period those who had extended fervour to the Indian National Congress resisted caste discrimination in favour of the upper class in varying degrees.<sup>103</sup> In such a situation when looking through the spectacles of caste it can be seen that *Kerala Pathrika* was laying its thrust on the news items related to upper castes including Nairs only. An in-depth analysis of the available news items in *Kerala Pathrika* from 1884 to 1888 (period between the birth of *Kerala Pathrika* to the birth of *Kerala Sanchari*) is self

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Murkoth Ramunni, Thalassery on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

<sup>103</sup> P.Govinda Pillai, *Kerala Navothanam, Oru Marxist Veekshanam*, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 2003, p.65.

explanatory. It can be seen that *Kerala Pathrika* never attempted seriously as a mission the reformation of the depressed classes at a time when it endeavoured for that of the Nairs.

Since *Kerala Pathrika* was a newspaper first of its kind and started from scratch it is sure that it might not have any idea of who should be its audience. Since Kunhirama Menon was a member of the Nair community and since majority of the literate folk belonged to that community it is quite natural that treatment of news items was mostly vis-a-vis to their interests. In those days even the cultured Nairs had some aversion for the depressed classes including the Thiyyas. Some of them expressed it openly. For example when Churayi Kanaran a Thiyya, was posted as *Head Munshi* in Calicut *Hajur Kacheri* (collectorate) in 1847, Hindu officers protested it by mass resignation.<sup>104</sup> But some of them did not express it openly; they kept the disgust in privy. Anyhow a cultured man like Kunhirama Menon was wise enough to see that it never precipitated in the pages of *Kerala Pathrika*. During the two years of its work *Kerala Pathrika* was able to get a circulation of only 904 copies.<sup>105</sup> Kunhirama Menon might have been doubtful as to how the Nair readers would receive his paper if he attempted more coverage for the depressed classes and if so about the fate of his paper. Because in those days the upper class people did not extend any endurance towards Thiyyas and other lower castes however educated they are. Therefore it was with much scare and fear the Thiyyas accepted even government postings.<sup>106</sup>

In such a situation deliberately or undeliberately Kunhirama Menon might have been forced to ignore the news of the depressed

<sup>104</sup> Article by C.Krishnan in *Mithavadi Special Supplement* , Calicut, 1925, p.45.

<sup>105</sup> *Correspondence* 639 dated 18<sup>th</sup> June 1886, RAC.

<sup>106</sup> Article by C.Krishnan in *Mithavadi Special Supplement* , *op.cit.*, p.47.

castes for the time being. During the early period, in *Kerala Pathrika* local news items were published in the form of letters. It published simultaneously letters of diverse nature. But most of them were primarily related to Nair community only. A letter published in an issue of August 1886, *Kerala Pathrika* says that the long standing custom forbidding the Nair females of North and South Malabar to cross the Korapuzha and the Kallai River respectively is one that should be adhered to.<sup>107</sup> It seems funny that *Kerala Pathrika* at a time when Nairs were arguing for marriage reforms was upholding the conservative view of restricting Nair women by not letting them to cross the traditional barriers. This is again ridiculous because there are various other matters which attract serious attention other than trifles like women crossing the rivers.

*Kerala Pathrika* of December 1885 says that the *karanavans* were pressurized by various means including civil suits, to provide for education. It also published a letter praising a junior member of a Nair family for instituting a civil suit against a *karanavan* for the expenses of English education.<sup>108</sup> Madras Native Newspaper Report says that *Kerala Pathrika* of October 1886 carried several letters and articles advocating changes in the *marumakkathayam* (matrilineal system) law of inheritance and impartibility of property.<sup>109</sup> Another report suggested that almost everyone who was involved with the question of marriage reform viewed the Nair law of inheritance, family organization and marriage custom as linked with Namboothiri dominance either in their origin or in their perpetuation. Any reformation in the Malayali marriage customs is impossible unless it is made compulsory that all Namboothiri

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<sup>107</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, August 1886, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>108</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, December 1885, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>109</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, October 1886, MNNPR, TNA.

Brahmins should marry girls of their own caste.<sup>110</sup> All the above news items are related to Nair community. None with Thiyyas or other depressed classes.

Also if we compare three separate reports of *Kerala Pathrika* regarding inhuman treatment, the discrimination it had towards the depressed classes will become more evident. In an article in the issue of May 1886 says that the District Judge of North Malabar who apparently shows that he dislikes people visiting him on Saturdays, sometimes gets his visitors disgracefully treated by servants, the visitors being pushed out of his house. The article concludes with an opinion that it is very necessary that such persons should not be allowed to remain long in the same district.<sup>111</sup>

In the April 1890 issue *Kerala Pathrika* highlights that the service of two or three companies of native sepoys engaged in the Burma Field Service have been dispersed with, without even giving them a gratuity. European soldiers would never submit to such a treatment but would fight against it. But these are natives and have no one to whom they can represent their grievances.<sup>112</sup>

But the enthusiasm with which *Kerala Patrika* argued for human dignity in the above case of visitors who gets ill treatment in the hands of the magistrate or the native soldiers who have been denied gratuity does not seem in the report it published about the slave trade of Cherumas. The editorial in the *Kerala Pathrika* of September 1898 states that Englishmen are so generous and ready to put down slave trade wherever it exists. The article concludes with the mere suggestion that the *amsam* (village) Revenue Inspectors will be able to give additional information regarding this nefarious practice. Also it invites

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<sup>110</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1891, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>111</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, May 1886, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>112</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

the attention of Collector and the Government in this matter.<sup>113</sup> Here by allowing slave trade there occurs the gross violation of not only Indian Penal Code but human justice also. Freedom in the ‘pages of the paper’ does not mean anything to a slave. Just writing in newspaper about slavery is ridiculous. Because it is meaningless to explain about the right of freedom unless the slaves actually know what freedom really means.<sup>114</sup> Therefore to enlighten them about freedom and to mount pressure by campaign to emancipate them from bondage were the duties expected of a newspaper. At the same time *Malayala Manorama* vehemently argued for the education and freedom of worship of the Pulayas. In *Malayala Manorama*, even the first editorial in 1890 was about the education of the Pulayas.<sup>115</sup> In those days not a single paper dared to speak for Pulayas. That editorial invoked the message to treat the Pulayas as human beings and to try to elevate them through education.

In Malabar according to Sections 370, 371 etc. of the Penal Code which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1862 slavery was totally banned. Yet the high caste people employed Cherumas as slaves and treated them as beasts. In the novel *Saraswathivijayam* there is the description of how a Brahmin named Kuberan Namboothiri sees a Pulaya. “This Brahmin treats human beings like Pulayas as part of his movable property. It is doubtful whether he has come to know the British Act by

<sup>113</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 24<sup>th</sup> September 1898, MNNPR, TNA. In the news item it states that there exists slavery in a certain form among cultivators of the soil in Malabar especially the Mappilas. The Cherumas, an extremely poor race that knows not what liberty is, are brought sometimes at the rate of 8 rupees each by the cultivators who employ them on their farms and treat them as part and parcel of their holdings. The slave Cherumas have great regard and affection for their masters and will not reveal anything calculated to push their masters into jeopardy. The article however gives a hint that the slave Cherumas call their masters by the title of *Thampuran* (a King or God), while they call other Mappilas by the simple name Mappila.

<sup>114</sup> Emine Saner, “British Asian women forced into marriages”, *The Hindu*, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2008, p.11.

<sup>115</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1890.

which slavery is banned”.<sup>116</sup>In this context it cannot be said that there is much difference between the views of Kuberan Namboothri and *Kerala Pathrika*. Other than showing the existence of slavery it exhibits little concern for those hapless human beings who is treated as less than human beings.

Thus directly and indirectly *Kerala Pathrika* was ignoring a chunk of the society by not giving the concern it deserved. In such a context Poovadan Raman might have felt the vacuum created by *Kerala Pathrika* by keeping aloof the depressed classes from its purview. In all other respect the functioning of *Pathrika* might have been agreeable for him. Certainly *Kerala Pathrika* was a model for Poovadan as a vernacular. Only after the birth and growth of *Pathrika* he might have understood of its possibility and potential. When *Kerala Pathrika* was highlighting the issues of Nairs, and as a result depressed communities were unheeded, Poovadan Raman, a lover of his community might have felt pangs. In such a lamentable condition Poovadan might have also wanted to enlighten Thiyyas and other depressed communities through a vernacular. He felt the need of expanding to them the horizons of knowledge especially who were trying to cross the barriers of caste and convention. The result was *Kerala Sanchari* which started on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1888.<sup>117</sup> “Poovadan Raman wanted to satiate the need of ordinary Malayalam readers especially those who do not come in the ambit of *Kerala Pathrika*. He liked to inform them the every day news-breaks in the country and to enlighten them the consequences of such happenings”.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Potheri Kunhampoo, *Saraswathi Vijayam*, D.C Books Kottayam, 2004, p.28.

<sup>117</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.54-55.

<sup>118</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, *op.cit.*, p.92

Infact many of the Thiyyas had acquired wealth and education by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>119</sup> But there was no agency to spell out them proper guidance regarding investment. Prudent utilization of such newly acquired wealth was difficult for them in the wake of the newly emerged rules and regulations. Poovadan Raman liked to wake up them by making them aware of the new constitutional innovations and the rights and duties of the public enshrined in them. By enlightening them with a knowhow in the judicial procedures he wanted to make them fight against the corrupt officials. Also he wanted the public to inspire with novel thoughts and thereby to lead them to modernity. It was a time when new community structures were evolving. To mould them with solid shape he liked to disseminate the ideas as fast as possible. All these are to be done in an interesting and enticing manner. These were the aims of Raman and his colleagues in the founding of *Kerala Sanchari* in October 1888.<sup>120</sup>

At that time (during 1888) ‘Kesari’ had acquired the glamour as the best reporter in *Kerala Pathrika* and in Malabar. *Kerala Sanchari* was in fact started as a newspaper which was meant to fulfil the dreams of Poovadan Raman related to civic rights with ‘Kesari’ as its Chief Editor. “The paper was named *Kerala Sanchari* aimed to contain the letters ‘Kesari’ in it.”<sup>121</sup> This is again corroborated by Murkoth Kunhappa. “I got the first six issues of *Kerala Sanchari* from the collections of Murkoth Kumaran. In the conclusion of an article in the first issue the reporter’s name was given in Malayalam as ‘*Kerala*

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<sup>119</sup> K.K.N Kurup, *Adhuunika Keralam: Charithra Gaveshana Prabandhangal*, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp.20-25.

<sup>120</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, p.147.

<sup>121</sup> Vengayil Kunharaman Nayanar, *Kesari*, (Mal), Trichur, 1945, p.14.

*Sanchari*’ with ‘*Ke*’, ‘*Sa*’, and ‘*Ri*’ in special bold Malayalam letters so as to read those bold letters collectively as ‘*Kesari*’. From this itself the greatness of ‘*Kesari*’ in the journalistic firmament is very evident.<sup>122</sup> But ‘*Kesari*’ continued in that position only for six months. Meanwhile he could tear into pieces the misdeeds and high handedness of the power-monger officers.

But the aim of *Kerala Sanchari* was not such tramples over bureaucrats only. The heading of the first editorial of the first issue of *Kerala Sanchari* was ‘*Lokasamastho Sukhinobhavanthu*’ (Let happiness be in the whole world). Even today many of the sentences of that article are by-heart for many readers. It is doubtful whether *Kerala Sanchari* could get back the popularity and fame ever in future which it enjoyed during the short period of ‘*Kesari*’.<sup>123</sup> With the sole aim of protecting the financial interest of the community *Kerala Sanchari* published an article in the seventh issue. It was intended to highlight the dignity of business and the need to invest in ones’s native country. In the article the paper asked to break the caste rules. If Brahmins can do business Sudras can also do the same. If caste rules were strictly observed the Sudras could not have acquired education. Therefore *Kerala Sanchari* advised to earn money without forsaking the dignity and freedom.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, *op.cit.*, p.148.

<sup>123</sup> Murkoth Kumaran, *Vengayil Kunhircaman Nayanar*, (Mal), Trichur, 1945, p.xviii.

<sup>124</sup> *Kerala Sanchari* editorial, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1888. “The position of Europeans, Parsis, Muslims etc. who left their homes and native lands settled here, did business and made fabulous fortune is really great. To be honest our situation is very pathetic. It is foolish to believe that doing business is below our dignity or humiliating. There is nothing shameful about it. The authors of our ancient ethical code had allotted trade and agriculture to the noble caste of Vaishyas. But we see even Brahmins doing trade, ignoring these rules and observations. This has not lowered their status at all. If it is argued that the ancient rules should not be broken, the Sudras should not seek education. Do we see Sudra customs anywhere among us now? We should put away our false pride and also

Thus in a way for *Kerala Sanchari* the voice of journalism becomes the voice of economic progress and simultaneously the voice of the progress of Sudra community.

But *Kerala Sanchari* was not a staunch fighter for the interests of Thiyyas or depressed classes alone. It had the concern for all. This perspective is evident in its news items and editorials. An excellent example is the editorial ‘*Kozhikkottu Ninnu Kannurekkulla Theevandi*’ (Train from Kozhikode to Kannur) published in the fifth issue of *Kerala Sanchari*, in which there is an appeal to the local people to make contributions for the Kozhikode-Kannur railway line. *Kerala Sanchari* wrote that everyday we see foreign businessmen coming to our land from England offering several lakhs of rupees as loan. They work as business partners to build railway lines, pay off interests, make huge profits and take the money back to their countries every year. If the natives themselves engage in business they can, not only do the nation much good, but prevent money from leaving the country and causing us loss. If the affluent landlords of Kerala use their money prudently on welfare activities instead of spending lavishly on obsequies and marriages and keeping the rest idle, they themselves as well as the land will benefit much.<sup>125</sup> *Kerala Sanchari* is reminding people that construction of railway lines is more important and lucrative than wasting money for celebrations. It is appealing to the rich to work for their own good and prosperity of the land. It can be said that our newspapers of the initial period were giving a belligerent note to the desire of the natives to develop into an authoritative power in political,

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our foolish belief that we have no right to do business. We must do business without compromising our dignity and freedom so that we earn money for the sake of our happiness and for others welfare”.

<sup>125</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 7<sup>th</sup> November, 1888.

financial and cultural areas.<sup>126</sup>

As discussed above, an in-depth approach to the problems of the ordinary people may be the secret of the success of *Kerala Sanchari*. According to the confidential report sent to the Government of Madras in 1889, *Kerala Sanchari* had a circulation of 1500 copies.<sup>127</sup> During the first one year of its existence *Kerala Sanchari* could make such a good performance is of-course commentable. When compared to that of *Kerala Pathrika* the performance of *Kerala Sanchari* is to be considered still great as *Kerala Pathrika* during its two years could gather only 904 copies. Also *Kerala Sanchari*'s achievement is at a time when it had to compete with an established newspaper which had been circulating among the people for the previous four years. Indeed this was the triumph of both Poovadan Raman and 'Kesari'.

Poovadan Raman, was a patriot who did many things aimed at the modernization of the nation. He took a leading role in the implementation of railway system in Malabar not only using his newspapers but also making sacrifices in his own case. Towards that he sold his large area of land at a very cheaper cost for the Railways at Kannur. He regarded much more, the benefit of the nation than his personal gains. Because of that vision the Kannur railway platform was the longest in Malabar quite for a long time.<sup>128</sup>

### **The Blooming of a Genius-'Kesari' Nayanar**

Vengayil KunhIRaman Nayanar who wrote under the pen name 'Kesari' is a genius who showered his talents in profuse strains in the pages of a few newspapers and journals of his time. He tried to bridge

<sup>126</sup> Shibu Muhammad, *op.cit.*, P.117.

<sup>127</sup> *Correspondence* 639, RAC Calicut.

<sup>128</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, pp.141-142.

the gap between literature and journalism. He is a sun who happened to rise in the literary firmament only because of the advent of newspapers and periodicals in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Nayanar was a man who had little interest in fame and popularity. It was by virtue of necessity he wrote the articles for various journals. Those creations were the spontaneous and innate expressions of a genius. He had not in his imagination that they are unique literary pearls which may become the valued treasures of posterity. Therefore he did not care or bother to preserve them. This is very clear from the letter of 'Kesari' written to C.D David, who compiled 25 numbers of Nayanar's articles and published in the form of a book entitled 'Kesari'. "From 1879 onwards I have been writing numerous essays and articles in various newspapers and magazines. I hadn't any thought of making a book collecting all those articles. Therefore I have neither kept any of those articles nor preserved the copies of those newspapers or journals".<sup>129</sup> In fact 'Kesari' has written witty articles in plenty, under the pen names 'Kesari' and 'Desabhimani', in several circumstances in several magazines and newspapers. But he has written only a few in his real name. Therefore many of the readers do not know actually how much and to what extent he has written.

T.K Krishna Menon in his *Primer of Malayalam Literature* said that when speaking of newspapers, as the one name that suggests itself to his mind is that of Mr.Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar. He is the best Malayalam newspaper correspondent of the day. His chaste diction and humour invest his writings with an indefinable charm. If only he worked he could easily gain an undying name in the journalistic history of the country.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, *op.cit.*, p.2.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, Opening page.

Though he did not write a novel, he made Kizhakkepatt Raman Menon to write a unique work *Parangodi Parinayam* with titles and subtitles as he suggested. ‘Kesari’ had written in 1891 in *Vidyavinodini*, an article *Oru Aakyayika, Allenkil Novel (A Narration or Novel)* in which he had sarcastically criticized the spate of imitations that followed *Indulekha*, the first novel in Malayalam. Also he had said in that article that it is very easy now days to write novels resembling those imitations. In the article he suggested chapter-wise subtitles from first to ninth chapters. Also he had advised to write the title as *Parangodiparinayam*. The result of this lampooning was Kizhakkepatt Ramankutty Menon’s *Parangodiparinayam* closely following Nayanar’s same title and subtitles as suggested in the article.<sup>131</sup> C.Madhavan Pillai comments, “Vengayil Kunhiraaman Nayanar is an excellent prose writer. There is smooth flow, facility and significance for his style. Especially there is an element of humour in it. Also there is no exuberance of Sanskrit words. It is relevant to regard him as our ‘Jonathan Swift’.”<sup>132</sup>

The famous novelist Chandu Menon had an admiration for the writings of ‘Desabhimani’ (Nayanar) even when Menon hadn’t any acquaintance with him. It is due to this fact that Chandu Menon specially mentioned the phrase, ‘amusing reporters like ‘Desabhimani’ while writing the preface to the second edition of *Indulekha*. There he emphasizes that ‘Desabhimani’ hasn’t any knowledge of him.<sup>133</sup> Murkoth Kumaran reminds, “The famous novelist Chandu Menon read the articles of ‘Desabhimani’ (Nayanar) with much fondness. He advised me many times to try to write like ‘Deshabhimani’”.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Kizhakkepatt Raman Menon, *Parangodi Parinayam*, (Mal), Preface, Kottayam, 2004, p. 21.

<sup>132</sup> Vengayil Kunhiraaman Nayanar, *op.cit.*, Opening page.

<sup>133</sup> Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, Calicut, 1995. p.22.

<sup>134</sup> Vengayil Kunhiraaman Nayanar, *op.cit.*, Preface, p. 15.

Everybody applauds Nayanar for his performance in *Kerala Pathrika*. Infact it was Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar who made *Kerala Pathrika* most vibrant. Through *Pathrika*, ‘Kesari’ made a mortal fight against bureaucratic overlordism. The vernacular readers can never forget ‘Kesari’s performance in *Kerala Pathrika*. On hearing the name of ‘Kesari’ the corrupt officers who used to receive bribes trembled. It was ‘Kesari’ who exposed the misappropriations of corrupt officers and thus fixed them.<sup>135</sup> It can be said that it is ‘Kesari’ through *Kerala Pathrika* that laid the foundation for the investigative journalism in Malayalam.<sup>136</sup>

Moorkoth Kumaran remembers Kesari, “It is true that Kesari made his debut in *Kerala Chandrika*, a paper from Travancore. But he made the display of his mettle in *Kerala Pathrika*. Never the performance of ‘Kesari’ in *Kerala Pathrika* may fall into oblivion. In those days the ‘bureaucratic beasts’ possessed with the evils like bribery on hearing the name ‘Kesari’ trembled. It was ‘Kesari’ who exposed a few of such officers who ruled here like despots, and brought them before law. He has written articles in *Kerala Pathrika* also using pen-names like ‘Desabhimani’ and ‘Swadeshamithran’. On receiving any issue of *Kerala Pathrika*, readers were first looking for the articles of ‘Kesari’ and ‘Dehabhimani’. Because of the interest in the articles of ‘Kesari’ many became the subscribers of *Kerala Pathrika*”.<sup>137</sup>

‘Kesari’ who used to write short essays in which there was the harmonious blending of humour and wit was one of the most famous reporters of *Kerala Pathrika*.”<sup>138</sup> From Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar

<sup>135</sup> *Malayala Manorama Vaaranyapathippu*, December 25, 1966, Kottayam.

<sup>136</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.329.

<sup>137</sup> Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, *op.cit.*, p.13.

<sup>138</sup> V.Aravindakshan, “Malayala Sahithyathinte Adhunikeekaranam.....” *op.cit.*, p.32.

known by the name 'Kesari' what Malayalam literature bequeathed was a few newspaper articles. This contribution which enabled Kerala to thrive newspapers is infact the basic cause for the subsequent enrichment of the total Malayalam literature.<sup>139</sup>

His (Vengayil KunhIRaman Nayanar) articles under the nom de plume of 'Kesari' which appeared in rapid succession in the Calicut weeklies in the late 1880's and the early 1890's used to be looked forward to with lively interest and read with keen enjoyment by newspaper readers of the day on account of their vigorous style and trenchant treatment of the subjects dealt with. Most of these articles however were but of ephemeral interest as they treated of contemporary events of no great importance, but several of them, as also most of his articles in the monthly magazines deal with subjects of general interests and deserve a permanent place in literature.<sup>140</sup>

The daring deeds of the trinity (Dr.Kees, Mr.Rolo Platal-Editors of *Malabar Spectator* and 'Kesari') through the instruments of *Malabar Spectator* and *Kerala Sanchari* to suppress the corrupt officers are unique events in the journalistic history of India.<sup>141</sup> It was the humour of KunhIRaman Nayanar that influenced 'Sanjayan' much. In the story of 'Kesari' entitled *Paramartham* there is the description of a leopard's den. "I cannot imagine about the stink there. There is no such foul smell even in the Municipality so intense".<sup>142</sup> It may be the above sentence that might have inspired 'Sanjayan' to make frequent attacks against

<sup>139</sup> E.M.S Namboothirippad, *Sampoorna Kruthikal*, (Mal), Sanchika-9, Trivandrum, 1998, p.260.

<sup>140</sup> C.Achutha Menon, "Introduction" in Murkoth Kumaran, (ed.), *Vengayil KunhIRaman Nayanar*, (Mal), Trichur, 1945, p.1.

<sup>141</sup> Murkoth Kumaran,(ed.), *Vengayil KunhIRaman Nayanar* (Mal), Trichur, 1945, p.xviii.

<sup>142</sup> Vijayan Kodencherry, (ed.), *Malayalathile Aadhyakaala Kathakal*, (Mal), Kozhikode, 2006. p.101.

Kozhikode Municipality.<sup>143</sup> It may be accidental that both ‘Kesari’ and ‘Sanjayan’ became famous through *Kerala Pathrika*. The circulation figures of this paper which reached the peak at the time of ‘Kesari’ again repeated only during the time of ‘Sanjayan’.<sup>144</sup>

Murkoth Kumaran has narrated the brief biography of Vengayil KunhIRaman Nayanar in the book *Kesari*. “Vengayil KunhIRaman Nayanar was born in 1036 Thulam of Malayalam Era. He studied English in Thalipparambu School. After that he studied in Kozhikode Government College. Malabar Collector William Logan was very much interested in his studies. After completing the F.A course from ‘Kerala Vidya Sala’ he went to Madras Presidency College. After continuing there for one year, as per the advice of William Logan he studied agricultural science in Sayidappetta and completed education..... In those days the aristocratic Nairs did not use to send their daughters to convent schools. But Nayanar breached that practice which is now followed by many. Now KunhIRaman Nayanar is more known as a ‘journalist of wit and humour’ rather than the head of a famous Nair *taravad* in Kerala (Vengayil), or a landlord, or a reputed agriculturist or District Board Member. It is in this way that he is going to be remembered by the generations to come”.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> K.P Kesava Menon et. al., *Hasyaprakasham Magazine*, Kozhikode, 1958.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Vengayil KunhIRaman Nayanar, *Kesari*, (Mal), Trichur, 1945, pp.1-13.

## Two Luminaries- C.Krishnan and Murkoth Kumaran

After six months of service 'Kesari' left *Kerala Sanchari*. It seems very enigmatic that he left the newspaper at its apex of glory and success. Murkoth Kumaran reminds that after forsaking the editor post of *Kerala Sanchari*, Nayanar did not contribute to it long. It seems funny that when Murkoth Kumaran was its Editor, considering his special request 'Kesari' again wrote in *Kerala Sanchari* numerous articles in the pen-name of 'Kesari', 'Vajrabahu', 'Vajrasoochi' and 'Desabhimani'. Also he used to contribute articles to various periodicals in the succeeding years.<sup>146</sup> In this context we are perhaps bound to think that if it was due to some difference of opinion with Poovadan Raman that 'Kesari' bid farewell to *Kerala Sanchari*. If so what would have been the cause of his departure is still enigmatic. If 'Kesari's service in *Kerala Sanchari* lasted only for six months he might have left the paper somewhere around April 1889. 'Kesari' was succeeded by Adv.C.Krishnan. He assumed the charge of the editor in *Kerala Sanchari* after passing B.A in 1895.<sup>147</sup> It is to be still found out who the editor of *Kerala Sanchari* was in between 'Kesari' and C.Krishnan. While he was a B.A student in Madras during the period between 1892-95, Krishnan used to write articles in *Kerala Sanchari* which was under the ownership of Karinkal Madathil Rarichan Mooppen who was his

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<sup>146</sup> Murkoth Kumaran, *Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar, op.cit.*, pp.14-15. Murkoth Kumaran says, "Kesari wrote a few articles in *Malayala Manorama* and *Kozhikodan Manorama*. I have seen one article in *Janaranjini* also. He was the Co-Editor of *Vidyavinodini* for sometime when C.Achutha Menon was its Editor. Also he wrote many interesting articles in *Vidyavinodini* under the pen-name of 'Vikada Dhooshakan', 'Vidhooshakan' and so on. When I was the Editor of *Saraswathi* magazine Kesari extended me immense help. After that he jumped into *Mithavadi*. It is my experience that when Kesari started writing articles in *Mithavadi*, due to that fact itself its circulation increased".

<sup>147</sup> Changaramkumarath Sankaran, *C.Krishnan*, (Mal), Trichur, 1967, pp.4-7.

sister's husband.<sup>148</sup> It means that from Poovadan Raman the ownership of *Kerala Sanchari* was purchased by Karinkal Madathil Rarichan Mooppen somewhere after 1890. When *Kerala Sanchari* was under the complete control of the brothers-in-law (Rarichan Mooppen and C.Krishnan) Thiyya interests were vehemently pushed forward as Krishnan had interest in the community affairs right from his student life. When he was a student in Madras Presidency College, being a Thiyya, Krishnan had to endure discrimination.<sup>149</sup>

Krishnan went to Madras for B.L studies in 1897 March. Before that Murkoth Kumaran was entrusted the editorial duties. Thus Murkoth Kumaran who was only 23 years old became the editor of *Kerala Sanchari* on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1897. The editorials he wrote in *Sanchari* were simple, pleasant, elegant and reasonable owing to its wit and humour. The thought provoking nature and the daring of opinion were its hallmarks. An excellent example is the editorial he wrote in connection with the convocation of the title 'Rao Bahadur' on the Government pleader of Calicut M.S Ramakrishna Iyer. Being too happy over getting the title he gave a party to the Government officers like District Collector, District Judge and Police Superintendent. Panangaden Shanku, the owner of the Empress Victoria Hotel was entrusted with the arrangements. In token of his satisfaction Iyer presented Shanku with a silver clock. Mocking Iyer, in the next issue of *Kerala Sanchari*

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-5. One such report published in January 1896 observes this point. "Although the Travancore *Sirkar* pays sufficient attention to primary education and has established for this purpose several schools, yet it is a matter for regret that the children of Thiyyas and other kindred classes are refused admission in such schools".

Murkoth wrote an editorial with the heading, “Had Sankaracharya Come”?<sup>150</sup>

Another editorial he wrote in connection with *Murajapam*<sup>151</sup> also had repercussions. In those days each Namboothiri who participated in the *Murajapam* of Travancore were given 10 *paras* (a vessel for measuring) of paddy as charity on their return. A few newspapers of Travancore had reported that some of the above Brahmins who received the charities had sold out from it, the *avil* (flour) packets for money. Based on the reports Murkoth Kumaran wrote a leader in *Kerala Sanchari* entitled *Vayar oru Pathayam* (The belly-a granary).<sup>152</sup>

In those days the newspapers in Malabar like *Kerala Pathrika* and *Manorama* were able to make only a superficial discourse of the issue.

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<sup>150</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *Ibid.*, pp.55-56. The crux of the editorial was this: “We had a doubt whether the British guns were able enough to surmount all the forts. No. Now we are very sure that our doubts were not reasonable. There is no fort insurmountable to the British. We are now thinking about the emotions and agony that might have inflicted upon Sankaracharya, had he seen the British tearing up “the ritual fort” which Sankaracharya had entrusted the Brahmins to implement in Kerala without any flaw or frailty, with a single shot of ‘Rao Bahadur’. Sankaracharya may be lucky in not witnessing the scene in which the alien and beef eating Europeans walking with foot-wears made of animal skin on the floor purified by sprinkling cow dung water”.

<sup>151</sup> The royal ceremony conducted at every six years at Thiruvananthapuram, the capital of the Princely state of Travancore. It was started by King Marthanda Varma as a penance for the sins he committed in connection with the expansion of his kingdom.

<sup>152</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit.*, pp.149-150. The crux of the editorial: His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore who tries to retain the title of ‘Dharmarajyam’ for his country may be complacent in spending enormous amount of money collected as tax from the subjects to feed a special community. But has His Highness ever pondered the fact that how much number of poor people could be fed with the above amount of money. Anyhow the Government of Travancore spent one lakh rupees collected as tax from the people in a prodigal way. The belly of the Namboothiri Brahmin is not a granary which can contain 10 *paras* of paddy. And why is he blamed for selling out the *avil* packets?” Subsequent to this, the editor of *Manorama* (*Janmi’s* newspaper) told many persons that taking into account the severe rebuke contained in the article the Government of Travancore would ban *Kerala Sanchari* in that country. But such things didn’t happen. On the contrary the Government stopped the custom of distributing *avil* packets.

But *Kerala Sanchari* could satisfy the readers well with the editorial criticisms as said above. Mahakavi Kumaran Asan wrote, “No other paper launched from Malabar have so far got this much circulation and fame other than *Kerala Sanchari*”.<sup>153</sup> Later C.P Govindan Nair purchased the ownership and for a long time he was the editor. During the 1920’s the rights of *Kerala Sanchari* was sold to C.Krishnan who merged it in *Mithavadi*.<sup>154</sup>

### ***Pathrika and Sanchari- Match and Mismatch***

*Kerala Sanchari* though four years younger than *Kerala Pathrika*, both are progenies of the same breed. In *Kerala Pathrika* the most reputed correspondent was ‘Kesari’. That ‘Kesari’ was the Editor of *Kerala Sanchari* at the time of its birth. Therefore it is quite natural that the style, policy and thrust of these two papers as far as many of the issues concerned were similar.

The style of *Kerala Pathrika* was very solemn, elegant, simple and very close to ordinary man’s speech. The style of *Kerala Sanchari* was similar to that of its elder sister *Kerala Pathrika*. But it was more interesting than that of the elder sister. Since *Pathrika* had already moulded out a new style it was easier for *Sanchari* to make innovations. When articles were made popular in Malabar by *Pathrika*, short articles were propagated by *Kerala Sanchari*.<sup>155</sup> When *Kerala Pathrika* extended a moderate tone to the authorities *Kerala Sanchari* was very loyal in approach.<sup>156</sup> While *Pathrika* gave a summary of local and foreign news *Sanchari* gave summary of important news and discussed

<sup>153</sup> *Vivekodayam*, Mithunam 1089.

<sup>154</sup>

Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini*, op.cit., p.152.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.150.

<sup>156</sup> *Correspondence* 639, RAC.

matters of local interest.<sup>157</sup> When *Kerala Pathrika* highlighted Congress and *Mahajana Sabha* it is not seen to that extent in *Kerala Sanchari*.

Against corruption whether it is British or Indian both the papers extended very stringent policy. Both the papers did not show any fear or fervour in making sharp criticisms against the double dealing stand of the Government in respect of dispensation and delivery of justice for natives and British. Poovadan Raman being a Thiyya and since that community has a special leniency towards the British one may expect in *Kerala Sanchari*, a liberal attitude towards the white.<sup>158</sup> But that is not evident in the first phase of the paper. At the same time *Kerala Sanchari* was more sharp and vehement in such cases when compared to the other. *Kerala Sanchari* deplored the practice of exonerating the British officers while convicting the accomplices who are Indians. Crawford-Hanumantharayar case is an excellent example as to how these two papers upheld a similar perspective in its treatment. Crawford was the Commissioner of Central Division Bombay. He got bribe through his Sirasthadar Hanumantharayar. When they were caught red-handed Hanumantharayar was sentenced to imprisonment and fine. Crawford was tried by a special commission.<sup>159</sup> But Crawford was not found guilty of bribery because he is a European.<sup>160</sup>

*Kerala Pathrika* also took a similar stand in this issue. Referring to the result of the Crawford bribery case *Kerala Pathrika* makes an appraisal that “further retention of Crawford in the service is a great mistake. It is wrong to suppose that all Europeans are honest and that all natives are dishonest. It may be because the Europeans are the rulers and

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> K.K.N Kurup, *op.cit.* Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, p.27.

<sup>159</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 10<sup>th</sup> October 1888.

<sup>160</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1889.

the natives are ruled, that the faults of the latter are magnified, while those of the former are reduced to a trifle.”<sup>161</sup>

In waging a war against corruption *Kerala Sanchari* was not at all behind *Kerala Pathrika*. *Kerala Sanchari* highlighted the undue strictness shown in the case of the poor and the great leniency shown in that of the rich, by the Tellicherry Municipality in the matter of allowing buildings to be erected on the sides of the roads.<sup>162</sup> Also it wrote about the corruption practised by certain peons of the Calicut Municipality with regard to the assessment of buildings.<sup>163</sup> It exposed the inequities committed by the *amsam menons* (village officers) in assessing the crops in North Malabar. It said that these *amsam menons* asked bribes from the tenants and if they are refused the assessment is made heavy.<sup>164</sup> In a similar perspective *Kerala Sanchari* criticized the police, calling them worthless because they resort to illegal means to make money. It also suggested that to make the Department more efficient, men of education and capacity should be enlisted in the Department and that they should be paid decently and in proportion to the energy they show.<sup>165</sup> To prevent corruption *Kerala Sanchari* recommended that the merchants who persisted in selling rice at rates far above those prescribed by the authorities should be traced out, charged, tried and severely punished as these merchants were really responsible for the looting.<sup>166</sup>

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*Kerala Pathrika*, 9<sup>th</sup> March 1889, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>162</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 26<sup>th</sup> December 1888, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>163</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 18<sup>th</sup> May 1889, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>164</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1894, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>165</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1894, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>166</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1919, MNNPR, TNA.

Both the papers showed meticulous care in issues pertaining to health and hygiene of both man and beast. They advocated for precautionary measures to avoid starvation, infectious diseases and epidemics. Towards this goal they sometimes attacked the municipalities and other administrative institutions and sometimes put forward valuable suggestion for their consideration.

During the rainy season in 1894 cholera was broken out at different places in the Calicut Municipality. But the authorities did not care for it. Immediately *Kerala Pathrika* alerted the Municipal authorities and asked to take necessary measures for improving the sanitary condition of the town.<sup>167</sup> In a similar situation in 1897 owing to the consumption of unwholesome food many people were dying daily of cholera and other diseases. There were only very few among the poor who were able to take one *canji* a week. Juxtaposing the situation *Kerala Pathrika* warned that if the present state of affairs continues the condition of the district will be very serious. The article urged upon the Government immediately to open relief works.<sup>168</sup> Also it anticipated in 1907 May itself, the impending famine in Malabar. It cautioned the authorities that the famine will inflict severe starvation on the poorer classes in the rainy season when all labour will be suspended.<sup>169</sup> *Kerala Pathrika* could suggest a century back the hygienic condition to be preserved in Tali tank which even today remains a dream not at all materialized. It also suggested that after draining and cleaning the tank, certain rules are to be prescribed for preserving the purity of water.<sup>170</sup> High mortality of cattle in Malabar owing to various kinds of cattle

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<sup>167</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1894, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>168</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1897, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>169</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1907, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>170</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, April 1886, MNNPR, TNA.

diseases was also the topic of write up. It invited the attention of the authorities in establishing of a veterinary dispensary in the District.<sup>171</sup>

*Kerala Sanchari* also made similar endeavours. When snake-bites increased it wrote about the exigency of appointing one skilled person by the Calicut Municipality for the treatment of snake-bitten persons.<sup>172</sup> During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was no modern treatment for many of the infectious diseases. Therefore the isolation of the patients was the only measure to avoid spreading. In Calicut during that time the number of patients was on the increase. In such a situation *Kerala Sanchari* presented the seriousness and asked the Municipal authority to take steps to prohibit persons suffering from leprosy, ulcers and other skin diseases of a contagious nature from entering the fish market and touching the fish exposed there for sale.<sup>173</sup> It identified the insanitary condition of certain places within the Municipality and through reports invited the attention of the Chairman.<sup>174</sup>

Regarding the Malabar Marriage Bill of the 1890's these papers held view points that slightly differ. *Kerala Pathrika* gave strong support for the Marriage Bill. But *Kerala Sanchari's* stand was neutral. This can be in a way interpreted as a Thiyya stand in respect of a Nair issue. *Kerala Pathrika* observed that, as at one time no nation had any legalized marriage. It can be inferred that the legalization of marriage is the result of a nation's progress in civilization. As *marumakkathayam* was agreed when Malabar was brought under British rule, the courts were led to decide cases in accordance with that law. In the face of these decisions it is impossible without an Act such as the proposed Bill, to

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<sup>171</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1908, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>172</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1889, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>173</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1907, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>174</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 13<sup>th</sup> March 1889, MNNPR, TNA.

bring about reformation in the matter of marriage. The British Government will undoubtedly grant the people of Malabar their reasonable request to be allowed to enjoy the privilege of legalized marriage admitted by all. It also made suggestion such that divorce suits must be decided by a *Panchayath* consisting of six or eight men chosen by the parties.<sup>175</sup> But contradictory to this, *Kerala Sanchari* took a more impartial and neutral role in this regard. It gave the substance of the Bill and called upon educated Malayalis to consider well and offer their opinion of the Bill before it becomes law.<sup>176</sup>

Regarding total abstinence both the papers held contradictory views. *Kerala Pathrika* argued for total abstinence. Its suggestions were amounting to even cross the borders of logic. But *Kerala Sanchari's* stand was very mild when asking to bring temperance without affecting the exchequer. *Kerala Pathrika* suggested that it will be a boon if Government instead of making exertions to increase the abkari revenue by affixing numbers to the trees allowed to be tapped, discourage drinking by affixing a number to the forehead of each person accustomed to the use of spirituous liquors. And levy a fine of Rs.10 from each of those bearing such numbers.<sup>177</sup> This proposal may seem ridiculous and impractical but the stand and policy of the paper is self explanatory from the news item. But *Kerala Sanchari* makes suggestions for improving the present system of abkari administration and for checking intemperance as much as possible without affecting the Government revenue.<sup>178</sup> This can also be indeed regarded as a suggestion for the sake of suggestion which practically won't alter the

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<sup>175</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>176</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>177</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, September 1886,, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>178</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1889, MNNPR, TNA.

situation then existed. Also it was the Thiyyas who were to lose by abstinence since it was they who tapped toddy and sold.

Just as the view-points of these two papers seem contradictory, were the stands of Kunhirama Menon the individual and Kunhirama Menon the editor of *Kerala Pathrika*. Dr.Chelanatt Achutha Menon in his reminiscence depicts Kunhirama Menon like this: “He remained healthy until the age of 80. ‘He drinks like water’. No damage for his body up to that age”.<sup>179</sup> But in contrast to the habit of the editor, *Kerala Pathrika* stood to disseminate the message of total abstinence.

### **Collective Efforts**

In Malabar there is also the history of joint struggles by various newspapers for a common cause. It is the ‘war of dharma’ that fought collectively by *Kerala Pathrika*, *Kerala Sanchari* and *Malabar Spectator*. Even the English papers from outside the District provided them help on the basis of issue. ‘Thiruvannur torture case’ was one such occasion that tested the solidarity of newspapers. It was the period when Morley was the Collector and Faust was the Police Superintendent of South Malabar District. Faust was a type, brandishing his sword against anyone who writes in newspapers about the corruption of the police. But the then Chief Editor Chenkalath Komu Menon dared to bring out the ‘Thiruvannur torture case’ through *Kerala Pathrika* without any kind of fear. Subsequent to the theft of the gold plated idol of Lord Krishna from Thiruvannur temple, the police had brutally tortured the supervisors of the temple Kadungi Nedungadi and Revunni Vellodi. And that was the charge alleged upon the police. To fight the case that originated in the court subsequent to the publication of the report, Komu Menon, carrying a satchet begged before the public and collected money.

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<sup>179</sup> Chelanatt Achutha Menon, *op.cit.*, p.47.

Murkoth Kumaran not only congratulated Komu Menon's commitment to the public cause and praised his service mentality but also helped him by all means through reports published in *Kerala Sanchari*. The penetrating articles of Murkoth Kumaran and the editorials of Komu Menon brimming with rage awakened the public and the judge. English newspapers like *Malabar Spectator* and *Madras Mail* also carried the reports. In the examination at the court, the guilt was convincingly proved. Eventually the main accused in the case Head Constable K.Kannan Nair was convicted for five years imprisonment by the South Malabar District Sessions Judge Opherel. In fact it was this journalistic protest that made the public wake up for the first time against the despotic rule of Malabar police.<sup>180</sup>

### ***Manorama- A Janmi Congress paper***

As far as aims and objectives are concerned *Manorama* was not much different from *Kerala Pathrika*, in the beginning. Just as *Kerala Pathrika*, *Manorama* too supported *Kerala Mahajana Sabha*. *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* was an organization formed at Calicut to discuss and to mould opinion pertaining to political and community matters. *Manorama* was published on the second and fourth Mondays of every month from Victoria Press, Calicut.<sup>181</sup>

Kizhakke Kovilakath Kuttiyettan Thampuran who later became the *Samuthirippad* (Zamorin of Calicut) was the secretary of *Kerala Mahajana Sabha*. He used to participate in political debates and was present in the *Bharatha Mahajana Sabha* meeting as a Kerala delegate. He started *Manorama* paper to propagate the aims of *Bharatha*

<sup>180</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit.*, p.153.

<sup>181</sup> Champadan Vijayan, "Pathrapravarthanavum Sahithyavum", in Chummar Choondal and Sukumarnan Pottekkatt, (eds.), *Malayala Pathracharithram*, (Mal), Kochi, 1977.

*Mahajana Sabha*. Infact it was the mouthpiece of *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* from 1891 May onwards. Since most of the members of *Kerala Mahajana Sabha* were *janmis* the very feet of the paper was in tusk-tower. At the same time *Kerala Pathrika* edited by Chenkalath Kunhrama Menon had by this time acclaimed as laymen's newspaper. Therefore, on and off there were tussles between these two papers. When *Manorama's* disparity towards the *Janmis* was convincingly explicit, *Kerala Pathrika* which was the ordinary public's tongue started to lean in favour of the tenants.<sup>182</sup>

Since *Manorama* represented the rich class it had a tendency to publish news items in favour of the *janmis*. The report about village headman exacting money from litigants is an example. The report said that although there is the rule prohibiting *adhikaris* (Village Headman) from taking any fee for registering *vakkalaths*, they demand two *annas* for each *vakkalath* to be registered. Usually in a single suit three or four *vakkalaths* are required till the termination of the suit. Therefore the collection of two *annas* for each *vakkalath* caused unnecessary loss to the poor litigants. It is sure that in those days the suits related to eviction and *melcharth* (overlease or eviction of a tenant in favour of a new one) were in plenty. In such cases since the litigants are mostly *janmis* and litigation is against the tenants the exemption of fee will certainly help only the *janmi* side.<sup>183</sup>

When the much awaited Malabar Tenancy Bill was about to pass in the Madras Legislative Council *Manorama* wrote a report saying that if it be passed in the present form it will cause more hardships and troubles to the tenants than before.<sup>184</sup> It means that *Manorama* suggested

<sup>182</sup> P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.784.

<sup>183</sup> *Manorama* Calicut, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1908.

<sup>184</sup> *Manorama*, Calicut, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1929, MNNPR, TNA.

not only some amendments in the bill but also its postponement. The fact is that the tenants were much satisfied by that Bill. Still *Manorama* says that if it is passed in the present form it is detrimental to the tenants. Here *Manorama* was apparently standing for the tenants and was indirectly helping the *janmis*.

At the same time *Manorama* was not at all reluctant to argue for the freedom of the press at a time when the publishing industry was only just trotting its steps. It accused the Government of India for its order authorizing local Governments to prosecute seditious papers. *Manorama* observed that, the order betrayed the intention of Government to curtail the freedom of the press in general. Government is at liberty to take action against those papers that abuse their privileges. But to consider their misconduct as affording sufficient ground to abridge the freedom of the press in general is to contravene British justice.<sup>185</sup>

Kuttiyettan Thampuran named the paper as *Manorama* with an intention to commemorate the name of Manorama Thampuraatti who was the founder of *kizhakke Kovilakam*. Thampuran's clerk and secretary of *Mahajanasabha*, Puliampetta Kunhikrishna Menon looked after its affairs in the beginning. To write the editorial and the articles, apart from Thampuran there was Kannapra Ramunni Nair and a few others also. Talented and hard working Kunhikrishna Menon, after sometime reached a stage in which he did not want others helps for running the paper. During this time the family burdens of Thampuran increased several fold and so the whole responsibility of the paper fell upon Menon. He was able to run it well for almost twenty four years and later entrusted his nephew Krishnan Nair, the charges. He ran the paper well until he went to England for legal studies. It was in *Manorama* that

<sup>185</sup> *Manorama* Calicut, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1907.

the *Bilathivishesham* (The news of England) of K.P Kesava Menon was published for the first time.<sup>186</sup> The first few writings of Kodungallur Kunhikuttan Thampuran, V.C Balakrishna Panikkar, Manavikrama Ettan Thampuran and P.V Krishna Warier and so on were first published in *Manorama*.<sup>187</sup>

Actually Kandathil Varghese Mappila had started *Malayala Manorama* from Kottayam in 1890. Therefore *Manorama* started from Calicut in 1891 was known as *Kozhikodan Manorama*. This was an opposition publication. Many of the literary leaders of those times were frequent writers of this paper. The paper was defunct due to shortage of newsprint consequent to Second World War.<sup>188</sup>

Theruvath Raman says, “*Kozhikodan Manorama* was the successor of *Kerala Pathrika*. It was this paper that initiated the tradition of giving local news by publishing the reports regarding the anniversaries and commemorations of libraries and clubs. The subscribers of *Kozhikodan Manorama* were mostly *janmis* representing the elite class of the society. When Krishnan Nair became its editor he introduced some innovations regarding the subscription. He made annual subscription fee as fifteen rupees for *janmi* and twelve rupees for the ordinary people. The discount offered for the ordinary folk enabled the paper to penetrate more into the common masses and thus it became somewhat popular in the society. At the same time the special rates mentioned in the case of *janmis* was treated by them as recognition of their status”.<sup>189</sup>

### **Successors of *Malabar Spectator***

<sup>186</sup> P.A Syed Muhammed, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.784.

<sup>187</sup> Champadan Vijayan, “Pathrapravarthanavum Sahithyavum” *op.cit.*

<sup>188</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, *op.cit.*, p.106.

<sup>189</sup> Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

During the 1880's three English newspapers *Malabar Spectator* (later *Westcoast Spectator*), *Westcoast Reformer*, and *Champion* were prevalent in Calicut. The Editor of *Malabar Spectator* was a European named Rolo Platal. Kallat Raghavan succeeded him. Raghavan always wore European costumes.<sup>190</sup> *Westcoast Reformer*, the English weekly of Sankar Shastri, *Champion* by Erampally Gopalan were the other two. *Westcoast Reformer* carried local news with due importance. The office of *Champion* was located in a building in front of the present Jayanthi building at Palayam in Calicut. Editor Gopalan used to wear semi-European dress- ironed white, clean dhoti, tie and coat.

Thus the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century became historic by the opening up of a new avenue in journalism. The newspapers started at this juncture stirred the desire for innovative endeavours directed at bringing to ordinary people the fruits of civil liberty. The English papers as well as vernacular papers have played their role in this experimental enterprise. They became the fora for intimation, interpretation and exchange of ideas. As a result new communication channels developed which resulted in the formation of public opinion and public sphere.

The debates, dialogues and agitations under the guidance of these newspapers resulted in the growth of a public sphere as propounded by Jurgan Habermas. Open debates about the rights of the people and the benefits to be obtained from the Government were often. The lapses and improper actions of the rulers also became the thread of discussion in the papers.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> P.Govinda Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.62.

## CHAPTER V

### **HORIZONS BECOME WIDER**

Newspapers had existed long before the press developed as a mass medium. However, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century social and economic changes created circumstances conducive to the growth of newspapers. Increasing industrialization and urbanization, technological innovation and changes in transportation and education all had an impact. <sup>1</sup> Due to the cumulative effect of the above factors and due to indomitable courage and studious toil of some great men, the sphere of journalism became wider and wider in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century leading to the birth of newspapers of large circulation.

Malabar Collector Marines in a speech said, “During the ten years from 1910 the literacy among Nairs has increased to 42% from 32%, that of Thiyyas to 17.5% from 14.5% and that of Mappilas to 10.5% from 8.5%. It means that among 100 Mappilas ten and among 100 Thiyyas 17 and among 100 Nairs 42 are literate.<sup>2</sup> The increase of circulation was in-fact on a pace with literacy and readership. A.A Nair presents a sketch of the Malayali readership in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. “In Kerala, where a high percentage of literacy prevails, most people read newspapers. Even those engaged in strenuous manual labour are readers and are politically conscious. Cart-drivers, rickshaw-pullers, for eg., enjoy a respite, sitting in the shade of their vehicles or under trees by the side of the road and reading the day’s papers and discussing their contents ; or a man going through a newspaper in a petty tea-shop reads

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<sup>1</sup> Lyn Gorman and David McLean, *Media and Society in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, 2003, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> *Mithavadi*, August 1914.

it aloud for the sake of others while one or two seated beside him, peer at the paper, breathing into his face”.<sup>3</sup>

In Malabar, due to the comparatively high degree of autonomy extended by the local self rule and due to increased literacy especially among the lower classes like Thiyyas, there was more vigour and fervour for newspaper reading. This is evident from the narration of Murkoth Kunhappa. “During the days of First World War *Mithavadi* published daily, a single sheet paper containing only war news, costing half an *anna*, from Calicut. By a single day itself it got wide circulation in various parts of Malabar. It is quite usual that people will throng around the radio in shops and other public places consequent to the death of Nehru or any great-man like him or due to some other important news breaks. It was a scene just like that, that the people gathered around those who had copy of *Mithavadi* with them, with the eagerness, curiosity and enthusiasm to know the war news. In those days it was a usual scene, the gatherings of people near the wells, junctions, play grounds or reading rooms. If one goes near such gathering he can see somebody sitting in the midst and reading the war news loudly”.<sup>4</sup> Along with *Mithavadi* other newspapers like *Mathrubhoomi*, *Al-Ameen*, *Kerala Kesari*, *Athmavidyakahalam* etc. have played considerable role in manifesting new horizons of public opinion leading to the formation of various communication channels which ultimately resulted in the creation of a public sphere.

Most of these newspapers were quite different from the predecessors in terms of thinking and action. They contributed much towards the deepening self-awareness of the literate middle class which

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<sup>3</sup> A.A Nair, *Peeps at the Press in South India*, Madras, 1960 p.157.

<sup>4</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Malayala Manorama Samskara Tharangini(Mal)*, Kottayam, 1982, pp.14-15.

came to be increasingly mobilized both politically and socially.<sup>5</sup> Also the editors of these newspapers like Murkoth Kumaran, Adv.C.Krishnan, K.P Kesava Menon, Muhammed Abdurahiman, Moyyarth Sankaran, Vagbhadanandan and so on were not only editors alone but were versatile talents who articulated journalism, literature, politics and community service by their unique gifts . For them media was not only the mirror of the society but also something to guide it along the right path in the time of crises.<sup>6</sup> The newspapers like *Kerala Pathrika*, *Kerala Sanchari* and *Manorama* which were started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued in the new century too, with vigour and strength. But the newspapers that were started in the new century could contribute much more, symbolizing revival and change.

### ***Mithavadi* and Murkoth Kumaran**

All the leaders of modern literature became adept through writing in newspapers and magazines. Murkoth Kumaran too was a leading reporter who proved his mettle in newspapers and magazines from 1884 to 1941, that is, until his death. Even in the death bed he dictated the matter for articles. Infact, he is a literary giant who devoted his whole life for journalism.<sup>7</sup> Like Murkoth Kumarn there is none who held the sway over so much number of newspapers that have created history. He had been the editor of 12 papers including *Kerala Sanchari*, *Mithavadi*, *Kerala Chinthamani*, *Saraswathi*, *Samudaya Deepika*, *Vidyalayam*, *Aatmaposhini*, *Gajakesari*, *Prathibha*, *Kadorakudaram*, *Deepam* and *Sathyavaadi*.

<sup>5</sup> E.V Ramakrishnan, "From Region to Nation and Beyond", in M.A Oommen, (ed.), *Rethinking Develoment: Kerala's Develoment Experience* Vol. I, New Delhi, 1999, p.37.

<sup>6</sup> Speech of Rajdeep Sirdesai as reported in *Malayala Manorama*, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2008, p.2.

<sup>7</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *Kerala Pathrapravarthanam Suvarnadhyayangal*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1999, p.53.

During the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century *Mithavadi*, *Deshabhimani*, *Kerala Kaumudi* and *Sahodaran* were the only papers that advocated for the rights of the downtrodden. *Mitavadi* which was started in 1908 from Tellicherry under Murkoth Kumaran was later shifted to Calicut in 1913 to be published as a magazine and later daily, under C.Krishnan.<sup>8</sup> It was in *Mithavadi* that published the pompous articles of Murkoth Kumaran written about Kerala Varma and A.R Rajajaja Varma. The articles of C.V Kunhiraman, Manjeri Rama Iyer, Ramavarma Thampan, Mooliyil Kesavan and so on also embellished the pages of *Mithavadi*. It was *Mithavadi* that published for the first time an authoritative biography of Oyyarath Chandu Menon, the author of *Indulekha*. It gave important place for independent thought, rationalism and naturopathy. The enlightening weekly notes of Sahodaran Ayyappan also appeared regularly in *Mithavadi*. For a brief period it was run as a daily. Also it could contribute three special supplements with excellence. Articles which require further research-oriented study like ‘Malabarile chila Mahaanmaarude Aadyakaalam’ (The early life of some great men in Malabar) were published in it. It extended staunch support for the tenants’ agitation in Malabar. It also utilized its columns for the propagation of Buddhist ideology.<sup>9</sup>

*Mithavadi* is the first newspaper that effectively handled the social issues. It waged a war against caste and untouchability. Thus it worked as a champion of social change and as a sentinel of the depressed classes at a stage when *Mathrubhoomi* was only in its rocking cradle. Now although *Mithavadi* is known along with the name of Adv.C.Krihsnan, it was actually the brain-child of Murkoth Kumaran.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *Kerala Charithram*, (Mal), Cochin, 1974, pp.1246-47.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.794.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

The christening of this paper as *Mithavadi*, was indeed very dramatic. Murkoth Kumaran picked this name from a speech of Gopalakrishna Gokhale. In the presidential address of the Bharatha Mahajanasabha held at Kasi in 1905 Gokhale categorised the Congress leaders as *Mithavadi* (moderate advocates) and *Amithavadi* (extremist advocates). Murkoth Kumaran who was attracted by the first group *Mithavadi*, wanted to start a newspaper in that name. Thus *Mithavadi* was born as a weekly in 1907, from Tellicherry Vidyavilasam Press under the proprietorship of T. Sivasankaran, who was a businessman.<sup>11</sup> There was indeed ‘Kumaran touch’ on every aspect of *Mithavadi*. Murkoth Kumaran was writing in his own handwriting the design, to make the blocks for the ‘masthead’ of the paper.<sup>12</sup>

Receiving the first issue of *Mithavadi* newspaper *Malayala Manorama* wrote about the excellence of the paper as well as about the calibre of its editor. “We received with happiness the first issue of the weekly newspaper *Mithavadi*, published from Tellichery under the editorship of Murkoth Kumaran who is acknowledged throughout Kerala as a good prose writer in Malayalam language and a good friend of *Malayala Manorama*. Mr.Kumaran is eligible enough to be appointed as a Headmaster of a High School or an Assistant Professor in a college. But bidding adieu to all such career, he has sought the profession of the journalist and now running this paper. If we make a prediction on the basis of the first issue, there is no doubt that this paper deserves a first place in Malayalam language. There are many interesting items in it, written in pure and original Malayalam style and meant for various categories of readers”.<sup>13</sup> Receiving the first two issues of *Mithavadi*

<sup>11</sup> P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *op.cit*, p.794.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1907.

Mahakavi Kumaran Asan wrote in *Vivekodayam* magazine, “We are very happy and satisfied in seeing *Mithavadi*, distinguished in both appearance and contents. It is embellished by a variety of news items and articles which we are supposed to read. The way in which the articles arranged is also admirable. There is no doubt that *Mithavadi* deserves a first place among the newspapers of Kerala”.<sup>14</sup>

By the time when *Mithavadi* was started in 1907 its editor Murkoth Kumaran had become mellowed as a journalist by writing frequently in newspapers of Malabar and Travancore and by reading various English and Malayalam newspapers. He contributed a particular form and style to *Mithavadi*. In *Mithavadi*, along with the news breaks, its reasons for the cause and consequences were also highlighted. In those days the stride of science was marvellous. As a result the various achievements of modern science frequently became news headings. Therefore a general impression about the weekly developments in western science was published in *Mithavadi* in a tabular form. When railway, post and telegraph, steam engine, tile factories etc. were introduced in the country, the principles by which these systems and engines worked were narrated interestingly in *Mithavadi*... In that period when Malayalis were getting familiar with the modern life style, they had to get awareness in very many things. To a great extent this was made easier by making them acquaint with the latest news-items... It was a time when literate people had just started reading newspapers to know the daily news breaks. Therefore, it was necessary to include all those subjects that would create interest in the readers and evoke in them new avenues of thought. Kumaran could successfully blend each item in judicious doses and in a simple and humourous style. Also Kumaran had to make the people acquaint with the new system of

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<sup>14</sup> *Vivekodayam*, November, 1907.

administration introduced by the British in Malabar. In the beginning the people were not able to digest or respond to it. They used to call the police as *puyyemakkar* or *puthiya niyamakkar* (new law-givers) which means new agencies which enforces law and order. They addressed the magistrate as magistrate *thampuran* because people saw the government officials as the inheritors of the old *thampurans* (lords). The officials also acted accordingly, wielding the powers in a despotic manner. It was a time when the municipalities, taluk boards and district boards obtained the administrative powers. As a result the people's representatives got a right to act above such officials and to some extent overrule. It was a very novel experience for the people. Murkoth Kumaran through the annals of *Mithavadi* not only could introduce the new institutions among the public, but also make a public audit by evaluating and criticizing the works of the officials related to such institutions.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, matters related to local municipal administration, discussions about the running of the schools, details about court cases, small articles familiarizing the new life style etc. were the contents of *Mithavadi*. There was a luxuriant shower of epistemological items also. It was a period when novel literary movements were emerging. *Mithavadi* responded to such movements positively. It published the poetic innovation of Kumaran Asan, the *Veena Poovu* (The Fallen Flower). Because of the single reason that it presented this maiden endeavour of Kumaran Asan for the first time, *Mithavadi* has become perpetual. Uchampally, a friend of Murkoth Kumaran and a regular reader of *Mithavadi* used to say that if various issues of *Mithavadi* were bound together into one bundle it can be used as a small encyclopedia.<sup>16</sup> The famous writer cum journalist in Malayalam, Sanjayan said, "I am

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<sup>15</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1975, pp. 157-158.

<sup>16</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.61.

sure *Kairali* (Malayalam language) will always remember Murkoth Kumaran as a glittering star among the writers who has emancipated the Malayalam prose style, which was like something as used in documents starting and ending nowhere, which followed the style adopted in ‘Sanskrit *champu* (a mixture of prose and poetry) articles’ that sans vitality and vigour. His style was so flexible that it was always able to become pleasant, simple, sweet, intense, elegant or witty according to the context. Even topics hard like iron if comes for his treatment, within no time it assumed resilience and became one with his style....No other prose writer like Kumaran has born in Malayalam who is able to instill the emotions in the human heart so easily with the magical power of words”.<sup>17</sup>.

In those days also debates on various issues were published in newspapers. In *Mithavadi*, during the days of Murkoth Kumaran such debates appeared often. Among these memorable one was the one between M.K Gurukkal (later Vagbhadanandan) and Mooloor S.Padmanabha Panikkar on the subject ‘Virtuous Man and Virtuous Lady’. By the attractive style and diversity *Mithavadi* could appease every section of its readers.<sup>18</sup> Murkoth developed the above kind of style while he was working in *Mithavadi*. But he was there only for one year and a half. Then some sort of difference of opinion developed between Kumaran and Sivasankaran consequent to the publication of a satiric article in *Mithavadi* written by K.Sukumaran. Kumaran and Sukumaran were friends and classmates. Both were interested in wit and humour alike. In the article of Sukumaran there was a mention of the pickle business of Sivasankaran. The couplet was like this: “*Shiva, Shiva, Shivashankarante pachakkurumulakaaliha theerthorachaar*” (Shiva,

<sup>17</sup> M.R Nair, *Sanjayan*, Vol.II, Kozhikode, 1986, pp.528-29.

<sup>18</sup> P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *op.cit.*

Shiva, Shivasankaran's pickle made of green pepper). But Sivasankaran could not endure this poetic composition and treated this as an insult to him. Respecting the injured feelings of Sivasankaran, Murkoth resigned the editor post.<sup>19</sup> When Kumaran resigned, *Mithavadi* was made to run for some more time using the articles sent by C.Krishnan from Calicut. In 1908 its publication was ceased.<sup>20</sup>

Kumaran's resignation inflicted much pain on the lovers of the language. Kumaran Asan wrote in *Vivekodayam*, "Murkoth Kumaran's resignation from the helm of *Mithavadi* when it is in the pinnacle of glory really grieves us much".<sup>21</sup> It was actually his admiration for Murkoth Kumaran that made him to publish his début *Veena Poovu* in *Mithavadi*. Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran who was the subject of Kumaran's sharp criticism also grieved in his departure from *Mithavadi*. "When Murkoth Kumaran is moving from *Mithavadi* every reader who has the power to discriminate virtue and vice will certainly become sad. As an editor he cared to highlight the popular policies of the Government and to lash the officials who deviate from the path of virtue. He strove much to introduce reforms among the members of the community and make the readers happy with witty articles and stories".<sup>22</sup>

Learning about Kumaran's resignation *Malayala Manorama* said, "Murkoth Kumaran was running *Mithavadi*, right from the beginning with unique competence and acumen. Malayalees with discretionary powers of good and bad will of course grieve over his exit from *Mithavadi*. We are very sure that the grand success so far achieved by *Mithavadi* is, ofcourse, due to the hard work and studious toil of

<sup>19</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*,p.62.

<sup>20</sup> P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *op.cit.*

<sup>21</sup> *Vivekodayam*, February-March 1908.

<sup>22</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit.*, p.165.

Murkoth Kumaran. He wrote in a unique and attractive style extending judicious approach to Government policies, criticizing mercilessly those who deviated from the path of virtue, initiating the drive for reformation in communal matters and enticing the readers with simple, humourous and witty articles”.<sup>23</sup>

### **Kumaran and a Dozen Journals**

Murkoth had been the editor of *Kerala Chinthamani* from May 1909 onwards. It was a newspaper originally started by the poet V.C Balakrishna Panikkar in 1906 from Trichur. But in 1908 its publication was stopped. Though it was again started in April 1909 as a magazine, Murkoth came to its helm from the second issue onwards. By the advent of Kumaran the dignity of *Kerala Chinthamani* which always maintained excellence, was enhanced.

After the arrival of Kumaran, *Kerala Chinthamani* was forced to engage in a tug-of-war with *Malabari*, published from Tirur. It was a war of words between the two editors. The editor of *Malabari*, V.C Balakrishna Panikkar was the founder editor of *Kerala Chinthamani*. In fact the first attack was from *Malabari*. For that Kumaran gave a repartee in *Kerala Chinthamani*. The cause of *Malabari*'s criticism was the article in *Chinthamani* which praised the Diwan of Kochi, Mr.Rajagopalachari. The reply in *Kerala Chinthamani* was that since Balakrishna Panikkar was once its editor, it is unbecoming for the present editor of *Chinthamani* to abuse him even when he is going to a low degree.<sup>24</sup>

Kumaran in *Kerala Chinthamani* gave thrust to literary articles. This magazine had a major role in the *prasa yudha* (rhyme tussle).<sup>25</sup> He

<sup>23</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, 7<sup>th</sup> April 1909.

<sup>24</sup> *Kerala Chinthamani*, September 1910.

<sup>25</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.65.

said that meaning should not be sacrificed for the rhyming of words. He advised not to shower praise upon mediocre poems due to any personal interest or affection as it will affect adversely the growth of the language. Infact, the criticism against the use of meaningless words was flung against the poems of Kottarathil Sankunni. Kumaran did this when Kerala Varma praised the poem of Kottartathil Sankunni considering the affection towards him. Those verbal darts injured many of those who loved Kerala Varma. His voice against the abundant use of Sanskrit words also became arrows against many scholars of that time. The comment that author should not be criticized without reading his works was darted against Kunnath Janardana Menon.<sup>26</sup> He was very enthusiastic in criticizing and evaluating the important works published during that time, including Kumaran Asan's *Nalini*. Thus, when he was heading the magazine, giving it a new vigour and life, he came to see that a relative of the owner of the magazine managed to publish an article which he had rejected earlier. Unable to tolerate that he resigned the post of the editor.

He was a successor of 'Swadeshabhimani' Ramakrishna Pillai in editing the magazine *Athmaposhini*. 'Swadeshabhimani' was the editor of this magazine from 1913-1915 which was started in 1910 from Kunnankulam. When 'Swadeshabhimani' was in the death bed, he invited Murkoth Kumaran and entrusted him the responsibilities. Kumaran observed in *Athmaposhini* the qualities that a critic needs. "Though a little different the power of imagination must be more intense in a critic rather than that in a writer. One who just criticizes or praises the books for its own sake need not essentially be critic. Those who start to criticize books should read much more books. Also the critic should have more knowledge about the world than a writer". Murkoth Kumaran

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<sup>26</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran, op.cit.*, pp.163-170.

edited even a magazine *Samudaya Deepika* owned by Nair community which originated from Kannur in 1915. He was its editor from January 1917 onwards. This convincingly and conclusively proves that the journalistic policy and competence of Murkoth Kumaran was acceptable to everybody irrespective of caste and religion. In his first editorial in *Samudaya Deepika* (January 1917) he wrote, “It is necessary that each community should work hard for its progress. But it is not desirable to create an impression that one community should grow upon the debris of another community. Therefore *Samudaya Deepika* works with the motto that ‘all communities together as a single community of Kerala’”.<sup>27</sup> He had been the co-editor of *Prathibha* magazine which was edited by Kumaran Asan from Aluva from September 1919 onwards. Only eleven issues of the magazine came out. Its life was thus short but meaningful and Murkoth Kumaran could contribute several inspiring items.

At the same time Murkoth Kumaran continued his work in *Kerala Pathrika* from 1914 to 1920, criticising and correcting various officials in the administration through his reports. Sanjayan reminisces in his memoirs, in 1935, about the *Vadakkan Kathu* (Letters from North) of Murkoth Kumaran published in *Kerala Pathrika* 19 years ago. The series *Vadakkan kathu* that Murkoth Kumaran wrote under the pen name ‘Gajakesari’ attracted him more than the war reports of the time. ‘Gajakesari’ could tear many corrupt officials, like Jarasandhan of the Hindu mythology whose body was torn to pieces”.<sup>28</sup>

Out of envy and communal enmity a few of the critics made sharp criticism against the works of Kumaran Asan. Murkoth Kumaran never could endure this. If somebody wrote anything quite insulting to himself

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<sup>27</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-68.

<sup>28</sup> M.R Nair, *Sanjayan*, Vol. I(Mal), Calicut, 1986, p.290.

or the leaders of his community or the persons dear to him Murkoth Kumaran would come to the forefront brandishing his sword. At the same time one cannot see any word of him tainted with personal detestation or communal hatred.<sup>29</sup> ‘Sahithya Panchanan’ P.K Narayana Pillai, Vadakkumkur Rajaraja Varma, Mahakavi Vallathol and so on, became the target of Murkoth Kumaran’s attack due to the fact they criticized Kumaran Asan. In fact Kumaran as a critic didnot hesitate to praise or criticize anybody, as one deserves on the basis of literary merit, irrespective of caste and religion.

### **Kumaran as owner and Editor**

Though Murkoth Kumaran had been the editor of many publications he was always pricked by the grief, in not having a paper owned by himself. Murkoth Kunhappa states that he had heard several times his father telling that one can exercise free and fair journalism only if he owns a paper. Learning this Kumaran’s intimate friend and a main disciple of Sree Narayana Guru, Swami Guruprasad collected Rs.5000 from Burma and sent to Kumaran. Thus he started *Gajakesari* from Tellichery in 1921.<sup>30</sup> Guruprasad Swamikal also corroborates Kunhappa’s argument. “Murkoth Kumaran used to tell me that we cannot write as we like, as the newspaper owners are cowards and so we need a paper of our own. Considering that opinion *Gajakesari* was started under my proprietorship with the assistance of Malayalees in Burma. In the beginning itself, Kumaran asked me not to hold back his hands when writing unpleasant reports. And as long as I was the proprietor he was at full liberty to run the paper as he liked.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Ulloor, *Kerala Sahithya Charithram*, (Mal), Vol. IV, Trivandrum, 1990, p.392.

<sup>30</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.68.

<sup>31</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

It was soon after the commencement of *Gajakesari* that the Municipal elections were held. In those days the main duty of newspapers was to enlighten the public as how to utilize fruitfully their freedom of franchise. *Gajakesari* was exercising that duty by introducing the candidates and highlighting the achievements and setbacks of those who had already been elected earlier. During that elections in-fact a 'battle of words' was fought between the newspapers *Gajakesari* and *Swabhimani*. The main contestants of the election were one abkari trader and Adv.K.T Chandu Nambiar (editor of *Swabhimani*). But the proxy-war was fought between Murkoth Kumaran and Adv.Chandu Nambiar. As the intensity of this fight increased the character of the weapons and counter weapons also changed. To retaliate, Chandu Nambiar started a small, four page paper named *Ramabanam* meant exclusively for arguments and debates.

Kumaran immediately understood that publication like *Ramabanam* is less than a match for *Gajakesari*. So he too started a quarter *anna* (one *anna* is six paise) paper named *Kadora Kudaram*. The couplet 'Aruthi varuthan mathiyallenkil, poruthi varuthan njan mathiyavum' (though not able to make still, but I am enough to give relief) was its motto. The name of the special correspondent of *Kadorakudaram* was given as one 'Sriman Charal Kannan'. Infact Charal Kannan was an ugly fellow in Tellichery town, with supine lips through which saliva was incessantly oozing out. The overt sarcasm was that Charal Kannan, with such an ugly appearance was the befitting guy to write against Chandu Nambiar of *Swabhimani*. To dart sharp arrows against Nambiar, items in *ottanthullal* (a popular dance form of Kerala) rhymes were presented in *Kadorakudaram* by Kumaran under a permanent heading 'Nambiarude thullal'. This kind of attacks and counter attacks aroused much interest among the readers. Though

Nambiar and Murkoth held different views they were not at all enemies.<sup>32</sup>

Through *Gajakesari* Murkoth Kumaran resisted the non-cooperation movement of Gandhi. He argued that the majority of the population of India belongs to lower classes and untouchables. Here the main problem is the infirmity due to caste discrimination. That should be resolved first. On getting freedom, the right for rule will reach the hands of the upper castes from the white men. He was under the impression that it will only create more difficulties. Murkoth Kumaran was a great personality who devoted the lion-share of his life for the upliftment of his community. He can be called the ‘commander-in-chief’ of the Sri Narayana Movement in North Kerala. He was the messenger of Guru in social reformation tasks. But his ultimate aim was to mould out a unified Kerala society destroying the caste discriminations. In a message given to a Warier Samajam he said, “It is advisable that every community has its own samajam and special newspaper. But these samajams and newspapers should be run with the intention and belief that the unification of various communities is the ultimate end”.<sup>33</sup> It is with this belief and motto that he worked and wrote. He was very conscious in not writing anything that tilts communal harmony. When Murkoth Kumaran sparked many dialogues through newspapers and magazines in subjects related to literature, politics and community he took special care in seeing them not ending in communal hatred and personal venom.<sup>34</sup>

Infact, Murkoth Kumaran is a writer who accomplished his skills by writing in newspapers and magazines. For more than half a century,

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.163-170.

<sup>33</sup> N.K Damodaran, *Mahacharithamala*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1983, p.24.

<sup>34</sup> Murkoth Kunhappa, *Murkoth Kumaran*, op.cit., pp.163-170.

his innate flow of talent was displayed through media. He is a rare breed of writer who sacrificed all his life for journalism. The fact that other than his three novels and four biographies, more than two dozen works were collected and compiled from newspapers and magazines is a proof for that. The unique calibre of a journalist is judged by the ability to write articles fast and also by the significance of the contents. Murkoth had these qualities more than enough. His works assume all the more importance as they are the products of a period when our journalism was in its cradle.

### **Resurrection of *Mithavadi***

*Mithavadi* had a resurrection from its ashes when Adv.C.Krishnan resumed it in 1913. Krishnan was earlier the Editor of *Kerala Sanchari* which was then owned by his brother-in-law C.M Rarichan Mooppen. He had relinquished that post when he went to Madras for pursuing Law. Krishnan was an adept in handling both Malayalam and English. While at Madras he used to write articles in the English newspapers there. During the time of his collegiate studies all his attention was in reading newspapers and writing articles. He regularly sent news dispatches from Madras to the *Kerala Sanchari* newspaper. On his return, he re-launched the *Mithavadi* publication as a weapon for the upliftment of his Thiyya community. The necessity of starting a newspaper favouring the British Government was pointed out by some of his friends like Dr.Ayyathan Gopalan.<sup>35</sup> To make it a reality Krishnan purchased the rights of the *Mithavadi* magazine paying 200 rupees. He started to publish it from Calicut from August 1913 onwards, with the motto ‘Thiyyarude Oru Malayala Maasika’ (A Malayalam Magazine of the Thiyyas). In the first issue Krishnan wrote, “This magazine is aimed at giving some relief to the members of Thiyya community who

<sup>35</sup> N.K Damodaran, *op.cit.*, p.25.

experience much difficulty in not having a newspaper or magazine of their own in Malabar. There is no doubt that, not only in Malabar but in Travancore and Cochin also we witness much change and progress in respect of religion and education. At present this kind of changes is known only to the locals. *Mithavadi* aims to make it known elsewhere”.<sup>36</sup>

To enable the re-publication of *Mithavadi* a grand success, help and assistance were extended to Adv.Krishnan from various corners. For that Murkoth Kumaran came from Tellichery to Calicut in the beginning of January 1913 itself. After that he regularly sent articles.... K. Ayyappan B.A also wrote weekly notes in *Mithavadi*. While the articles of Kumaran amused the readers, the articles of Ayyappan made them introspective by their depth. ..Also Krishnan included in *Mithavadi*, the articles from the Tamil paper *Kudiyarashu* run by E.V Ramaswamy Naickar, the leader of the Swabhimani Movement in Tamil Nadu and also articles from other Tamil papers. These Tamil articles were translated for him by both V.R Parameswaran Pillai, the Malayalam scholar of Nagarcoil High School and V.R Velappan who practiced indigenous medicine in Ramamedu.<sup>37</sup>

Within one year itself, *Mithavadi* could penetrate among the masses and achieve good reputation. *Mithavadi* quoted in its own issue, what had been said about it by *Kerala Sanchari*. “We have much happiness in stating that *Mithavadi* now has become one of the best magazines in Kerala. In the leadership of Mr.Krishnan it will scale new heights. Our opinion is that many of the objectives of this magazine may

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<sup>36</sup> P.V.K Nedungadi, *Sreeman C.Krishnan*, (Mal), Kozhikode, 1939, p.14.

<sup>37</sup> K.R Achuthan, *C.Krishnan*, (Mal), Trichur, 1970, p.144.

be fulfilled without difficulty. In this effort of Mr. Krishnan, not only Thiyyas but all are indebted”.<sup>38</sup>

C.Krishnan could run *Mithavadi* as a magazine, with excellence as far as possible until December 1920. From January 1921 to October 1938 it was a weekly. Thus the service of *Mithavadi* for almost a quarter century was much beneficial for the Thiyya community. Besides community matters, literature also had a prominent place in it. On November 29, 1938 C.Krishnan passed away. Sometime before his death itself, *Mithavadi* had ceased. Later Krishnan’s son-in-law K.R Achuthan resumed it as a weekly again. But it did not continue long. There is no doubt that among the newspapers of Kerala, *Mithavadi* and among the editors, its editor C.Krishnan have a special place.<sup>39</sup>

Even the English newspapers held Krishnan in high esteem. *Times of India* wrote about Krishnan, “...Mr.C.Krishnan B.A, B.L, the first non-official President of the Calicut Taluk Board in the Malabar District is among the few Thiyyas who have risen to high positions by dint of hardwork and through integrity. A man of deep convictions and stern morals Mr.Krishnan has done much to uplift his community and to further its moral and material interests. The monthly magazine he edits and owns, the *Mithavadi* (the Moderate Advocate) has proved a powerful instrument of reform and progress...He has well established his claim to be regarded as a leading publicist on the West Coast. He maintains a free reading room open to all classes of the public and has founded the S.N.D.P Club and the ‘Paran Hall’ which have become the centres of intellectual and social activities”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *Mithavadi*, February 1914.

<sup>39</sup> P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.794.

<sup>40</sup> The news item in *Times of India* as quoted in *Mithavadi* of June 1920.

Dr. A Ayyappan who was the superintendent of Madras Museum wrote, “History will ever remember the name of C.Krishnan as one of those who begot newspapers in Kerala. The simple and sharp style of the editorials in *Mithavadi* will never fall into oblivion....It is doubtful if there is any other paper in Kerala like *Mithavadi* that simultaneously worked for the integration and enlightenment of a community”.<sup>41</sup>

### **‘Thiyyathwam’ Watchword of *Mithavadi***

From the very first issue of *Mithavadi* in 1913, Adv.Krishnan pampered ‘Thiyyathwam’ (the state of being Thiyya) with a very narrow perspective and resisted with vigour all the other movements in his innate simple style.<sup>42</sup> Before spearheading the Thiyya/ Ezhava renaissance, the *Mithavadi* presented in its second issue a bird’s eye view of the pitiable condition of the Thiyyas during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Although the Thiyyas have got some independence in the urban area their situation is very pathetic in the country sides. Though in religion they are Hindus, due to untouchability they cannot do anything. Many of the Thiyyas in the country sides are not at all aware of the fact that there are many qualified and competent people in their own community in the urban areas. ..The Thiyyas of the urban area are educated, united and wealthy”.<sup>43</sup> This article ends with a call to each one born in the Thiyya community to work hard for the upliftment of the community.

Krishnan worked for the solidarity and emancipation of the Thiyya community through multifarious ways. He was aware of the Thiyya might, in terms of population. But the lack of consolidation and

<sup>41</sup> N.K Damodaran, *op.cit.*, p.32.

<sup>42</sup> Swami Brahmavruhan, *Maharshi Vagbhadananda Gurudevan*, (Mal) Ambalappuzha, 1971, p.89.

<sup>43</sup> *Mithavadi*, 13<sup>th</sup> September 1913.

unity agonized him much. Krishnan said, “Although the strength of the Thiyyas in Malabar is almost eight lakhs they have no representative neither in the Legislative Council nor in the Assembly.... We are neglected cruelly. Although we are almost 40% of the Hindu population in Malabar, since the election is held for all Hindus our community cannot make anyone of them win. Thiyyas will have salvation only if they stand as an independent community severing its links with upper class Hindus”.<sup>44</sup>

With this end, he not only wrote articles and made campaigns but also organized conventions giving wide publicity. It was as a part of this programme that the meeting of the Kochi Ezhava Samajam was celebrated at Trichur on a *Pooram* (a festival) day in April 1916. It was chaired by Adv.C.Krishnan. Murkoth Kumaran gave the keynote address. Since much propaganda works were given regarding the founding of the Samajam, media in both English and Malayalam published editorials and editor’s note.<sup>45</sup> Even the *Yogakshemam* newspaper, an organ of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha reported it in an excellent manner, highlighting it as an example to other communities also. “On reading the speeches delivered by Mr.C.Krishnan and Mr.Murkoth Kumaran in the Ezhava convention at Trichur, we felt that these kinds of men are the genuine lovers of society. The correct policy is to encourage other communities to perform in a justifiable way. We are very happy to see that Mr.Krishnan and Mr.Kumaran have understood the above principle very well”.<sup>46</sup>

The *Malayala Manorama* report sheds some light on the works of Krishnan and the Calicut convention. “The Thiyyas of Malabar who

<sup>44</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.159.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>46</sup> *Mithavadi*, May 1916, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.

have an important position in respect of population and education when compared to other communities have decided to work in solidarity for social and industrial welfare and so as to lift it from its awkward state. Though the Thiyyas of Malabar are eight lakhs in number, they have no due representation in the administrative matters and so no vigour and interest in social and economic matters. In the new Legislative Assembly the lower classes like the Aadi Dravidas and the minorities like the Muhammadiyas have got representation. But the Thiyyas who are above them in number has not got even a single representative. To ponder over the measures to solve such inequalities and to work for the upliftment of the community a big convention was held at Calicut in which C.Krishnan B.A, B.L chaired....In the meeting Krishnan opined that the Thiyyas should cut off its relations with the savarna Hindus. He said that for a very long time Thiyyas were the slaves of upper classes and if the Thiyyas blindly follow them as Hindus it will help only the upper classes to enhance their status and power which in turn will not bring any benefit to Thiyyas.<sup>47</sup>

Krishnan utilized all the slots available before him, in reaching his goal. Dr.T.M Nair, the leading member of the Justice Party in Madras before his journey to England (1918-1919), had asked Krishnan whether he needs to submit some memorandum before the British Parliament about the wretched state of the underdeveloped communities like the Thiyyas of Malabar. Krishnan immediately replied that if special constituencies were not allowed to the Thiyyas in the Legislative Assemblies, it will result in the incapability of the community to send the genuine representatives to the Legislative Assembly and so T.M Nair should endeavour for it.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, 15<sup>th</sup> August 1922.

<sup>48</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.117.

Krishnan's uproar about the sad state of the Thiyyas and other lower castes found expression in the English newspapers of Madras also. *Madras Mail* published an editorial entitled 'Screams of the Untouchables' in January 1928. Immediately Krishnan sent to the editor of *Madras Mail* a telegraphic message conveying his thanks for the editorial. In it Krishnan said that he agreed with each word of the editorial.<sup>49</sup>

As a leader of his community Krishnan had taken much pride in the rise of its every member. He was very eager and happy to inform the whole community such pieces of news items through *Mithavadi*, and tried to give them splendid display. The news item regarding the appointments of Oyitti Krishnan and K.Krishnan is a fine example. "We are very happy in Mr.Oyitti Krishnan being elected as the Municipal Chairman of Calicut. It is a very respectable thing for our community in Mr.Krishnan being the Chairman of Calicut which is the head quarters of Malayalam District. High Court Advocate K.Krishnan B.A B.L, the son of Kottiyeth Ravunny, the main force behind the construction of Thalasseri Jagannatha Temple has been posted as the additional Munsiff of Calicut. Mr.Krishnan by his character and competence is earning good name".<sup>50</sup>

From the above statements it is very clear that *Mithavadi* editor was, not of opinion' that Indians should be the perpetual slaves of the British. He had the opinion that under the British every subject got equal justice. To him self-rule did not mean good rule. He also held the opinion that the British rule should continue here, until the communities enduring inequality achieve the bravery and ability, to ask for its due share from the administration that comes in the post-independence

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171.

<sup>50</sup> *Mithavadi*, August 1913, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.

period. Otherwise he believed that the lower communities will be dragged away to the old situation of ‘water drawers’ and ‘wood cutters’. It is because of this conviction that he criticized the Indian National Congress with tooth and nail.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed Thiyya awakening was the only vision and mission of *Mithavadi* and its Editor Adv.C.Krishnan. He used to respond immediately to anything that was detrimental to Thiyya/ Ezhava cause. Once he happened to see an editorial note in the English newspaper *Westcoast Spectator* (around 1916), published from Calicut blaming the Ezhavas for developing a tendency to keep away from other communities. Immediately he sent a befitting reply to the above paper.<sup>52</sup> He was not reluctant to criticise through his paper, even his brother-in-law C.M Rarichan Mooppen, when he did not get the co-operation expected from him in this mission. What provoked Krishnan was an English article written by Rarichan Mooppen in the English newspaper *Westcoast Specatator*. In the reply Krishnan said, “Among Thiyyas those who know English might have read the English article of Rarichan Mooppen, “Thiyya social reforms” published in *Westcoast Spectator* of April 1914, intended to enlighten the Thiyya nobles of South Malayalam. At present many of the Thiyya women of South Malayalam do not clad their body fully. Therefore, to set right this defect, something should be immediately done is the main suggestion in the article. Since *Mithavadi* is a Thiyya magazine in Malayalam it is advisable to write this kind of articles and essays in it, than writing in English papers since the purpose can be better served in Malayalam. Also now *Mithavadi* is widely subscribed and read by the people”.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.143.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

<sup>53</sup> *Mithavadi*, May 1914.

*Mithavadi* always attempted to publish reports about the freedom struggles that had been going on elsewhere in the world and to make its comments. He made a call to make mortal fight for the preservation of rights. In the *Mithavadi* of August 1916 he wrote that the endeavour for freedom will not materialise within four days or ten days. Continuous work is inevitable for that. The proverb ‘only when you knock it will open’ will finally become reality.<sup>54</sup>

C.Krishnan who had made a great call for revolution almost a century ago, was indeed a magnetic personality. He hailed the Russian Revolution even before its successful conclusion. *Mithavadi* wrote this editorial in August 1917 when the world as such was denouncing the revolution. In the editorial Krishnan tried to establish the fact that the situation in Russia is much better than in Kerala in terms of human dignity. He also made a forecast that the destiny’s destination here also will not be much different from that of Russia in the coming days. “It is in Russia (before the revolution) that people say they have no freedom. But when one thinks about our condition, some preventing us from walking along the roads, going to schools and praying at the temples we have to conclude that the difficulties experienced by the people of Russia is nothing at all. Now the Russian emperor, family members and ministers are all imprisoned. It would have been nice if some people here also understand that the course of time-wheel is alike and everywhere.<sup>55</sup> No other editor has made such progressive, solemn and majestic comments as C.Krishnan in justifying the socialist revolution. It was after him that K.Ayyappan in *Sahodaran* and T.K Madhavan in *Deshabhimani* wrote editorials hailing the Russian Revolution.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Mithavadi*, August 1916.

<sup>55</sup> *Mithavadi*, August 1917.

<sup>56</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.149.

Krishnan was indeed a visionary who could anticipate things ahead of time. He had much confidence in the strength of the people. This is clear from the editorial in *Mithavadi* published in December 1917. “What was it that happened in Russia? There the people imprisoned the emperor and trespassed the palace; they drove away the rulers and declared that people are the bosses. When witnessing these incidents everybody here may also be forced to think about the situation in our land. Here the majority of the people, who own this land, have no freedom to walk, have no right for education, and many of them are untouchables. There is much difference when comparing the situations in Russia with that of here. Nobody knows about the strength of the people”.<sup>57</sup>

With this enlightenment, Krishnan resisted daringly and without any kindness, all communal injustices and inequalities. This is convincingly proved by his famous breach of Tali Road ban at Calicut. Zamorin’s Estate Collector J.A Thoran I.C.S had earlier forwarded to the District Collector F.B Evans a memorandum signed by more than hundred persons requesting to prevent the lower communities using the Tali temple roads. But Evans did not allow that. It was at that time that Evans went on leave for two months. Consequent to that J.A Thoran was appointed as the acting Collector. He thought that this was the most propitious occasion and he decided to ban the lower communities from walking along Tali roads. On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1917 he installed in the Tali road, two notice boards preventing the lower communities. The notice said that since the untouchables like Thiyyas, walking along the steps of this temple and along the roads around the temple pond is against civility, the above communities should not use those roads henceforward, and is hereby informed that those who breach the notice

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<sup>57</sup> *Mithavadi*, December 1917.

would be responsible for all the expenses incurred to the temple and would be punished as per law”.<sup>58</sup>

C.Krishnan did not waste any time in breaching this law. Along with his intimate friend Manjeri Ramayyar he travelled along the Tali road in a horse cart on the same day when the board appeared. Then he wrote a letter to Thoran, “...since your notice limits the rights of a major section of the subjects of His Majesty the Emperor, we have immediately utilized our right by walking along the Padinjare Samooam Road (Western Samooam Road), one among which has been mentioned in your notice. We would be thankful to you if you take immediate action in this case of violation of law”.<sup>59</sup> But Thoran did not dare to take any action but sent a reply conveying thanks to Krishnan that he received the letter. Meanwhile somebody threw away one of the notice boards into the temple pond and tarred the letters of the other board. Apart from writing a letter to the Collector, Krishnan wrote an editorial in *Mithavadi* criticizing his nefarious deed.<sup>60</sup> *Kerala Pathrika* expressed its happiness in Krishnan’s daring deed, by publishing an article congratulating him.<sup>61</sup>

Anyhow by that act of Krishnan everybody got the freedom to walk along the Tali Road. This incident sheds light on the multifaceted personality of Adv.C.Krishnan. By trespassing into the prohibited area and thereby denying the order of the District Collector, an I.C.S officer, Krishnan dared to take law into his hands. At a time of imperial rule when the I.C.S officers were wielding unimaginable power, none of the subject would have been so eloquent to break the law so simply as

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<sup>58</sup> P.V.K Nedungadi, *op.cit.*, pp.28-31.

<sup>59</sup> N.K Damodaran, *op.cit.*, p.34.

<sup>60</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.144.

<sup>61</sup> P.V.K Nedungadi, *op.cit.*, p.31.

Adv.Krishnan. On the legal angle this act would have brought several untoward consequences unless the collector was prudent and wise enough to contain the repercussions in a mere reply. On the other hand, on the humanitarian angle the act of Krishnan enabled the wretched classes to achieve the right and freedom to walk along the prohibited road in future also. Had Krishnan not done so, at that particular moment then it would have been stamped as an unbreakable rule hindering all the members of the lower classes from walking along the temple road and thereby nipping the freedom due to human beings. This incident became a mile stone in invigorating people similar kind of agitations at Vaikkam, Kalpathi and Thiruvappu.<sup>62</sup> It is true that Krishnan always favoured the British. But this is self explanatory that whenever he found fault with the British officers he did not hesitate to criticize them. When looking this incident from another angle it can be observed as something akin to an act of civil-disobedience which the great American philosopher Throu propounded decades back and implemented in India by Mahatma Gandhi a decade after.

C.Krishnan extended open support to Dr.K.V Choi, a Thiyya, who walked along the temple tank near Chalappuram in 1919. The temple authorities filed a criminal case against him in the Sub-magistrate's court, Calicut. *New India* (published from Madras) of 22<sup>nd</sup> February 1919 reported it as a sensational case of pollution and this was the first case of its kind in Malabar. On Krishnan's advice, his close friend Manjeri Ramayyar defended Dr.Choi and won the case.<sup>63</sup>

*Mithavadi* fought not only for the rights of the Thiyyas of Malabar alone but for the rights of the Ezhavas of Travancore and

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>63</sup> K.Sabukuttan, *C.Krishnan and Social Change in Kerala*,(Mal) Kottayam, 2002, p.27.

Cochin also. In 1917 the Kochi Ezhava Samajam submitted before the Maharaja a memorandum condemning the denial of admission, for Ezhava children in some schools especially in some girl's schools. Highlighting this issue *Mithavadi* wrote that it would have been better if the Government of Cochin had understood that apart from the dispensation of justice, recognition of the rights also is their obligation. It is not at all right to keep them away from the main stream when we think of the population of the Thiyyas and the amount of tax collected from them. It is very doubtful that such abominable treatment towards subjects can be observed in any other civilized state.<sup>64</sup>

C.Krishnan made his fight for securing the rights of Ezhavas and Thiyyas not only by employing the pages of his own paper, but he made use of the services of other papers also. In those days (around 1916), lower castes were not allowed to walk along the Sreesankarapuram bazaar of Kodungalloor. They were allowed only to walk through a narrow lane running through the rear side of the bazaar which was stinking due to the continuous deposit of garbage and urination of the public. Although a memorandum of grievance was submitted in 1917 to the Kochi Maharaja by Ezhava Samajam, the grievance was not redressed. Therefore highlighting this problem, the Ezhavas of Kodungallur submitted the Resident a memorial. C.Krishnan sent the copies of this memorial to the important English dailies like *The Hindu* and *New India* and to the leaders of Justice Party like Thyaga Raja Chetty and P.Kesava Pillai. Krishnan did not hesitate to wage a war with even the Maharajas in his fight for the social justice. As in many places, in Tripunithura also the Ezhavas had to suffer many bitter experiences due to untouchability. Krishnan condemned this in an editorial in *Mithavadi*. "The tyrannies experienced by our community has become

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<sup>64</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.105.

intense in Tripunithura where the royal families of Cochin are also residing...We should not fear at all in claiming our right for the freedom to walk along the road”.<sup>65</sup>

He not only advised the people to fight for their rights but also to exercise their duties too. He unwearingly worked towards the task of leading his community forward so as to enable them to stand on its own feet with complete independence. The editorial in the *Mithavadi* of August 1916 is an example for the same. “Although we advise to fight for your right for employments, the work towards this end should not be your only aim. We are of the opinion that the progress of any community lies in its people. A Divanji, a Collector or a Governor cannot bring progress or retrogression for a community. If one tries for his upliftment who can hinder him? The communities like Parsis, Nattukottachetti, Maarwadi and Baniya have ascended the ladder of progress by their hard work, not by Government employments or favour. Although the Jews were tortured unkindly by Christian Kings for centuries, they did not descend to the lower racks. They were like an ignited twig held downward, but the flame always upward. In our case others can deny admission in the college but they cannot prevent us from earning a good name and reputation by gentlemanly behaviour. The Maharaja of Cochin can deny the freedom to walk in some streets and admission in some schools. But he cannot prevent us from doing hard work and enduring temperance. As such, there are avenues many to achieve progress without somebody’s help. It is enough that we should not become our own enemies”.<sup>66</sup>

Krishnan argued for financial austerity and asked his people to be frugal and prudent in spending. We may spend the money we earn only

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<sup>65</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*,pp.106-109.

<sup>66</sup> *Mithavadi*, August 1916.

for genuine needs. Expenditure should be on a par with the income. Among us there are many celebrations which are quite unnecessary. For why this *kettukalyanam* (initiation rite) and *thirandukalyanam* (a ritual to celebrate the puberty of a girl) we celebrate for many days? Marriage is the perpetual alliance and in that case we celebrate only for a day. At the same time in the case of *kettukalyanam* we celebrate for four days. The result of *kettukalyanam* is a huge expenditure of money and aberration for the modesty of the woman. Usually what happens is that after these celebrations and receptions practically people become houseless and penniless.<sup>67</sup>

It is true that the progress and welfare of Thiyya community was the main goal of Adv.Krishnan. At the same time he had sincere and earnest desire for the upliftment of other communities also. His perspective was that every community should progress for a nation to develop. Only thereby, we could be able to dispel inequality and blind belief and create a situation in which fraternity and prosperity are maintained. An excellent example for this is the editorial he wrote in *Mithavadi* in respect of Nair community. "In the early days the Nair community had not much vigour and vitality that we see at present. But we are happy to see that members of the Nair community is on a forward march. Although Nairs are much ahead of other communities in respect of education, wealth and progress no other community so badly needs a social correction and reformation. We are very sure that every community that loves the Nairs will certainly advise them to revamp and renovate their matrilineal system and rights of succession. All their prosperity we see today is earned by their great grand patriarchs. To

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<sup>67</sup> *Mithavadi*, April 1914, Microfilm, NMML , New Delhi.

retain that prosperity in future also, necessary changes and renovation are inevitable”.<sup>68</sup>

*Mithavadi* encouraged the reformation works in the Namboothiri community which had spent the time in eating and fun making. It published the reports of the Namboothiri Yogkshema Sabha with due importance. It gave advance warning to Namboothiri community that if it maintained only the status quo without undergoing change, within a century the ‘namboothiri voice’ alone would remain. Also *Mithavadi* dedicated its pages to carry in-depth reports about the agitations against pollution which were raging over Kerala then. It advised the Christians to dispel hostility among them. *Mithavadi* noted that it is a pity, that the Syrian Catholics did not participate in the Christian Congress held at Kottayam and that the hostility between them is on the increasing scale. Among the Syrian Catholics the differentiation between the aristocratic and the non aristocratic families is increasing. The higher graders will not voluntarily allow the lower graders to climb to a lofty level, unless they surpass the higher class with wealth and wisdom. *Mithavadi* published frequently articles and speeches explaining the means of progress for Christians and Muslims along with articles tracing the history and origin of these communities. No other paper like *Mithavadi* has published a true and in-depth report about the agitations between Nairs and Pulayas at Neyyattinkara and Perinad near Kollam. A research student who would enquire into the actual conditions of Pulayas six or seven decades back, cannot get any other detailed report than the one in *Mithavadi*. It was with such impartial mind that *Mithavadi* criticized the abuses and excesses unleashed by those who upheld pollution, and analysed their mind-set brimming with blind beliefs. Those reports were

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<sup>68</sup> *Mithavadi*, June 1915.

something which would make the agitators shy and make them repent over their deeds.<sup>69</sup>

Apart from *Malayala Manorama* there was only one paper in Malayalam, the *Mithavadi*, that attached much importance for the reports of the First World War. *Mithavadi* used to publish everyday a single sheet paper containing war reports and sold at the rate of half an *anna*. In those days in Kerala there was not any daily newspaper. Therefore, *Mithavadi's* novel endeavour got wide approval. Dr. Ayyappan commemorates that for Keralites during the time of First World War, *Mithavadi* was a synonym of daily newspaper. The locals sat around *Mithavadi* copies and discussed the course of the German war. The editor's philanthropic attitude and calibre for the analysis of world situation was unique and the same reflected in its editorials. Amidst the war, a British pilot had dropped the bomb over the building where German emperor Kaiser stayed. But the emperor had left the building twenty minutes earlier. About this, the editor's comment was that it was world's misfortune, that the pilot had not reached 20 minutes earlier.<sup>70</sup> *Mithavadi* was subscribed by various groups of people even outside Malabar or Kerala. The Maharaja of Travancore Sree Mulam Thirunal sent the subscription fee to *Mithavadi* regularly. In Ceylon also where Thiyyas were in greater number, Krishnan and *Mithavadi* focused its attention.<sup>71</sup>

### **Literary efforts**

C.Krishnan had genuine interest and taste in Malayalam literature. When he was in the college he had read the Venmani poems and other

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<sup>69</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, pp. 152-161.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>71</sup> P.V.K Nedungadi, *op.cit.*, p.64.

works. Also he used to read regularly *Vidhyavinodini* magazine.<sup>72</sup> It may be those interests that led Adv.Krishnan to give much importance for literary items of various natures in *Mithavadi*.

The services of *Mithavadi* for the development of language and enrichment of knowledge are invaluable. It was *Mithavadi* that published for the first time the biography of O.Chandu Menon. This biography written by Ambroli Kunhiraman Vaidyar was published in five issues from November 1914. *Mithavadi* published the brief biographies of various personalities who have proved their calibre and mettle in various fields. Thus it published the abridged biographies of people like Ooraacherry Gurunaathanmar, Uppottu Kannan, Rarichan Mooppan, Paravoor Kesavanasan, T.M Appu Nedungadi, Dr.T.M Nair, C.Krishna Pillai, K.Paramu Pillai and so on.<sup>73</sup>

A regular column for the criticism of books entitled *pusthakaabhiprayam* (book review) was a special item in *Mithavadi*. This was meant to introduce among the readers the newly published books. If any novel aspect of aesthetic sense is found in a work then that will be appreciated with due importance in the evaluation. Also it encouraged the translation works from English. Whether the work is independent or translation, it was a must that language should be simple, pure and sweet. *Mangalamaala* (Appan Thampuram), *Bilathivishesham* (K.P Kesava Menon), *Rajayogam* (Translation by Kumaran Asan),

<sup>72</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.291.

<sup>73</sup> G.Priyadarshan, *op.cit.*, pp.160-161. Ooraacherry Gurunaathanmar was the scholars who helped Dr.Gundert in the compilation of the first Malayalam dictionary. Uppottu Kannan had amazing knowledge in Malayalam, English and Sanskrit. Paravur Kesava Asan was the founder of *Sujanandini*, the first Ezhava newspaper in Travancore. T.M Nair was the one who championed the non Brahmin movement in Madras. C.Krishna Pillai was the first Secretary of Kottayam Kavisamajam, the first organization of Malayalam writers. Although he was the organizer of Keraleeya Nair Samajam, Krishna Pillai ardently fought for the rights of the lower classes. K.Paramu Pillai was the first M.A holder in Travancore. He was also an educationalist and a reformist in Nair community.

*Chithrayogam* (Vallathol), *Viruthan Shanku* (Karaatt Achutha Menon), *Vyaapara Charithram* (K.C Manavikraman Raja), *Prarodanam* (Kumaran Asan), *Pourasthyadeepam* (Naalappatt) etc. were the prominent books for which review was published in *Mithavadi*. This column was handled by Murkoth Kumaran and Mooliyil Kesavan. C.Krishnan wrote the abridged biography of the Thiyya noble Choorai Kanaran (1812-1876) who had achieved fame in various levels as the first Malayali Deputy Collector, the first Indian to that post from a lower community, the unique personality who got the full salary as pension, the great social reformer and the first Municipal Chairman in Kerala.<sup>74</sup>

Krishnan had great fondness for the works of Kumaran Asan. It was due to his request that Asan wrote the poem *Prabhatha Prarthana* (Morning Prayer) to publish in *Mithavadi* in 1913. This was followed by other poems of Asan like *Karshakante Karachil* (The Cry of a Farmer), *Oru Ulbhodhanam* (An Enlightenment) etc. which were also published in *Mithavadi* for the first time.<sup>75</sup> Also it published many modern poems. But always it attached much importance to the works of Kumaran Asan.

### **A forum for other streams**

Western education, the leadership of Sri Narayana Guru and the enlightenment obtained through *Mithavadi* injected among the Thiyyas a new vigour and vitality. A quest for entity starts among the lower classes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century itself. A craze for independent integrity free of caste, and a fascination for casteless Budhism are born among these classes now. Swami Sivaprasad, a disciple of Sri Narayana Guru, disgusted by caste discrimination and fascinated by Budhist preachings, wrote a letter requesting Sri Narayana Guru either to found a religion

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<sup>74</sup> C.Krishnan, "Churai Kanaran Avarkal" in *Mithavadi Supplement* 1925, p.44.

<sup>75</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.292.

sans untouchability and pollution, or let the Thiyyas to espouse Buddhism. It was that letter that favoured the Thiyyas to voyage in favour of Buddhism. Subsequent to that, several debates were held, for and against in Thiyyas espousing Buddhism. Adv.Krishnan though still a Hindu, allowed *Mithavadi* to be the forum for the Buddhist activists and their activities. Since he had strong belief in Sri Narayana Guru, he wrote his opinion as editorial in *Mithavadi*. “We do not say that the opinion of Swami Sivaprasad is ridiculous. To speak frankly we too have several times thought about such things. Thiyyas if getting converted, it would be better either to Christian or to Islam religion”.<sup>76</sup> He wrote this opinion with his signature as *Mithavadi* Editor.

But anyhow a general thinking was by now rampant such that it is impossible to obtain equality in Hindu religion. The debates and discussions for salvation from the framework of Hindu religion and clutches of Brahminical hegemony were very live. As a result the conversions were very vibrant during these times especially among the educated people of middle class communities.<sup>77</sup> But Krishnan was against such isolated conversion of individuals. So he told that the community as such should anchor upon one independent structure. Subsequently, the general opinion that Buddhist religion suits the Thiyyas much more was strengthened. Among the affluent people of Thiyya community the attraction towards Buddhist religion thus became very vehement. Translations of Buddhist works, articles and poems were published in plenty. The novels like *Saraswathivijayam* and *Sukumari* are in a way the representations of the above ideology.<sup>78</sup> The author of *Saraswathivijayam*, Adv.Potheri Kunhampoo was a visionary who argued much earlier that Thiyyas should sever the links with Hindu

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<sup>76</sup> *Mithavadi*, March 1917.

<sup>77</sup> George Irumbayam, *Naalu Novelukal*, (Mal), Trichur, 1985, p.103.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

religion. He was of the opinion that Buddhism is the best religion suited for them.<sup>79</sup>

Even when Krishnan espoused Buddhism, he was not that kind of a believer as we imagine. He had his own convictions. “Perhaps you may wonder that I deny other religions while I advise you to espouse Buddhism. But Buddhism is not a religion asking you to bow, to chant songs or to do pujas. If you think pujas, prayer and worship as unavoidable rituals for a religion, Buddhism is not a religion at all. Sri Buddha says only that one should say truth, do not commit violence, do not use alcohol and walk along the path of virtue.”<sup>80</sup> In 1925 *Mithavadi* published in its second special supplement a very long article by C.V Kunhiraman entitled “Theeyarkku Nallathu Buddhamatham Thanneyanu” (For Thiyyas the best is Buddhist Religion) tracing historical, political, social and economic reasons.<sup>81</sup> But Kunhiraman conveniently changed his stand after a decade, advocating in favour of Christian religion.<sup>82</sup>

Although he became a Buddhist believer, Krishnan honoured other streams of thought including rationalism and gave sufficient space for them also in his paper. It was *Mithavadi* and *Sahodaran* that had

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<sup>79</sup> *Mithavadi Supplement*, 1925, p.13.

<sup>80</sup> *Mithavadi*, April 1924.

<sup>81</sup> C.V Kunhiraman, *Mithavadi Supplement*, 1925, p.6.

<sup>82</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, “Pazhamayil Ninnu-*Mithavadi* Visheshal Prathikal” in *Bhashaposhini*, November 2006. When the social leaders changed their opinion for their expediency, the task of enlightening the readers about their former stand was performed by newspapers even in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. C.V Kunhiraman, the renowned Ezhava leader published his historic article in the second special supplement of *Mithavadi* published in 1925 entitled “*Thiyyarkku Nallathu Buddhamatham Thanneyanu*” (For Thiyyas the best is Buddhism) which paved the way for the spate of conversion. After a decade Kunhiraman wrote another article cleverly showing that for the Ezhavas it is better to espouse Christian religion. This was published as a small separate booklet. In this context *Malayala Manorama* exposed the contradictory stand of Kunhiraman by carrying in three issues his article that appeared in *Mithavadi* earlier.

played a major role in the growth of rational movement. M.C Joseph, the father-figure of rationalist movement in Kerala says, “In those days *Mithavadi* of Calicut and *Sahodaran* of Cochin were the only newspapers ready to publish articles related to rationalism. The other newspapers and magazines did not publish articles that resist blind religious beliefs or unhealthy rituals”.<sup>83</sup>

### **The Perspective Broadens**

*Mithavadi* which was a successful Malayalam magazine for more than seven years after its re-birth was once again re-launched as an English-Malayalam weekly from 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1921 onwards. Many leaders like Annie Beasant, Sir Narayan Chandravarkar and so on and other important persons like K.Natarajan, (Editor, *Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay), Malabar Collector J.A Thoran (Thoran was the Zamorin’s Estate Collector during Tali Road issue) and so on sent best wishes to the new venture.<sup>84</sup>

The statement carried in the first issue signified a beginning as well as end. “When serious changes are going to be made in the administration of Indian empire there is no other reason to say why *Mithavadi* is switching over to the position of a weekly. At this juncture when we are entering the threshold of self-rule it causes great anxiety among the Hindus those who sans power and freedom. Self-rule is satisfactory to all the people in India only after exorcizing the devil called the ‘caste discrimination’ or when a convincing situation is emerged in which there are strong evidences of upper classes showing generosity and compassion towards the lower classes...We felt that first and foremost is to run a paper for the above class, the downtrodden. We

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<sup>83</sup> P.A Syed Muhammad, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.1247.

<sup>84</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.138.

know that it should not be a weekly but must be a daily. But for the time being, we have decided to run it as a weekly considering the acute shortage of newsprint. *Mithavadi* when it was a monthly magazine, it was the special magazine of the Thiyyas. But when it is made a weekly it broadens its purview and perspective. It has been made the paper of all those who have been suffering the tyranny of caste devil. As far as *Mithavadi* is concerned there are only two castes. One caste is those who agree that in social matters also, Indians should change the stand according to the changing times to climb the ladder of progress and reach the level of all other civilized communities of the world. The other caste is those who object the above stand.<sup>85</sup>

In the first issue there was also an annexure on the topside of the Malayalam editorial entitled “Avasha Samudayangalude Magnacarta” (Magnacarta of the downtrodden). “We institute, command and declare as follows: you should make all necessary conditions for the progress and social upliftment of all those subjects under you, especially those who are minority and those who are not able to make a united political move for want of education, wealth or some other reason. You should take special care to see that the above category of people should not come to bear any torture or difficulties”.<sup>86</sup>

### **Criticising Congress and Gandhi**

It was a time when the tides of freedom movement was getting transmitted and transferred to Malabar. Then Malabar was under the British rule. Since Travancore and Cochin were under the rule of the princes and the hegemony of the upper class was so severe there, the caste discrimination problems were also more intense and rigid. But

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<sup>85</sup> *Mithavadi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1921.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

Malabar, where the caste problems were not so rigid, was a fertile soil for the national movement. So in Malabar the Government was trying to curtail the protests against the British rule in the bud itself. Since C.Krishnan who took the initiative for Thiyya reformation was a landlord, he had more loyalty towards the British. This admiration for the British coerced him much to prevent the Thiyyas from the path of national consciousness born out of the venom towards the British.<sup>87</sup> Adv.Krishnan upheld the idea that lower communities should acquire self-reliance to move in par with the upper class and he believed that under British rule it will be easier to attain that goal than under Congress rule. It was because of this reason that he resisted the Congress and the Non-co-operation/ Civil Disobedience movements.

Adv.C.Krishnan continued the fight for communal representation aimed to acquire equality and opportunity, social justice and fraternity even until his old age. Because of this single reason, he could not agree with the Congress policy of solving the social infirmities after getting political independence. He wrote about it in *Mithavadi*, referring to the speech made by Jinnah. “The Congress policy is that it may decide the matters pertaining to the community, after getting political independence. But if political independence is obtained before resolving the problems of the community, it may lead to hegemony of the majority community which will ultimately lead to the torture of the weaker communities. Therefore the so-called communalists, who are actually the true nationalists, now vindicate that the genuine independence is to be built only up on the foundation of peace and fraternity evolved from the eligible rights of the weaker sections”.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Swami Brhamavruthan, *op.cit.*, p.89.

<sup>88</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.151

C.Krishnan was a journalist who unfailingly fought for his own convictions. K.P Kesava Menon says that in criticizing the Congress *Mithavadi* (moderate advocate) was indeed an 'Amithavadi' (extremist advocate). Krishnan's belief is that once the British quit India it will be like a house without a sentinel.<sup>89</sup> Yet Krishnan awarded considerable finance towards the funds for Guruvayur Sathyagraha and Kalpathi freedom struggle. Although he had objection against the philosophy of Sathyagraha as a movement, he helped unconditionally the movements of Congress for eradication of untouchability. He did not hesitate to congratulate the efforts of Congress in staging Vaikam Sathyagraha.<sup>90</sup>

*Mithavadi* and C.Krishnan always resisted Gandhiji, Non-co-operation Movement and Khilafat. *Mithavadi* pestered and taunted the above movements whenever it got opportunities. The news item in January 1922 stated that it is now proved and admitted that the immediate cause of the Mappila riots and of the consequent hardships of the people, is the Khilafat and the Non-co-operation movements. It observed that if the Khilafat and the Non-co-operation workers who have been proved to be guilty of inciting the Mappila fanatics to rebellion are not brought to book by the Government, the restoration of peace and safety is likely to be indefinitely delayed. As a result the people will not find satisfaction in any of the steps that may be taken by the Government for the future well-being of the country.<sup>91</sup> *Mithavadi* also said that Gandhiji was lying down for 21 days not for the sake of the Harijans and depressed classes but for the sake of the Hindu Community.<sup>92</sup> It advocated a vigorous campaign against Non-co-operation, and suggested that officials can do their part separately by

<sup>89</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.142.

<sup>90</sup> N.K Damodaran, *op.cit.*, p.35.

<sup>91</sup> *Mithavadi*, 30<sup>th</sup> January 1922, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>92</sup> *Mithavadi*, 6<sup>th</sup> May 1933, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.

helping to open the eyes of the common people to the dangers of the Non-co-operation movement.<sup>93</sup>

*Mithavadi* was very much against the Civil Disobedience Movement. It evaluated that this Movement in Malabar has reached a peculiar phase. The bulk of the people in Malabar are fortunately indifferent to it. It is confined at present to Calicut. In North Malabar the Movement is practically dead...It is afraid that if the Movement is allowed to grow it will soon assume larger dimensions which will make repressive and coercive measures of a severe kind necessary...It takes the form of picketing of cloth shops...But the authorities have to bear in mind that people who do not believe in Civil Disobedience are at least as much entitled to the consideration of the government as those who believe in Civil Disobedience.<sup>94</sup>

Along with *Mithavadi* other papers like *Sahodaran* and *Gajakesari* were also the spoke- persons of Thiyya resurgence and British rule. Several attacks that may injure the sentiments of Gandhiji and the creative works of Congress originated from these papers. 'Gandhi who thinks that India will get freedom by spinning in charka and by prohibition is indeed an idiot' (*Gajakesari*), 'In fact Congress may represent the vested interests of the caste Hindus, no one has done so much harm to the oppressed classes than Gandhiji, this is very evident from Gandhi's stand in the Round Table Conference' (*Mithavadi*), 'Congressmen are the born enemies of the oppressed classes' (*Sahodaran*) are examples.<sup>95</sup> There is another criticism that when the peasants started the revolt during the 1920's Adv.C.Krishnan and *Mithavadi* deliberately tried to hide the factor of tenants agitations

<sup>93</sup> *Mithavadi*, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1921, Microfilm, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>94</sup> *Mithavadi*, 28<sup>th</sup> December 1930, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>95</sup> K.K Pavithran, *Vagbhadanandan Atmeeya Himalayathil*, (Mal), Kollam, 1995, p.221.

contained in it. Thus favouring the side of government they presented the revolt as a communal riot and accused the Congress men for all the problems.<sup>96</sup>

### **Thiyya representation**

Although C.Krishnan and *Mithavadi* toiled for the representation of the Thiyyas in the Legislative Council for more than a decade it did not bear any fruit. Krishnan could not endure this kind of unconcerned attitude of the Government. With utmost despair he wrote that we seem to live in a sort of political shadow land. We have shadow councils and shadow ministries and we have a shadow electorate and shadow elections...We have got to realize that the elective system in this country at this stage of our social evolution is a solemn farce...The depressed classes in India today have no representation in the Legislative Council. The only manner in which they can bring their views to the notice of the Government is through their nominated representatives in the Councils. When the question of representation to the Councils is discussed they say, “we will represent you. We will not eat with you, we will not bathe in the same tank with you or marry with you, will not worship with you or study with you or allow you to use our streets but you may vote for us. You may send us to the Councils and will rule the country for you”. If we continue this process without change, we shall have in the place of bureaucracy the reign of caste. That is why the depressed communities in India are grim and unenthusiastic in the matter of political reforms. They do not want a further apotheosis of caste and the elective system of misrepresentation.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Moyyarath Sankaran, *Ente Jeevithakatha* (Mal.), Trichur, 1965, p.214.

<sup>97</sup> *Mithavadi*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1925, NMML, New Delhi.

*Mithavadi* was of the opinion that it was high time to make substantial changes in the present systems of elections which allowed members of one community to represent another. The paper thought that the system which allowed *janmis* to represent tenants and caste Hindus to represent non-caste Hindus, would be more harmful than allowing for instance the representatives of Tories to represent Labour in England.<sup>98</sup> Referring to the elections of September 1930, *Mithavadi* expressed strong protest against the policy of clubbing together the Brahmins, the Nairs, the Thiyyas and the Cherumas in one constituency and opined that separate communities should be given separate representatives.<sup>99</sup>

*Mithavadi* attacked the lack of representation of Thiyyas in the administration also. Regarding the demand of the Thiyya deputation to IG of police for greater representation in police Department, *Mithavadi* wrote, “the cast Hindus have monopolized not only the Police Department but the Revenue, Judicial, Education and Abkari also and they have driven the other communities to the wall. All revenue collected in the country is being appropriated among the officials...The more the Congress gains support in the country and clamours for the rights and privileges of Mother India, the more will the caste Hindus bring the other communities under their control...The Thiyyas suffer because they are labelled as Hindu non-Brahmins. That is why we ask them to cast off that label and form themselves into a separate and independent community. The injustice shown towards Thiyyas in the matter of appointments in Government service is intolerable. The Government derives all their excise revenue from Thiyyas. For taking to the profession of toddy tapping other communities condemn Thiyyas.

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<sup>98</sup> *Mithavadi*, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1922, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>99</sup> *Mithavadi*, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1930, NMML, New Delhi.

But the Nair and Brahmins preponderate in the excise Department. We cannot shut our eyes and put up such acts of injustice for long.<sup>100</sup>

### **Spokesman of Tenants**

Although a *janmi*, even from the collegiate days Krishnan's attention was focused on the *janmi*-tenant issue of Malabar. In *Madras Mail* in July 1900 he published an article entitled 'Malabar Janmi'. After that he became an active participant in the Malabar Tenant agitations. It was the *Mithavadi* that stood in the forefront, among the papers that gave leadership for this struggle. Krishnan extended active co-operation for the tenant conventions that held at Pattambi in 1922 and 1926. Though Mannath Krishnan Nair's Bill for permanent rights to all *kanakudiyans* and *verumpattakudiyans* was passed by the Legislative Council it was vetoed by the Governor. Subsequently it was Krishnan who gave active leadership for the strong agitations that broke out against the injustice of the Government. As a result of this continuous struggle, the Government was made to negotiate the issue, which eventually led to the passing of the Malabar Tenancy Legislation Act of 1930, permitting permanent rights to *pattakudiyans* and *kanakudiyans*.<sup>101</sup>

### **Collective Efforts**

Although the vernacular newspapers had its own views, in common issues they worked in harmony. The hasty purchase of a burial ground for Thiyyas by Calicut Municipality and the posting of non-Malayali officers are examples.

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<sup>100</sup> *Mithavadi*, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1934, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>101</sup> N.K Damodaran, *op.cit.*, p.35.

The article in *Mithavadi* said that an acre of ground acquired by Calicut Municipal Council for Rs.800 without a compound wall or road is not at all sufficient to meet the requirements of the community. Also the resolution of the Council is passed by only nine out of 25 members. Therefore it is hoped that the authorities will redress the grievances of the community after proper enquiry into the matter.<sup>102</sup> At the same time the leader in the *Manorama* condemned the action of the Council in rushing through the resolution in such haste and the disregard shown to the feelings of the community. It invited the attention of Government, the Collector of Malabar and the Municipal authorities to the just grievances of the Thiyyas.<sup>103</sup> A paragraph in the *Kerala Sanchari* of the 26<sup>th</sup> August observed that the ground acquired for the purpose is hardly sufficient or convenient for the purpose.<sup>104</sup>

The appointment of non-Malayali officer Mr. Bheema Rao to the post of Huzur Sirastadar at Calicut was also an issue that became the thread of discussion in newspapers. An editorial in *Mithavadi* referring to the appointment of Mr. Bheema Rao said that the principle hitherto followed in filling up the post was to appoint a native of the district, well acquainted with the traditions and customs of the District. But the principle is strangely enough has been violated, in the present arrangement. The Sirastadar is the Secretary of the Collector on whom devolves the duty of advising the Collector in his dealings with the various communities comprising the population of the district, so that due respect should be paid to local prejudices and customs.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> *Mithavadi*, 30<sup>th</sup> August 1908, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>103</sup> *Manorama*, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1908, NMML, New Delhi..

<sup>104</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 26<sup>th</sup> August 1908, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>105</sup> *Mithavadi*, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1908, NMML, New Delhi.

Similarly the appointment of Mr.Panchapakesha as District Munsiff of Tirur was also much criticized due to his lack of proficiency in Malayalam. *Manorama* wrote that although he has passed the vernacular test, the new Munsiff does not seem to have a good command in it. Hence however capable he be, it will be much better both to himself and to the people if he is transferred to a Tamil District and a Malayali, put in his place here. It is unfortunate that such matters do not receive due consideration at the hands of the High Court.<sup>106</sup> *Kerala Pathrika* also highlighted this problem the next day. “One of our contemporaries says that as soon as he assumed charge Mr.Panchapkesha Iyer, the newly appointed District Magistrate of Tirur ordered that he should be furnished with an English summary of the complaints, petitions etc. written in the vernacular language. This shows that the Munsiff is ignorant of Malayalam which will cause much inconvenience to the litigant public. It is to be hoped that the matter will receive the attention of the High Court.<sup>107</sup>

### ***Mathrubhoomi-Heralds New India***

During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century *Kerala Pathrika*, *Manorama*, *Kerala Sanchari* and *Mithavadi* were the four vernacular newspapers printed and published from Calicut. None of them had much favour towards national movement. At the same time some of them were vehemently against it. The stand of English weeklies like *Westcoast Spectator*, *Westcoast Reformer* and *Champion* were also not much different from the above. In those days the media were not ready to publish anything in favour of the national movement or something against the authorities. In such a situation without a press and a newspaper it was difficult to push the Congress movement forward. The

<sup>106</sup> *Manorama*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1914, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>107</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 11<sup>th</sup> July 1914, MNNPR, TNA.

necessity of starting a newspaper became the thread of discussion among K.P Kesava Menon and his colleagues like K.Madhavan Nair, Kuroor Neelakandan Namboothiripad, P.Achuthan and K.Kesavan Nair.<sup>108</sup> The long cherished desire of these Congress leaders finally took the shape of *Mathrubhoomi* newspaper which spearheaded the national movement for a quarter century leading the nation towards a new age of liberty and fraternity.

The statement of the Kerala State Congress Committee Secretary Madhavan Nair issued in a box column in *Mathrubhoomi* is an example for its commitment for national movement. In the statement entitled 'Possible for everyone' he said, "In India wherever you look, you can see daring children working hard for the liberation of Bharathamatha even forsaking family life, wealth and other comforts and embracing many difficulties and even hugging death itself. For those who are not able do such heroic deeds can exercise it in a humble and simple way by taking membership in Congress. Are we, the Keralites incapable even for that"?<sup>109</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* in its editorial on New Year day of 1925 reminded that one's country is above his caste, religion and community. "Whether in England, Germany or Japan people first say 'my country', and not my caste, nor my community nor my religion. In these countries whichever party comes to power is not a matter. But they all work for the progress of the nation. That is the secret of their unity and liberty. But here pride of one's religion and community is one step ahead over pride of one's nation. Even the senior leaders are more anxious about the means and ways which are more advantageous for their community

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<sup>108</sup> V.R Menon, *Mathrubhoomiyude Charithram*, (Mal), Vol.i, Kozhikode, 1998, p.48.

<sup>109</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1929.

than the welfare of the nation. Some of such leaders even engage in parley for such temporary gains. To strengthen this kind of narrow mentality of leaders and to divide the Indians they have even implemented communal representation in Legislative Councils. Now this system has been extended to other areas also. Instead of competence the caste and community have become the rule and norm for appointments. The reality is that the community as a whole does not benefit out of communal representation but it provides a few who belong to that community the convenience to get nomination to Legislative Council or to get appointment to some post”.<sup>110</sup> In fact this editorial was clearly aimed at Thiyya leaders like Adv.C.Krishnan and Murkoth Kumaran who favoured the British rule and fought for communal representation.

The campaign to boycott Simon Commission was given very extensive coverage in *Mathrubhoomi*. It appealed on several days to the citizens of Calicut to boycott the Commission. It reminded that the national organizations like Congress, Mithavadi Federation, Hindu Sabha, Muslim League and leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Moulana Muhammadali, Sen Gupta and Pandit Malavya have called for the boycott of Simon Commission. Calicut is a city that has proved its commitment to the national cause. In 1917, Calicut created history by making struggles against the District Magistrate, to safeguard the honour of the mother tongue. In 1919 it observed a successful hartal against the Rowlatt Act. Also it gave warm reception to Mahatma Gandhi and Moulana Shaukath Ali. In 1921 non Co-operation movement was inaugurated at Calicut. In 1927 again Mahatma Gandhi was welcomed by Calicut. A city which has done so many great services already knows what its obligations are. Therefore Calicut will not forget

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<sup>110</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1925.

its duty and work according the persuasions of a dozen individuals who have not thought of their country's welfare. If those dozen persons are anxious to pass a resolution to welcome the Simon Commission let them do in their own name but not in the name of Calicut city. Also the citizens of Calicut should be vigilant not to happen anything in the Town hall that may taint the reputation of Calicut or tarnish the image of Malabar.<sup>111</sup>

Propagation of khaddar was also a programme of *Mathrubhoomi*. It resisted the moves against wearing khaddar clothes. It carried a report when a student in Payyanur Board School was beaten by his *karanavan* for wearing khaddar and not for taking bath after being polluted at school. But that brave student endured all the tortures saying that one day he too will become a *karanavan*. But now to regard the advices of the teachers and to give some relief to his parents he has started wearing mal clothes giving up khaddar. It is doubted that he was tortured by the elders due to the belief that he will not get government job if he wears khaddar.<sup>112</sup> When the meeting of the citizens of Calicut passed a resolution asking the people to work hard for the propagation of khaddar and boycott of foreign dress *Mathrubhoomi* gave good coverage.<sup>113</sup>

Publication of in-depth reports about the violence of the police against Congress volunteers was also an important programme, among the multifarious activities of *Mathrubhoomi* during the period of Civil-Disobedience Movement. Such reports boosted the morale and inspired the workers for more strong agitations. Fed up with such reports the District Magistrate stamped *Mathrubhoomi* as a paper encouraging

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<sup>111</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1928.

<sup>112</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1928.

<sup>113</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1929. This meeting was chaired by *Al-Ameen* editor Muhammad Abdu Rahiman.

extremism and sent a report to the Secretary to Government. The report said, “*Mathrubhoomi* is a paper of extremist tendencies and has published a good deal of matter making allegations of unnecessary and illegal violence by the police in dealing with the Civil Disobedience movement”.<sup>114</sup>

### **Fighting Social Injustice**

Along with the works for the promotion of national movement *Mathrubhoomi* led the chariot in several battles against social injustice and inequality. It shouted for the rights of the ordinary people when the landlords trampled over them. It extended its help and assistance when human dignity was questioned and human cry was reverberated. Untouchability was one of the issues that *Mathrubhoomi* fought with tooth and nail. In the editorial *Mathrubhoomi* said, “We are of the opinion that untouchability should not have a place not only in roads, schools, offices and families but in human hearts also. We have to change our life and make a continuous satyagraha against untouchability. Also we have to continue our efforts for the upliftment of the brethren of lower communities who have endured so far the bitter experiences of untouchability.”<sup>115</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* through its reports always helped the lower castes to assert their right to use public ponds. In Calicut city there were public ponds in Mankavu and Panniyankara in which all the public were allowed to take bath. But some high caste members of the Municipal Council were strongly against in permitting lower caste members to take bath in the above ponds. The District Collector expressed his view that the courts may settle the disputes. But the court decision was in favour

<sup>114</sup> Letter from Russell, Dt. Magistrate of Malabar to the Chief Secretary to Government, Public Relations Dept. Madras, dated 17<sup>th</sup> October 1932.

<sup>115</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1927.

of the conservative group. Against this *Mathrubhoomi* expressed great concern and protest. As a result the Council appointed a Committee for taking decision in this matter. The Committee consisted of one Thiyya, one Mappila, one Brahmin and some other members of the Municipal Council. Some of the members of the Committee suggested allotting the ponds on caste basis. But the majority decision was that the public ponds are the property of the public.<sup>116</sup> In Cannanore the Municipality allotted the Pulaya community a separate cemetery. This was objected by the Congress members. Yet it was passed by the Council due to the support of other members in the meeting.<sup>117</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* staunchly upheld the idea that public grant may be allotted only to those schools which give admission to all communities. When a school in Tali which allowed admission only to certain communities was taken over by Calicut Municipality, *Mathrubhoomi* published reports as to gather public opinion against that.<sup>118</sup>

This kind of experiences made *Mathrubhoomi* to strengthen the fight against untouchability and pollution. It carried the speeches of Lala Lajapat Rai and Shanmugham Chetty made at Ernakulam motivating the works for the upliftment of the downtrodden. "Pollution is the cruelest face of caste discrimination. Therefore all those who are engaged in the service of the country should give a prominent place to the eradication of pollution also. But in Kerala such efforts have not become strong so far. The leaders are also lethargic in this respect. Anyhow the interest of the people in pollution and caste is decreasing day by day now. If everybody tries to strengthen the public opinion towards this cause we

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<sup>116</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1925.

<sup>117</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1925.

<sup>118</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1928.

can eradicate this curse for ever. That will further empower all the other progressive movements”.<sup>119</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* exhibited much interest in enlightening the masses against all unhealthy customs and traditions. It continued the campaign against *murajapam*, which was already started by Murkoth Kumaran two decades back while he was the editor of *Kerala Sanchari*. As a part of this programme it had published a statement regarding the decisions of the Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha held at Mavelikkara. In the statement it was said that since the subjects of Travancore have much aversion towards *murajapam*, the image of Namboothiri community seems to be tainted now. Considering this, the Sabha requested the Throne of Travancore to find some alternative measures.<sup>120</sup> Thus even though the Namboothiris who were to do the sacramental works for *murajapam* were ready to withdraw from it, the Government went ahead with its decision to observe the ceremony. Then *Mathrubhoomi* in a report said, “The authorities of Travancore have decided to observe *murajapam* this time also despite the desire of the people of Kerala to stop it forever. The public opinion may not have attained the organizational strength to coerce them to cancel it this time. But it is desirable that the public opinion is strong now so as to make it the last one”.<sup>121</sup> In a report after the *murajapam* festival, *Mathrubhoomi* observed, “It is true that the authorities celebrated *murajapam* against the will and wish of the people. But there is much deterioration in its pomp and festivity and people who participated in it is fewer in number. Those who came were also not happy and satisfied. To end this custom we have to surpass this kind of uncultured and feeble minds. It is sure

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<sup>119</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1928.

<sup>120</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1929.

<sup>121</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1929.

that the people will be empowered for it within the next six years”.<sup>122</sup> It solicited the help of the public in doing campaign works to eradicate the unhealthy rituals in Kodungallur Bharani Festival.<sup>123</sup> At the same time it carried reports of Kerala Yukthivadi Samgham (Kerala Atheists’ Association) founded in Calicut elaborating its aims and objectives.<sup>124</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* taunted the Municipal administration by several of its reports. *Mathrubhoomi* is the successor of Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar and predecessor of Sanjayan in lampooning mercilessly, the authorities of Calicut Municipality. In a report it depicted the picture of the city during 1920’s. “In Calicut Municipality wherever you look you can see dilapidated houses, dusty streets, stinking and muddy streams, carts carrying human excreta and so on. In many of the places wells are not clean. Pure water and pure air is unavailable in the city. Beggars having serious ailments beg and die in the roads and shop verandas. We doubt if there is any other municipality anywhere in the world as lazy as Calicut. It is high time that the Municipal authorities resigned their posts admitting their incompetence. Without mosquito bites one cannot live in Calicut city. The unconcern attitude of the authorities in keeping this municipality so unprotected, with a sagging health care is not pardonable.”<sup>125</sup>

The reports in *Mathrubhoomi* established that Brahmasamaj and Aryasamaj had become vibrant in Malabar during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Mathrubhoomi* says that nine persons of Calicut including their families have espoused ‘Brahmadharmam’ and became members of Brahmasamajam in a function chaired by Devendranath

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<sup>122</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1929.

<sup>123</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1929

<sup>124</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1929.

<sup>125</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1930.

Vikram of Calcutta.<sup>126</sup> In another report the office bearers of the Aryasamaj have expressed much satisfaction in its work in Malabar. Also it is mentioned in the report that Swami Pranavananda Saraswathy has come to Malabar in place of Mr.Venkitachala Iyer who led the movement for the last four years.<sup>127</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* condemned in its reports those men who work for the political independence of the country and at the same time hate the social independence to his fellow men referring to the state conference held at Palakkad. During the conference the mixed meal programme organized became the target of attack of some Congress men who belonged to high castes. In the report *Mathrubhoomi* agreed that mixed meal programme is not a mission of Congress. But eradication of untouchability and pollution are its objectives. That is why Cherumas and Nayaadis were seen in the conference along with members of other communities. It is very ridiculous to argue that we cannot dine with somebody, only because of him being a member of a lower caste.<sup>128</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* also denounced the mentality of the high caste people who raised protest in giving admission to the girls of Aadi Dravida community in the Board Hindu School at Aamayur near Pattambi.<sup>129</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* vehemently argued for reformation of matrilineal customs among Nairs. It suggested that as long as the custom exists, there would be only loss and ruin for the community.<sup>130</sup>It worked for the promotion of women's education by carrying the news items of various agencies like All India Women's Education Conference. *Mathrubhoomi*

<sup>126</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1929.

<sup>127</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 7<sup>th</sup> September 1929.

<sup>128</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1923.

<sup>129</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1928

<sup>130</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1930.

was of the opinion that satisfactory results may ensue in the case of reforming and propagating women's education, only if women themselves try for their upliftment.<sup>131</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* worked wholeheartedly for the reform movements in the Namboothiri community by extending adequate encouragement. It cautioned the Namboothiri youths that the community will perish unless they reform themselves with the change of time. It asked them not to befool the Namboothiri women in the bondages of absurd customs as they did in the past. They are also human beings like men with pulsating heart and vigour of spirit.<sup>132</sup> It carried with due importance the news item informing the incorporation of the first lady member Mrs.S.S Sankaran Namboothiri in the Namboothiri Yuvajana Samgham. In the report it appealed all Namboothiri women to awake from slumber and asked to feel shy of their customs and rituals.<sup>133</sup> It published as a news item the resolution passed by the Namboothiri Yuvajana Sabha at Vellinezhi which requested the lady members of Kochi, Travancore and Malabar Legislative Councils to prepare a Bill to ban the most abominable and obnoxious custom-the polygamy among Namboothiri men. It suggested that for the progress of Namboothiri community its girls and boys should be brave enough to breach the ridiculous customs.<sup>134</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* advised the affluent Namboothiris to send their boys to public schools as other communities do. If so, they can live in harmony with boys of other communities. Since today's girls are the mothers of tomorrow it is high time that we should pay attention in their education also.<sup>135</sup> It was very happy to publish the progressive decisions

<sup>131</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1928.

<sup>132</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 27<sup>th</sup> August 1927.

<sup>133</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 11<sup>th</sup> December 1928.

<sup>134</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1928.

<sup>135</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1928.

of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha. When the Sabha passed the resolution asking the members of the Legislative Councils of Madras, Kochi and Travancore to prepare a draft Bill to eradicate the wretched custom of polygamy *Mathrubhoomi* published the news item with splendid display.<sup>136</sup>

Education and reformation of the Muslim community was also *Mathrubhoomi*'s thrust area. It quoted in full text the speech of Komukutty Maulavi made at the public convention of Kozhikode Muslim Samajam in which he highlighted the need for reforming the Muslim community. The Musaliars are the sole cause for the deterioration of Muslim community. The present deplorable situation is due to the fact that they use to hide certain realities and misuse the community as a puppet for their selfish ends. Their aversion and detestation towards modern systems like schools, newspapers and co-operative societies is known to all. He asked the Muslim community not to be carried away by the words of such clergymen.<sup>137</sup> It also brought to the notice of the public that the Muslim Girl's School opened at Vatakara on an experimental basis was closed due to the deliberate deeds of a few. Though the students attended the classes almost a week, due to their mal-advice that acquiring education from school is against Islam, the children stopped coming school. Actually they are ignorant of the real picture in countries like Turkey and Afganistan, the centres of Islam.<sup>138</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* highlighted the need for higher secondary schools in Kurumbranad Taluk. At present there are only four such schools for the entire area though there are more than sixty elementary schools under Taluk Board. In fact a student who studied up to fifth

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<sup>136</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1929.

<sup>137</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1926.

<sup>138</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 21<sup>st</sup> August 1928.

standard knows only just to read and write. Actually he does not have any use by that. Because of this lack of facility the student who passed the fifth standard again continues in the same class. The condition of Thikkodi Board School is also the same”.<sup>139</sup>

As in *Mithavadi* the conversion of Thiyyas to Buddhism was widely discussed in *Mathrubhoomi* also. It carried a news item of the Thiyya convention held at Kuzhalmandam in which Sahodaran Ayyappan, Swami Satyavruthan and Swami Sivaprasad suggested the necessity of Thiyya community following Buddhism.<sup>140</sup> But in another report *Mathrubhoomi* pointed out that the *Mithavadi* version about the mass conversion of Ezhavas of Palakkad taluk to Buddhism makes a distorted impression among people.<sup>141</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* was a playground for the writers also. The special supplement of *Mathrubhoomi* that issued for the first time in 1926 was a major event. The writers and readers of Kerala were very eagerly looking for such supplements every year. *Mathrubhoomi* weekly in those days tried to include new columns and endeavoured to welcome new writers. In respect of ideology and morals total impartiality was the general norm. Therefore the weekly could make the parade of diverse opinions in a common platform and by this kind of healthy interaction it could extract novel thoughts and ideas. The leading writers of the subsequent times were all trained in the pages of *Mathrubhoomi* weekly. Vidwan C.S Nair, K.V.M, K.Kelappan, A.K Pillai, A.Balakrishna Pillai, Puthezhathu Rama Menon, M.R Nair, K.P Kesava Menon, Chelanatt Achutha Menon, A.Ayyappan, A.D Harisharma, Joseph Mundasserry, Kuttikrishna Marar, P.Kesava Dev, Murkoth Kumaran, Kuttippuzha

<sup>139</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 18<sup>th</sup> March 1926.

<sup>140</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1923.

<sup>141</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 1<sup>st</sup> Novemeber 1923.

Krishna Pillai, Vagbhadananda Gurudevan and so on were the prominent writers thus mellowed and ripened.<sup>142</sup> It was through *Mathrubhoomi* that the famous poem of Mahakavi Vallathol *Ente Gurunathan* reached the readers. The biography of Mahatma Gandhi which was translated by Madhavanaar was serialized in *Mathrubhoomi* under the title “Ente Sathyanweshana Pareekshana Kathakal’ (*My Experiments with Truth*). *Mathrubhoomi* published it in the book form also. The influence it exerted upon the readers was tremendous.<sup>143</sup>

Witnessing the steep increase in the number of newspapers in Malayalam, *Mathrubhoomi* made a proposal to form a Council of the newspapers and magazines of Kerala. “Now day by day newspapers and their readers are increasing. At present their total number is more than two hundred. These newspapers have given contributions not only to change the opinion but also to manifest new thoughts among thousands of readers of Kerala. To exercise this larger obligation of the newspapers, certain arrangements like a Council is necessary. The newspapers have a major role in the development of the language also. In order to chalk out new words and to reform certain words having various shades of meaning in various parts of Kerala, the Council can help. Therefore a Journalists’ Association is quite necessary”.<sup>144</sup>

### ***Mathrubhoomi versus Mithavadi***

During the boycott struggle of foreign dress the police of Calicut extended a sympathetic treatment towards the satyagrahis. But in places like Pappiniserry, Kannapuram, Kalyasserry and Cherukunnu in North Malabar they had to suffer much torture from the police. At this moment

<sup>142</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, p.374.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p.243.

<sup>144</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1928.

Adv.C.Krishnan in his editorial in *Mithavadi*, justified the policy of the police in North Malabar and requested them to implement the same in South Malabar also. Then K.P Raman Menon sent a reply to *Mithavadi* which Krishnan rejected. Later it was published in *Mathrubhoomi* with the heading ‘policine akramathinu prerippikkukayo’ (Actuating the police for violence?). In that Raman Menon said, “At present pseudo-patriotism like that of Adv.Krishnan is on an increasing scale in the district. From a paper like *Mithavadi* everybody expects moral endurance, and broad outlook. Its name itself indicates ‘moderate advocate’. Don’t aggravate the agony of Congress workers by this kind of distorted pieces of advice which may eventually lead to restlessness and bloodshed.”<sup>145</sup>

*Mithavadi* once qualified *Mathrubhoomi* as ‘Nayanmaarude pathram’ (the paper of the Nairs). Then *Mathrubhoomi* asked if it is the religion or caste of the editor that determines the caste of a paper? If so *Mithavadi* is also not beyond the consideration of caste. Then *Mithavadi* replied that Buddhism is based neither on caste nor castelessness. To this *Mathrubhoomi* retorted by expressing the doubt, why some Buddhists are saying that they are Thiyyas?” To this *Mithavadi* gave a repartee that if *Mathrubhoomi* is not a Nair paper it may be a Brahmin paper. To this *Mathrubhoomi* gave the reply that so far we had only an impression that *Mithavadi*’s caste discrimination is very harsh. We had not thought that their idiocy and ridiculousness is so intense. At this *Mithavadi* asked if the editor of *Mathrubhoomi* hasn’t any caste feeling why he is using the caste name. Then *Mathrubhoomi* replied that the Buddhist editor of *Mithavadi* hasnot got any special permission to use a Hindu name.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>145</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, pp.280-81.

<sup>146</sup> C.Uthama Kurup, (et.al), *Mathrubhoomiyude Charithram*, (Mal), Vol.II, Kozhikode, 1998, pp.81-82.

When South Indian Railway Employees went on a strike *Mithavadi* criticized it sharply. It said that majority of the strikers do not know for why they have done so. It also said that there are a few persons in our country who have been creating this kind of problems, a part of their profession. Then *Mathrubhoomi* asked from where it was and when it was that *Mithavadi* came to know as to majority of the strikers do not know the cause of the strike. It also wrote that they do not think that employees are idiots as *Mithavadi* imagine. In the public meetings held at the Town Hall during the last two three days, the representative of *Mithavadi* should have been present. If so from the actions and discussions of the employees they could have known the real fact indeed.<sup>147</sup>

### ***Al-Ameen* - Synonym of Honesty.**

In the history of national movement *Al-Ameen* has a very important place just like *Mathrubhoomi*. After the Malabar riots of 1921 the Muslim community was almost kept apart from the national mainstream and Congress movement. It was *Al-Ameen* that brought them back to the fold of national movement and presented vehemently the stance of the minorities for the consideration of the public.<sup>148</sup>

*Al-Ameen* Company was registered in 1923 under the leadership of Muhammad Abdurahman even before the launching of *Mathrubhoomi*. Under its auspicious a newspaper *Al-Ameen* which means ‘honesty’ was started on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1924, on Prophet Muhammad Nabi’s birthday.<sup>149</sup> The first issue was published with a message from Mahakavi Vallathol. In the beginning it was published as

<sup>147</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 24<sup>th</sup> July 1928.

<sup>148</sup> N.P Chekkutty, *Muhammad Abdurahiman*, (Mal), New Delhi, 2005, p.65.

<sup>149</sup> Khadar Pannikkottur, “*Al-Ameen*, Swathanthrya Samarathinte Padavaal”, *Varadya Madhyamam*, 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1997.

tri-weekly. Before the launching of *Al-Ameen*, Abdurahiman issued a statement in *Mathrubhoomi* highlighting the essential character of his paper. “..In *Al-Ameen* along with the local news and telegraphic messages there will be various articles borrowed from English, Arabic, Urdu and Tamil newspapers in India and abroad. It will be very helpful to know about Khilafat and Congress related news. The opinions published by Moulana Muhammadali Sahib in his *Comrade* will be carried in *Al-Ameen* also”.<sup>150</sup> Greeting *Al-Ameen* the *Mathrubhoomi* published a write up under the heading ‘Njangalude Puthiya Sahajeevi’ (Our New Mate).<sup>151</sup> The first issue of *Al-Ameen* came out with the editorial criticizing the Andaman scheme, which had been manifested to destroy the Mappilas who were brimming with national pride, mental courage, valiance and British hatred.<sup>152</sup>

In order to make the motherland independent, to instil national pride and sense of independence among the people and to invigorate the Muslim community dumped in blind beliefs and illiteracy were Abdurahiman’s aims. He wanted to cultivate honesty, serenity and morality in political, cultural and administrative sectors. He also waged a fight against injustice and dishonesty of any kind, without thinking of future consequences. Theruvath Raman has underlined the sincere and unrelenting role played by Muhammad Abdurahiman. “*Al-Ameen* edited by Muhammed Abdurahman made a biforked approach, an attack against the social evils prevalent among the conservative Muslim society and an attempt to bring the Muslims to the mainstream of

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<sup>150</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1924.

<sup>151</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 14<sup>th</sup> October 1924.

<sup>152</sup> S.K Pottekkatt, (et.al), *Muhammad Abdurahiman*, (Mal), Kozhikode, 1985, p.140.

nationality. By and large the reform and regeneration of his community was the mission. It had no business intentions at all”.<sup>153</sup>

It was *Al-Ameen* that installed the Muslims in the forefront of the fight against the imperial forces. It played foremost role in elevating the Muslims of Kerala in political, educational and cultural spheres. *Al-Ameen* which always fired shots against the British imperialism was a nightmare of the authorities. Because of that reason the paper was banned more than once.<sup>154</sup> Abdurahiman was the first political leader who endeavoured much to redeem the Muslim community from the yoke of Muslim clergy. All Muslim organizations that worked against blind belief and unhealthy rituals got support from him.<sup>155</sup> As a result *Al-Ameen* and Abdurahiman had to resist attacks from several corners. The conservatives of the Muslim community, the rightist group of his own party and the white dominated foreign government together darted arrows simultaneously. The Muslim orthodoxy observed *Al-Ameen* as not a fighter for freedom, but as a paper that favoured the Hindus as it resisted all the blind beliefs, unnecessary interventions of the clergy and all unhealthy customs. By giving publicity to labour strikes and leftist ideology *Al-Ameen* became the enemy of the right wing of the Congress party especially the ‘Sunday Congressmen’<sup>156</sup> who branded it as a Muslim paper.<sup>157</sup>

In fact Abdurahiman wished the Muslims should be an inseparable part of the Indian nationality. He was of the view that

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>154</sup> *Islamika Vijnjanakosham*, p.526.

<sup>155</sup> M.N Karasserry, “Abdurahimante Orma”, *Granthalokam magazine*, November 2001, p.28.

<sup>156</sup> The right wing of the Congress party was mainly constituted of the upper class Hindus. Many of them were advocates and employees who could spare only Sunday for Congress activities.

<sup>157</sup> Khadar Pannikkottur, “Al-Ameen, Swathanthrya Samarathinte Padavaal”, *op.cit.*

patriotism is a part of one's faith in religion. The heading for the famous editorial in *Al-Ameen*, written in connection with the Salt Satyagraha was 'Jihad-ul-Akbar' (The Great Holy War). He wrote, "If patriotism is an integral part of one's faith and if Islam is a religion that hails the message of freedom it is the duty of a true Muslim to sacrifice everything for the salvation of the mother country and for salvation to heaven.....It is sure that the successors of the ancient Mussalmen who preserved perpetual peace and perennial happiness in this world, will not bow their heads before this foreign evil ghosts, as long as they have life in their body. If the Muslim folk of today are indeed the successors of those great heroes who made a valiant battle against these foreign evil ghosts and became martyrs, they may stand like rock in this battle for freedom".<sup>158</sup> This kind of appeals made by *Al-Ameen* based on Islamic ideology provoked the conservative Muslims. The Muslim nobility who were one with both the Muslim League and the British Government attacked *Al-Ameen* and its editor overtly and covertly. But *Al-Ameen* marched forward overcoming all such obstacles. It was not ready to dilute its ideology and belief.<sup>159</sup>

To confront all such ordeals Abdurahiman got an inner-strength derived from spirituality. He observed the principles of Islam strictly in his life. The roots of his desire for freedom were ramified in nationalism and faith in his religion. It is his religion that manifested the personality of Abdurahiman which made him to choose a Quran sentence as the motto of his paper *Al-Ameen*. "Believers, observe justice and witness the way of God, though it is against your relatives, parents or yourself."<sup>160</sup> Abdurahman taught the lesson of endurance and sacrifice. Service of the

<sup>158</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1930.

<sup>159</sup> M.Rasheed, "Sahibinte Vyakthithwam", *Granthalokam magazine*, November 2001, pp.12-13.

<sup>160</sup> M.N Karasserry, "Abdurahimante Orma", *op.cit.*, pp.26-27.

community and service of the country were the principles that he highlighted through *Al-Ameen*. “The troubles and sorrows we endure on account of the scarcity that has befallen on our country are not a few. Various kinds of miseries like economic, physical and spiritual consequent to drink and intoxication are indeed insufferable. ..God blesses such suffering and sacrifice. The history of Islam teaches us that by suffering, sacrifice and non-violence, the Muslim community, the religion and the country have derived great benefit. The service of the community and the service of the country are indispensable duties of ours. It is deplorable that Kerala Muslims are now backward in these matters. To remove the ill-fame, he asked his people to undergo some sacrifice.<sup>161</sup> *Al-Ameen* once pointed out that Abdurahiman Sahib suffered all the persecutions at the hands of the police with a smiling face. He went to jail only to save the fair name of the Kerala Muslims and that it is the duty of the Muslims of Kerala to make his efforts successful.<sup>162</sup> His writings and appeals had the desired effect. During the days of Salt Satyagraha he wrote, it is creditable for Muslims that the number of their warriors who are bold enough to sacrifice their lives for India and Islam is increasing. He wished that the war of Salt Satyagraha (Jihad-ul-Akbar) be victorious.<sup>163</sup>

Honesty was the hall mark of Abdurahiman. “The former communist leader of Delhi and a disciple of Abdurahiman, M.Ishak once narrated about his guru’s honesty and the perseverance in the mission of journalism. Abdurahiman was perfectly honest. It was this honesty that his enemies exploited to make *Al-Ameen* tight-lipped. Once Abdurahiman borrowed 5000 rupees from a person on pronote to

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<sup>161</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1930, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>162</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1930, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>163</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 6<sup>th</sup> July 1930, MNNPR, TNA.

purchase types and machinery for Al-Ameen press. Due to financial problems he could not repay it on time. Since the creditor had no such problems he forgot about the pronote. According to law, one need not give the money back to the creditor after the expiry of the pronote. At last when the creditor approached, Abdurahiman said that though law is in his favour it is not proper for a true Muslim to breach the promise. Therefore Abdurahman agreed to renew the pronote. Subsequently another Muslim landlord who had close contact with the British government and the Muslim League purchased that pronote giving more money. Next time also Abdurahiman could not give the money on time. Immediately the landlord filed a suit against Abdurahiman. In the court Abdurahiman said that he has no money and so he is ready to go to jail. In those days if the borrowers failed to give the money they were sent to 'civil jail'. The petitioner has to bear the expenses of the borrower during this period of detention. But the Sub-judge Krishnan Nambiar asked Abdurahiman to see him personally in his chamber in the afternoon. Sub-judge told him that although he is ready to go to jail, the court is not ready to send him. The Sub-judge extended the repayment period by one more month. But this time also he could not pay the creditor. On the day of next posting, before going to court Abdurahiman gave directions to publish the report 'I am Going to Jail' anticipating his imprisonment. But this time also the Sub-judge did not sent him to jail, but allowed two more months to repay. Unfortunately, before his reaching Al-Ameen office, the paper had come out with the report of his imprisonment. Due to the acute financial difficulty he did not go for reprint, but allowed to distribute the same copies with the report of his imprisonment even when he was free. It was thus his followers came to know about their leader's financial constraints. Subsequently they

collected funds and repaid the creditor”.<sup>164</sup> This also highlights the difficulties he has undergone to exercise fair journalism in those days of trials and tribulations, when print media was just passing its infancy.

The news item published against a Muslim landlord of Calicut Mr.Khan Bahadur Pookkoya Thangal is another example. Reading the report Pookkoya Thangal gave Abdurahiman an ultimatum to withdraw it. He also threatened that otherwise he will make more than five hundred of its subscribers to stop the subscription. But Abdurahiman gave him a reply that what has been published in the paper is true to his conscience and so no matter of withdrawal of the news-item. At this time the Muslim youth took the threat of the nobility as a challenge and they constituted Youth Forums to help *Al-Ameen*.<sup>165</sup>

Abdurahiman was always with the have nots and the downtrodden. He fought against the exploitations of the *janmis* and landlords. Therefore he extended all co-operations to socialists to organize farmers and labourers with the knowledge that they are materialists. *Al-Ameen* also carried with importance the news items which were ignored by other papers so far. All these deeds provoked its detractors and out of venom advertisements were denied to *Al-Ameen*. Yet *Al-Ameen* and Abdurahiman did not budge an inch from their ideological stand.<sup>166</sup>

*Al-Ameen* provided miraculous service to the people of Lakshadweep by publishing reports which exposed the corruption rampant in the concerned section of the Hajur office. Once a man from

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<sup>164</sup> M.Rasheed, “Keralathinte Veeraputhran”, in *Malayala Manorama* daily, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2005, N.P Chekkutty, *op.cit.*, pp.62-63.

<sup>165</sup> Khadar Pannikkottur, “Al-Ameen, Swathanthrya Samarathinte Padavaal”, *op.cit.*

<sup>166</sup> M.Rasheed, “Sahibinte Vyakthithwam”, *op.cit.*

Agathi named Kunhikoya, was urgently in need of some records to argue a case in the court. But the clerk dealing with the records in the section did not give him the papers for want of bribes. Immediately an in-depth report was published in *Al-Ameen*. Also Abdurahiman met the Collector with the complainant. When the Collector was convinced of the bribery in the office, the clerk in charge was expelled from service. A few others who used to receive bribes along with him were transferred to some other places. In retaliation to this the officials again continued to harass the people of Lakshadweep. Then *Al-Ameen* wrote an editorial giving the warning 'if crushed too much, the rat-snake will also bite'. That ultimatum was found very effective and fruitful.<sup>167</sup>

To create public awareness *Al-Ameen* wrote several reports questioning the malicious intentions of the British Government. It observed that poverty, the most wide spread evil is the result of the British rule. The Government only thinks of new means to increase the revenue and never thinks of improving the condition of the people. In respect of education, health and economic conditions of the people there is no room left for complimenting the Government. There is no other country in the world which has such a huge illiterate population as 95%. As for health, the average life is only 23 years.<sup>168</sup>

With the mission of spreading nationalism *Al-Ameen* took up various issues. During the advent of Simon Commission it appealed the people to boycott it. It wrote that the task before the freedom loving Indians is not to be frightened by threats of the British and not to be misled by their pretty promises. It also appealed the people of Calicut to

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<sup>167</sup> S.K Pottekkatt, (et.al), *op.cit.*, pp. 153-54.

<sup>168</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1926, MNNPR, TNA.

prove their manhood and self-esteem by observing a successful hartal on the day of the arrival of Simon Commission.<sup>169</sup>

Among the Khilafat leaders Muhammad Abdurahiman alone could bring the issue of Mappila relief before the Government as well as to the public. He had sent a letter to the District Collector E.F Thomas calling the government attention to the need for relief work among the Mappila women and children in the rebel area. Evenafter he sent many reminders, the Collector paid little heed to the letters. But eventually the letter was published by the *Bombay Chronicle* and *The Hindu*. This aroused the sympathy of the public especially the Muslim public. But Abdurahiman was arrested according to military law, on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1922 for creating disappointment in the refugee camps and misunderstanding among the outside people.<sup>170</sup> As a result of the works of Abdurahiman, Muslims of North India got sensitized to the issue. A mammoth meeting was convened at Chawpatti in Bombay to discuss the issue and mobilize fund for Mappila relief.<sup>171</sup> Two sons of the President of Congress-Khilafat Committee of Punjab reached Calicut to organize relief work for Mappilas. They were Muhyudhin Ahmed Ceasuri and Muhammedali Ceasuri. They visited the rebel areas to have direct experience of the situation. Consequently they started six relief centres in rebel areas and Calicut.<sup>172</sup>

It is true that *Al-Ameen* was not born during the days of wagon tragedy. When the Malabar riots broke out in 1921, there was not any newspaper favouring the nationalists to expose the real events and so the

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<sup>169</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1928.

<sup>170</sup> M.P Mujib Rahman, "Malayali Maranna Sahib", *Madhyamam* daily, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1999.

<sup>171</sup> V.S Keraleeyan, *Keralathinte Veeraputhran*, (Mal), Alwaye, 1998, p.113.

<sup>172</sup> Malayil Muhammadkutty, "Jeevitham Udaneelam Samaramaakkiya Nethav", *Chandrika* daily, 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2002.

people were left in the lurch. It was only after the advent of *Abduahiman* and *Al-Ameen* that people got an exact picture of the devilish deeds of the British imperial Government. It was keen and attentive in reminding those bitter days experienced by the Muslim community and waking up their conscience. On 19<sup>th</sup> November, the anniversary of the train tragedy of 1921, *Al-Ameen* recapitulated the circumstance that led to the death by suffocation of 70 Mappila prisoners in the goods wagon to Coimbatore. It observed that such an incident as this, will not be found even in the history of the notorious cruelties of the rulers of the Roman Empire. There is little difference between the Malabar rebellion and the Punjab massacre. It asked if the Black hole of Calcutta which was the product of the imagination of British merchants would excel the cruelty of this wagon.<sup>173</sup>

In the report ‘On the road to Non- co-operation’ *Al-Ameen* expressed joy in the decision of the Working Committee of the Congress that all Congress members should resign their membership of the Legislative Council. It wrote, “Our opinion is that the Congress should not deviate from its straight path but should proceed steadily towards its goal of liberty. It should be ready even now to revert to Non-co-operation, to liberate its members from the Councils and to do everything necessary to prepare the country for the fight for freedom that might become necessary in 1930.”<sup>174</sup>

At first *Al-Ameen* was published as a tri-weekly. When the Civil-Disobedience Movement was started in 1930 it had to become more vibrant to disseminate the news of the agitations as early as possible. As a result it became necessary to publish *Al-Ameen* as a daily from 25<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1925, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>174</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1929, MNNPR, TNA.

June 1930 onwards.<sup>175</sup> But for the single reason that Abdurahiman participated in the Salt Satyagraha he was arrested and imprisoned on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1930 along with several other Congress leaders including Chief Editor of *Mathrubhoomi* K.Kelappan. Abdurahiman was released only on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1930. While he was in jail he wrote an editorial in *Al-Ameen* entitled 'Government and the Newspapers'. "It is doubtful whether the rulers here are aware of the importance, the modern Governments attach to newspapers which are in fact the public's tongue. The newspapers that speak the truth are forced to make a premature death here. Even if it is harmful to us, what Muhammad Nabi taught is to speak out the truth. But in the present situation it is difficult to run a newspaper according to the preachings of the Prophet. His teaching is that one who does not make his frank opinion is a 'deaf Satan'. Some parties who have vested interests want to make *Al-Ameen*, a deaf Satan. But if *Al-Ameen* is coerced to surrender to such a situation it will be extremely happy to extend its neck to any sharp weapon but will not like to live even for such a moment".<sup>176</sup> The editorials written against the curfew and the reports of the agitations made by the Congress enraged the authorities. Immediately they imposed upon *Al-Ameen* on August 4<sup>th</sup> the Press Ordinance which ordered it to remit Rs.2000 as advance security. Since Abdurahiman denied paying the amount the *Al-Ameen* press was sealed.<sup>177</sup>

During the Civil-Disobedience period when Abdurahiman continued to write articles attacking the government, *Mathrubhoomi* which was supposed to be the official organ of the Congress party, although strangled by ordinances and unfriendly Acts, took only a

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<sup>175</sup> G.Priyadarsanan, *op.cit.*, p.210.

<sup>176</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 29<sup>th</sup> July 1930.

<sup>177</sup> N.P Chekkutty, *op.cit.*, p.64.

sober stand. At the same time *Al-Ameen* sacrificed even its life. The daring editorials and the inspiring reports fascinated more and more Congress workers for Civil-Disobedience. In fact *Al-Ameen* did not think of its future, but made homage on the altar of the ultimate goal of Congress party-India's freedom. On the other hand *Mathrubhoomi* which left the editorial column blank protesting in the arrest of Kelappan dared to open its mouth only on 13<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>178</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* issued a statement justifying their stand in this issue. "Had we expressed our opinions without hiding the facts and betraying our conscience, about the amazing news breaks during the last six months in the history of India, *Mathrubhoomi* would have been a victim of the Press Ordinance. If so it would not have been possible for us to inform the public about the news regarding the tortures unleashed by the despotic rulers in an unkindly manner in various parts of India. It was because of this strong conviction that we left the editorial column blank since the arrest of Kelappan Nair."<sup>179</sup>

In this issue it can be seen that *Mathrubhoomi*'s stance was totally pragmatic. It thought that existence is more important than exercising the duty. This approach won for them long term gains. But *Al-Ameen* was more committed and emotional. It was the unrelenting determination of Abdurahiman and *Al-Ameen* that inspired more and more workers to court arrest in the agitations and make Civil-Disobedience Movement a success. For this the price he had to pay was the life of his paper. Yet in the political level the short term gains it achieved was wonderful.

*Al-Ameen* was in the forefront of the Congress even when there was a feeling that the right wing was forsaking the Muslim community.

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<sup>178</sup> Interview with M.Rasheed, Ponnani on 04-01-2006.

<sup>179</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, p.277.

Abdurahiman had great compassion and respect for Gandhiji. *Al-Ameen* published the notice issued by the President of the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee Calicut, announcing 24<sup>th</sup> November as the ‘Boycott Day’ and to be observed with processions, public meetings and picketing of foreign cloth shops. It reminded that while Gandhiji and more than seventy thousand brothers and sisters are suffering in jails, our lives will be futile if we do not try to stop the trade in foreign cloths.<sup>180</sup>

After cessation of publication for three and a half months, in consequence of its unwillingness to pay security demanded of it, the *Al-Ameen* re-appeared on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1930. The statement carried in the first issue after republication showed the editor’s indomitable courage and commitment. He wrote, “We who had the good fortune or misfortune to receive on ourselves one of the ordinance sword blow, dealt by Lord Irwin’s Government on new India, are very glad to appear once again without the shadow of slavery.”<sup>181</sup> Bearing great difficulties, with crippled legs it continued until 1939. Consequent to the editorial in *Al-Ameen*, asking the Indians not to co-operate with the war efforts of Britain, it was banned on 29<sup>th</sup> September. Within months Abdurahiman was also arrested and sent to jail. Until September 1945 he was in various jails. After his release he lived only for 77 days.<sup>182</sup> Thus *Al-Ameen* and its founder Abdurahiman, though short lived like lightning, could radiate immense light in the heart of a people who were under fetters. *Al-Ameen* could give vigour and vitality to a crucial period in the history of Kerala. It inspired not the nationalist workers of those times alone. But it showered its immense influence as leader of leaders.<sup>183</sup>

<sup>180</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1930, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>181</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1930, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>182</sup> N.P Chekkutty, *op.cit.*, pp.64-65.

<sup>183</sup> S.K Pottekkatt, et.al, *op.cit.*, p.163.

The services of *Al-Ameen* were confined not to politics alone. The contributions it paid to Malayalam language and literature are immense. It gave much encouragement to educational workers and all those who love the language. It had a major role in finding correct Malayalam translations for English words. It could nurture a cultural group behind it and contribute a new style of writing and usage. *Al-Ameen* had the courage to publish the articles of the leftist leaders like K.Damodaran and N.C Shekhar. It encouraged the writers like Vaikkam Muhammad Basheer, K.A Kodungallur, N.P Muhammad, M.Rasheed, Vakkam Abdul Khadar and Vaikkam Said and so on. S.K Pottekkatt was a daily visitor to *Al-Ameen* office. When K.Damodaran translated *Communist Manifesto* into Malayalam entitled ‘Samashtivada Vijnjapanam’ in 1937 none was ready to print it for him since Communist Party was banned during that period. At last K.Damodarn, A.K.G and N.C Shekhar approached Abdurahiman. Without delay the copies of *Communist Manifesto* printed in the *Al-Ameen* press came out.<sup>184</sup> Thus *Al-Ameen* was credited with printing the *Communist Manifesto* for the first time in Malayalam. He supported the Jeeval Sahithya Samgham (the new literary trend that developed in Malayalam during the 1930’s in which the writers said, art for lifesake instead of the earlier argument art for art sake) which made vibrations in the literary field.<sup>185</sup>

E.M.S comments about the services of *Al-Ameen* and Abdurahiman. “Subsequent to the riots of 1921 when the Muslims of Eranad and Valluvanad taluks were suppressed brutally, it was *Al-Ameen* paper that inspired in them self-confidence and thirst for freedom. It was Abdurahiman who gave them leadership. During the time of Salt Satyagraha in the 1930’s I was a student. In those days I

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<sup>184</sup> M.Rasheed, “Sahibinte Vyakthithwam”, *op.cit.*, p.17.

<sup>185</sup> M.N Karasserry, *op.cit.*, p.28.

read regularly *Al-Ameen* just like *Mathrubhoomi*. *Al-Ameen* could exert in young nationalists like me, an influence not less than *Mathrubhoomi*.”<sup>186</sup> It is because of his valiant deeds and immense heroism that Muhammad Abdurahiman became the title of almost half a dozen poets of Kerala. Edasseri’s ‘Abdurahiman’, P.Kunhiraman Nair’s ‘Veera Musalman’ (Brave Musselman), Vailoppilly’s ‘Abdurahiman’, Akkitham’s ‘Maranamillatha Manushyan’ (Immortal Man) etc. are such literary creations hailing his outstanding deeds.<sup>187</sup>

### **Nationalist Newspapers- But with Different voices**

*Al-Ameen* and *Mathrubhoomi* were both nationalist newspapers with the same goal of achieving freedom of India. But it was, these two papers and their leaders, who actually paraded the Congress workers in two different camps and became their spokespersons and prophets.<sup>188</sup> E.M.S says, “No sooner *Mathrubhoomi*, which was generally regarded as the official organ of Congress had launched than came another Congress paper *Al-Ameen* under Muhammed Abdurahiman Sahib. From that day onwards upto 1942 there was a competition mostly indirect and sometimes direct between Chalappuram Congress and Ameen lodge”.<sup>189</sup>

E.M.S exposes the contradictory stands taken by the two diverse groups of congress led by K.Kelappan and Abdurahiman. He says, “Though the Congress has been able to make the simultaneous parade of Hindus and Muslims in the national struggle against the British, its central leadership is still not able to advise with acceptable and justifiable principles as to how the Hindu-Muslim unity is to be

<sup>186</sup> E.M.S, “Thirinju Nokkumpol”, *Deshabhimani* weekly, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1977.

<sup>187</sup> Dr.Asad, “Muhammad Abdurahiman, Kavithakalil”, *Granthalokam* magazine, November 2001, p.42.

<sup>188</sup> N.P Chekkutty, *op.cit.*, p.58.

<sup>189</sup> *E.M.S Sampoorana Kruthikal*, (Mal), Sanchika No.9, Trivandrum, 1998, p.365.

structured. Hindus argue that it is unjust and anti-national to allow special schools and Mulla teachers for Muslim students. At the same time Muslims claim that their demands are just and the Hindus who try to deny them are in fact communal. This was the basic reason for the tussle between *Mathrubhoomi* and *Al-Ameen*. Muhammed Abdurahiman, a pious and an ardent lover of Muslim community advocated in the strong language for the social and religious needs of Muslims. He said that if the Congress allowed them, the Muslim community will have more trust and confidence in it and so hundreds of Muslims will join the organisation which ultimately will help the growth of nationalism. At the same time if the Congress denied the above needs the Muslims will come to think that it is an anti-Muslim organisation and so anti-national. Just opposite to this, is the stand of K.Kelappan who claimed himself as not at all communal. He said that the demands of Abdurahiman will only perpetuate the special privileges granted to Muslims at present and so his demands are anti-national. In course of time Kelappan thought and said of Abdurahiman as a ‘communal Muslim in khaddar dress’ and Abdurahiman thought and said of Kelappan as ‘a communal Nair who just deleted the suffix ‘Nair’ from his name’.<sup>190</sup>

*Al-Ameen* questioned the religion of *Mathrubhoomi* also. The reason was the objection of *Mathrubhoomi* against the conversion of Hindus during those times. Then came the allegation that the editor of *Mathrubhoomi* K.Kelappan is a follower of Aryasamaj movement. As a reply *Mathrubhoomi* juxtaposed the contradictory argument of *Al-Ameen* in respect of religion. “*Al-Ameen* says that Islam allows freedom of religion to all. But at the same time it says that any attempt of the believers of Islam to espouse other religions should be resisted. A

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<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.368-69.

religion which claims that it tolerate freedom of religion to all, if dislikes the conversion of somebody to some other religion and if advises to resist such attempts, that amounts to the denial of freedom of religion. We denounce the attempt for conversion by anyone. *Mathrubhoomi* has not any religion. Islam and Hinduism are alike for *Mathruboomi*. We don't see it as a danger in somebody receiving or rejecting a religion. *Al-Ameen* should understand that Kelappan is not an Aryasamajist".<sup>191</sup>

### **Together with One Voice**

But in several issues of common cause *Mathrubhoomi* and *Al-Ameen* raised their voice together. Whether it is the Press Regulation of Travancore or Prohibition or Andaman scheme they fought with one mind and voice.

#### **1. For the Freedom of the Press**

*Mathrubhoomi* published several reports and editorials against the Press Regulation Act of Travancore and the despotic orders of Diwan Watts. In the editorial which sharply criticized this black law, *Mathrubhoomi* said, "The Regent Maharani of Travancore by the use of her pen for a split second was destroying the freedom of expression of the subjects of Travancore and thus tarnishing the good image of her Government among the governments of other princely states. So far the people of Travancore had one solace that they have at least the right to express their opinion, although they don't have the freedom to participate in the democratic rule of the country. But in this 20<sup>th</sup> century instead of acquiring more freedom they were losing what all they already have".<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> C.Uthama Kurup, et.al., *op.cit.*, p.82.

<sup>192</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, p.149.

*Mathrubhoomi* in another report said that the authorities of Travancore might have the desire to extinguish the civic consciousness of their people. But now it has become clear that such wish is really out of place. Now the people have explicitly told that until this Act is called off they will not remain idle. The protest meetings held at Trivandrum and other places bear witness to the determination of the people of Travancore. If this regulation indirectly incites them to fight for responsible Government, in a way the despotic act of Watts may become a boon.<sup>193</sup> Three days after this report, it published the resolution of the Kochi Journalists' Union which denounced the Press Regulation Act of Travancore and asked the Government to withdraw the same immediately.<sup>194</sup> Without delay *Mathrubhoomi* published another item expressing strong doubt whether the Government is vowed to rule against the wish of the people and their liberty. It said that now the Regent Maharani has denied permission for the journalists' deputation who came to submit her a memorandum. Also it gave a warning that sooner or later Maharani and her advisers will become fully aware of the fact that torture is not a pragmatic policy to rule the country.<sup>195</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* sarcastically wrote that the first and foremost good that Diwan Watts has done to the country is the Press Regulation Act and thereby the ban exercised over the newspapers of Travancore.<sup>196</sup>

*Al-Ameen* also responded to the atrocities in the neighbouring princely state. About the Travancore Press Regulation Act it wrote, "If the Government really thinks of retaining this black law (Travancore Press Regulation) which has robbed the people of their freedom, which is their birth-right, we shall have to surmise that Travancore has lost the

<sup>193</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1926.

<sup>194</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1926.

<sup>195</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1926.

<sup>196</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1928.

prestige and enlightenment which she had till now”.<sup>197</sup> The paper considered it a misfortune that such an irresponsible Government ruling over an enlightened and public-spirited people.

## 2. Against Liquor

*Mathrubhoomi*'s endeavours for prohibition and temperance are amazing. It published all kinds of reports aimed at achieving the above goal. It blamed the Madras Government that it has given liberty only in drinking alcohol. When four lakh rupees was sanctioned by the Madras Government for campaign works towards the necessity of temperance, *Mathrubhoomi* wrote that it is a mere waste. If the Government sincerely regards temperance as an immediate experience instead of a distant goal it should close a few shops at least. It is ridiculous to campaign against consuming liquor with all liquor shops open. The fact is that the Government is not prepared to give up the income from liquor. This four lakh rupees is to conceal the above truth. Therefore the people should come forward for a struggle against liquor.<sup>198</sup> To spread the message of prohibition *Mathrubhoomi* carried the contents of the speeches of the famous American social worker Pussy Futt Johnson made at Madras and British social worker Rev. Herbert Anderson made at London, raising the need for total prohibition.<sup>199</sup>

As a part of the campaign works of Madras Government towards temperance, Malabar Temperance Board was constituted with Mr.Mooliyil Kesavan as secretary<sup>200</sup> and Mr.Koppan (Aadi Dravida),

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<sup>197</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 15<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> June 1926, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>198</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1929.

<sup>199</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1929.

<sup>200</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 15<sup>th</sup> October 1929.

Mr. Karunakaran (Thiyya) as its members.<sup>201</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* hailed the decision of the Palakkad Municipality in passing the resolution to remove all the liquor shops in the city.<sup>202</sup> But it blamed the stand of Calicut Municipality for having given up the idea of prohibition in its purview.<sup>203</sup> The Temperance Board expressed its strong protest in the above stand of the Calicut Municipal Council.<sup>204</sup> At this stage *Mathrubhoomi* wrote an editorial blaming the liquor policy of Madras Government. “Due to consumption of liquor the adverse impact is larger in our country than in other countries. Much of the liquor used in India is imported from abroad. Due to the consumption of this liquor it causes not only moral degeneration but also economic deterioration. Even though majority of the people are in favour of prohibition it has not materialized here only because that we are under foreign hegemony. The campaign policy of Madras Government is only a farce. Allowing the liquor shops to open on one side and doing campaign work to avoid its consumption on the other side will not do any good. After the implementation of this double dealing policy the number of liquor shops has only increased, not even a single one closed. Although the Indians said, *en masse* that we do not want this kind of liberty in liquor, it is amazing to see that the Government is imposing liquor on us”.<sup>205</sup>

*Al-Ameen* was also very enthusiastic in diffusing the message of prohibition. It asked the Government to implement the resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly regarding restriction and ultimate prohibition of drink.<sup>206</sup> It denounced the drink evil in India under the heading ‘A Dangerous Industry’. In it *Al-Ameen* criticized the attitude of

<sup>201</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 26<sup>th</sup> October 1929.

<sup>202</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1929.

<sup>203</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1929.

<sup>204</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1929.

<sup>205</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1930.

the Government in respect of the drink evil in India. “Though all the industries of India were ruined with the advent of the British rule, the liquor industry is alone thriving; it is very difficult to get a school or post office or dispensary in spite of repeated petitions by the people.....but not so with liquor shops. For these no petitions are required”.<sup>207</sup>

### 3. Do not Drive away to Andamans

*Al-Ameen* and Abdurahiman responded strongly against the bestial scheme of banishing the Mappilas to Andaman islands. By touring in the North Indian cities Abdurahiman gave wide propaganda against the scheme. He wrote several articles in English and vernacular newspapers against it.<sup>208</sup> This scheme was meant to make the Muslims of Eranad, who were invincible in respect of national pride, mental courage and British enmity, silent by throwing them away to incurable diseases and cruelties of nature in Andamans. Thus *Al-Ameen* became more the subject of the dislike of the authorities.<sup>209</sup> It resisted the scheme with all its might. *Al-Ameen* wrote, “It would appear that the attitude of the Government is not to recede from their position whatever might be the popular opinion in the matter of taking Mappila prisoners to the Andamans. The Mappila representative in the Legislative Assembly and the representatives in the Madras Legislative Council

<sup>206</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1925, MNNPR, TNA. *Al-Ameen* wrote: “Although the representatives of the people have passed the resolution, will the Government which looks upon revenue alone as the most important matter, try to carry it out? When we hear the argument advanced by the Government side, that this is a resolution that runs counter to the freedom of the people, we cannot suppress a smile. Great indeed is their solicitude for the freedom of the people!”

<sup>207</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 13<sup>th</sup> July 1926, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>208</sup> Subair Kunnamangalam, “Yugapurushanaaya Muhammad Abdurahiman”, in *Chandrika* Supplement 28<sup>th</sup> November 1999.

<sup>209</sup> Khadar Pannikkottur, “Al-Ameen, Swathanthrya Samarathinte Padavaal”, *op.cit.*

condemned this scheme severely. In Madras and Malabar, many public meetings have been held to condemn it. It is a great injustice on the part of the Government to appoint special officers and to misuse money on an affair not at all wanted by any amongst the public. Nobody will believe that the Andaman Islands have been rendered fit for human habitation within the last four or five years. Even if it be so, what is the meaning of saying that only Malabar Muslims need go there”.<sup>210</sup>

*Al-Ameen* exposed the ulterior motives behind the Andaman scheme. The supply of labour to develop the island is one of the motives for launching the scheme while the ulterior motive of the Government is to prevent once and for all the return of the Mappila convicts to Malabar and to destroy their turbulent race in the Andamans. It observed that no other Government in the world whether civilized or uncivilized would ever award for any offence, this kind of punishment”.<sup>211</sup> *Al-Ameen* also questioned the impartiality of the Andaman enquiry committee. It did not consider the representatives of the public while nominating the members of the Committee. The paper suggested that the Mappila community should awake and do the needful to hold a public meeting to choose some Hindu and Muslim members of Council, who enjoy the confidence of the people to be sent out as a deputation.<sup>212</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* also by all its strength objected the Andaman scheme. The very next week since its birth, *Mathrubhoomi* wrote that the enthusiasm shown by the Government, to bring to the Andaman convicts their wives, has created many doubts. *Mathrubhoomi* asked the Government to make it clear whether it is for the benefit of the prisoners they are taking the ladies to Andamans. It also asked the authorities

<sup>210</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1925, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>211</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 29<sup>th</sup> September 1925, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>212</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 1925, MNNPR, TNA.

whether, before implementing the scheme they have made a genuine effort to know the mind of the Muslim society of Malabar. It opined that by sending the ladies to such an island where the attention of the authorities is less and public opinion is bad, it will help to accumulate wealth though it will not help to protect their modesty.<sup>213</sup> But without considering the objections raised by the Muslim community or other organisations like Congress the Government started to send the ladies of the prisoners to Andamans.<sup>214</sup> Then *Mathrubhoomi* wrote that even the Committee appointed by the Government has opined that Andamans is a land not at all suitable for the spiritual or physical growth. But as in the tenant issue the Government is adamant here also. Yet we do not need to be desperate. Our obligation is to strengthen the agitation as in the past.<sup>215</sup>

### **Mangalodayam Rises**

*Mangalodayam* which was originated in 1084 Vrischikam (1909 November) was aimed at the well-being of Namboothiris. Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha was the motivation and inspiration behind its birth.<sup>216</sup> It was due to the efforts and encouragements of Appan Thampuran, that Deshamangalam Namboothiri started *Mangalodayam*. In the beginning it was the official organ of Yogakshema Sabha. Later Appan Thampuran and Kodungallur Kunhikkuttan Thampuran showered their literary exuberance in *Mangalodayam*. It could continue only for sixteen years. During 1943-44 periods Prof. Joseph Mundasserry renovated it again as the official organ of Appan Thampuran Sahithya Samajam.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 24th March 1923.

<sup>214</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1923.

<sup>215</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 30<sup>th</sup> November 1926.

<sup>216</sup> *Mangalodayam*, 1909 November.

Right from the beginning *Mangalodayam* agreed with the fact that, as a community Namboothiris have lost the glamour which they inherited in the past. Also it tried to explore various ways to reform and renovate the community. In the ‘statement’ carried in the first issue it was said that although the Namboothiris were once embellished with the power of knowledge, is at present in a state of *Thrishanku* Heaven (a heaven-like place in between heaven and earth where mythological character Thrishanku was held by Hermit Viswamithra) in which they lost the traditional education but not gained the modern one. It also said that it was due to the work of Yogakshema Sabha that the members of Thaliparamba and Travancore who are hundreds of miles apart have now the convenience to see and understand the agony and ecstasy of both. In this issue the report about the second annual conference of Yogakshema Sabha held at Trichur was also given. The major decision of the conference was to create a Namboothiri bank. Among the Namboothiris there are many who borrow money for *pennkoda* (marriage of Namboothiri girl) and other functions. It was observed that a Namboothiri bank would help them much. It was viewed that other communities will also benefit out of this bank.<sup>218</sup>

In the second issue of *Mangalodayam* there started a debate on the topic ‘Namboothiri and Education’. The first article was written by Punnasseri Nambi Neelakanda Sharma. He said, “Now it is the British Government that rules us. Not Namboothirippad or others. The British have made English as the royal language, not Sanskrit or Malayalam or any other language. For the British it is the Acts they make from time to time, the instrument to rule. To understand them we should have education. If we remain studying only ‘vedam’ and ‘sasthram’ we

<sup>217</sup> Puthuppalli Raghavan, *Kerala Pathrapravarthana Charithram*, (Mal), Thrissur, 1985, p.133.

<sup>218</sup> *Mangalodayam*, *op.cit.*

cannot think that others would work and feed us. That period in which we could remain as dictators is gone for ever. One should be able to do his own affairs. For that we should have education. It is ridiculous to say that English being the language of the British is a sub-standard one".<sup>219</sup> The debate was continued in the third issue by Kodungallur Kunhikuttan Thampuran. It was a response to the opinions of Punnasserri Nambi carried in the second issue.<sup>220</sup> Being fascinated by this dialogue *Kerala Chinthamani* in its third issue made an appraisal of contents of *Mangalodayam* magazine. It assured that it would also opine on Namboothiri education once the debate in *Mangalodayam* is over. It also said that since *Mangalodayam* is a newspaper run by Kerala Brahmins it would be very nice if there appeared articles in it about the unwanted practices and rituals in Kerala.<sup>221</sup>

In another issue of *Mangalodayam* Mathur Vasudevan Namboothirippad joined the debate by arguing that English education is very essential for the progress of Namboothiri community. The debate was concluded by publishing a letter of the noted Namboothiri scholar Kudallur Kunhunni Namboothirippad in which he invited (1042 Chingam 27, 1872 September 13) the Namboothiri *janmis* to think of a school to teach unni Namboothiris, the English language. It was amazing to note that Kudallur Kunhunni Namboothirippad had the vision to start an English school at a period when the Nair community was treading fast for modern education.<sup>222</sup> In this issue there was the review of the book *Kerala Charithram* written by Kannambra

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<sup>219</sup> *Mangalodayam*, December 1909.

<sup>220</sup> *Mangalodayam*, January 1910.

<sup>221</sup> *Kerala Chinthamani*, June 1909.

<sup>222</sup> *Mangalodayam*, 1910 July 1910.

Ramanunni Nair which was earlier serialized in *Manorama*, published from Calicut.<sup>223</sup>

Even in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was very difficult for the newspapers and magazines to survive due to many reasons. This is explicitly made clear in the statement carried in the *Mangalodayam* published in connection with its first anniversary. “At present there is only one among 8000 who read Malayalam magazines and only one in 32000 pay the cost and read. This readership is to be shared between 12 magazines. Therefore one can imagine how difficult it is for magazines to survive”.<sup>224</sup>

Namboothiri community which was almost against in studying English was at last convinced of its advantages. Even the Secretary of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha wrote a letter to *Mangalodayam* praising its efforts for English education. “Material benefits, positions and all other benefits now lie in English education. Therefore that language every day ascends to glory where our language Sanskrit descends to death. At present it is observed that only those who study English reach glamorous positions”.<sup>225</sup>

Alongwith suggestions for community reformation it carried items dealing with various legislations including that on land. In the issue of October 1911, it published the anomalies of the ‘Kuzhikur Chamayam Act’ (Improvements Act) of 1900. In that issue it was given one by one the reasons for the increase of litigations between *janmis* and tenants to evict each other from the property.<sup>226</sup>In fact it was to redress the anomalies of this Act, that the tenants later strengthened their

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *Mangalodayam*, November 1910.

<sup>225</sup> *Mangalodayam*, April 1910.

<sup>226</sup> *Mangalodayam*, October 1911.

agitation under the banner of Malabar Kudiyan Samgham during the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Yogakshemam-To Uplift Namboothiris***

When the Thiyyas and Nairs were fast acquiring modern education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Namboothiris were only just passive onlookers. The Namboothiri community was in the grip of a few elders and was enveloped by wretched customs and rituals. But the youths brimmed with thirst for change and some elders having progressive vision wanted to break the bondages that clasped the community. For this onward march the Namboothiri community formed organizations like *Yogakshemam* and *Namboothiri Yuvajana Samgham*, and publications like *Yogakshemam* and *Unni Namboothiri*. Due to this kind of strenuous works the Namboothiris could acquire some modernity by the 1930's what the Nairs could do by the 1890's. The heroines Indulekha in the novel *Indulekha* published in 1889 and Sulochana in the novel *Aphante Makal* <sup>227</sup> published in 1932 establish this wide gap in the march of progress among the above communities.

Anticipating the need for reformations in the Namboothiri community *Malayala Manorama* in 1905 wrote, "The Namboothiris should educate their children considering the need of the time; if so this community can develop in many fields. They would be able to protect their property from being grabbed. It is desirable that their ancient traditions are refurbished and used for the well being of the community".<sup>228</sup> After a span of 14 years *Manorama* presented a totally changed opinion. "We are happy to see that the Namboothiri community has adapted to the timely changes. Giving up the aversion for the

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<sup>227</sup> A novel in Malayalam by Moothiringott Bhavathrathan Namboothiripad.

<sup>228</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1905.

English language they have shown willingness to espouse it. They had the belief that learning English would make them outcastes from the community and the school life with the untouchables would make them polluted. But all these have changed”.<sup>229</sup>

The pathetic condition of the Namboothiri community during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is very evident from the above observations of *Malayala Manorama*. It was with the help of Namboothiri’s official organ the *Yogakshemam* and other publications, that the community was able to lift itself from the clutches of traditions and rituals. Alongwith the fight for the *janmis* in the tenancy issue *Yogakshemam* worked much for the progress of the community in the realms of reformation and renovation. It published several articles with modern outlook to incite and inspire the community. It also quoted or lifted reports of all kinds pertaining to Namboothiri community carried in other publications, with a view to construe the impression about them among the members of other communities.

The report lifted by *Yogakshemam* from *Prathibha*<sup>230</sup> magazine is an example. “Nobody will accuse even if any amount is spent for the modern education of Namboothiris. It is better to stop *oottupuras* and educate the Namboothiris”.<sup>231</sup> Mangalodayam was happy to welcome the suggestions made by *Kerala Pathrika* in its report. “The opinions like, to live in fraternity with other communities, without fascination to the western culture, observing the swadeshi style and enduring the traditional modes as far as possible are of course very valid suggestions.

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<sup>229</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, 8<sup>th</sup> March 1919.

<sup>230</sup> A magazine which was edited by Kumaran Asan from Aluva from September 1919 onwards.

<sup>231</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1920, NMML, New Delhi.

These opinions are quite acceptable not only to the Namboothiri community but to other communities also.....”<sup>232</sup>

*Malayala Manorama* which highlighted the progress observed in Namboothiri community during the 1920’s wrote another report about its ongoing forward march during the 1930’s. *Yogakshemam* lifted this also. “...It is very urgent to take necessary initiatives to redress the pathetic condition of *antharjanams* (Namboothiri ladies) who spend their whole life within the isolated *anthapurams* (the harem of *illam/mana*). The initiatives of some Namboothiri youths in taking their better halves to public places with them, in modernizing their costumes, and in giving them education is welcome. The publication of the books like *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangatheykku* (From Kitchen to Stage), *Mamoolinte Mattoli* (The Reverberations of Rituals) etc. and the initiative shown by some Namboothiri women in coming to the forefront are of-course signs of progress in Namboothiri community.”<sup>233</sup>

Due to various kinds of interventions several progressive changes were noticed in the condition of Namboothiri women. This is noted by *Mathrubhoomi* in its report. “The Namboothiri women who were in the habit of wearing clothes up to their knees, holding *marakkuda* (the cadjan umbrella used by the Namboothiri women to hide themselves from the public when going out) and wearing bangles made of bronze are eschewing such evils. They now read the newspapers such as *Yogakshemam* and learn about the outer world. They are now aware of the problem of the increasing number of spinsters in the community and so the need for all male members to get married from the same

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<sup>232</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1920, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>233</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1930, NMML, New Delhi.

community. They now conduct samajams. Certainly they should be appreciated for all these”.<sup>234</sup>

This transformation in Namboothiri community is portrayed well in the novel *Aphante Makal*. Here Namboothiri ladies like Ittichiri, Innikkali and Ittangeli study at home reading and writing.<sup>235</sup> Madhu, a Namboothiri boy reads newspaper and refers ‘wanted’ columns in search of a job.<sup>236</sup> He denounces the polygamy in Namboothiri community and declares, “Each *MahanMoos* (Eldest Namboothiri boy) in our community is a trap. In it three or four she-elephants fall one upon another. Some die in the instance of fall. Some die in that dungeon inch by inch. And some die in the course of life. Anyhow everybody suffers much and sheds tear. To redeem the community from this wretched state all the younger Namboothiris should marry from the same caste”.<sup>237</sup>

During the 1920’s itself topics like Namboothiri family regulation, women’s education, marriage from the same caste etc. had become the thread of discussion in *Yogakshemam*. In the subsequent period this naturally helped in the formation of public opinion. During this time some *antharjanams* started to write on topics like dress code, education etc.<sup>238</sup> Also open debates were held in *Yogakshemam* with other papers on communal issues. As a result, an atmosphere of discussions and dialogues emerged in the Namboothiri community.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1929.

<sup>235</sup> Moothiringott Bhavathrathan Namboothiripad, *Aphante Makal*, (Mal) Kottayam, 2004, p.21.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>238</sup> *Yogakshemam*, Vol. 11, Issue 27, 1921, p.3.

<sup>239</sup> E.M.S, *Aathmakatha*, (Mal), Trivandrum, 1985, p.114.

This atmosphere even inspired some of the Namboothiri women who were not ready to endure the tyrannies in the family anymore. *Yogakshemam* narrates the story of one such *antharjanam* who went away from the *illam*. She was the *antharjanam* of Edakramancherry *Illam* in Perumanna Amsam of Kozhikode city. Scared of the first *veli* (wife) the Namboothiri was not even ready to look at this *antharjanam*, who was an eighteen year old girl. Two days before her departure from the *illam* she went to the temple nearby when her husband was present and narrated her grievances before the other Namboothiris. Then she had given a warning that if her husband does not care her, she will do whatever deemed proper for her. But the Namboothiri did not respond to her then.<sup>240</sup>

It is true that by 1930's there was tremendous progress in the reformation process in Namboothiri community. But when compared to other communities like Nairs it was not satisfactory. They were convinced of the fact that the community was treading towards modern education and progress only with crippled legs. So they were ready to go to any extent to uplift the community. Namboothiri Satyagraha Committee in its letter to Mahatma Gandhi apologetically presented the deplorable condition. "While all other communities in Kerala have made great stride in point of education, population and social condition the Namboothiris still stick up to their old customs and manners and consequently degenerate day by day. Of all the evil customs prevalent among the Namboothiris the most obnoxious is that only the eldest male member can marry from the caste and all other junior members must resort to *sambandham* (liaison of junior Namboothiri sons with Kshatriya/Nair women) with the females of other communities... Finding that there is no other way the Yogakshema Sabha and Yuvajana

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<sup>240</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 26<sup>th</sup> March 1930, NMML, New Delhi.

Samgham have recently decided that all Namboothiris should adopt the inevitable course of Satyagraha and hartal”.<sup>241</sup>

When the agitation spirit and reformation drive in the Namboothiri community gathered momentum, progress in terms of education and life style also became hasty. This was appraised and evaluated by *Yogakshemam* in its annual report. “Namboothiris who have been engaged in social reforms have actually come to the work only this year. The annual conference of this year have revealed the fact that an awareness is created in the members of the community to the effect that only actual work brings fruitful results instead of making resolutions and speeches. The experience of the last two years have taught that unless we convince others our might nobody will listen to us...Youths were ready to start satyagraha, hartal or any other style to achieve the goal. It can be said that after Edakkunnu convention a creative awakening is visible in the community”.<sup>242</sup>

Consequent to initiatives many, a new found vigour started to pulsate in the Namboothiri community. *Yogakshemam* lifted the report in the *Samadarshi*<sup>243</sup> newspaper regarding the social reformation attempts among the Namboothiris. “Namboothiri community endowed with so many solemn virtues are hastily bidding farewell to their conservative outlook in respect of community rituals and English education. Their organizational strength is also becoming greater. The conventions held by Yogakshema Sabha in various places of Kerala and the Malayala Brahmana Convention held at Thiruvananthapuram exhibit their organizational strength”.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1930.

<sup>242</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1930.

<sup>243</sup> A newspaper published from Trivandurm.

<sup>244</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1930.

It was at this stage that the *Yogakshemam* announced the arrival of a women's magazine run by *antharjanams*. "A magazine run by *antharjanams* to highlight the matters of *antharjanams* will be started from Chalavara (Thrukkadeeri) soon. The first issue of this magazine, with the name *Sreedevi* will be published in the beginning of Kanni. V.T Sreedevi Antharjanam, Mrs. Muthiringod and so on will be the persons behind this endeavour. Like us, other community members are also eagerly waiting for its advent."<sup>245</sup>

Though *Yogakshemam* was mainly intended for the upliftment of Namboothiri community it did not give a deaf ear to the progressive changes in the other parts of the world. In one of its report, praising the new rule in Russia it sharply criticized the British Government in India. "In Russia they do whatever is possible to make the life of the ordinary public most comfortable. They try to enrich the countryside. They have introduced several schemes in the rural areas to bring industrial and agrarian progress. They implemented the five year plan in 1927. ..Our Government can also do something in this respect, even though not to that extent in Russia. Anyhow Soviet Government is a government for the people."<sup>246</sup>

### **Vagbhadanandan-Propounder of 'Atmavidya'**

Vagbhadanandan is a stalwart who greatly helped the growth of the Thiyya community. In the profundity of knowledge and eloquence he surpassed even Sri Narayana Guru. There is no doubt that he has a major role in the social transformation of North Malabar.<sup>247</sup> In the beginning through Aryasamaj and later by Atmavidyasamgham (which

<sup>245</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1930.

<sup>246</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 11<sup>th</sup> June, 1930, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>247</sup> E.M.S Namboothirippad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhoomi*, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, p.281.

he founded by himself) he made intensive work against caste discrimination, idolatry and alcohol consumption and he made even the members of the upper castes his disciples.<sup>248</sup>

Vagbhadanandan struggled for all his life time to build up a new Kerala pervaded with spiritual knowledge and universal fraternity.<sup>249</sup> He fought to destroy the caste-demon which had been making a nude dance throughout Kerala.<sup>250</sup> Theruvath Raman says, “*Atmavidya Kahalam* under Vagbhadananda Gurudevan from Cheruvannur (Calicut) carried on the tradition of the fight against caste. It highlighted the unjust treatment towards lowercaste students in Taluk Board Schools and Aided Schools. It criticized the decision to collect four *annas* from each student in Chirackal Raja’s School for Navarathri celebrations and at the same time not to let the lower class students to participate in them is a violation of natural justice.<sup>251</sup> It laid its emphasis against social evils and unhealthy rituals. Vagbhadanandan vindicated that the existing interpretations of God and observance of traditions are wrong and there is no rebirth of soul. In conventions he used to speak continuously for two to three days. At the end he could create an impression among the audience that God is only a beautiful imaginative concept. He fought against the unhealthy practices like *kettukalyanam*, *thirandukalyanam*’ and idolatry.<sup>252</sup>

Also he tried his level best to propagate newspaper reading among people. To inspire the women to read newspapers he wrote several reports in *Atmavidya Kahalam*. The letter to the editor written by

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<sup>248</sup> K.K Pavithran, *op.cit.*, 1995, p.92.

<sup>249</sup> Swami Brahmavruathan, *op.cit.*, p.81.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>251</sup> *Athmavidyakahalam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1929.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Theruvath Raman on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

Kalyaniyamma, Feroke showers enough light on that. “Do not grieve on the fact that some of us are illiterate or lack education. If we have a determination we can have knowledge, culture and other qualities we desire. No need of searching hills and mounts to find remedies to acquire them. Newspapers including *Atmavidya Kahalam* are box of medicines in which all remedies for knowledge is kept”.<sup>253</sup>

*Atmavidyakahalam* tried to enlighten the people to take precautionary measures to check the spread of leprosy which was not fully curative in those days. It wrote, “Leprosy is a fierce contagious disease. If somebody in one house happens to be a victim to that disease, due to lack of care it spreads among other members of that house.....In such a situation the village officials should be authorized to make a list of such patients and to coerce them to go to hospitals for treatment. If we do so now at least we can protect the children to be born in future from the curse of this disease”.<sup>254</sup>

Atmavidyasamgham was an organization that was founded by him. He shaped his ideals on the basis of Adwaita philosophy. Infact the movement led by Sri Narayana Guru had included in its renovation programmes the rituals of Brahmins and paved the way for sanskritisation among the lower communities. But Atmavidyasamgham did not help such kind of sanskritisation since they were against idolatry.<sup>255</sup> Like Sri Narayana Guru he too resisted the caste tendencies and organized agitations against all sectionalist ideas. He propounded the idea of human love. To propagate his ideals Vagbhadanandan founded in 1921 a newspaper named *Abhinavakeralam*. “Wake up,

<sup>253</sup> *Athmavidyakahalam, op.cit.*

<sup>254</sup> *Athmavidyakahalam*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1929.

<sup>255</sup> K.K.N Kurup, *Adhunika Keralam, Charithra Gaveshana Prabandhangal*, (Mal), Trivandrum, 1982, pp.53-54.

remember the Almighty, Get up to fight against injustice”, was the motto of that paper. He manifested for his followers a set of rules to be observed in times of birth, death and marriage. Even in the remote places of Malabar this samgham had followers. Even the Brahmins and upper castes were fascinated. But majority of the members were Thiyyas. He laid thrust on social programmes like mixed meal and inter-caste marriage. He organized a mixed meal programme at Azhikode. That was regarded as a revolution in those days.

Vagbhadanandan extended support to the Civil Disobedience Movement of Gandhiji. His paper *Atmavidya Kahalam* supported the national movement. The article he wrote in *Atmavidya Kahalam* entitled ‘Who are the law breakers’ provoked the British. They gave him last warning. Vagbhadanandan not only supported the rights of the untouchables but also published a book in the name *Gandhiji and Scientific Interpretations*.<sup>256</sup>

When newspapers like *Gajakesari*, *Mithavadi*, and *Sahodaran* continued to publish articles that injured the sentiments of Gandhiji and Congress, Vagbhadanandan could not remain silent. He resisted these kinds of anti-national opinions with tooth and nail. He gave repartee to these three newspapers through his paper *Atmavidya Kahalam*. He asked, “Is Gandhiji who held mixed meal programmes with Hindu, Christian and Muslim and ate from one table, a caste Hindu? He is the greatest philanthropist in the world. Gandhiji is a true socialist who accepted a Harijan girl as her adopted daughter by exorcising the ghost of caste”.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.55-56.

<sup>257</sup> K.K Pavithran, *op.cit.*, p.221.

Vagbhadanandan was not ready to sacrifice belief for respect. It was out of respect for his Guru Brahmananda Sivayogi that he named his newspaper *Shivayogi Vilasam*. But there took place a tussle between them about the concept of God. Brahmananda was of the view that God is happiness. But Vagbhadanandan said that in Advaita, Soul is God. As the tussle went to a climax the name of *Sivayogi Vilasam* was changed to *Sivayoga Vilasam*.<sup>258</sup>

### ***Kerala Kesari of Vadakara***

The 1920's was a period when Malabar riots startled the forward march of national movement. The rulers and the vested interested parties tried to propagate the message that all works of Congress will end only in massacre. The leader of the Home Rule League Manjeri Ramayyar opined that the sword that was used to cut human throats in Eranad was to be in fact directed against Mahatma Gandhi and Khilafat leader Shaukath Ali. Murkoth Kumaran was another personality who spoke against the national movement. He used to wonder that what will happen if British say good bye to this land. Then the rule will reach the hands of a few princes who do not know anything. Congress is an organization of the upper classes and Nairs are at its helm. It was through his *Gajakesari* paper that Kumaran made his anti-Congress stand.<sup>259</sup>

To give reply to the false propaganda against the Congress and its leaders, and to liberate the people from the clutches of conservatism which was very strong in Kadathanad, prominent Congress workers like K.V Krishnan, G.Chathu Master, Moyyarth Sankaran and so on felt the need for a newspaper. Thus *Kerala Kesari* was born at Vadakara in

<sup>258</sup> Interview with Dharmaraj Kaloore on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2006.

<sup>259</sup> Kaviyur Rajagopalan, *Moyyarth Sankaran*, (Mal), Trivandrum, 1986, pp.41-42.

1924 under Moyyarath Sankaran who was the Secretary of Kurumbranad Taluk Congress Committee.<sup>260</sup>

*Kerala Kesari* existed only for two years as a newspaper. Meanwhile it grew as the people's tongue. It made mortal fight in the fortresses of landlordism and in the administrative centres of bureaucracy. Its editor wrote, "The motive of my paper is to eradicate the evil deeds like torture and exploitation that make this land a hell".<sup>261</sup> In the beginning *Kerala Kesari* was printed in the Manorama Press at Calicut and later in Prince Press Cannanore. Due to the threats of the authorities and due to the spate of lawyer notices everyone was scared of printing that paper. When it published a report against Kunhikkoru Mooppen of Mayyazhi it got a lawyer notice demanding compensation of Rs.2500. At this juncture it could not push forward and as a result the publication was ceased. Again *Kerala Kesari* was re-started in 1927 purchasing a press of its own.

In the first issues, *Kerala Kesari* attacked the the mis-rule of Taluk Board which ended in the termination of its President Kadathanat A.K Sankara Varma Raja. Then it attacked the Vatakara Union President Njalikkara Kunhiraman Nair, who was also removed from the post. The article "Gajakesariyodu Kerala Kesari" (Gajakesari versus Kerala Kesari) was widely discussed everywhere. Though started with 500 copies, after every important news report its circulation increased considerably. "Ulakkabhadante Dinasari" (The Daily Routine of Ulakkabhadan) was a popular column in it. Certain corrupt bureaucrats used to say that until finishing this column their hands would shiver.

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<sup>260</sup> Moyyarath, *Ente Jeevithakatha*, (Mal), Trichur, 1965, p. 214.

<sup>261</sup> Kaviyur Rajagopalan, *op.cit.*, pp.42-44.

Due to the popularity of this column no other paper in North Malabar had this much of circulation".<sup>262</sup>

### ***Unni Namboothiri-Exploring Reforms***

Namboothiri Yuvajana Samgham was started as the youth wing of Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha. *Unni Namboothiri* was published as the official organ of this Yuvajana Samgham from Trichur. But later Yuvajana Samgham became ready to work as an independent registered organization liberating itself from the organization of the elders. Many a time there developed diverse points of view between Yogakshema Sabha and Yuvajana Samgham in matters related to community and public. Also there held ideological dialogues and debates between them which sometimes even took the shape of competitions. The forum for such debates was the *Yogakshemam* and the *Unni Namboothiri*. A different voice among the young Namboothiris emerged mainly due to their dissatisfaction in the retarded pace of social reformation.<sup>263</sup>

### **English newspapers in 20<sup>th</sup> century**

It may be assumed that the English newspapers had fairly good circulation in the Malabar District in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Newspapers like *Madras Mail* carried even the local reports of the Calicut city. The send-off given by the Ladies Club of Calicut to the wife of District Collector,<sup>264</sup> cattle lifting in Walluvanad by Mappilas<sup>265</sup>, proposal to introduce a leper clinic at Calicut by the Municipal Council,<sup>266</sup> heavy rains in Calicut<sup>267</sup> etc. are not reports of much seriousness or

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<sup>262</sup> Moyyarath, *op.cit.*, pp. 215-217.

<sup>263</sup> E.MS Namboothirippad, *Aathmakatha*, *op.cit.*, p.114.

<sup>264</sup> *Madras Mail*, 26<sup>th</sup> March, 1925, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> *Madras Mail*, 16<sup>th</sup> January 1925, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>267</sup> *Madras Mail*, 27<sup>th</sup> July 1927, NMML, New Delhi.

wide repercussion or far reaching consequences to be known by the entire people of the Presidency or by the whole folk of the District. They do matter only to a limited number confined to the city and suburbs. In those days it is impractical to have regional editions to carry exclusively local news as we do today. Therefore the paper edited and published from Madras might be allotting a certain space to Malabar District which is meant for carrying the local news of Malabar. From this it is very clear that such a situation occurs only when the paper has wide circulation and readership in the Malabar District and Calicut Municipality.

Another notable point is the comprehensiveness of Malabar in respect of news items. The planting notes from Wayanad,<sup>268</sup> abnormal rain in Palakkad,<sup>269</sup> administration report of the Municipality of Kannur<sup>270</sup> etc. are examples of such news from various parts of the District. It means that a paper like *Madras Mail* did not leave any place in Malabar from attaching importance in respect of news. All these news items are shown as reported by 'From Our Correspondent' which means the paper had its own correspondents to report even the local events in Malabar. It also indicates to the point that it had fair circulation here and it is because of that reason it was able do justice to its readers by extending a balanced approach in respect of the treatment of news.

*Madras Mail* had a regular column, "Our Readers' Choice". Some of the letters published in this also point to its vibrant readership in Malabar. This was in fact a column in which the editor published the letters and opinions of the readers. Such a column is relevant only when readers have opinions, responses and reciprocations. In a way this is an

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<sup>268</sup> *Madras Mail*, 27<sup>th</sup> December, 1899.

<sup>269</sup> *Madras Mail*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1927.

<sup>270</sup> *Madras Mail*, 1<sup>st</sup> August 1927.

exchange of ideas, a give and take in which the newspaper and the readers fuse together, one knowing the mind and sentiments of the other. A letter from one J.C.G is very notable at this point. In it he said that while there has been so much talk of Hindu-Muslim unity he has not seen a single Muslim other than Mr.Yakub Hasan condemning the atrocities perpetrated by the Mappilas upon Hindus.The Mappilas have by their excesses against the Hindus have terribly injured the cause of Indian Nationalism. The letter concludes with a question to Mr.Yakub Hasan if he would tell the Hindus whether he proposes to raise a fund for the relief of the victims of the Mappila outrages.<sup>271</sup> This is again vindicated by the Malabar District Collector publishing his appeal for help in *Madras Mail*.<sup>272</sup> If the paper had only negligible circulation he would not have taken the burden to see the appeal carried in a paper published from Madras. The three English newspapers that were published from Calicut, the *Westcoast Spectator*, *Westcoast Reformer* and *Champion* continued during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also, with earnestness and vigour.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> *Madras Mail*, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1921.

<sup>272</sup> *Madras Mail*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1921, NMML, New Delhi. The 'Appeal for Help' of the Malabar District Collector E.F Thomas addressed to the Editor, *Madras Mail*: Sir, I have received information from many sources that in the Eranad and Walluvanad taluks, as a result of wholesale looting of Hindus by Mappila rebels, scarcity is beginning to be felt; private food stores have been dissipated by loot, economic and industrial life is at a standstill, and much of the standing crop ruined or abandoned. In Calicut we have realized that help is required now, and some gentlemen of the headquarters town have already undertaken to supply food-stuffs...It is certain that much more aid will be required than local efforts in Calicut can supply. The need is urgent for the military and civil authorities must devote all their energy to the restoring of order and rebuilding the fabric of administration. Government aid will perhaps, be necessary later on. I address this appeal to the public for help to tide over the immediate distress and I know I shall not appeal in vain. The administration of such funds as are forthcoming will be entrusted to a committee of non-official gentlemen, working hand in hand with the District officers and I am taking steps to form such a Committee. Donations may be paid to the Imperial Bank of India, Madras, for credit of the Malabar Relief Fund.

<sup>273</sup> G.Priyadarshanan, *op.cit.*, p.201.

In fact the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were an epoch making age in the history of journalism in Malabar. During this period it witnessed the steady growth of public opinion. Along with the newspapers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, new journals of diverse nature also appeared in this period. Most of these papers had their own policy, objective and style. Due to these unique differences they engaged in dialogues, debates and verbal exercises. As a result every subject was treated from several corners providing the readers an overall outlook to enable them to make their own opinion. Thus when the print media became more and more vibrant the civic consciousness of the people and their awareness about the rights increased considerably. This in-turn inspired them to fight for the cause of the freedom of human-beings from caste and conventions, and freedom of the country from the hands of the foreign government.

## CHAPTER VI

### TENANCY - A MUCH DEBATED ISSUE

All over the world the under privileged section, whether they are racial and ethnic minorities or low castes and classes, are organizing themselves to fight against inequalities, discrimination and deprivation. They often violently agitated for the legitimate share in the economic opportunities, educational privileges and political power.<sup>1</sup>

This was true with Malabar also. The first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century was a period of turmoil for Malabar. The tenants enslaved for decades, who were very much scared of even the sound *janmi* now muster up courage and make a valiant fight of non-violence for their emancipation from the bondages. This period is a mile-stone in the history of Malabar and Kerala because it is the one that catapulted the people to prepare for more mortal fights in future on the basis of class struggle.

The fighters in this struggle on one side were the most powerful class, the *janmis* and on the other side were their tenants, the *kudiyans*. Therefore it became a combat between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The struggle for the land started during the 1880's. It acquired more momentum during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century though gains were not considerable in the balance sheet. But the second decade becomes historic as evidenced by the victory of the weak against the mighty. In this fight, to a greater extent, the proxy fighters on both the sides were the newspapers and magazines. Usually espousing a general cause, becomes one among the many objectives of newspapers. But in respect of the issue of *janmis* and tenants the very aim behind the birth of some

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<sup>1</sup> M.S.A. Rao, *Social Movements and Social Transformation-A Study of Two backward Class Movements in India*, Delhi, 1987, p.31.

of the newspapers was to spearhead this fight. The newspapers like *Kudiyani*, *Janmi*, *Vasumathi* are in the array.

Even *Mathrubhoomi* was founded with an aim to enact the role of this 'proxy fighter' standing on the tenant side. During the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century the tenant side got numerically an upper edge in the Congress Movement. Thus when the majority of the Congress workers became the tenants, in a way they captured the movement from the *janmis* who were so far its bread and butter. When the *janmis* became almost deaf in the congress it became a forum for the ordinary people to discuss their vital issues. Thus the tenancy issue became an inseparable part of Congress along with nationalism. In a way Congress makes a rebirth after *Mappila* struggles in Malabar through taking up the cause of tenancy. It is at this juncture *Mathrubhoomi* is born in 1923 and spearheaded the struggle of tenancy which enabled it to take up national struggles of different nature. *Mithavadi*, *Kerala Kesari*, *Kerala Pathrika*, *Kerala Sanchari*, *Al-Ameen* and several other newspapers also played a major role in the debate on the *janmi-kudiyani* issue along with some English newspapers like *Malabar Spectator*, *The Hindu*, *Madras Mail*, and *Justice*.

When we look back at the early history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it becomes very evident that the British who favoured the *janmis* had no intention even at the beginning of the 1920's to pass a Tenancy Bill. But the tenant side finally emerged victorious by 1930 to coerce the Government to pass the Bill. When we trace the history it becomes very clear that it was the newspapers that reflected the sentiments of the tenants and enlightened the rulers about the consequences that may follow if they did not favour the cause of the thousands of poor people

of Malabar. This chapter is an attempt to expose the involvement of newspapers in the campaigns for the cause of the tenants.

In Malabar almost all the lands in the district were claimed by the *janmis* as their absolute property. Even the smallest parcels of land for houses or cottages had therefore to be obtained from *janmis*. Though the *janmis* formed only a small fraction of the total population of the district they were generally rich and influential.<sup>2</sup>

T.C Varghese says that the population of Malabar in 1861 is estimated to have been about 1.71 million of which possibly two thirds were dependent on land. Out of the 1.15 million comprising agricultural population, the *janmis* numbered only 24714; of them 829 were classified as principal farmers and 250 were religious institutions. All the *janmis* together account for less than 2% of the agricultural population. To these *janmis* constituting an insignificant minority of agricultural population belonged practically every right and interest connected with land in Malabar.<sup>3</sup>

Controlling unit of land ownership in Malabar was the *taravad*. Table given below relates to the year 1882 and gives details of the break-up of the controlling houses or *taravads* in North and South Malabar.<sup>4</sup>

**Land holdings in Malabar *Taravads* and *Devaswams*,<sup>5</sup> 1882.**

Nature of land holdings	No. of monopoly houses		Total
	N. Malabar	S. Malabar	
<i>Devaswams</i>	12	34	46

<sup>2</sup> M.Krishnan Nair, *The Malabar Tenancy Bill 1927*, RAC.

<sup>3</sup> T.C Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences*, New Delhi, 1970, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Property of the temple.

Namboothiri houses	44	86	130
Moosad's houses	--	8	8
Nedungadi's houses	17	41	58
Nair taravads	63	60	123
Total	136	229	365

These *janmis* did not ordinarily sell their lands and the laws which governed them prohibited partition and thus prevented the distribution or diffusion of landed property. The *janmis* themselves did not use to cultivate in their lands. They generally let out their lands to others on *kanam* (customary tenure or lease), *kuzhikanams* (customary lease of land without any advance to the landlord) or simple leases for cultivation. These lessees who formed the cultivating classes were thrifty and industrious. They clinged to their holdings with a fondness and tenacity perhaps unknown in other parts of the Presidency. But they were often unable to enjoy the fruits of their labour on the land. By the time, the land which they have reclaimed or improved or the trees which they have planted and protected begin to yield they were evicted from their holdings. These unjust evictions on several occasions caused serious troubles and led to agrarian outbreaks.<sup>6</sup>

### Tracing the history

The traditional agrarian structure in Kerala was based on a three-tier relationship between *janmis*, *kanakkars* (holders of *kanam*), and *verumpattakkars* (holders of simple lease).<sup>7</sup> A noticeable feature in Malabar during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the rise

<sup>6</sup> M.Krishnan Nair, *op.cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Y.Vaikuntham, "Peasants in Colonial South India", *Presidential Address*, South Indian History Congress, Calicut University, 1991, p.9.

into prominence of a section of the *kanakkar*.<sup>8</sup> This small section who paid rent to the *janmi* and at the same time received rent from cultivators emerged as a socio-economic force since they extracted a higher rent from the actual cultivators than what they paid to *janmi*. Again when *janmis* were in need of money they borrowed from *kanakkar* who collected the share of the produce of the *janmi*. This growth and advancement of the *kanakkar* was noticed and viewed seriously by the *janmis* who resorted to several measures which would enable them to harm and eliminate the intermediary class.

To devise measures for improving this state of affairs the Government of Madras appointed more than one Commission in the past. On 25<sup>th</sup> January 1881 Mr. William Logan who was then the Collector of Malabar was appointed as Special Commissioner to conduct a thorough investigation into the general question of tenure of the land and the tenant right in Malabar. In June 1882 he submitted his report to the Government containing several suggestions including a strong recommendation to grant occupancy right to the prevailing tenants of Malabar. "The landlord's power of ouster must in the public interests be curtailed", he said.<sup>9</sup> He recorded that the tenants were in perpetual fear of eviction by the landlord, chronically in debt and were driven to the limits of starvation.<sup>10</sup> Again the Government appointed a Special Commission in January 1884 with Sir T. Madhava Rao as President and Mr. William Logan, Mr. C. Sankaran Nair and others as members to consider the whole question of Malabar tenancy and advise the Government as to the lines on which legislative action should proceed. This commission submitted its report and a draft Malabar

<sup>8</sup> K.N Panikkar, "Agrarian Legislation and Social Classes in Malabar", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. xii, No.21, May 27, 1978.

<sup>9</sup> William Logan, *Malabar*, Vol .I, New Delhi, 1995, p.584.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.583.

Tenancy Bill in July 1884. The report indicated the necessity for legislation. The draft Bill contained a provision for the grant of occupancy to the *kanam* tenants. The draft bill was referred by the Government for the opinion of the Judges. It may be stated that even Sir Charles Turnes, the then Chief Justice was not entirely against the grant of occupancy right. The Government appointed another Committee in 1885 with Mr. Master as President and Sir Madava Rao, Sir Subramanya Iyer, Sir C. Sankaran Nair, Mr. Ross and others as members. The majority of the members of this Committee were also of opinion that legislation for restraining eviction was necessary.<sup>11</sup> The Government accordingly passed the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvement Act I of 1887 for awarding compensation for improvements to the tenants on eviction.<sup>12</sup>

Subsequently the Government considered that further legislation was required to amend the whole law related to landlord and tenant in Malabar and placed Mr. Ross on special duty in 1896 with instructions to draft a Malabar Tenancy Bill incorporating therein the provisions of the Improvement Act. The unexpected death of Ross soon after this prevented the completion of his work. Nothing further was done in the matter till 1899 when a bill to amend the Improvements Act of 1887 was introduced in the Madras Legislative Council and after a great deal of discussion finally passed into law as Act I of 1900. It may, also be noted that Mr. Dance, the then Collector of Malabar with a view to restricting under certain conditions the power of granting *melcharths*, drafted in 1899, “the Malabar *Melcharth* Bill”. The Government however refused to act upon it and rejected it in 1901.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> M. Krishnan Nair, *op.cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Y. Vaikuntham, *op.cit.*, p.11.

<sup>13</sup> M. Krishnan Nair, *op.cit.*

Thus the only practical result of all the Committees and Commissions mentioned above had been the passing of the Improvements Act I of 1900. This Act also could not give adequate protection to the tenants but only led to the increase in the number of the eviction suits in the Civil Courts of Malabar.<sup>14</sup> The *janmis*, in order to circumvent this Act, adopted the bold methods of: (1) Renewal of a lease on higher rent and remitting a portion of the rent in advance, as surety, and (2) allowing tenants for few more years after the contract and the improvements made during the contract period were not brought under compensation.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently Mr.C.A Innes who was for a long time Collector in Malabar and whose knowledge of the conditions of the district was almost unrivalled had, in his report when he was the Collector of the district, recorded that the Improvements Act of 1900 has failed to achieve and can never achieve one of the principal objects with which it was passed, namely the prevention of capricious and arbitrary evictions. He recommended that 'comprehensive tenancy legislation' providing for fixity of tenure should be undertaken. But the Inne's report of 1915 on the fixity of tenures was not accepted by the Board of Revenue, as it feared that the *janmis* would be alienated.<sup>16</sup> While the Government of Madras had been hesitating to enact as per the report of Mr.Innes, the Governments of Travancore and Cochin, where conditions were similar to those in Malabar had solved the problem that related to the *kanam* tenants. The Travancore Government by a Proclamation issued in 1867 and the Cochin Government by a Regulation passed in 1914 confirmed occupancy right on *kanam* tenants. It was in this situation as the only remedy for removing the agrarian discontent that existed in Malabar that grant of permanency of tenure to

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Y.Vaikuntham, *op.cit.*

<sup>16</sup> A.R Desai, *Peasant Struggles in India*, Delhi, 1985, p.616.

tenants in their holdings was argued and Mr.Krishnan Nair introduced his Bill in the Council.<sup>17</sup>

In August 1922 Krishnan Nair applied to the Government of India for sanction to introduce the Tenancy Bill in the local Legislative Council. But the Government stated that they proposed to oppose it saying that the Government was not fully convinced of the necessity of such legislation. Krishnan Nair subsequently modified his original Bill and asked permission to introduce it. The Government's attitude towards the Bill was discussed in Cabinet and it was decided that the Government should not oppose motion for leave to introduce the Bill. Also it was decided that their further attitude towards the Bill would be settled after observing the attitude adopted by the Council towards this measure. It was also decided that with the dissolution of that Council it may be introduced as a fresh motion when the new Council assembles.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Bill was passed after an elaborate discussion in the next Council, with some modifications, by an overwhelming majority, the Governor did not give his assent. Therefore, Krishnan Nair introduced again the Bill in the Council in 1927 which after several discussions and conciliations was later piloted as a Government Bill and passed and enacted by getting the Viceroy's assent in 1930 December 1.

The proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1921 is self explanatory as to that the Government lacks an intention to make a legislation regarding the Tenancy Bill then. <sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> M.Krishnan Nair, *op.cit.*

<sup>18</sup> *Letter No.2234, Law Department, 11-09-1922, RAC.*

<sup>19</sup> Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Madras-First session from 8-1-1921 to 5-3-1921, Council Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> February 1921, RAC. The following were the questions of the members and answers of the Government pertaining to the tenant issue: Question:-Khan Bahadur Muhammed Usman Sahib Bahadur: To ask the Hon'ble the Law Member whether- (a)there is a great deal of agitation among the tenants of Malabar for a Tenancy Bill safeguarding

Thus even when the Government extends almost a deaf ear to Tenancy Bill, the Council member Mr.Krishnan Nair managed to make the Council recommend for the same Bill within a short span of one month. The proceedings of the Council in April 1921, throws a light upon that.<sup>20</sup>

K.N Panikkar says, “The tenancy question was the most debated issue in Malabar: the Malayalam press was replete with reports of landlord oppression and exploitation, tenants’ grievances and appeals for tenancy reform. *Kerala Sanchari* 15<sup>th</sup> October 1890 and 10<sup>th</sup> July 1901, *Vyavasaya Mithram* 30<sup>th</sup> December 1910 and *Kerala Chandrika* 26<sup>th</sup> October 1900 are some examples”.<sup>21</sup>

It is a fact that tenants were afflicted much in the hands of the *janmis*. Prior to its re-organization as a linguistic state in 1956, Kerala

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their interests. (b) the Government contemplates introducing a Tenancy Bill for Malabar in the near future. Ans- (a) Yes, (b) There is no immediate intention to introduce the Bill.

Mr.K.Prabhakaran Thampan:- “Whether the agitation among the *kanam* tenants and the cultivating tenants was brought to the notice of the Government?. The Hon’ble Mr.C.G Tod Hunter”- “There was a representation made by a conference on the subject made in the course of last year”.

Diwan Bahadur M.Krishnan Nair:-“Are not the Government aware from a perusal of the newspapers that in Malabar within the last six months or one year there have been many meetings of tenants raising very loud complaints against the oppression of the *janmis*”?. The Honourable President:-“Is it a question for information?”

M.Krishnan Nair(Continuing)-“I only want to know whether the Government have received complaints and if they have not received complaints, are they at least aware of the fact from a perusal of the newspapers? The Honourable Mr.C.G Tod Hunter:-“I am not quite sure that the Honourable Law Member had read the newspapers. If he has not, I am sure he will lose no time in doing so.”

<sup>20</sup> *Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Madras*, Vol. I B, April 1921, RAC. Appendix viii, “Occupancy rights to Malabar *Kanam* tenants”. The resolution of Diwan M.Krishnan Nair said, “This Council recommends to the Government that a Bill providing for grant of right of occupancy to *kanam* tenants in Malabar in their holdings be introduced in the near future”.

<sup>21</sup> K.N Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921*, New Delhi, 1989, p.120.

had the highest percentage of area under tenancy in India, and was perhaps the only state characterized by such a bewildering variety of land tenures which were ‘almost unique in respect of their complexity and multiplicity of incidence.’<sup>22</sup>

K.Vasudevan Moosad (K.V.M) in his biography narrates the pitiable condition of the tenants of Malabar especially the intermediary tenants called *kanakkar*, “Our family property was some land leased out from the *janmis* by *kanamcharth* (overlease of tenure). In those days the condition of *kanakudiyans* (holders of *kanam* right) like us was quite pathetic. All property including farm lands, garden lands, hills and valleys in the countryside belonged to the *janmis*. Namboothiri Brahmins, some *sthaani* Nairs who are *Naduvazhis* (local chieftain) and *Uralans* (Custodians) of certain temples were the owners of the whole land in the country. *Janmi*, *kanari* (*kanakkar*) and *verumpattkkaran* were the three groups who were related to land. Of this *janmi* had the birth right with full independence over the land, *kanari* was the intermediary and *verumpattakudiyani* was the one who actually cultivated the land. To speak about the unfortunate state of *kanari*, the intermediary, is like that of *Thrishanku* in Hindu mythology that is, in fact not here or there. *Kanari* was safe only if he could give Government tax, *michavaram*, (balance of *pattam* or rent after deducting mortgage interest), *onakkazhcha* (gift to the landlord during Onam festival), and *thirumulkkazhcha* (present to the landlord) to the *janmi* from time to time. Except a few who kept under possession large area of land, most of the *kanakkudians* were not able to make subsistence with the income from the property they obtained. There were only two ways for the *kanakkudiyani* to keep the land permanently under himself. For this either the *kanakkaran* would have been able to gather a big amount

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<sup>22</sup> Oommen M.A, *A Study on Land Reforms in Kerala*, New Delhi, 1975.

outside, for the tax, *michavarams* and for the *polichezhuth* (a deed on the periodical renewal of lease, a new bond) made during every twelve years or he would have been able to do the farm works by himself.”<sup>23</sup>

K.V.M continues, “Our family was not in a position to do either. In the family none had necessary savings and none was able to do the farm works by himself. Also if one was ready to till the land taking the yoke and plough then it was certain that he would be excommunicated from the caste. Thus there was no means to protect our *kanam* lands. What left to us was to entrust *keezhkudiyans* (sub-tenants) the land and get satisfied with what they give. It was because of this reason that *kanari* (*kanakkaran*) or the intermediary was compared earlier to *Thrishanku*. In fact the *Thrishanku* is remaining in an imaginary paradise. *Kanakkaran* is also like that. He may be entitled to get a bulk amount of paddy as lease. He incurs his family expenditure on the basis of that high stature in his mind. Enormous meals for obsequies and birthday celebrations, squandering money for *cheroonu* (first meal of a child), marriage etc. were some examples of prodigal way of spending. Thus it is for the intermediary, a heaven everyday.... But in this style of life he will be forced to keep the *janmi*'s share as arrears from time to time. For that, interest and fine will accrue. The *janmi* will be patient onlooker until his dues accumulates into a big amount. When the *kanakkaran* is not able to remit the amount by onetime settlement for, him there is no other way but to mortgage the land. When two three times thus mortgaged he will be bound to execute a final deed. By the time the *janmi* will coerce him for a *polichezhuthu*. The term *polichezhuthu* is very much relevant in the sense because to facilitate this *polichezhuthu* the *kanari* has to give up all his possessions. It was in

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<sup>23</sup> K.V.M, *Aatmakatha*, (Mal), Kottayam, 1966, pp.50-52.

such a situation when the landed property of our family was getting dwindled that I came to the forefront of life”.<sup>24</sup>

The land tenure system in Malabar was very much different from Travancore and Cochin until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Malabar the whole land was the private property of a few of the *janmis*. Government had no other land in Malabar other than that became escheat by the deposition of the heirless land with the Government. The powers that vested with the *janmi* over both the land and tenant were unlimited. At any time the *janmi* could evict the tenant from the land without placing any genuine reason. *Janmi* had the discretion to make *polichezhuth*. He could also give *melcharths* as he liked. Much worse was the condition of the *verumpattakkudiyans* who were under *janmi* and *kanakkar*. The unlimited authority enjoyed by *janmi* over land affected every facet of the life of the tenant. It curtailed the freedom of the tenant even in the community and domestic matters. Any tenant who is bound to live in such a circumstance has certainly to fear the *janmi*. Besides, since the Government, that ruled over the country was overtly favouring the *janmis* there was no scope for the tenant to get any redressal of their grievances. The very specialty of the land tenure system and the consequent harassments were resulted out of a few judgments made by the British judicial officers who were not at all aware of the traditions and the ancient history of this land. To get emancipated from this pathetic condition the tenant leaders of Malabar endeavoured much from 1880 onwards.<sup>25</sup>

K.R Achuthan also describes the perilous life of the tenants. “The tenant has to pay another amount in the name of ‘signature right’ for the *janmi*, *anantharavakasaham* (nephew’s right) for nephews and

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Malayala Vijnanakosham*, Vol.iv, Kottayam,1971, p.286.

*thadasthavakasham* (mediator's right) for intermediaries while *janmi* executing the *kanam* deed. During the time of celebrations the tenant has to take to *janmi*'s house, plantain leaves and vegetables as offerings. If one does not do like this the *janmi* will give the land to some other tenant as *melcharth*. It is very painful for these tenants that this property where they are born and brought up, their ancestors are buried and family deities are seated getting alienated by *melcharth*. Therefore the *kanakkudiyans* will succumb to any demand of the *janmi* to avoid such *melcharth*.<sup>26</sup>

### **Through the pages of newspapers**

To find some solace for these troubles the tenants started manipulations in many a way. Though the vernacular newspapers were started only during the 1880's, it seems amazing that the tenants started to pour their grievances through its pages in those days and made an attempt to make the world and the authorities know about their sufferings. Complaints from the tenants, often directed against Namboothiri landlords and their excesses, began to appear in the columns of newspapers on a regular basis.<sup>27</sup> *Kerala Mithram* said, "The harsh and oppressive treatment to which the tenants are at present subjected by their land lords of whom Namboothiris form the majority has no parallel that for every frivolous reason tenants will be punished with ejection".<sup>28</sup>

*Kerala Shobhini* pointed out that apart from executing evictions and *melcharths* the *janmis* interfered in the social and domestic matters of the tenants and created dissensions among them for their own profit.

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<sup>26</sup> K.R Achuthan., *C.Krishnan*, (Mal), Trissur, 1970, p.216.

<sup>27</sup> *Kerala Mithram*, 30<sup>th</sup> April 1881, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>28</sup> *Kerala Mithram*, 26<sup>th</sup> February 1881, MNNPR, TNA.

Sometimes they do not allow the tenants to cultivate their lands at the proper season if they have any grudge against them.<sup>29</sup>

The harsh treatment and threat of eviction discouraged the tenants from improving their holdings. The contemporary newspapers played the role in bringing to light the inhuman treatment and action directed against the tenants. One paper argued that *janmi* should be held entitled only to the interest on his capital expended in the cause of the land, and the tenant to all the rest of its produce as it is the tenant who works.<sup>30</sup> Another paper warned that the stage came when judicial intervention and decision was sought by the people to solve the confusion which prevailed. Government should take steps to put a stop to injurious practice in the interest of both landlords and tenants. The existing relation between the two is not so cordial.<sup>31</sup> Large number of disputes reached the courts for solution. Every landlord has two *paras*, one bigger than the other. The bigger one is used to measure *paattam* paid by the tenants who in consequence suffer a loss of 10 percent.<sup>32</sup>

In the early issues of *Kerala Sanchari* there are passing references about the oppression of the tenants. A correspondent says that the landlords of Malabar oppress their tenants by unnecessary evictions. Government should check such evictions by legislation.<sup>33</sup> It also complains of the inequities committed by the *amsam menons* in assessing the crops in North Malabar. The correspondent adds that these *amsam menons* ask bribes from the tenants and if they are refused the

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<sup>29</sup> *Kerala Shobhini*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1903, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>30</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1896, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>31</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 30<sup>st</sup> June 1896, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>32</sup> *Kerala Chandrika*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1897, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>33</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 17<sup>th</sup> September 1890, MNNPR, TNA.

assessment is made very heavy. The attention of the authorities is invited to the matter.<sup>34</sup>

The letters to the Editor published in *Kerala Sanchari* during the early days since its launching is an indication of the intensity of the tenant's worry, anxiety and anguish about their land. A tenant from Chirakkal *Taluk* writes to the Editor, "Dear Editor, We, destitute are writing now with the intention of conveying the Government through you, our grievances and thus to get them redressed. If there was any wherewithal in these times none would borrow money at such exorbitant rates and bearing much difficulties engage in farm works by felling forest. We, unfortunate people who are doing farm works in somebody's land are bearing unendurable harassments in respect of the *varam* (lease amount) to the *janmis* and bribes to their *karyasthans* (manager of the property of a landlord) and after giving them nothing will be left with a tenant. When the financiers pester us we will be forced to give even the seedlings. And this can be done somehow. But it is inexplicable the harassment made by the *menons*. Even if these people are given five or ten rupees to get some relief in the case of tax, without having satisfaction they further demand pumpkin, watermelon, curd etc. I am not telling now anything about the revenue inspectors. It is so wonderful that they do not study anything even by bitter experience".<sup>35</sup>

Another tenant without mentioning his name writes a different letter to the Editor in the issue of *Kerala Sanchari*. "Dear Editor, I hope there will not be much harassment from the officials for sometime henceforward. But when will this harassment of the *janmis* come to an end? We cannot say in what way and how these *janmis* are exacting several types of rent from poor tenants like us. And if the tenant dares to

<sup>34</sup> *Kerala Sanchari* 17<sup>th</sup> January 1894.

<sup>35</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1888.

start litigation against the *janmis* that will result in the ruin of the tenant. Then what else to do? There is no escape. One has to obey them fully if he wants to live in the land with some peace of mind. It is very painful that an educated tenant, dancing to the tune of an ignorant *janmi*. It would have been very nice if there is some way to bridle the authority of the *janmi*”- *One Kudiyan*”.<sup>36</sup>

Right from 1880's there were some efforts from the part of administration, to bring some reforms in the land tenure system of Malabar. The article published in *Kerala Pathrika* throws light on this point. “The first article observes that the Committee at Madras engaged in considering the Malabar Land Tenure System has not decided on any of the important points on the subject and says that the people are eagerly expecting the issue of the Commission. The same article proceeds to say the insufficiency of the compensation generally awarded to tenants for their improvements on the lands they hold”.<sup>37</sup> When the Committee was formed, the *janmis* could ‘read the writing on the wall’ much early and understand that it is perilous for them. As a result they started to resist such initiatives and make uproar against it. “Class-based associations also emerged in the Malabar District during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1886, when the Madras Legislative Council took up for consideration a Bill for awarding compensation for tenants’ improvements, the landlords organized themselves to safeguard their economic interests”.<sup>38</sup> Out of this concern came into being the Kerala Janmi Sabha, Dharmachara Sabha and Uttara Kerala Sabha. These associations held annual meetings, passed resolutions and submitted

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<sup>36</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1888.

<sup>37</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, April 1886, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>38</sup> *Leg.Dept*, G.O No.19 A, 10th May 1887, TNA.

memoranda to the Government in an attempt to prevent legislative approval of the Bill.<sup>39</sup>

K.Vasudevan Moosad (KVM) reminisces in his biography, the early efforts of Namboothiris in forming an organization. “Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha was formed in 1908 at the house of Chittumukku Vaidhikan Namboothiri in Aluva. Leaders of the community like Kuroor Unni Namboothiripad, Chitoor Narayanan Namboothiripad, Edappalli Shankar Raja, Kallingatt Vaidikanmar, Kaanippayyur Namboothiri-padanmar, Deshamangalam, Olappamanna Namboothiripadanmar, Poomulli Namboothiripad, Aazhvancheri Thambakkal and so on, were active participants during its early activities. It was originated at a special juncture when the institutions like family, marriage, mode of succession etc. which are the basis of a traditional social structure were facing a crisis and at the same time under the colonial rule the world of knowledge in which the Namboothiris had a sway was getting more and more democratic”.<sup>40</sup>After the formation of Yogakshema Sabha a magazine in Malayalam *Mangalodayam* was also started. “This was regarded in the early period as the official organ of the Sabha”<sup>41</sup>. *Yogakshemam* newspaper was started in 1909. It is this *Yogakshemam* which became the main weapon of the *janmis* in the fight against Tenancy Bill later.

Meanwhile the advocates of the bill, mainly the intermediary *kanakkar* did not form an association, but were more vocal and through the medium of vernacular press, succeeded in making it a public issue.<sup>42</sup> These discussions and debates on marriage reform and land legislation

<sup>39</sup> *Leg.Dept, G.O No. 76, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1887, TNA.*

<sup>40</sup> KVM, *op.cit.*, p.53.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

<sup>42</sup> K.N Panikkar, “Agrarian Legislations and Social Classes in Malabar”, *op.cit.*

initiated a new style of conducting public affairs in Malabar and a new awareness in public life.<sup>43</sup> Even then, when the Committee at Madras started its sittings the tenants were really scared to give evidences before them due to the fear of the *janmis*. This is very clear in the report of *Kerala Pathrika*. “Several tenants in Malabar are afraid to give evidence before the Committee, for their landlords threaten them with evictions and *melcharths*, if they were to do so”.<sup>44</sup>

But some of the *janmis* like C.Krishnan were against this kind of tyrannies unleashed upon the poor tenants. “The attention of C.Krishnan focused on the *janmi*-tenant issue also, as in other general matters of interest, even while he was making collegiate studies. While he was pursuing law in the Madras Law College he wrote an article in *Madras Mail* entitled *Malabar Janmi* in the issue of 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1900 in the name ‘K’. In that article he vindicated that as in Travancore the *kanakkudiyans* of Malabar also should be given permanent right in the land property”.<sup>45</sup> After that he became an active participant in the Malabar tenant agitations. It was the *Mithavadi* that stood in the forefront among the papers that gave leadership for this struggle.<sup>46</sup> To bridle the unlimited powers of the *janmis*, the then Malabar Collector Dance sent the ‘Malabar *Melcharth* Bill’ for the consideration of Madras Government in March 1901 but was decided not to implement that Bill”.<sup>47</sup>

No major legislation designed to protect and promote the interests of the oppressed and exploited groups can be ordinarily expected in the

<sup>43</sup> K.N Panikkar, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar, 1836-1921*, *op.cit.*, p.120.

<sup>44</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1893, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>45</sup> K.R Achuthan., *op.cit.*, p.215.

<sup>46</sup> N.K Damodaran, *Mahacharithamala* (Mal), Kottayam, 1984, p.35.

<sup>47</sup> K.R Achuthan., *op.cit.*, p.216.

absence of persistent demands and protracted struggles. In agrarian societies land is the most important means of wealth and source of power and prestige, and rights in land are often hereditary with power and prestige tending to be ascriptive attributes. Consequently, changes in the institutional framework of agriculture, the pattern of ownership, control and use of land, or more briefly the land system will have far reaching effects on the land-based social order in such societies.<sup>48</sup> Since peasantry constituted a major anti-colonial force in most of these countries in the period of the nationalist struggle, land reforms for the emancipation of the peasantry from feudal burdens became a necessary part of the process of national planning for economic development.<sup>49</sup>

### **Action and counteraction**

During those times when tenants intensified the initiatives to strengthen legally the agrarian laws, re-shaping the *janmi*-tenant relations, that the *janmi* sabhas of Malabar and Cochin looked at the agitations made by the tenants with doubt and anxiety. As a counter-measure the *janmis* started their own newspapers and magazines to propagate their ideas among the members of the fraternity. The Malayalam news magazine with the title *Janmi* which was started in February 1908 was the first endeavour of that kind. Beneath the masthead of the paper in the front page there was the motto, 'the only organ of the landlords'. *Janmam* tenure, *tarawads* of Malabar, English education of the Namboothiri Brahmins etc. were the contents of the first issue. It was made clear in the magazine that, a *janmi* is one who holds *janmam* land. It was also stated that the *Janmi* magazine will try

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<sup>48</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *Peasant Struggles, Land Reforms and Social Change-Malabar 1836-1982*, New Delhi, 1989, pp.13-14.

<sup>49</sup> P.C Joshy, *Land Reforms in India: Trends and Perspectives*, New Delhi, 1976, p.36.

to serve the interest of every *janmi* irrespective of caste.<sup>50</sup> In the presidential speech of the Janmi Sabha held in Vatakara in 1908 , Kozhikode Moonnarpada Raja said that earlier there was no unity between the *janmis*. But due to the efforts of Janmi Sabha the *janmis* from various lands have come here. The rights and authority of *janmis* have been reduced much now. If we inform the Government these matters properly, the grievances may be redressed.<sup>51</sup>

*Janmi* magazine was always in the forefront in enlightening its members about the new legislations in any of the regions in Kerala. It serialized the report of the *Janmi-Tenant* Commission of Kochi with amendments, from second issue onwards<sup>52</sup> and *Marumakkathaya* Bill of Travancore from the third issue onwards.<sup>53</sup> It also published in the second issue the amendments that proposed and forwarded to the Madras Governor General by the Janmi Sabha, in respect of the *Kuzhikkoor Chamayam* Act (Improvement Act) of 1900.<sup>54</sup>

*Janmis* had started the campaign in their favour through *Janmi* news magazine right from the beginning itself. In the issue of 1085 *Kanni* (1910 September) there were quotes from various enquiry reports that justified the *janmam* right of the *janmis*.<sup>55</sup> At the same time it tried to take stock of its own pathetic condition. The newspaper lamented that not only the big *janmis* but also a sizable number of the small *janmis* are not able enough to look after their own affairs without somebody's help. Many of the *janmis* don't know how to write and calculate. Therefore the newspaper advised the *janmis* to appoint educated and competent

<sup>50</sup> *Janmi magazine*, February 1908, (M.E 1083 Kumbham).

<sup>51</sup> *Janmi magazine*, May 1908, (M.E 1083 Edavam).

<sup>52</sup> *Janmi magazine*, , September 1910, (M.E 1085 Kanni).

<sup>53</sup> *Janmi magazine*, October 1910, (M.E 1085 Thulam).

<sup>54</sup> *Janmi magazine*, September 1910, (M.E 1085 Kanni).

<sup>55</sup> *Janmi magazine*, September 1910, (M.E 1085 Kanni).

*karyasthans* (supervisors) at a reasonably fair salary. It reminded the members that things have changed much at present. Now litigations against the tenants are on the increase. In the past there was no need of collecting evidences for making such litigations. It cautioned that due to the innovations like survey, settlement and *janmam* registration, land related affairs have become now complicate.<sup>56</sup> At this time with the intention to reform *Yogakshemam*, a newspaper of Namboothiri community was started and it was decided to make it the official organ of *janmis*. Later some *janmi* Directors of *Mangalodayam* company invited Kunhirama Menon (MRKC)<sup>57</sup> to the post of Company Manager. But other than in literature he could not do anything for the *Janmis*.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the tenancy issue was not kept so live and vibrant as during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The attempts in the next phase to protect the interests of the *kanam* tenants starts around 1912, when T.M Nair, a member of the Madras Legislative Council (MLC) and later one of the founders of the Justice Party, prepared a Tenancy Bill to confer fixity of tenure on *kanam* and *verumpattam* tenants. As Nair resigned from the council in 1913 his Bill had a premature death.<sup>59</sup> The vernacular newspapers continued to

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K.C Manavikrama Raja, "Upadeshaprasamgam" in *Janmi*, Februaary 1911 (M.E Medam 1085), pp.15-20.

<sup>57</sup> MRKC is Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon, famous writer and editor. He is the nephew of Chenkalath Valiya Kunhirama Menon, the founder of *Kerala Pathrika*. It was in 1908 the Yogakshema Sabha was founded. From then onwards until the launching of *Yogakshemam*, reports of the proceedings of the *Sabha* were published in *Mangalodayam*. *Mangalodayam* press was owned by Desamangalam Mana and the monthly *Mangalaodayam* had been published from this press under K.V.M. The press was later transferred to Thrissur after purchasing the Kerala Kalpadrumam press and forming the new *Mangalodayam* company. Later it merged into the *Yogakshemam* Company with M.R.K.C as Manager.

<sup>58</sup> KVM, *op.cit.*, p.109.

<sup>59</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.77.

highlight the issue in many a way. *Kerala Sanchari* wrote against the unjust *melcharths* and un-reasonable evictions.<sup>60</sup> *Kerala Pathrika* dared to abuse even the High Court order which was against the interests of the ordinary public.<sup>61</sup>

Subsequent attempts to stir up the issue up to 1920's remained almost at the level of occasional meetings. The editor of *Mithavadi*, Adv.C.Krishnan, a Thiyya advocate and one of the few non-Nair tenant leaders had recorded two such meetings. In August 1919 he met the new Malabar Collector Hole and apprised him of the problems of the tenants. In October 1920 he participated in a meeting of the tenant leaders convened at Calicut at the residence of K.P Raman Menon, a prominent lawyer and tenant leader, and contributed Rs.100 towards organizational needs.<sup>62</sup>

Krishnan's venture, the *Mithavadi* had one of the foremost places in Malabar among the newspapers that pioneered the tenant agitations. While launching *Mithavadi* as a weekly, Krishnan wrote in the first issue (3<sup>rd</sup> January 1921), "For the public to experience the benefits and virtues of a responsible Government, they should have the ability to

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<sup>60</sup> *Kerala Sanchari*, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1915, MNNPR, TNA. A correspondent in the *Kerala Sanchari*, points out that "unjust *melcharths* and un-reasonable evictions are the natural mania of some of the *janmis* and observes that the tenants are eagerly waiting to see our benign Government who occupy the position of a father to us all, passing a measure into law, regulating the relations between the *janmis* and the tenants".

<sup>61</sup> *Kerala Pathrika*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1915, MNNPR, TNA. *Kerala Pathrika* says that the recent decision of the High Court that a *janmi* is entitled to evict a tenant even before the expiry of the period for which the property has been leased out to him, in case it is proved that the latter is causing damage to it. If such decisions become final and authoritative, and if the subordinate judiciary will decide cases in accordance with these decisions, High Court decision alone will be sufficient to meet the requirements of the people, not only in the matter of land tenure in Malabar, but also in several matters which require special legislation.

<sup>62</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, p.222.

work independently. In British Malabar to materialize that, there should be some change for the present situation of the *janmis* and tenants. Here *janmi* thinks that the tenant is a slave who is supposed to surrender to him and obey what he says. To develop love and trust between them, the system in which *janmi* can evict the tenant and giving the property by *melcharth* without the consent of the tenant should end. To bring forth such a situation we will do the best through *Mithavadi* whatever is possible for a newspaper”.<sup>63</sup> The committed works of Adv.Krishnan towards the cause of tenants has been lauded by many of the newspapers then.<sup>64</sup>

It was from 1916 onwards that the District Conference of the Congress was started to be convened. Between 1916 and 1920, the tenant leaders gradually captured the control of the Malabar Congress, by ousting the *janmis* who dominated it till then. With this, the demands of passing resolutions of the *janmi-kudiyar* relations was voiced in each of the District Conference.<sup>65</sup> The last district conference of the Congress was held at Manjeri on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April 1920.<sup>66</sup> The tenancy and

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*Ibid.*, p.218.

<sup>64</sup> *Mithavadi*, October 1920, Vol.viii, No.9. In the wake of elections to Madras Legislative Council in 1920, the papers like *Westcoast Spectator* published news items supporting the candidature of Adv.C.Krishnan. One such report carried in *Westcoast spectator* which was further quoted by *Mithavadi* is an example. “Mr.C.Krishnan has a particular aim on the confidence and support of the tenants of Malabar for more reasons than one. At the outset, we are in a position to state that the representations Adv.Krishnan has been making off and on to the authorities on behalf of the tenants have already had the effect of exciting interest in them in the matter the common people of Malabar are deeply interested in. This is a matter the tenant voters should not overlook. If they have gratitude enough, they must vote for the man who has been labouring incessantly to get the many and varied wrongs of the tenant redressed. We may confidently expect that the man who has done so much will also succeed in getting some relief for the anxious situation created by the tenancy laws”.

<sup>65</sup> K.Madahavan Nair, *Malabar Kalaapam*, (Mal), Calicut, 1987, p.91.

<sup>66</sup> A.K Pillai, *Congressum Keralavum*, (Mal), Thiruvananthapuram, 1982, p.394.

*Khilafat* issues attracted a large number of Mappilas to the conference, most of whom ‘had just come from the plough and the farm’.<sup>67</sup> In the Manjeri conference, K.P Raman Menon pushed through a resolution demanding tenancy reform legislation, despite stiff opposition from the *janmis*.<sup>68</sup> *Janmis* vehemently resisted it. Some of the landlords who attended the conference submitted a note to the president recording their strong protest against passing the resolution.<sup>69</sup> Yet the resolution was passed. Thus with a massive rural participation, the obstructionist policy of the *janmis* was defeated and the tenants’ case first found a public platform.<sup>70</sup> In fact, practically in every regional conference since 1920 when any significant political activity began to take place in Malabar, tenancy reforms figured as a major demand. The first Kerala State Political Conference held at Ottappalam in 1921 wanted to evolve harmonious agrarian relations between the land lords and tenants.<sup>71</sup>

Subsequent to that, due to the enthusiasm of K.P Raman Menon and others a Kudiyan Samgham was constituted at a meeting in Calicut and also took the decision to begin such Kudiyan Samghams in all the places in Malabar. K.P Gopala Menon, P.K Kunhrama Menon and C.K Nair were its Secretaries. The famous ‘*Kudiyan* pledge’ also was approved there.<sup>72</sup> Without delay a few Kudiyan Samghams were started in Malabar.<sup>73</sup> The emergence of this phase of the struggles has to be understood in the context of the spread of English education in Malabar

<sup>67</sup> *Westcoast Spectator*, 29<sup>th</sup> April 1921, quoted in C.Gopalan Nair, *The Moplah Rebellion 1921*, Calicut, 1923, p.9.

<sup>68</sup> K.Madahavan Nair, *op.cit.*, p.91.

<sup>69</sup> A.K Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.409.

<sup>70</sup> Conrad Wood, *The Mappila Rebellion and Its Genesis*, New Delhi, 1987, p.132.

<sup>71</sup> T.K Oommen, *From Mobilization to Institutionalization*, Bombay, 1985, p.38.

<sup>72</sup> K.Madahavan Nair, *op.cit.*, p.91.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because of their privileges and pre-eminence in Malabar society for a long time the Namboothiris considered English education an anathema, thanks to their false notions of aristocracy and social rank. This was, however, not the case with the Nairs, especially those from the *kanakkar* families. The new education opened to them the doors of British bureaucracy in Malabar, offered them its power and influence, and made them assertive and aspiring.<sup>74</sup>

When the *janmis* saw the tenants' uproar from various quarters they could not remain idle. To think about the measures to counter them the *janmis* also called conference. *Yogakshemam* reports about the Tellichery conference. "Just now a meeting of the *janmis* was convened at Thalassery. In the conference it is seen that they decided to send a representative delegation to inform the Government that it should not make any legislation restricting the authority and powers of the *janmis* and the hue and cry that the tenants make is meaningless. Six gentlemen including Chirakkal Valiyaraja, Vengayil Nayanar and so on have been selected members of this delegation".<sup>75</sup>

### **Tenancy Movement becomes vibrant**

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<sup>74</sup> E.M.S Namboothiripad, *A Short History of the Peasant Movement in Kerala*, People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1943, p.4. Yet sometimes their situation was lamentable. E.M.S Namboothiripad comments about this. "The new class of educated young-men and officers were politically and culturally far more advanced than their landlords who however were economically and socially dominant in the countryside. The very state which made them politically independent of the *janmis* made them much more dependent economically on those same *janmis*. A *Tahasildar* or a police inspector or a sub-judge is part of a machine which deals with *janmis* as with any other citizen but individuals who are appointed to these posts are socially and economically dependent on some of these *janmis*. The officer has innumerable opportunities of bossing over the *janmis* as over the rest of the people, but the *janmi* can evict his family from the house in which he lives. The educated and professional man with a wide outlook and a sturdy sense of self-respect has to humiliate himself before the narrow minded and conceited ignoramus who is his landlord".

<sup>75</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 24<sup>th</sup> June 1921.

Meanwhile when the Justice Party formed the first ministry in Madras in 1921 after the first election to the Reformed Council, some of the lawyers of the Pattambi Munsiff court thought of finding a solution to the tenancy problem through legislative means. An immediate result was the formation of the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham (MKS) at Pattambi in 1922 with T. Ramakurup, a prominent lawyer of the Pattambi bar as President and lawyers M.M Kunhrama Menon and P.A Raman Menon as Secretaries. This was followed by the launching of the newspaper, *Kudiyan* (Tenant) with lawyer N.Kunhrama Pathiyar as Editor. In December 1922 the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham organized the first Malabar *Kudiyan* Conference at Pattambi presided by C.R Reddy, member of the Madras Legislative Assembly and a prominent member of the Justice Party. The organizers of the Conference had given adequate publicity to their venture and to the oppression of the *kanam* tenants by the *janmis*. This conference marked the beginning of the organized agitation of the *kanam* tenants.<sup>76</sup> This conference was a major break through. Mannath Krishnan Nair, K.P Raman Menon and so on were present.<sup>77</sup>

The main resolution of the convention was that considering the public opinion, Mannath Krishnan Nair will prepare a Tenancy Bill in which there will be the proposal for giving permanent rights for all *kanakkudiyans* and *verumpattakkudiyans* who have been keeping the land under possession for not less than six years and this Bill should be passed in the floor of the Madras Legislative Council. Krishnan Nair although introduced the Bill it was not passed in the Council.<sup>78</sup> The Malabar Kudiyan Samgham had to employ various means to create

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<sup>76</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.78.

<sup>77</sup> K.R Achuthan., *op.cit.*, p.220.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.223.

public opinion in favour of the Tenancy Bill by doing campaign works in and out Malabar. No political movement, however just or reasonable can hope to be completely successful if it is not adequately reinforced by public opinion.<sup>79</sup> As a part of the campaign, the leaders of the Kudiyan Samgham made contacts with the editors of important newspapers of Kerala, Madras and Delhi and sought their help.

The hard core of the tenants' agitation consisted of a few lawyers, intellectuals and journalists from prominent *kanakkar* families in and around Calicut. The methods of articulation were in keeping with their social and professional background. These involved the publication of articles and reports on tenancy issues in leading newspapers such as the Madras-based *The Hindu*, *Justice* and *Madras Mail* in English and the Calicut-based *Kudiyan*, *Mathrubhoomi* and *Mithavadi* in Malayalam; periodic meetings with the editors of *The Hindu* and the *Madras Mail* for apprising them of the need for tenancy legislation; fighting elections on tenancy issues, seeking the patronage of important political leaders and inviting them to preside over *Malabar* Kudiyan Samgham conferences and so on.<sup>80</sup>

It was at this juncture *Mathrubhoomi* was born. Right from the beginning, it started to embrace the cause of tenancy movement. In the fourth issue *Mathrubhoomi* sarcastically wrote that seeing the scene in which the *janmis* and tenants of Malabar kneeling before a foreign power for the solution of the issue we are reminded of the fable where two cats went before a monkey to get a loaf of bread shared. This tenancy discord is intertwined with many other things and it will further weaken the strength of our beloved country. It is sure that until a

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<sup>79</sup> P.K.K Menon, *The History of the Freedom Movement in Kerala*, Vol.ii, (1885-1938), Trivandrum, 1992, p.11

<sup>80</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, 1989, p.79.

judicious decision regarding the dispensation of land there will be no prosperity and peace in the District.<sup>81</sup> The very next day *Mathrubhoomi* again carried a statement of K.Madhavan Nair of Calicut. In it he highlighted that until some enactment is made in respect of *janmi*-tenant issue, we cannot expect to have peace or prosperity in Malabar. The permanent right of the tenants is, of-course a genuine need. Even though there are hard-hearted *janmis* it is not good, or beneficial or desirable to abuse the *janmis* in general and a community in special.<sup>82</sup>

In a way, at that particular period the very aim of *Mathrubhoomi* was to lead the tenancy movement so as to be beneficial to the tenants. When the elections to the Madras Legislative Council were held in 1923 *Mathrubhoomi* was taking the initiative to decide the candidates of the Kudiyan Samgham. In the report published on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1923 it intimated the readers about such a meeting. “A general meeting of the Kudiyan Samgham will be held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1923 at Pattambi. The agenda was mentioned as to choose two candidates of the Samgham to the Legislative Council”.<sup>83</sup>

At the same time the *Janmi*-tenant Acts in Cochin and Malabar coerced the rich group of the Yogakshema Sabha to change according to changing times. The *Janmi*-tenant Act promulgated by the Government of Cochin was the item on which the immediate attention of the Sabha was focused. About this *Unni Namboothiri* wrote, “Oh, *janmis*, you might have understood the danger behind the third and fourth chapter of Tenancy Regulation. Our condition has now become very pathetic. Independent authority over land is the basis of all our qualifications and worthiness. But it is to be controlled by the Regulation from this 8<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1923.

<sup>82</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1923.

<sup>83</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1923.

*Thulam* onwards. And there ends all our worthiness....”<sup>84</sup> It was in regions like Cochin and South Malabar, quite different from Travancore, where separate agrarian relations existed, that *Yogakshemam* concentrated its activities. Therefore it gave more weightage to the interests of the Malabar and Kochi *janmis*. “In those days there were publications like *Vasumathi* and *Janmi* to protect the interests of the *janmis*. Regarding the *Janmi*-tenant issue of Malabar *Vasumathi* could only make some noise favouring the side of the *janmis*. The *janmis* met in *kovilakams*, *manas* and *oottupuras*, ate enormous meals and discussed about their rights. And later the report of those discussions would be published in *Vasumathi*”.<sup>85</sup>

The election to the second Reformed Council in October 1923 witnessed the first active phase of the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham.<sup>86</sup> It was in the Congress convention held at Delhi in September 1923 that the resolution allowing Congress members to contest the elections to the Legislative Council was passed....As a result a new importance came up for the elections to the Madras Legislative Council and Council of State, scheduled to be held in the coming month. It was a time when a new vigour and vitality was rampant throughout the land as a result of the agitations made by the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham. In the previous Council Diwan Bahadur Mannath Krishnan Nair had introduced a Tenancy Bill which was not at all discussed in the floor since the tenure of the Council ended early. It was the next Council to be formed after the elections that could do something. Therefore this election was

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<sup>84</sup> Unni Namboothirippad, in *Unni Namboothiri*, Voi.iv, Issue 8, 1923, pp.146-151.

<sup>85</sup> KVM, *op.cit.*, p.156.

<sup>86</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.80.

something very crucial for the tenants who comprise a major population of Malabar.<sup>87</sup>

Among the 140 members in the Madras Legislative Council Malabar was represented by only five. One among this five is a representative of the *janmi*. And among the other four general seats, two were reserved for Muslims. For the passing of the Tenancy Bill it became very important for the tenants to ensure the election to the above four seats, persons who are in favour of the Bill.<sup>88</sup> Kollangottu Raja Vasudeva Raja and Kuthiravattath Prabhakaran Thampan were the contestants to the *janmi* seat. And to the two unreserved seats Ambatt Sivarama Menon, Kollangottu Madhava Raja, Diwan Bahadur M.Krishnan Nair and K.P Raman Menon were the active candidates. Malabar Kudiyan Samgham supported and made large scale campaigns for both M.Krishnan Nair and K.P Raman Menon. In an annexure report published in *Mathrubhoomi* on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1923 under the heading “Malabar Tenant, Coming Elections” a statement of G. Sankaran Nair, the founder Secretary of Malabar Kudiyan Samgham was published in which he had explained the necessity of electing young Krishnan Nair and K.P Raman Menon for the satisfactory solution of tenancy issue. Sankaran Nair had also given a warning such as the tenants should be very much aware of the strategies of the *janmis* who want to make Madhava Raja win the elections utilizing their influence among the tenants. He also said that some tenants are helping Madhava Raja in the above endeavour considering some vested interests. The contest became intense and tough as the day for the election approached. In the newspapers there appeared the requests of the candidates explaining their qualifications both as advertisements and news items. Elections

<sup>87</sup> V.R Menon, *Mathrubhoomiyude Charithram*, (Mal), Vol.i, Calicut, 1987, pp.80-81.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

became a mortal battle not only due to the vigour of the campaigns but also considering the general importance and unprecedented vigilance and encouragement that came up among the public.<sup>89</sup>

Of the three candidates who contested the election, claiming to represent the tenants, namely Mannath Krishnan Nair, K.P Raman Menon and Ambattu Sivarama Menon, the first two were quite popular among the tenants....<sup>90</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* depicted in brief but in simple style the background of the election, the situation of the constituencies and the virtues and vices of the candidates: “Candidates four: voters more than 33000. Among them some favour the candidates; some are interested only in the immediate gains. *Janmis* coerce the tenant voters to cast their votes in favour of Madhava Raja as single vote. The number of contestants staged by Kudiyan Sangham is two. But saying that this is unjust, *Kudiyan* newspaper (edited by Kunhirama Pathiyar who was an office-bearer of Malabar Kudiyan Sangham) fielded another candidate Ambatt Sivarama Menon. This is the situation prevailing now. In this context how can we elect two qualified and competent candidates? If not possible what would be the future of the tenant world?”<sup>91</sup>

Newspapers like *Mathrubhoomi* favoured much the *Kudiyan* movement and gave wide publicity for its work. Even it published as a news item the request of Mannath Krishnan Nair, a candidate for the Legislative Council elections, under the heading, “Election to Legislative Council, Request to Voters”. The text of the request was like this, “Although I introduced a Bill in the Legislative Council proposing permanent rights for all *kanakkudiyans* and *verumpattakkudiyans* of Malayalam District, since the tenure of the Council ended early it could

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.80-81.

<sup>90</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.80.

<sup>91</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, .p.82.

not become a matter of discussion in the Council. But I can move this Bill again in the new Council. Therefore, to enable me for the same I request every voter to vote for me in the forthcoming election”.<sup>92</sup> Usually this kind of requests was carried only as advertisements since they would create an impression that the paper is supporting that side only. But for *Mathrubhoomi* it was not a problem since it was vehemently in support of the tenancy movement.

*Mathrubhoomi* was injecting inspiration into every tenant to persuade him to vote for the candidates of the Kudiyan Samgham. With that purpose they carried various news items which would instill self-pride in the heart of every tenant who may come across that. In the supplement of 9<sup>th</sup> October 1923 the election was the main thread of discussion. It said: “We are now standing at a juncture in the history of the Malabar tenancy. A new inspiration and vigour is visible in the land, consequent to the agitations in respect of tenancy issue. The tenant world which was enslaved so far, feels an air of freedom and a new awareness about rights. This topic which was hitherto confined to Malabar District is now fascinating the attention of the whole of Presidency. The Government which so far kept silent in this issue is also aware of the fact that it cannot remain idle without doing something. In the last Council Diwan Bahadur M.Krishanan Nair had introduced a Tenancy Bill. But since the Council was terminated early it will be discussed again only in the next Council formed after the election”.<sup>93</sup>

The report continued: “It is a must that *janmi*-tenant relations of Malabar are to be restructured in a reasonable way so as to protect the genuine rights of both. To materialize this objective we have to get the sympathy and favour of Madras Legislative Council. Out of the 140

<sup>92</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1923.

<sup>93</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* Supplement, 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1923.

members in the Council, Malabar has a representation of only five. Among this one is reserved for the *janmis*. Out of the other four seats two each are reserved for Hindus and Muslims. Since among the public, the brutal majority being the tenants and since the Government has shown overt injustice in the allocation of seats to Malabar, as a sweet revenge we have to ensure the success of the tenant candidates to the Council. Especially since our grievances are to be redressed by the next Council the above four members should be our genuine representatives. Among these four we have to think about the two Hindu candidates. There is no doubt that the Government is unjust in the allocation of seats to the Council. It is funny that besides reserving one seat for the *janmis* the Government has also allowed them to contest in the general seats. Under the guise of the above clause Kollangottu Madhava Raja has filed nomination. This is a subject which the tenants of Malabar have to seriously ponder over. It is most funny to see Madhava Raja as a candidate before the public, who have been suffering from the torments of the *janmis* for quite a long time. This justifies the general thinking of the *janmis* that these tenants are some abominable creatures lacking even a bit of self respect or dignity. In order to retaliate the impudence of the *janmis* the tenants should be able to exercise their franchise in a manly manner. We should remember that if a *janmi* goes to the Council getting our votes, as our representative, what we have done all these days for the welfare of the tenants will be in vain. Many of the *janmis* using their influence among the tenants, are trying to canvass votes for Madhava Raja. Some tenants are also conniving with these *janmis* for reasons of vested interest. We have to be careful in dealing both these groups".<sup>94</sup>

An advertisement which was centre-spread in the front page of

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

*Mathrubhoomi* conveys the importance it attached for the canvassing works of the candidates of Kudiyan Samgham contesting to Legislative Council elections.<sup>95</sup> (See appendix-II). But although *Mathrubhoomi* fought with the same energy and vigour just as the candidates, Krishnan Nair alone could win the elections, since it was the early beginning of Kudiyan Samgham and as a result much unity and solidarity were not cemented among the tenants. K.P Raman Menon was defeated by a *janmi* Kollangottu Madhava Raja.<sup>96</sup> Among the seats reserved for Muslims Moidu and Uppi Sahib made success. Subsequent to the elections *Mathrubhoomi* wrote an editorial under the heading “Certain lessons from Election”. In the editorial they said, “On the basis of votes it is very evident that the candidates of the Kudiyan Samgham are the most agreeable ones. Yet one of their candidates lost the election due to some feud within the organization”.<sup>97</sup>

Despite the partial defeat of the *Malabar* Kudiyan Samgham, the election provided ample opportunities for building up a tempo on tenancy issues both through the press and the platforms. Indeed *Kudiyan* newspaper was partial. But *Mathrubhoomi* which was started just on time for the election propaganda with one *janmi* (Kurur Nilakantan Namboothirpad), five lawyers and one doctor as directors devoted considerable space to lengthy editorials and debates on *janmi-kudiyan* relations and to election appeals of the *Malabar* Kudiyan Samgham and its candidates. Every election meeting was also used for highlighting the tenancy issues.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile *Kerala Kesari*, the newspaper of Moyyath Sankaran welcomed the activities of the *Malabar* Kudiyan

<sup>95</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1923.

<sup>96</sup> *Malayala Vishwa Vijnanakosham*, p..288.

<sup>97</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, .p.83.

<sup>98</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.81.

Samgham and wanted to consider the case of *verumpattakkar* also.<sup>99</sup> The resistance mounted upon by the ruling authorities and the *janmis* troubled *Kerala Kesari* much which gave active support simultaneously to both National Movement and Tenancy Movement. The pressures became intolerable such that it was forced to shift its office from Kannur to Calicut. In Kannur due to the harassment of the police none of the presses was ready to print the paper which ultimately resulted in the closure of the publication.<sup>100</sup>

When the tenants started campaigns the *janmis* also could not remain idle. They too started the enlightening works using the print media. The article by Kaanippayyur Sankaran Namboothiripad in the *Yogakshemam* under the heading ‘The responsibilities of Janmi Sabha’ is an example for this. He said, “I don’t think even the tenants have any difference of opinion in the fact that *janmis* have absolute freedom in their property. It is with the idea that, may these poor tenants live in comfort, that many of the land owners have given them land by *charths* and allowed them to continue there and to keep it under their possession. Thus in fact the *janmis* have so far been protecting the tenants...But forgetting all these now the tenants want the permanent rights over the land enjoyed by the *janmis*. Is there any ingratitude more intense than this? If we think on another line, we will be bound to say that it is the foolishness of the *janmis*, the reason for all. If the tenants were not allowed to enjoy this much of property for such a long period this kind of ‘avarice’ would not have engendered in their minds. This kind of greed would not have born in them if they were paid the coolie as cash down at the moment they do the farm work. The root cause for all these

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<sup>99</sup> Kaviyoor Rajagopalan, *Moyyarath Sankaran*, (Mal), Trissur, 1965, p.43.

<sup>100</sup> Perunna K.N Nair, *Malayala Pathrathinte Katha* (Mal.), Cochin, 1987, p.39.

troubles is the fact that the *janmis* allowed the tenants to enjoy their land like *janmam* for a meagre consideration of paddy called *michavaram*.”<sup>101</sup>

Kanippayyur continued, “The only solace of the *janmis* so far was that the Madras Government will not favour the tenants in their unjust move. But in the introductory speech of the Governor it is seen as he said that tenancy legislation is also under consideration. Therefore if the *janmis* remain idle they will have to bear hardships....if large scale chaos break out in the land the Government also cannot remain without fear. Therefore it is the Janmi Sabha that has to do further in this matter. For this the Janmi Sabha has to collect four or five lakhs rupees by borrowing from the Government or from some other sources. And let the *janmis* know that they don’t give anymore land by way of *charth*, but start litigation to evict the existing tenants without fearing to remit the compensation for improvements and for that there is sufficient money to be collected by Janmi Sabha. Now it is neither due to any lack of desire for profits nor any lack of knowledge regarding the ingratitude of the tenants that the *janmis* have not evicted them so far but for lack of money to start litigation and pay compensation for the improvements”<sup>102</sup>.

He suggested further, “Therefore the Janmi Sabha has to do this thing alone on an emergency basis. Janmi Sabha can be given the evicted land as collateral security for the money they lend to the *janmi*. However, we look, all the lands released thus will not be required as collateral security for the amount that *janmi* borrows. Thus the *janmis* will have some balance land under their possession for enjoyment even after giving a portion of the property as collateral security for the amount they borrow from Janmi Sabha. The result is that the tenants

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<sup>101</sup> Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboothirippad in *Yogkshemam*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 1923.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

won't trouble them hereafter. If four or five *janmis* like Kollangott, Olappamanna, Nilambur, Poomulli and so on, come into a contract and form a company they can collect not four or five lakhs but crores of rupees".<sup>103</sup> *Yogakshemam* by separate news bits also tried to inspire the *janmis* about the works started by the tenants and thereby to take counter measures to defend the same. Also it gave advance information about Diwan Bahadur Krishnan Nair's move seeking permission for introducing the Malabar Tenancy Bill in the forthcoming Legislative Council.<sup>104</sup> Learning about the advent of Tenancy Bill in the Council *Unni Namboothiri* lamented that the Tenancy Bill and the 'Charitable Institution Bill' will make the Namboothiris to dispossess of their *Dharmaswam* and *Dewaswam*.<sup>105</sup>

The period between 1926-30 witnessed the most active and vocal phase of the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham, centering around the Malabar Tenancy Bill and the Government's opposition to it. Krishnan Nair had begun his efforts to formally introduce his Bill in the Madras Legislative Council soon after the second Reformed Council was constituted. The Bill, was eventually introduced in the Council in August 1924. The Select Committee headed by C.P Ramaswamy Iyer issued a dissenting note stating that the Bill was so defective that it was incapable of being improved even by amendments. And the task of framing these amendments was entrusted to F.B Evans, its second Secretary whose anti-tenant views were so notorious that tenants throughout Malabar felt it necessary to protest immediately against his appointment. According to Evans the Tenancy agitation in Malabar was not due to any change in the economic situation that occurred since the Government decided

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1923.

<sup>105</sup> *Unni Namboothiri*, Book iv, Issue 5, 1923.

against Tenancy Legislation in 1918. He regarded the agitation as communal, Nairs versus Thiyyas in North Malabar, Namboothiris versus Samanthans in South Malabar, and a combination of both in Calicut.<sup>106</sup>

In the wake of the impending Bill of Mannath Krishnan Nair *Yogakshemam* was eager to publish the report of every meeting of Kerala Janmi Sabha. The resolution passed by the special meeting of the Janmi Sabha held at Payyanur was carried in *Yogakshemam*. “This Sabha is of the opinion that the Legislative Council should not allow Sri Diwan Bahadur Mannath Krishnan Nair to present the Malabar Tenancy Bill which is supposed to grab the genuine, inherited and ancient rights of a group of people and give it to another group which is irrelevant, unnecessary, detrimental for Malabar and which may result in the enhancement of litigations considerably”.<sup>107</sup>

*Yogakshemam* took diplomatic stand when it appeared necessary, showing some sympathy for the tenants. In the report entitled “Congress Workers and the *Janmis*” it took a bi-forked stand attacking the Congress workers and at the same time showing compassion towards the tenants. “Now the important persons like K.P Raman Menon who have recently joined the Congress in Malabar uphold a policy such that the powers and rights enjoyed by the *janmis* are to be exacted and subsequently bestowed upon the tenants with the same. And thereby the fruits of the hard work of the tenants may be made enjoyable by some ‘upstarts’. In Congress *janmis* are a few, but tenants or those who are favouring the tenants are more in number. Now it is difficult for the small *janmis* to release their outdated possessions from the tenants....Our ancestors have entrusted the tenants their lands without

<sup>106</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.83.

<sup>107</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1924.

getting sufficient security or registering *marupattam* (the counterpart of the pattam deed which the *janmi* keeps by him). Now it is very much comfortable for the tenants since the courts in their judgments give the tenants a consideration for their improvements even greater than that of the *janmam* cost....As a result the tenants can enjoy the property as if his *janmam* land without giving either the *janmam* price or the periodic increase in taxes. ..But in most of the cases the poor tenant who worked hard is not in a position to enjoy the fruits. Because the ‘men who have made new fortunes’ ultimately swindle the land by lending 10 rupees and adding to it two three times the interest and compound interest. Subsequently it is he who gets the *janmam*. If he evicts the tenant there is no grievance. But if the *janmi* evicts him for not giving the lease amount for 12 years consecutively, then the tenants organize and put the *janmi* in trouble so as not to enable him to evict the tenant. For getting the meagre lease amount, it will cause unbearable expense for the *janmi* to go to court”.<sup>108</sup>

Another report in *Yogakshemam* entitled “The Basis of Malabar Tenancy Act” accused the Government for its lack of zest in collecting information, and the Council members for its lack of dynamism. It called for making a scientific study of the tenancy problem. “The tenant side puts forth very many reasons for the legislation of a Tenancy Act in Malabar. But nobody has collected any material evidence to substantiate these claims. Details regarding how much is the number of *kanakkudiyans*, how much is the number of *kudiyirupps* (consideration, a tenant used to pay to the owner, for land taken for building alone) under *janmis* and *kanakkudiyans*, how many *verumpattakudiyans* are there, whether it is the *janmi* or the *kanakkudiyans* that have filed more number of eviction suits etc. are of urgent necessity now. When

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<sup>108</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1924.

Mr.Gopala Menon requested the Madras Government to collect such details the reply of the Law Member was that such information won't help. Though it needs some labour the reluctance of the Government to collect these necessary details cannot be justified at all".<sup>109</sup>

The meeting of the Janmi Sabha held at Kottackal in 1924 also cautioned the *janmis* against the Tenancy Bill of Mr.Krishnan Nair. It was presided over by K.C Sree Veera Rayan Raja known as Nedathralppad Thampuran. He explained in his speech the troubles and difficulties for the *janmis* and tenants that may result if the Bill comes into force and warned the *janmis* that it is their duty and responsibility to see that such a legislation is not at all made. The following resolution was passed unanimously. "It is seen that the Tenancy Bill to be piloted in the Legislative Council by Diwan Bahadur Krishnan Nair will turn upside down the permanent rights of the *janmis* which have been agreed by the British Government and also by their predecessors and thereby protected and strengthened by the judicial courts".<sup>110</sup>

*Yogakshemam* while fighting for the cause of the *janmis* it was very enthusiastic in attacking the reports and policies of *Mathrubhoomi* which was unfailingly favouring the tenants. The report entitled '*Mathrubhoomi's* Model' published in December 1924, in which the works of *Mathrubhoomi* is ridiculed, is an excellent example. "Some newspapers like *Mathrubhoomi* are indisposed to hear the news that a college is necessary for the *janmis* to get necessary education so as to enable them to exercise their duties and obligations in the capacity as the owners of the land in Kerala. We don't understand why these people cannot digest a situation, in which the *janmi* governs his estates judiciously and efficiently without somebody's help and without

<sup>109</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 29<sup>th</sup> March 1924.

<sup>110</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1924.

allegations. In this country there are separate colleges for engineers, doctors, lawyers and agriculturists. Is it the formation of a special college where the curriculum has subjects helpful for estate management that has annoyed them? Or is it adding some *janmi* sound along with the name of the college that has caused for their discomfort? Or, is the reason for this venom the desire that there should not be any difference between *janmi* and tenant among the public? Or, is it the stand of *Mathrubhoomi* that the word *janmi* might not be used henceforward other than not seeing in some records or books or dictionaries....That equality and equal rights about which people use to speak right from the genesis of the world and even now speaking, has not so far come into force but rests only in the heads of scholars like the Editor of *Mathrubhoomi*. Editor and reader, Government and subjects, officials and subordinates, leaders and followers, courts and clients, master and servant, rich and the poor, land owners and landless people all exist then and now. Nowhere else there is a country or a people as shown by *Mathrubhoomi's* model. Even Mahatma Gandhi has not made any endeavour to bring equality and socialism as to say that there should not be *janmis* or that there isn't any necessity of the word *janmi*. It is to be experimented to find out the difference between *Mathrubhoomi's* model and Gandhiji's model. If we can accept the economic principle of *Mathrubhoomi* such that a newspaper establishment can be run by collecting money from the subscribers, our principle of giving education by collecting money from *janmis* also can be accepted. If so it can be generally accepted that economic principles can be employed in any way....We totally agree with the opinion of *Mathrubhoomi* that there is considerable difference between *Mathrubhoomi's* model and our model".<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 5<sup>th</sup> December 1924.

Meanwhile the tenants had advanced much, in respect of the Tenancy Bill. Yet the *janmis* were not much aware of the impending danger. At this juncture the *Yogakshemam* takes initiative to awaken the *janmis* from their slumber. The call of Muthiringod Bhavathrathan Namboothirippad, ‘To *Janmis*’ is an awakening article. He says, “Perhaps everybody might have known that due to the earnest effort of Mannath Krishnan Nair a Tenancy Bill for the benefit of the tenants of Malabar is allowed to be presented in the Madras Legislative Council and it will be discussed in the meeting of the Council scheduled to be held in coming August. There is no doubt that if the Bill becomes a legislation it will be detrimental to much more number of *janmis* here than that in Travancore and Cochin. My impression is that in Cochin and Travancore *kanam* alone comes under the parameter of the Act. But here in Malabar, if the Bill is passed for *verumpattam* it will also fetch *janmam* right along with it. ..I feel that the *janmis* of Malabar are not aware of the impending danger when I see them remaining idle. A huge memorandum demanding the legislation of the Bill, signed by 30,000 tenants has reached the Government...Oh, *janmis*, if you stare well soon, you may perhaps be able to at least see your ancestral wealth”<sup>112</sup>.

At the same time during this period, we witness some sporadic efforts from *janmi* side to entice the British. The letter of Mannarghat Moopil Nair published in *The Madras Mail* containing some veiled threats is an example. It explains the difficulties of the *janmis* on one hand and tells frankly on the other hand that if the *janmis* are no more, then that will be a heavy loss for the British. The letter says, “The Revenue Department says that the *Pattadar* (Malabar *janmi*) is responsible for the land revenue of the land included in his *patta* (title deed). They do not seem to recognize the middle men (*kanamdars*) in

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<sup>112</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1924.

the matter of revenue collection. The *janmi*'s movables are attached by the Revenue officials for the due amount of the land held under '*kanam*'. What is then the *janmi* to do? He is to borrow from a money lender, perhaps at high rate of interest, the amount of money sufficient to meet the demand of Revenue officials. If so how is the *janmi* to realize the amount? He is to file as many civil suits as there are *kanam* tenants. If he has hundred *kanam* tenants he is to file hundred suits paying the increased rate of court fee in civil courts. In this situation the Malabar *janmi* requires immediate protection. He has status to wield power and influence, which is now and ever will be which he can use to help the British Government in all possible ways; which has to be considered as an asset of the British. If the power is taken away from him or if he is deprived of power it may safely be considered that it is a loss to the British Government. One of the ways to bring him back to his former position is to allow him to realize his dues from his tenants without pushing him into civil suits, by reviving the Rent Recovery Act viii of 1865 applicable to Malabar".<sup>113</sup>

Despite the multifarious efforts of the Janmi Sabha the Tenacy Bill was presented in the Council. Learning this *Unni Namboothiri*, an organ of the youth wing of the Namboothiri community, lampoons, advises, chastens and whips the elders through its pages. This is evident from the various reports and editorials of the time. In the article entitled 'Publication Project, Endeavours of Tenants' *Unni Namboothiri* darts multi-pronged attacks. "The *janmis* of Kerala instead of trying to gain what they want by the might of their money, they are spending everything for discussion, cohabitation and eulogy without any thriftiness which in turn becomes the manure for the fast growth of the poisonous tree of 'tenant might'. Tenant endeavours or otherwise the

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<sup>113</sup> *The Madras Mail*, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1925, NMML, New Delhi.

‘*Janmi* hatred’ which is born in Travancore and ramified in British Malabar through Cochin has grown to the pinnacle by even reaching the Madras Legislative Council. We cannot say that the tenant agitations in Malabar are not at all beneficial to the *janmi*. At least the *janmis* may have studied the lesson, that the system in which they entrusted their ancestral wealth, was not with the deserving people but it was with anybody who came into their sight, and *janmis* were enjoying so far what these tenants have been giving them with benevolence, and will not henceforward work smoothly”.<sup>114</sup>

It was when the Bill was passed in the Council that the *janmis* got a new enlightenment. Many of the *janmis* who kept away from the meetings of the Janmi Sabha suddenly turned up in the meeting held in July 1925 at Ottappalam. The next issue of *Yogakshemam* appeared with a self-criticism and evaluation of the above meeting. “From the increased attendance of the *janmis* in the meeting of the Janmi Sabha held at Ottappalam under the presidentship of Kottackal Valiya Raja, it is very evident that the unjust victory of the tenants has made the *janmis* at last a little more responsible. But it cannot be said that what they did there is something admirable or beneficial because such a big meeting of the prominent *janmis* of Malabar was just making a humble request and forming a petition committee. Only by hard work the *janmis* can bring a fruitful outcome in which they too get a place in the formation of public opinion in Malabar. It has become very necessary at least for the triumph of ‘ethical jurisprudence’ that the Tenancy Bill should be vetoed by the Governor. It is very gladdening that prayers for the same originate from the heart of every *janmi*. Our belief is that the *janmis* will not be reluctant in coercing the British Government for exercising its

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<sup>114</sup> *Unni Namboothiri*, 1925 July.

judicial mind at the time of final disposal of the Bill too, which it has exhibited at the time of debates in respect of the Bill earlier”.<sup>115</sup>

When the *janmis* were making campaigns for their cause, some newspapers like *Al-Ameen* in the opposite side highlighted the step-motherly treatment of the Madras Government in the case of Tenancy Bill. It even argued that Malabar, to get justice, should be made an independent province de-linking it from Madras Province.<sup>116</sup> While the activities of the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham was making an active momentum Adv.C.Krishnan spearheaded the tenancy movement in his own unique way by utilizing the support of Thiyya community and co-operation of Malabar Kudiyan Samgham and the support of his newspaper *Mithavadi*. The resolution passed in the very big Thiyya Convention held at Kuzhalmandam, chaired by *Mithavadi* Editor C.Krishnan was this: “This convention requests the Government and Legislative Assembly either to pass the Tenancy Bill of Diwan Bahadur M.Krishnan Nair at an earlier date or to introduce and pass a Bill moved by the Government in its initiative giving permanent right to all tenants”.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Unni Namboothiri*, 1925 July.

<sup>116</sup> *Al.Ameen*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1925, MNNPR, TNA. The *Al-Ameen* said that it is becoming increasingly difficult to carry Malabar affairs through the Madras Legislative Council, that the latter body does not attach any importance to Malabar problems and that the Government themselves are showing only a step-motherly interest towards Malabar. The Malabar Tenancy question affords a first class example of this attitude. It is difficult even to explain to them the meaning and application of such terms as *kanam*, *verumpattam* etc. It can undoubtedly be asserted that the ignorance of the Legislature is one of the greatest obstacles in the way of passing the Malabar Tenancy Bill. The Council depends on Tamils and Telugus. And they of course attach to their own affairs and not to Malabar.....In view of these and various other examples (not mentioned) of the anomalous position of Malabar, it is necessary for making it a separate province. It is advisable to have linguistic provinces with a Central Government for dealing with all India questions.

<sup>117</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1923.

Noted scholar G.Priyadarshan in his column in *Bhashaposhini* reminisces C.Krishnan's bold writings in the special supplement of *Mithavadi*. Priyadarshan says that C.Krishnan, a wealthy *janmi* sincerely argues in favour of the *kudiyans*. In the first special supplement of the *Mithavadi* published in 1924 he wrote an article entitled 'Malabar *Kudiyayma* Bill' in which he argued successfully that the Bill introduced by Mannath Krishnan Nair in the Madras Legislative Council may be passed. Krishnan was of the opinion that there is not any difference between passing that Bill and releasing a slave from fetters. In fact the *janmis* are making our growth negative.<sup>118</sup> Krishnan criticized the Madras Government for the slow efforts in dealing with tenancy reforms. *Mithavadi* was in the forefront in dealing with *kudiyans* problems. Though Kerala was hailed as 'God's own country' there was cruel and unjust exploitation of the *kudiyans* who were humiliated and brutally oppressed by the *janmis* in the name of *melcharth*. In the 1925 annual of the *Mithavadi*, C.Krishnan said, "While calling Kerala as Parasurama's gift, the Brahmins and people of *dewaswams* and *janmis* who possess land and wealth were exploiting and forcing *kudiyans* to obey them for their livelihood".<sup>119</sup>

At this time the publications like *Yogakshemam*, *Unni Namboothiri*, *Vasumathi* and *Janmi* made a parade on the *janmi* side and newspapers like *Mathrubhoomi*, *Mithavadi*, *Kerala Kahalam*, *Al-Ameen* etc. extended whole hearted support to the tenant cause. *Mathruboomi* was the most vehement voice of the tenants. It also advised the tenants and gave repartee to its rivals at the apt time. It even abused the stand of Government's Law Member C.P Ramaswamy Iyer in his deplorable

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<sup>118</sup> G.Priyadarshan, "Pazhamayil Ninnu", in *Bhashaposhini*, November 2006.

<sup>119</sup> K.Sabukuttan, *C.Krishnan and Social Change in Kerala*, Kottayam, 2002, p.32.

stance regarding the Tenancy Bill.<sup>120</sup> In the same issue *Mathrubhoomi* published a notice inviting the tenants for a meeting at Calicut on the same day.<sup>121</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* was very active and vigilant in informing the tenants each development in respect of the issue and to make it a thread of discussion. It reserved separate space to publish ‘Malabar Tenancy Matter’ under a separate logo. It was not reluctant to criticize even the Special Officer Mr. Evans when he seemed to be leaning towards the *janmis*. In the report entitled “Government’s overt partiality, Mr.Evan’s menace” *Mathrubhoomi* gives an ‘on the spot study’ of the way of Mr.Evans taking the evidences regarding the Tenancy Bill. “Mr.F.B Evans, the Special Officer in respect of Malabar Tenancy Bill held discussion about the Bill on 9<sup>th</sup> March at *Hajur Kacheri* with the main leaders of the *janmis* and tenants of this district. The important persons who participated were Kollangottu Valiya Nambidi, Diwan Bahadur M.Krishnan Nair, Rao Bahadur Appu Nedungadi, Nilambur Valiya Raja, Rao Saheb Chandan, T.Chathu, Kottiyathu Krishnan and so on. In

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<sup>120</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1926. In the news item “Malabar Tenancy Bill: The undesirable policy of the Law member, the strong abuse of the tenants” *Mathrubhoomi* says, “In the tenant meeting held at Vadakara last day more than 300 tenants including Muslims and Thiyyas assembled. It was presided over by Adv. K.V Krishnan”. After that G.Sankaran Nair spoke about the present state of the Malabar Tenancy Bill and about the obligations of the tenants. Mr.Chathu presented a resolution:-“This meeting expresses strong opinion that the Government’s Law Member C.P Ramaswami Iyer, by his deed so far made, and by the opinions and views expressed, regarding the bill, has become so undeserving to win the trust and confidence of the tenants of Malabar”. The resolution was passed unanimously.

<sup>121</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1926. The text of the matter under the heading “Notice” was this: “A meeting of the tenants is to be held today (February 1925) at 5.30 p.m in Town Hall, Calicut. The meeting will ponder about the Malabar Tenancy Bill and the policy of the Government towards it at present. It is requested that all the tenants should be present in the meeting”. Beneath the notice the names of the persons inviting were also given as ‘Rao Saheb P.A Krishna Menon, C.Krishnan, K.Madhavan Nair, U.Gopala Menon and G.Sankaran Nair’.

fact what we witnessed there was the prolonged debate between Mr.Evans and the tenants' representative Sankaran Nair. From the way in which Mr.Evans treated the representative of Malabar Kudiyan Samgham it is very clear that the Government is not going to include anything other than the amendments he may propose and so the Government is not going to review the needs like permanent rights of the tenants....It doesn't amaze us why the *janmi* delegates kept silence in the conference. Because Mr.Evans was sitting there as a representative who can satiate any *janmi* who is even conservative to the core. But the sight that majority of the Kudiyan Samgham members keeping mum indeed amazed us".<sup>122</sup>

When the partiality of C.P Ramaswamy Iyer and Mr.Evans became very explicit *Mathrubhoomi* cautioned the tenants to be beware of the above persons, through a news item entitled "The tenant conference of North Malabar". In it the paper said, "The respected people should know about the meeting of the Kudiyan Sabha scheduled to be held in coming April 14<sup>th</sup> at Thikkodi. The unfavourable attitude of Sir C.P Ramaswami Iyer very much exhibits the lack of sympathy of the Government in the matter of Malabar Tenancy Bill. Besides that Mr.Evans has been deputed to enquire about the tenant problem. The opinion of Mr.Evans will be same as that of the *janmis* since he has a leaning already towards *janmi* side. Now it has become necessary for the tenants of Malabar to think about the matters in which they have to work jointly. Therefore we invite all the tenants of North Malabar to be present in this meeting and request to extend all help for the smooth conduct of the Sabha".<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1926.

<sup>123</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 20<sup>th</sup> March, 1926.

When the Special Officer Mr. Evans published his report *Mathrubhoomi* carried the next day its crux under the logo “Malabar Tenancy Matter”. Evan’s report said that permanent rights will not be given to the tenants in the land. *Janmi* can evict as he likes. There is no objection for him to give *melcharth*. He can enhance the *michavaram*. The powers of the *janmi* are not at all cut off”.<sup>124</sup>

Infuriated by Evan’s appointment and amendments, protest meetings of tenants were organized in different parts of Malabar. Of them a meeting held at Thikkodi in North Malabar in April 1926 was probably the most significant. It was presided over by the *Mithavadi* Editor C. Krishnan and was attended by tenants from different parts of North Malabar and tenant leaders from South Malabar. In organizing it both the Nairs and the Thiyyas worked jointly overlooking their caste differences. More important is that it was organized with the help and co-operation of the younger members of *janmi* families in the area. Their involvement was very significant, symptomatic of the larger changes in Malabar society under the influence of modern ideas and education. Apart from a lengthy editorial *Mathrubhoomi* reproduced Krishnan’s presidential address almost in one full page.<sup>125</sup> In his presidential address C. Krishnan declared, “We shall not budge an inch in the fight for the rights which belong to us under every consideration of law and equality. We shall continue to agitate till we secure for ourselves these rights...The principle of permanency of tenure is based upon justice and it must prevail”.<sup>126</sup> He wholeheartedly supported the

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<sup>124</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1926.

<sup>125</sup> P. Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.83.

<sup>126</sup> K. Sabukuttan, *op.cit.*, p.32.

efforts of M.Krishnan Nair for introducing the Malabar *Kudiyan* Bill in the Madras Legislative Council.<sup>127</sup>

It was under the leadership of *Kerala Kesari* newspaper that the first tenants procession to Madras was organized. Under the leadership of K.V Reddy large tenants' convention was held at Puthuppanam of Vatakara. The procession under the leadership of Moolayil Kurumban, an 80 year old man was held to convey and convince the ruling authorities at Chennai about the growing debts and difficulties of the farmers of Malabar. It has been noted by N.E Balram that *Kerala Kesari* not only welcomed the activities of the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham but also asked to consider the case of *verumpattakkar* also.<sup>128</sup>

Meanwhile the Bill was debated in the week-long meeting of the Madras Legislative Council, in July 1926, when most of its sections were passed after rejecting Evan's proposals as they came up, after significant changes in the Select Committee's draft and more importantly, after frustrating the attempts of Ramaswamy Iyer to stall it.<sup>129</sup> At the same time Vasudeva Raja of Kollengode convened a meeting of *janmis* in July 1926, presided over by Kottackal Valiya Raja, where more than a hundred *janmis* from different parts of Malabar participated. The meeting requested the Governor not to pass the Bill.<sup>130</sup>

In the Legislative Council *janmi's* representative Prabhakaran Thampan delivered speeches underlining the reasons that justify not to pass the Bill, and those were carried in *Yogakshemam* in full text.

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<sup>127</sup> K.R Achuthan, ""Malabar Kudiyan Bill and C.Krishnan", in *Kerala Kaumudi* daily, 11<sup>th</sup> June 1967, Trivandrum.

<sup>128</sup> Kaviyoor Rajagopalan, *op.cit.*, 1965, p.43.

<sup>129</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.83.

<sup>130</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.83.

“..This council can never forget the fact that *janmis* are the absolute owners of the land for the last centuries. Also they had in the past the freedom to get back the rights like *kanam* by evicting as they like. Not only have the judicial courts of this land but even the Privy Council made judgments ratifying the above right. Due to the belief that the *janmis* have the above right, it can be seen that so many thousands of people have purchased this *janmam* right. On this basis even the Government has disposed the *janman* rights of escheat lands. In such a context is there any justice in taking away such rights in one moment so as to bring the ruin of one group? Also genuine reasons for the enactment have not been shown by the one who has introduced the Bill....I can daringly say that this Bill will not make even an iota of change in the case of lower classes. It is with the intention to get their votes that this kind of excuses is being presented. By this Bill the Council intends to give all the tenants of Malabar the permanent right. So that nobody is left without the right for permanent right. If so there is no difficulty to get the right of the land tomorrow for even the one who bought the right yesterday”.<sup>131</sup>

In the next issue of *Yogakshemam* also Thampan’s speech continued. “.. I feel this Council has a wrong impression that all the *janmis* are rich. Let me make it clear that there are only very few who have additional income more than needed. Most of the *janmis* are poor. If anybody of you goes to Malabar you can see that even some ladies who are getting *Malikhan* (pension) are leading their life by doing farm works in the field. ...If this Bill is passed there is no doubt that the *janmam* price will come down considerably. ..It was William Logan who said for the first time that *janmis* should have some kind of permanent right. During the discussion of *Kuzhikoor Chamaym Act*,

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<sup>131</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1926, MNNPR, TNA.

Justice Sundarayya who belonged to Malabar said that when considering the fact that *janmis* have spent much money on land property recently, any Act that takes away the right without remuneration is illogical. All the officials who have worked in Malabar have unanimously expressed the same opinion”.<sup>132</sup>

At this stage ‘to be or not to be’ was the prospect of the Bill. On the Government side there were strong attempts to stall the Bill and it was very conspicuous. Also there were strong moves on the tenant side to pass it in the Council. Then *Yogakshemam* wrote a report of double dealing nature in which they presented the pending Bill as something which the tenants can encash in the coming elections. “If the Bill be passed, it will count for votes at the ensuing election. On the other hand if it is vetoed by the Governor there will be an opportunity for the tenant leaders to condemn the ‘satanic Government’”.<sup>133</sup>

### **The Fight Continues**

Eventually overcoming all the hurdles mounted up by the *janmi* side the Tenancy Bill was passed by the Legislative Council. Krishnan Nair’s Malabar Tenancy Bill got 44 votes as against 23.<sup>134</sup> Then the *janmi* side again started to block the smooth forward movement of the Bill. The *Yogakshemam* carried a report of the resolution of the Namboothiri community meeting held at Cheruthuruthi which requested the Governor not to give assent to the Bill.<sup>135</sup> But when the Bill was

<sup>132</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 25<sup>th</sup> September 1926, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>133</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1926.

<sup>134</sup> K.Sabukuttan, *op.cit.*, p.32.

<sup>135</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 18<sup>th</sup> September 1926. Through the resolution the meeting requested the respected Madras Governor never to give assent to the “Malabar *Janmi*-Tenant Regulation” called the “Exaction Act” which has been passed by the Madras Legislative Council ignoring the inherited and permanent rights of the minority group called *janmis*. In that issue there was also another resolution requesting the Governor to reject the Bill since it is one which may nip the rights

finally passed by the Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1926, and when the tenants were celebrating their victory by organizing meetings in different parts of Malabar and felicitating Krishnan Nair and Sankaran Nair, came the news that the Governor had withheld his assent to it.<sup>136</sup>

The decision of the Governor made the *janmis* jubilant. Subsequent to that in the *Yogakshemam* there was a report justifying the action of the Governor. "...In this Bill, some clauses that deny the rights enjoyed by a group for the last 75 years, are incorporated, even rejecting the judgments of the judicial courts. It is seen that according to the Bill there is no provision to provide adequate compensation. Governor has felt that this enactment that prevents the natural justice and basic reasons of private rights, without showing genuine reasons is not at all judicious. Besides this Bill doesn't provide a satisfactory solution to the anomalies as said to exist in Malabar".<sup>137</sup>

In the same issue there was another report warning the *janmis* not to be relieved of fully by the present developments and advising the tenants not to be carried away by false promises. "There is no reason for the *janmis* of Malabar to sit in peace due to the fact that the Governor has vetoed the Bill. Sometimes the Government may introduce again this Bill. We vehemently say that *janmis* have to jointly work hard...We have to say that the tenants of Malabar should not sacrifice the love and affection towards the *janmis* for the sake of a few. Those who need your votes for their vested interests may give you many promises which may intensify your desires. Don't succumb to such things. It is the *janmi*, your most intimate relative. Don't give your votes in favour of those

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and authority enjoyed by the *janmis* and may destroy the amity between the *janmis* and tenants and may even distort the financial situation of Malabar.

<sup>136</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.84.

<sup>137</sup> *Yogakshemam* 8<sup>th</sup> November 1926.

who try to make discord between *janmis* and tenants. And by that don't give any chance for them to represent you and to do something that is detrimental to your interests".<sup>138</sup>

To express their exuberance the 19<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Namboothiri Yogakshema Sabha held at Kumaranellur passed resolution congratulating the Governor and the same was published in the *Yogakshemam*. "This meeting heartily congratulate the Governor who denied permission for the *Janmi-Tenant* Bill which was earlier passed by the Madras Legislative Council by artificial majority and without giving consideration to the genuine grievances of the *janmi* side. We also congratulate Raja Sir Vasudeva Raja, the *janmi* representative, K.Prabhakaran Thampan and so on also who put up tremendous work in this topic".<sup>139</sup>

The Governor's refusal to give assent to the Bill drew the ire of the tenant leaders and the tenants. On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1926, the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham secretary Sankaran Nair issued a lengthy 'open letter' to the Governor with copies distributed to the public, the Indian Government, the British Government and members of Parliament and reproduced it in full in *Mathrubhoomi* and *Mithavadi* as well.<sup>140</sup> In another letter M.Krishnan Nair appealed to the tenants for mobilizing public opinion for the Bill through meetings, newspapers, letters to the Government, meetings with members of the Madras Legislative Council, and men in public life for starting a newspaper (*Kudiyan* was defunct by then), and for building up a *Kudiyan* Fund for the purpose through contributions.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>138</sup> *Yogakshemam* 8<sup>th</sup> November 1926.

<sup>139</sup> *Yogakshemam* 5<sup>th</sup> January 1927.

<sup>140</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.84.

<sup>141</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* 7<sup>th</sup> December 1926.

Meetings held in different parts of Malabar, strongly protesting against the Governor's action, passed resolutions demanding the resignation of Ramaswamy Iyer and recall of the Governor and reaffirmed faith in Krishnan Nair, Sankaran Nair and the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham.<sup>142</sup> On 25<sup>th</sup> November 1926 C. Krishnan presided over a meeting of tenants in the Town Hall at Calicut to protest against the veto of the Tenancy Bill by the Governor of Madras. When Government and *janmis* together resisted the attempt of *kudiyan* leaders to convene a conference, Krishnan came forward and held such a conference on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1927 at the premises of his *tarawad* house at Mullasserry (in Ponnani taluk).<sup>143</sup> This was probably the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Conference of the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham. It was presided over by L.K Tulasi Ram, a prominent member of the Madras Legislative Council and was attended by about thousand tenant leaders from different parts of Malabar including Krishnan Nair and Sankaran Nair. There were as many as nine resolutions thanking Krishnan Nair for his work for the tenants, accepting his appeals mentioned earlier, indicting the Governor, expressing lack of faith in the Madras Government and its Law Member Ramaswamy Aiyar, requesting Krishnan Nair to introduce another Bill without delay and so on. Seconding, one of the resolutions Sankaran Nair stated that in the history of Malabar tenancy, two names would be remembered forever: that of Krishnan Nair as a selfless person who worked for the progress of the tenant and Ramaswamy Aiyar as an enemy of the Malabar tenants who worked for their ruin...Apart from an Editorial *Mathrubhoomi* published lengthy reports on the conference on two consecutive days of about one page each out of its total space of eight pages.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>142</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.85.

<sup>143</sup> K.Sabukuttan, *op.cit.*, p.32.

<sup>144</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, pp.85-86.

In the editorial *Mathrubhoomi* expressed its anguish in the inability of the organizers to chalk out a creative programme to retain and carry forward the tempo of the people's agitation. It noted that the success achieved by the strength of the crowd and by their mindset has been nullified by the above lapse. The decision of the conference was that the tenants may withdraw the co-operation to the *janmis* after tarrying for some time.<sup>145</sup> But in the editorial of the next day *Mathrubhoomi* lashed out at the organizers. "Whoever is responsible for this resolution, it reveals the lack of readiness to accept a pragmatic action plan. For whom is the tenants should wait? Is it for the Government, or the *janmis* or the leaders? The situation of the tenants becomes difficult and complex by each day's waiting. Action, at the earliest has become inevitable. Only by such deeds, great works can be done in this world....The duty of the leaders is to enlighten the tenants regarding the above truth and make them ready for the struggle. To fulfil that, it needs real courage and commitment. If the leaders are not prepared for that, let them concede the fact and withdraw from the posts".<sup>146</sup>

In the wake of mounting pressures from the tenant side, the Governor appointed a Committee in September 1927, with Diwan Bahadur T. Raghaviah Pantalu as President and six others as members to inquire into the matter and to report upon the disabilities that were pressing hard on the tenants of Malabar in general and on the extent of unjustifiable evictions by the *janmis* in particular, and how far the *Kanamdar* (one who holds land on *kanam* tenure) as such was in need of any protection.<sup>147</sup> Out of the seven members of this Committee six were

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<sup>145</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, p.153.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.86.

either *janmis* or those who favoured the *janmis*. After nominating the first six members the Government invited Mannath Krishnan Nair as the seventh, and as the tenants' representative. Krishnan Nair declined the invitation just like any other citizen may do in that situation. But Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer bridged that gap appointing Kottiyath Krishnan, a nominated member in the Legislative Council.<sup>148</sup>

Though the *janmis* were very happy when the Governor vetoed the Malabar Tenancy Bill passed by the Legislative Council, they became impatient and intolerant when they came to learn the news that the Government is going to appoint a Committee to look into the subject again. Consequently there was an outburst of the *janmis* in the Kerala State Conference of the *Janmi Sabha* held at Calicut. The nutshell of the speeches and resolutions about Malabar Tenancy Bill made in the above conference was published in the *Yogakshemam*. "If Hindu-Muslim unity is the most vital issue for India, it is the Bill that stipulates clauses pertaining to *janmi*-tenant relations is the most important issue for Malabar....Towards this end, though a Bill was passed by the Legislative Council after making discussion for six years the Governor annihilated it using his extraordinary veto power. Six months passed since that. But now it is learnt that to discuss again this topic, the Government is going to form a Committee consisting six *janmis* and six tenants. It is almost 50 years since the Government has started pondering over the tenant issue. During this period it appointed many Commissions, collected many evidences and prepared Reports and Bills. At last all those were put in waste baskets. To ponder more about this the Government needs a Committee...This Committee will not be effective if the members are not the genuine representatives of the

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<sup>148</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, p.154.

*janmis* and tenants and its president the retired judge, a fellow with little bipartisan spirit.”<sup>149</sup>

Just as in the case of nomination of the members to the Committee, the terms of references put for its consideration were also of anti-tenant in nature. A meeting of the tenants was convened on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1927 under the presidentship of C.Krishnan. Since most of the members of the Raghaviah Committee were *janmis*, Krishnan and other *kudiyan* leaders decided to boycott this Committee.<sup>150</sup> It was decided by the Government to convene a meeting of the Raghaviah committee on 18<sup>th</sup> of next month at Calicut *Hajur Kacheri* and Malabar Collector H.R Pate invited Krishnan on 13<sup>th</sup> to participate in it, as the tenant representative. But Krishnan wrote to Collector denying his invitation.<sup>151</sup> When the Committee came to Calicut in the middle of August to collect evidences they were convinced of the seriousness of the boycott. Then the Government expressed its willingness to include two more representatives of the tenants in the Committee. But the Kudiyan Sangham rejected that proposal too. In the three successive editorials *Mathrubhoomi* highlighted the interests of the tenants and provided them with strong support and leadership. It was because of the gravity of the boycott that the Governor later became ready to see a petition committee of the tenants.<sup>152</sup>

In October 1927 the *Malabar Kudiyan Samgham* sent a deputation under the leadership of C. Krishnan to Ootacamund and apprised the Governor of the absence of its nominee in the

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<sup>149</sup> *Yogakshemam* 28<sup>th</sup> April 1927.

<sup>150</sup> K.Sabukuttan, *op.cit.*, p.32.

<sup>151</sup> K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, P.224.

<sup>152</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, p.154

Committee.<sup>153</sup> In the face of total non-co-operation the Governor adopted a conciliatory attitude, added a tenants' representative as a member of the Committee, held discussions with a delegation of the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham and assured that he would hold a round-table conference of *janmis* and tenants to discuss the recommendations of the Committee. This was a clear victory for the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham.<sup>154</sup>

At this time *Yogakshemam* set the stage to motivate the *janmis* to give evidences so as to vindicate their side during the visit of Raghaviah Committee. The report entitled "Malabar Tenant Committee Bill" was very much calculated so as to incite the sentiments of each *janmi*. "Madras Government has appointed the Raghaviah Committee to draft a report making enquiries as to whether it is necessary in Malabar a Tenancy Bill or Bills...It is to be said that the *janmis* have to work in unison while this Committee collect evidences in Malabar. It is sure that Malabar Tenancy Act may be passed in accordance with the report of this Committee. Therefore the *janmis* have to do all possible endeavours collectively so as to enable the Committee to get the correct and necessary details while they make the tour in Malabar. If there is any chance we should be able to convince them with proper records, the grievances of the *janmis*. For many of the *janmis* it is easy to present before the Committee, the documents which can effectively prove wrong the argument that *janmam* right was established only 75 years back. In *kovilakams* like Punnathur, documents that belong to A.D 900 may be available. The book of Rajasaar Vasudeva Raja contradicting the arguments of Diwan Bahadur M.Krishnan Nair will be helpful to all

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<sup>153</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.86, K.R Achuthan, *op.cit.*, pp.24-26 .

<sup>154</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.86.

those who go before the Committee to give evidences. This is a time when the *janmis* of Malabar have to wake up”.<sup>155</sup>

Towards the above developments *Mathrubhoomi* was not a patient onlooker. In *Mathrubhoomi* published a news item making a meticulous observation of the movements of the Bill. “It is known that the Malabar Tenant’s Committee has submitted the Government their Report. In it, the most important one is whether to give or not, permanent rights to the tenants...It is also known that Malabar Collector H.R Pate has submitted a special report. He, one among the British civilian officers who is supposed to be the guardians of the people, is of the opinion that legislation of any kind is not necessary at present and even if it needs something, a Bill giving protection to the *verumpattakkaran* who actually do the agrarian works is enough. It is also known that as decided earlier this Bill and Report will be discussed in a joint conference of both the *janmis* and tenants. There is no doubt that Krishnan Nair’s Bill also be discussed along with this. We are anxiously waiting to know more details”.<sup>156</sup>

Without much delay *Mathrubhoomi* published the nutshell of the dissenting note submitted by the then Malabar Collector H.R Pate. In the news item *Mathrubhoomi* had mentioned that this piece of news was received from Ootty as a telegraphic message from the Special Correspondent of *The Hindu*.<sup>157</sup> By this time *Unni Namboothiri* was able to ‘read the writings on the wall’, and as a result it warned the members of the community to take advance measures to face the

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<sup>155</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1927.

<sup>156</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1928.

<sup>157</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1928. The crux of Pate’s report: (a) This Bill only facilitates an assurance for the rights over the property subject to the conditions prescribed and compensation to the liabilities. (b) Never give permanent right in the sense as used in other tenancy regulations.

tribulations of life in the post-Tenancy Act period. By a political article it cautioned its community. “The coming age will not be like one that is already gone. The intensity of the life-war and the difficulty to live are increasing gradually. In the forthcoming period we won’t get meals if we remain idle, thinking that we are Brahmins, the *bhoodevan* (Lord of the land). However we shout, it is certain that the *janmi*-tenant Bill will be passed. Then one’s belly will be full only if he works hard. In future none will ask for *Gayathri mantras* (chantings). Other communities, who were our markets in the past, have decided that those are not necessary things to be purchased and even if necessary they may themselves chant. Therefore such kind of things cannot be sold. We can fetch money only if we can have commodities needed for today. Nobody will be enticed by the unfolding of our old baggage. Therefore you have to gather the men and weapons to make a valiant fight so as to win the life-war”.<sup>158</sup>

Meanwhile the Raghaviah Committee Report was published. Soon *Unni Namboothiri* totally agreed with the above Report and called everyone to accept its recommendations. It said that none can disagree with the fact that Raghaviah Committee has drafted its report attaching much seriousness to the impleadings of both *janmis* and tenants of Malabar proposing solutions as far as possible. The stipulations of this Bill which is fairly large can be abridged like this in a few sentences: It can be said that provisions are included in it, like to give permanent rights to all tenants in the property, to enable the *janmi* who is the owner of the land to get a compensation for that, to stipulate *pattam*, *polichezhuthu* etc. in order to protect the freedom of the tenants in their *kudiyiruppu lands*, to bridle the *janmi* to obtain their due rights, to limit the cost of improvements, the *janmam* cost and the interest of the *kanam*

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<sup>158</sup> *Unni Namboothiri*, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1928.

amount, to reduce the number of the litigations etc....It is quite reasonable that both parties should honour this report which is not at all detrimental to either side than that at the present. If there is any clause in their draft Bill unfavourable for either *janmi* or tenant it can be amended in due course and legislation can be made in the Council".<sup>159</sup>

During this period some other incidents occurred in favour of the tenants. In April 1928 the tenure of Ramaswamy Aiyar as Law Member expired and in his place M.Krishnan Nair was appointed. Sankaran Nair went to Delhi, apprised the Congress Party High Command and persuaded them to allow the Congress members to participate in the discussions on the Bill in the Madras Legislative Council by either opposing the Government Bill or making necessary amendments in it. The consent thus secured was considered a great gain by the Malabar Kudiyan Samgham.<sup>160</sup> More importantly the attitude of the Government towards the *Kanakkar* had undergone a favourable change because of the fact that the agitation was championed by the educated middle class consisting of lawyers and Government servants, and so the belated realization of the political necessity of conceding to their demands. As a result of these happenings, the subsequent events followed in quick succession.<sup>161</sup> The English newspapers of Madras also took active interest in the tenancy issue. *The Madras Mail* published an editorial favouring the tenants' cause.<sup>162</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* continued its inspiring reports. It was still motivating the tenants to fight a mortal battle against the *janmis*. The

<sup>159</sup> Unni Namboothiri, 1927.

<sup>160</sup> From the diary of G.Sankaran Nair, as quoted by Kunhikrishnan V.V, *Tenancy Legislation in Malabar, 1880-1970:An Historical Analysis*, Ph.D Thesis, University of Calicut, 1985.

<sup>161</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, pp.86-87.

<sup>162</sup> *Govt.of Madras, (Law) Dept. G.O. 2692 dated 11.08.1928-RAC*

report entitled “Malabar Tenant Convention, The obligatory deed of Tenants” is an example. “ ..It is learnt that Government proposes to present the Bill drafted by Raghaviah Committee in the Legislative Council. There is no doubt that if the Council passes the same, without change, the tenants of this district will as such perish. If we can convey the Government, people and the Legislative Council this truth we can make them amend the Bill properly.....If the seven year old Malabar Kudiyan Samgham with less money and a few workers could do this much, there is no doubt that we can make them pass a Bill that caters to our needs provided a small percentage of the tenants of Malabar is ready to toil for sometime with courage, unity and commitment. Therefore tenant brethren, don’t get dejected, but believe in yourselves. Don’t retreat until you reach the aim. You may come in groups for the convention on 20<sup>th</sup> January”.<sup>163</sup>

As agreed earlier, the round-table conference was held at Madras in 1929 from 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> and on 26<sup>th</sup> January, with seven *janmi* representatives and seven tenant representatives. It was inaugurated by the Governor and presided over by the Revenue member Norman Marjorie Banks who was also a tenant sympathizer. Based on this conference, the Government prepared a Tenancy Bill and presented it in the Madras Legislative Council in 6<sup>th</sup> August 1929 which was reconsidered by a Select Committee subsequently.<sup>164</sup>

When the Malabar Tenancy Bill became the matter of discussion in various realms and levels different versions were spread among the *janmis* as well as tenants. Therefore everyone wanted to get an exact picture. They were not satisfied with the newspaper reports. Also since the newspapers backed either of the two sides nothing was found totally

<sup>163</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 1<sup>st</sup> January 1929.

<sup>164</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.87.

impartial. It was in this circumstance Deshamangalam Moothedath Krishnan Namboothiri wrote a letter to the Secretary to the Govt. of Madras (Law Dept.), Ootacamund, requesting the Malayalam version of the Report of the committee.<sup>165</sup> Considering requests like this, when the Bill was introduced in the Council the Government wanted to give publicity for the provisions in it. Towards that end, the Malayalam version of the Bill was soon made available throughout the District. The Law (General) Department directed the Collector of Malabar for sale, printing and supply of Malayalam translation of the Bill.<sup>166</sup>

It was at this time *Mithavadi* raised the demand to nominate Sankaran Nair to the Legislative Council until passing the Malabar Tenancy Bill. In the news item *Mithavadi* said that the British established their rule in the land and it was they, and not Parasurama that distributed all the lands in Malabar among a few families. Ever since people became conscious of the troubles in the country which resulted from this, the tenants have been protesting till now with very

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<sup>165</sup> *Letter of Moothedath Krishnan Namboothiri to the Secretary to the Govt. of Madras (Law Dept.)* dated 27<sup>th</sup> June 1928, RAC. The letter says: "Sir, It is learnt from the newspapers that the Committee appointed by the Government regarding the Malabar tenancy which has become the topic of introspection of all Malayalis alike, has submitted its report. I request you to arrange to publish the correct translation of this report in Malayalam since many people do not know the details of this report. I also request the Government to publish immediately as extraordinary gazette in Malayalam also the bills, orders etc. related to tenancy. Yours faithfully, Moothedath Krishnan Namboothiri, Deshamangalam Post, (Via) Shornur, Malabar."

<sup>166</sup> *G.O No 3589* dated 13-09-1929, Law (General) Dept.-Memorandum NO.3376 A2 dated 12-08-1929, RAC. The G.O says, "The Collector of Malabar is informed that the Government have introduced the Malabar Tenancy Bill in the Legislative Council on 06-08-1929. The Government desire that wide publicity should be given to the provisions of the Bill in the Malabar District. They have accordingly directed the Superintendent of Govt. Press to print and supply the Collector with 1000 copies of the Bill in Malayalam for sale to the public. The price of each copy is fixed as low as possible at one *anna* 6 paise a copy so that it may be within the reach of all. The Collector is requested to arrange that copies of the Bill, and to make available for sale at all *taluk* offices in the District and to inform the tenants and *janmis* of this arrangement- To the Collector of Malabar".

little effect. ....The paper suggests that G.Sankaran Nair who has hitherto advocated the cause of the tenants with diligence should be nominated by the Government as the tenants' representative in the Legislative Council for the duration of the consideration of the Malabar Tenancy Bill. The tenants of Malabar will not be satisfied unless this is done".<sup>167</sup>

When the impression was getting intensified regarding the passing of the Tenancy Bill in the Legislative Council, one of the newspapers on the *janmi* side, *Vasumathi* tried to highlight the defects of the Bill showing that it is detrimental to the *janmis*. It wanted to put off considering the Bill to the next session of the Legislative Council.<sup>168</sup> *Manorama* which is another newspaper that favoured the *janmis* also sought a protraction of the Bill saying that it will rebound the interests of the tenants.<sup>169</sup>

Though *Yogakshemam* was the official organ of the *janmis* in general, and that of the Namboothiris in particular, it was generous enough to cover the meetings of the tenants also. It published a brief but splendid report regarding the tenants' conference held at Pattambi. "A meeting of the tenants was held at Pattambi Board School on Chingam 1<sup>st</sup>, in the presidentship of K.P Raman Menon. There the discussion was mainly on the amendments made by the Select Committee in the case of

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<sup>167</sup> *Mithavadi*, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1929, MNNPR, TNA.

<sup>168</sup> *Vasumathi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1929, MNNPR, TNA. *Vasumathi* in the report said that if it be passed in the present form there is no doubt that a great majority of *janmis* of Malabar will soon be reduced to unexpected suffering and misery. In order to give time to study it, the Government should postpone it to the next session of the Council.

<sup>169</sup> *Manorama*, Calicut, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1929, MNNPR, TNA. *Manorama* says that the Government's Malabar Tenancy Bill has not only not met the demands of the tenants but also gives room for the apprehension that it might cause more hardships and troubles to them than before, if it is to be passed in the present form.

Malabar Tenancy Bill. The conference noted that the Tenancy Bill drafted and piloted by the Government and amended by the Select Committee is in many a way detrimental to the rights of the tenants and although some concessions are allowed, it is overweighed with several liabilities and so this meeting abuses the same. The meeting also wanted to lessen the amount to be remitted by the tenant for *polichezhuthu* right, to take the law applicable in all cases where there are litigations for eviction pending, to ensure conditions to avoid unnecessary and unjust evictions and to make a satisfactory decision in tenancy issue which has been enraging Malabar for one century. The meeting requested all tenants to do campaign works by going to Madras and elsewhere to bring necessary amendments in the Tenancy Bill. Mr.Kunhirama Pathiyar who moved the first resolution said, “The Bill may have many defects. Yet it bridles the wanton powers of the *janmis*. That itself is an achievement. Therefore for the enactment of this Bill every one should try in all possible ways. We got at least this kind of Bill due to our struggles”.<sup>170</sup>

Though the Bill was defective it was something better than not having anything was the opinion of the tenant leaders including C.Krishnan. He wrote in *Mithavadi*. “...It will greatly reduce litigation, particularly in respect of eviction as proved by the experience of Cochin after the new Tenancy Bill was introduced there...The present Bill may lead to some confusion and trouble, but even then it is welcome in the sense that something is better than nothing”.<sup>171</sup> C.Krishnan was enthusiastic in welcoming the clauses of the Tenancy Bill and he observed in the *Mithavadi* that the present law was a blessing to the

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<sup>170</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1929.

<sup>171</sup> *Mithavadi*, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1929, MNNPR, TNA.

people of Malabar in so far as it had relieved them of their slavery to *janmis*".<sup>172</sup>

The discussion of the Malabar Tenancy Bill in the Council was indeed shocking for the *janmis*. Already deserted by the Government there was practically none to help them there. It was a scene in which all the amendments brought by the *janmi* members were getting rejected while those of the tenants were getting accepted. It is this state of despair that prompted the *Yogakshemam* to make a reasonable analysis of the present state of things and to advise the *janmis* to be 'down to earth' in future, through its editorial. "The future of the *janmis* seems to be bleak, is the general emotion evolved in the minds of those who follow closely the debates in the Madras Legislative Council regarding the Malabar Tenancy Bill. What our two or three *janmi* members say in the Council ends as a 'cry in the wilderness'. When looking at the votes polled for the *janmi* amendments every time it is seen that there are only six or seven members out of the 26 to speak in favour of the *janmi* side. Since this is a Bill piloted by the Government, it tries to prevent the attempts to bring amendments. At the same time it is also seen that since the Government has not the sufficient strength to prevent the amendments from the tenant side majority of them are getting passed. The Government earlier rejected the Bill of Krishnan Nair saying the excuse that it has the responsibility to protect the *janmis* who are a minority. But such policy of the Government is now changed. *Janmis* must know that this is a period in which not only the middlemen in respect of Malabar Tenancy issue but also the middlemen among the public of the country (that is the middle class) wholly are prepared to kick down those who are in the upper ladder. It should be understood that the strength of the people have been increased and representative

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<sup>172</sup> *Mithavadi*, 21<sup>st</sup> October 1929, MNNPR, TNA.

institutions like Legislative Council are now under their control. A state has come in which the Government itself cannot resist their power”.<sup>173</sup>

The report continued as an advice to the *janmis* as to what they should do in future: “This is a crucial stage when each *janmi* has to think seriously as to how the present state of the *janmis* can be maintained. Before the implementation of the Act we have to think of some wherewithal. Though a minority, by the power of unity we can manifest many things. Deterioration will be faster if we continue the management of our land properties as we did in the earlier method. Many of the *janmis* do not know where and which are their land properties. Few are the *janmis* who have some legal knowledge. Therefore if competent persons are not entrusted with the estate management, then it is sure that the burden of the management of the properties will not sustain long. And finally it has become very necessary that the *janmis*, considering the future safety of the family, should engage in agrarian works. Ignore what others do, but at least do farm works in some plots of land which is enough to make you lead a life without poverty.”<sup>174</sup>.

Even when the *janmi* side was getting vanquished in the Legislative Council, campaigns to highlight their cause still continued and reports were published. The report of the Malabar Janmi Association in *Yogakshemam* is an example. The report said, “A campaign meeting was held at Thalipparamba under the auspicious of Malabar Janmi Association on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1929. The prominent *janmis* were present. The difficulties of the *janmis* and the impending adversities that may arise out of the *Janmi-Tenant* Bill were explained. The meeting opined that even when there are many evidences to prove the absolute

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<sup>173</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1929.

<sup>174</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 28<sup>th</sup> September 1929.

ownership of the *janmis* over the land, it seems very unjust that Malabar Tenancy Act which is detrimental to the above ownership, and which amounts to pilfer their wealth and which reduces considerably the ‘*janmam* price’ of the land was presented in the Legislative Council and have rejected all the amendments proposed by the *janmi* members. The meeting requested the respected Madras Governor to veto the above unjust Bill. To intimate the Madras Government about this resolution the Malabar Janmi Association Secretary was authorized. It was also decided to revive the ‘*Vasumathi*’ newspaper which is supposed to speak in favour of the *janmis*.”<sup>175</sup>.

At last the Bill was finally passed by the Council in October 1929. While the Bill was awaiting Governor’s assent, both the *janmis* and tenants made representations to him through deputations and other means.<sup>176</sup> *Mathrubhoomi* expressed its rage in the act of the Governor in delaying the consent for the Bill and questioned his rights for that, in the report entitled “Malabar Tenancy Bill”. “It was stated in the last issue that it is difficult to understand the policy of Sir Marsh Banks, the Governor who instead of giving assent to the Bill, invited a petition delegation of the *janmis* to submit in the proper way their plaints. This invitation of the Governor has caused anxiety in the minds of the tenants. What is the right for him for any doubt in the case of the Bill, for the head of a Government which drafted it, controlled it through the Council and strongly supported even in the last speeches by the Government members. Sir Marsh Bank does not deserve to say that the Government members forwarded the Bill up to this stage without his knowledge or favour. As such, if he sends back the Bill for review, it will cause not only for much anticipation improper of him and his

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<sup>175</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1929.

<sup>176</sup> *G.O 4111, Law (General)*, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1929, RAC.

Government but also will engender a situation so crucial for this District”.<sup>177</sup>

In the context of passing the Tenancy Bill by the Legislative Council, the *janmis* started looking for the loop holes to overcome the mandatory provisions in the Bill. It was then that Kavalappara Mooppil Nair found out a wherewithal by ceasing *polichezhuth* and apportioning the land into blocks. *Mathrubhoomi* in its report entitled “Is the reply to Tenancy Bill: Strong resistance of Kavalappara Nair” strongly chastised Mooppil Nair. “After the passing of the Tenant Bill in the last meeting of the Madras Legislative Council Mr.Kavalappara Mooppil Nair called all his estate managers and *menons* (accountants) and after discussing with them it is learnt that he has stopped *polichezhuth*. If the Bill becomes an Act taking the advantage of its provision that tenants can be evicted from the land for own use, he intends to get back all the land and apportioning it into blocks of 25 acres, he wants to entrust a salaried employee each block for doing farm work. Mooppil Nair owns paddy fields of 4000 acres in Palakkad *taluk* and 2000 acres in Valluvanad *taluk*...These lands were under the tenants for the last few centuries on the basis of *kaanamcharth*. If such lands are evicted and farm works are being done there, according to the provision in the new Act, so many families will become landless, houseless and suffer poverty....If the *janmis* are able to do this much things by the recently passed Tenancy Bill, it is to be pondered over then that what use is there for the tenants by this Bill. In this case the immediate attention of the tenant leaders and Government is to be focused. We request that if there is a defect like this in the Bill that is to be rectified and remedied soon.

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<sup>177</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 19<sup>th</sup> October 1929.

Otherwise there are chances that most of the *janmis* will follow Mooppil Nair.”<sup>178</sup>

At the same time, witnessing the set backs on the *janmi* side regarding Tenancy Bill *Yogakshemam* lamented at the lustre-less and bleak performance through one of its editorials. “Madras Tenancy Bill will come for further discussion in the meeting of the Madras Legislative Council scheduled to be held in this January.....We have to try not to pass in the Council the amendments proposed by the Governor. The expert member of the Council Mr.E.S Unni had requested in those days itself through media, that canvassing works are to be intensified towards the above end. It is now to be said that unless encouragement and assistance are obtained from the *janmi* folk of Malabar the *janmi* members of the Council can do little... I had earlier seen a notice of the Janmi Sabha Secretary stating that a meeting of the *janmis* will be held at Edakkunnu. It was mentioned in it that the important *janmi* leaders of Malabar will reach there. But unfortunately we could not hear the voice of the Janmi Sabha at all there. Whatever be the reason for this, it is an indication of the pathetic inability of the *janmis*. It seems very pathetic”.<sup>179</sup>

It is a truth that due to lack of strength in the Legislative Council the *janmis* could not block the forward march of the Tenancy Bill. But still they made a last attempt to block it using their influence. About that last endeavour also *Yogakshemam* reports. “It is seen that a deputation consisting of Kollangott Raja Sir Vasudeva Raja, Mr.E.Sankaranunni, Mr.K Prabhakaran Thampan, Mr.Kavalappara Mooppil Nair and Punnathur Raja met the Governor and submitted a petition requesting not to give his assent for the Malabar Tenancy Bill which has been again

<sup>178</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1929.

<sup>179</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1930.

passed in the Legislative Council. This Bill in which earlier there was a clause allowing the *janmis* to initiate steps to collect the *pattam* was deleted. Also many clauses beneficial for the *kanakkudiyans* were included not taking into account the grievances of the *janmis*. These have scared the *janmis* of Kerala. The deputation yesterday brought to the attention of the Governor these lapses and requested him to make a review before giving consent to the Bill. The deputation was led by Kollangott Vasudeva Raja. Governor said them that he will think about the grievances”.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1930.

## Dreams Materialized

Learning that the *janmi*'s deputation met the Governor, the tenant representatives also requested the Governor to meet their deputation too. To create an impression that he is neutral the Governor accepted that request also. *Yogakshemam* wrote about this. "It is learned that the Governor will meet the deputation consisting of *kudiyam* representatives K.P Raman Menon and G.Sankaran Nair. It is heard that they will request the Governor to give his assent to the Bill at the earliest".<sup>181</sup> Thus while the Bill was awaiting Governor's assent both the *janmis* and tenants made representations to him through deputations and other several means. At last after modifications by the Council as suggested by the Governor, the Bill got his assent in March 1930 and was sent for the Viceroy's assent. Not to be outdone, the *janmis* engaged Ramaswamy Aiyar to represent their case. The Malabar Kudiyan Samgham leaders lost no time in protesting against the unfairness of allowing a former Law member with considerable influence on officials to lead a deputation on behalf of the *janmis*. Following this, the *janmis* were forced to engage another person to lead their deputation. Sankaran Nair stayed at Simla for seven months countering the machinations of the *janmis*. Though the Bill was returned twice to Madras due to pressures from the *janmis*, after hearing the deputations of both the *janmis* and the tenants, the Viceroy eventually gave his assent to it. The Malabar Tenancy Act XIV of 1930, which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1930, was the outcome.<sup>182</sup> According to this Act which gave protection for the tenants from unjust evictions and *melcharths* and from escalation of *michavarm*, the *verumpattakkaran* and *kuzhikkanakkaran* need to give henceforward only the general lease amount as stipulated in

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<sup>181</sup> *Yogakshemam* 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1930.

<sup>182</sup> *GO4111, Law (General)*, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1929, RAC.

the law. Rules to control the *manusham* (the consideration for the land), the right for *polichezhuth* and the *janmam* right for *kudiyirupp*, rule to give the tenant the right to purchase the *janmam* of *kudiyirupps* from the *janmi* etc. were the other benefits allowed to the tenants by the Act which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1930.<sup>183</sup>

When it became certain that Tenancy legislation will be implemented *Mathrubhoomi* published an article of Adv.G.Madhavan Nair entitled “Malabar Tenancy Bill” aimed to enlighten the tenants about their rights and duties. “It is confirmed that Malabar Tenancy Bill will become an Act from 1<sup>st</sup> December onwards. Thus here ends a struggle prolonged for almost 75 years. Malabar District is now entering into a new epoch. I regard this new Tenancy Bill as the greatest event since the beginning of the British rule. I am very much aware of the defects of this Bill. Yet it is to be said that this is a great success of the tenants and their main grievances are addressed by it...My belief is that due to the new enactment a peaceful revolution in the financial and social sectors of Malabar will take place...The tenants may use the rights bestowed upon them by law only as a last resort. They may endeavour to go with *janmis* in unity and love as far as possible. I request the *janmis* to regard the welfare and satisfaction of their tenants as their main strength....Since there are a lot of misunderstanding about the new legislation throughout the land and also since the Malayalam translation of the Bill is not easily digestible for many, to construe them the new rights, and the means to protect them I would like to make in December a journey throughout Malabar. I request you to inform us those who are ready to hold meeting in each place”.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, p.282.

<sup>184</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1930.

G.Sankaran Nair, the main architect of the Malabar Tenancy Bill qualified it as the most important event in Malabar since the British rule started. He said, “My belief is that the Bill is a grand success of the tenants, by this all of their important grievances are addressed, generally looking it is doubtful whether *kanakkudiyans* may ever get a legislation better than this; and in the future not too distant, as a consequence of the new Act a peaceful revolution may occur in Malabar in financial and social sectors. Looking back to the history of this prolonged agitation in Malabar for the Tenancy Act with some pride he continued: “Many great men have associated with tenancy movement since it started in Malabar. But it is felt that nobody like me has been lucky enough to associate with this movement so much. I have devoted my last eight years of life fully for this movement giving up all other works. Meanwhile I suffered many difficulties. I was sad in many failures and set backs. Now I am happier than all others, in the success won today. Usually those who work in public affairs are not lucky enough to witness the fruits of their works during their lifetime. Therefore I have especially more gratitude in the success of Tenancy Bill”.<sup>185</sup>

*Mathrubhoomi* at last won the campaign and subsequently commented about the success of the enactment in its report. “*Janmi*-Tenancy Bill is of course a great achievement. The outcome of the legislation may be more spiritual than financial. We can be more relieved by the fact that henceforward the ferocious sound of *janmi* will not have that much strength as in the past which had enslaved most of the people of this district for generations. It is the young worker G.Sankaran Nair who is actually responsible for this new Act. What we understand from this is that, it is the youth who is responsible for endeavours of any kind now seen in Malabar not only in political affairs

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<sup>185</sup> V.R Menon, *op.cit.*, pp.282-283.

but in other public matters also”.<sup>186</sup> Although the secret of the success behind the Tenancy Bill is the collective work of several newspapers the role of *Mathrubhoomi* needs special mention. Right from its inception, the *Mathrubhoomi* championed the cause of the *kanam* tenants and clamoured for the enactment of Tenancy Bill.<sup>187</sup> When the Malabar Tenancy Bill was passed in 1929, *Mathrubhoomi* justifiably congratulated itself.<sup>188</sup>

As soon as the Viceroy gave the assent to the Malabar Tenancy Bill and it became an Act various publishing agencies got the Act printed in Malayalam and English and they started to sell. On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1930, the very next day since the Act came into effect *Mathrubhoomi* started selling the Malayalam version of the Act publishing an advertisement about the sales.<sup>189</sup> The publishers ‘Higgin Bothams’ also advertised about the sales of the copies of Malabar Tenancy Act in *Mathrubhoomi*.<sup>190</sup>

By the enactment of the Malabar Tenancy Bill though the tenants of South Malabar gained much, what the farmers of North Malabar achieved was little. In his biography *Aranoothandiloode* (Through half a century) P.Narayanan Nair depicts the picture of North Malabar in the post-Tenancy Act period. “By the *Kanakkudiyan* Bill of Sir M.Krishnan

<sup>186</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1930.

<sup>187</sup> K.Gopalankutty, “Political Journalism in the case of Malabar, 1923-1947”, in C .Balan (ed.), *Reflections on Malabar: Society, Institutions and Culture*, Mangalore, 2000, p.118.

<sup>188</sup> *Prabhatham*, 21<sup>st</sup> January 1935.

<sup>189</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1930. The text of the advertisement: “Malayalam Tenancy Act: Now ready for sale, the Malayalam translation of Malabar Tenancy Act which has come into effect from this December 1<sup>st</sup> onwards. Those who want, can purchase the book by sending orders enclosing stamp for 2.5 *annas* (cost of the book 2 *annas* and postal charge half an *anna*) in the address ‘Manager, Mathrubhoomi, Kozhikode or directly from the Mathrubhoomi agents throughout Kerala”.

<sup>190</sup> *Mathrubhoomi*, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1930.

Nair, although a section of the farmers of South Malabar got some relief, the majority of the tenants of North Malabar got little benefit. The predominant cultivations of this area like pepper and hill cultivation are outside the parameters of the Act. In the eastern region which is a fortress of landlordism, the *janmis* are engaged in despotic rule. They can evict as they like. Lease is measured using bogus *para*. Farmers are not allowed to wear *dhoti* below knees. Also they have to give the fruits and vegetables they make, as offering to the *janmis*....In such a situation farmers who have some self esteem and vigour have no other way but to organize and start struggle”.<sup>191</sup>

While the enforcement of this Act marked the close of the second phase of the peasant struggles in Malabar, the events in this phase raise a number of important issues. Malabar is one of the few places in India where land relations were intensely and effectively articulated by an educated middle class as early as in the first quarter of this (20<sup>th</sup>) century.<sup>192</sup>

It is because of this education and literacy the media got a role. Thus the press played a decisive and crucial role in the genesis, evolution and the successful conclusion of the Tenancy Bill. The early vernacular newspapers like *Kerala Pathrika* and *Kerala Sanchari* highlighted the seriousness of the situation by drawing a thumb-nail sketch of the problem of tenancy through its various reports. Upon the shoulders of the predecessors the newspapers like *Mithavadi* carried forward the mission by penetrating into the misdeeds of the *janmis* that perturbed and pestered the hapless tenants . *Mathrubhoomi*, *Al-Ameen* and *Kerala Chandrika* fought to the finish by building up new strategies to subvert the intrigues of the *janmis*. When observing with a democratic sense *Yogakshemam* and *Unni Namboothiri* played the role

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<sup>191</sup> P.Narayanan Nair, *Aranooottandiloode*, (Mal.), Kottayam, 1973, p.176.

<sup>192</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, *op.cit.*, p.87.

of opposition. Though they stood for the *janmis*, at last they were able to understand the realities and they made endeavours to guide the *janmis* to prepare for the life sans the fortunes.

## CHAPTER VII

### AN ASSESSMENT

In the ancient days communication transmission was exercised mainly through oral means or spoken voice when the source and the receiver were in face-to-face situation.<sup>1</sup> In this method, people who throng up in the market and festival places were the vehicle of such transmission. But this situation changed with the growth of literacy on one side and that of print media on the other.<sup>2</sup> Thus when the audience of the print media became more literate they could acquire from them more ideas and also could propagate them on a commensurate level. In respect of print media also same was the case. The invention of printing made it possible for a single written message to reach many receivers and thus to increase the potential effectiveness of a few individual communicators.<sup>3</sup> Because of the very fact that it is being duplicated or multiplied a number of times it reached the hands of so many. Earlier the lack of availability of such printed copies denied many, from even going to the threshold of information and knowledge. In a competitive colonial world, print literature afforded a space to different sections among the middle classes to carve out their own power basis.<sup>4</sup> Printing spurred the spread of literacy.<sup>5</sup> In this process of ‘give and take’ a

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<sup>1</sup> B.Kuppuswamy, *Communication and Social Development*, New Delhi, 1976, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with K.N Ganesh on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2005.

<sup>3</sup> B.Kuppuswamy, *op.cit.*, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> Anidita Ghosh, “Identities Made in Print: Literary Bengali and Others”, in Crispin Bates, (ed.), *Beyond Representation: Colonial and Post-colonial Constructions of Indian Identity*, New Delhi, 2006, p.212.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth M.Eisenstein, *Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, London, 1982, p.xiv.

certain kind of communication channel is opened. It is on the basis of this perception the communication society is formed.<sup>6</sup>

The communication between the newspaper and the reader is not just like a private conversation of two persons. When one is writing in a newspaper he does not know who are all reading that. Somebody who reads it, may respond and sometimes not. If he responds, it may not be the same day and it can be in a different way. Sometimes that response may be as a letter to the editor. Anyhow by this interaction there evolves a communication network and thereby some kind of 'links up' which results in the formation of certain public opinions. In the process, many such networks may evolve which may collectively form into public sphere. It can be inferred from this, that a communication channel is very fundamental for the evolution of public sphere. According to Jurgen Habermas it is this public sphere which is the basis of the communication society.<sup>7</sup> Public Sphere is a common space, in principle accessible to all, which anyone may enter with views on the common good realized wholly or partially: a *maidan*, a coffee house, an exhibition hall, the *paan* shop on the road side, the sweet shop in the locality as also the discursive and representational space available in the newspapers, magazines, journals, radio, television and now internet.<sup>8</sup>

In this concept of public sphere civil audience is an inseparable part. The speaker who speaks out in the paper and his audience become thus inseparable. The editor publishes each and every item under the impression that there is an audience to perceive each of them. It is not with the certainty that such and such audience will receive such and

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with K.N Ganesh on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2005.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Rajeev Bhargava, "Introduction" in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions*, New Delhi, 2005, p.15.

such news. At the same time the listening audience listens to only what he actually wants. It is through this process the communication society forms and grows. As a result of this kind of interlinking network, opinion is ultimately formed. Habermas explains that this kind of structural evolution leads to the formation of public sphere.<sup>9</sup> For Habermas, the public sphere is a “network for communicating information and points of view”.<sup>10</sup> Print is only one of the communication links. Changes were possible due to a multitude of other links including songs, novels and dramas. But the role of print was decisive. The evolution of the above kind of process is observed even in the early days of the journalistic attempts of Malabar.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century various innovations took place in the field of journalism in Malabar. The telegraphs helped the newspapers a lot to publish the hot news events, before it gets cold. Various news items were collected from various places, and carried articles able to transfer to the readers the latest knowledge, were published. Also there developed in the papers a forum which would reflect the desires of the public. As a result topics of discussion became matter for editorials; and editorials became the topics of discussion. And since the papers started to make dialogues aimed to resolve the problems faced by the country, the politics got a space in the paper. A public sphere consists of inter communication spaces available in principle to everybody and into which people may bring issues that concern everyone. The birth of Indian National Congress helped politics not only to acquire a perpetual place in the papers but also to enhance its importance. Chandu Menon’s *Indulekha* is a speaking evidence of the process by which democratic

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with K.N Ganesh on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Anantha Kumar Giri, *Rethinking Civil Society*, Madras, 1998, p.8.

values came to operate within the spheres of language and literature during the renaissance in Malabar.

This revolutionary change in the minds of the people occurred in various phases. In 1884 when *Kerala Pathrika* was launched there was nothing like public opinion since there was not any predecessor for it to cultivate the same at an earlier date. Thus it was from scratch that Kunhirama Menon developed the power and capacity among the people of Malabar to respond and reciprocate towards issues that prick the human conscience. But by the time it reached 1930's papers like *Al-Ameen* and *Kerala Chandrika* were ready to stake the life for the right of expression.

Right from its inception *Kerala Pathrika* had free and frank opinions on every subject. It criticized unkindly the inhuman policies of the government. It fought against corruption and nepotism. It castigated the unethical journalism and fought for the freedom of the press. Its opinions were so sharp and attacking that *Kerala Pathrika* was made to pay a fine of Rs.51 for publishing news against the Government. The imposition of fine is a clear indication of the degree of growth of journalism in Malabar, its daringness to make opinion even against the will of the Government, and the fear of the authorities towards the growth of public opinion. Kunhirama Menon in 1911 when he wrote the Preface to *Vrithandapathra Pravarthanam* he agrees that there was considerable degree of growth in respect of public opinion.

This has been ratified by the editorial of *Kerala Chinthamani* about the reactions of various newspapers about the banishment of Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai from Travancore in 1911. It said, "There aren't many papers to justify the stand of Travancore Government. We were under the impression that *Malayala Manorama*

would give a clear statement. But instead in it appeared only an article, Sanskrit rich, none can easily understand. *Kerala Sanchari* which will not usually make a hasty comment but here wrote an article in favour of Ramakrishna Pillai. It is a common belief that *Kerala Pathrika* is usually against the deeds of Travancore Government. But none would accuse that ‘journalist uncle’ (Chenkalath Kunhrama Menon) for favouring somebody or eulogizing anybody. None is against the argument that Travancore has the right to banish Ramakrishna Pillai, but everybody agrees that it would have been made only after a trial in a court of law”.<sup>11</sup> Here the prominent newspapers of Malabar like *Kerala Pathrika* and *Kerala Sanchari* are mentioned as opinion makers and creators. At the same time *Kerala Chinthamani* which had been edited by Murkoth Kumaran and which was circulated well in Malabar, while commenting on the opinion of other papers makes its own comment also.

Within another decade, the boldness of newspapers to express their views escalated to such a level in which they found imprisonment much better than shirking their commitment to the public. Antagonized by a few editorials in *Lokmanya* published from Trichur, immediately after the Kerala State Congress held at Palakkad in 1923, the Government of Cochin started proceedings against the editor Kurur Namboothirippad and the publisher Sebastian. Both of them were asked to pay fine or undergo six months imprisonment. But they preferred imprisonment rather than paying the amount. Then congratulating the national fervour of Kurur, *Mathrubhoomi* wrote: “Kurur Namboothirippad has assumed an important place among the Congress workers of Kerala by the virtues of truth, national pride and perseverance. Every community will feel proud of such a young man.

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<sup>11</sup> *Kerala Chinthamani*, October-November 1911.

.....we now congratulate him, his family and Namboothiri community as a whole.”<sup>12</sup>

*Kerala Kesari* edited by Moyyarath Sankaran was made to sacrifice its life for the single reason that it gave active support to both National Movement and Tenancy Movement. The pressures from the *janmis* and government became so intolerable such that it was first forced to shift its office from Calicut to Cannanore and later for the closure of the publication.<sup>13</sup>

The saga of *Al-Ameen* in its fight for the freedom of expression and opinion is indeed still heroic. The editorials written against the curfew and the reports of the agitations during the Salt Satyagraha made by the Congress enraged the authorities. Immediately they imposed upon *Al-Ameen* on August 4<sup>th</sup> the Press Ordinance which asked it to remit Rs.2000 as advance security. Since Abdurahiman denied paying the amount the *Al-Ameen* press was sealed.<sup>14</sup> After suspending publication for three and a half months in consequence of its unwillingness to pay security demanded of it, the *Al-Ameen* re-appeared on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1930 with a bold statement that it is very glad to be once again to carry on the services of the community and the country without the shadow of slavery.<sup>15</sup> Here Abdurahiman was highlighting the high values of public opinion to manifest the public space for action.<sup>16</sup> According to Habermas the public space is an emancipated

<sup>12</sup> V.R Menon, *Mathrubhoomiyude Charithram*, (Mal), Vol. I, Kozhikode, p.75.

<sup>13</sup> Perunna K.N Nair, *Malayala Pathrathinte Katha*, (Mal), Cochin, 1987, p.39.

<sup>14</sup> N.P Chekkutty, *Muhamed Abdurahiman*, New Delhi, 2005, p.64.

<sup>15</sup> *Al-Ameen*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1930, MNNPR, New Delhi.

<sup>16</sup> Neeladri Bhattacharya “Notes Towards a Conception of the Colonial Public”, in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld, (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.131. This is indeed a space that nurtured critical opinion and questioned the premises of public authority and power, replacing a public sphere in which the ruler’s power was merely represented before the people, with a sphere in which the state authority

space, liberated from the constraints of absolutism and unrestrained by controls on freedom of expression.

There is no doubt that it was due to the strenuous work of daring newspapers and competent editors public opinion reached its pinnacle and the public space was manifested. Readers started to respond to various issues. They informed the editor about various matters occurring around them, with their views and opinions. Sometimes they were treated as a source of exclusives. Sometimes they were published as letters to the editor. Anyhow people criticized and evaluated the authorities as to what extent they have exercised their duties. They informed the authorities their desires. A stage emerged in which no government could ignore or surpass this kind of public might.<sup>17</sup> As a result the duties bound to be done by the authorities became the subject of surveillance and audit of the public. This conceding aspect is explicitly visible in the formation of Malabar Relief Fund by the District Collector in 1921. He assured that the administration of such fund will be entrusted to a committee of non-official gentlemen, working hand-in-hand with the District Officers.<sup>18</sup> Had it been in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it would have been never with public participation and vigilance.

Thus by the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a diminutive social formation which could restrain the power of the officials and political institutions emerged. It could control and shape these powers by the public action of an active citizenry. This shaping may take the form of bending state power to cater to the basic needs of a more or less passive citizenry. *Mathrubhoomi* was doing exactly the same when it

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was publicly monitored through informed discourses of the people.

<sup>17</sup> *Yogakshemam*, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1921, NMML, New Delhi.

<sup>18</sup> *Madras Mail*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1921, Micro-film, NMML, New Delhi.

campaigned in the tenancy problem and *Al-Ameen* did in the Andaman scheme.

It is by standing on a particular platform of idea and conviction that each newspaper speaks about. They do all this with the anticipation of a public sphere in front of them. Otherwise neither Chenkalath Kunhirama Menon nor Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar could have published *Kerala Pathrika* or *Kerala Sanchari*. For Kunhirama Menon, when he started *Kerala Pathrika*, what he had before him was airy nothing. He could only foresee in his wildest imagination, the kind of audience before him. But he was very convinced about his platform and mission. He wanted to enlighten the public and boost their cultural standards so as to enable them to live in the modern times. So he used the pages of his paper to instill in them the legal awareness and knowledge about their rights. He wrote reports against the step-motherly treatment of the British against his fellow-men and corruption and nepotism in the administration. His desire for the autonomy of the country made him to work for Congress and argue for representation in the Councils.

It was all the more easy for *Kerala Sanchari* in its mission since it had already a model before it, *Kerala Pathrika*. It mainly addressed the issues of the educated Thiyyas. But it also tried its level best to infuse the people with their rights. It taught the lessons how to invest money and motivated them with entrepreneurial skills so as to enable them to amass money to become match with the Europeans.

*Mithavadi* laid its thrust on the upliftment of the Thiyyas. It also raised voice for the other backward communities and chalked out advises for the well-being of other communities. *Mathrubhoomi*, *Al-Ameen*, *Kerala Chandrika* etc. made clarion call to liberate the country from the British by the inflammation of national fervour among the people of Malabar.

All these newspapers could enlighten the public and create a space for the public to make the state to lean towards their wishes. When official institutions of the state are compelled to respond to the needs and requirements of citizens crystallized in their own public opinion and formed by rational-critical debate, then we have something akin to Habermas' liberal public sphere.

## APPENDIX-1

	Males	Female s	Total
<b>I. Professionals</b>			
1. Government	7206	57	7263
2. Defense	2274	--	2274
3. Learning, literature etc.	27657	14588	42245
Total	37137	14645	51782
<b>II. Domestic</b>			
4. Wives	--	866	866
5. Personal offices	5793	6001	11794
Total	5793	6867	12660
<b>III Commercial</b>			
.			
6. Money, house, goods dealing	16968	2304	19272
7. Carrying	32299	2133	34432
Total	49267	4437	53704
<b>IV Agricultural</b>			
.			
8. Occupancy of land, agriculture	34686	228631	57549
	8		9
9. Care of animals	13082	3948	17030
Total	35995	232579	59252
	0		9
<b>V. Industrial</b>			
10. Art and mechanical	19673	417	20090
11. Textile fabrics and dress	30097	61973	92070
12. Food and drinks	72632	52998	12563
			0
13. Animal substances	705	1599	2304
14. Vegetable substances	27830	14030	41860
15. Mineral substances	65708	6742	72450

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Total	21664	137759	35440
	5		4

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**APPENDIX-2**

***Malabar Kudiyan Samgham***

**NOTICE**

**To Madras Legislative Council**

Elect Diwan Bahadur M.Krishnan Nair

and

K.P Raman Menon.

## GLOSSARY

<i>Adhikari</i>	Village Headman.
<i>Advaita</i>	Non-duality.
<i>Advaita jnani</i>	One who knows the concept of non-duality.
<i>Ambalavasis</i>	A temple connected community.
<i>Amsom</i>	Village.
<i>Amsom Menon</i>	Village Officer.
<i>Anantharavakasam</i>	Right of the nephew.
<i>Anchal</i>	Post.
<i>Anchalkkaran</i>	Post-man.
<i>Angaadi</i>	Market.
<i>Anna</i>	A coin in British India.
<i>Anthapuram</i>	Harem of the <i>Illam/Mana</i> .
<i>Asan</i>	A teacher in indigenous school.
<i>Avarnas</i>	The lower castes.
<i>Bhoodevan</i>	Lord of the land.
<i>Champu</i>	Mixture of prose and poetry.
<i>Cheruma</i>	A slave caste.
<i>Choroonu</i>	First meal of a child.
<i>Devaswam</i>	Property of the temple.
<i>Ekadasi</i>	A Hindu religious observation.
<i>Ezhava/Thiyya</i>	A lower caste community in Kerala.
<i>Ezhuthassan</i>	A teacher in indigenous school.
<i>Ezhuthupalli</i>	A traditional school.

<i>Gurukula</i>	Traditional way of learning at the abode of guru.
<i>Illam</i>	Namboothiri homestead.
<i>Jamedar</i>	A lower rank in the military.
<i>Janmam</i>	Hereditary property right of landlord.
<i>Janmi</i>	The customary term for landlords in Kerala.
<i>Janmisabha</i>	Association of <i>janmis</i> .
<i>Jatha</i>	Procession.
<i>Jathi</i>	Caste.
<i>Jihad</i>	Holy war.
<i>Kachery</i>	Judicial court.
<i>Kalari</i>	Traditional school for martial arts and letters
<i>Kanakkar/kanari/ kanamdar</i>	One who held land on <i>kanam</i> tenure.
<i>Kanam</i>	Customary tenure or lease.
<i>Kanam charth</i>	Overlease of tenure.
<i>Kanakkudiyan</i>	Holder of <i>kanam</i> right.
<i>Kairali</i>	Malayalam language.
<i>Karanavar</i>	Head of the Nair joint family.
<i>Karyasthan</i>	Manager of the property of landlord.
<i>Kathakali</i>	A Kerala art form.
<i>Kavithrayam</i>	Three contemporary poets.
<i>Keralolpathi</i>	Legendary origin and history of Kerala.
<i>Kettukalyanam</i>	Initiation rite.
<i>Keezhkudiyam</i>	Sub-tenant.
<i>Khandakavyam</i>	Poem of medium length.
<i>Kovilakam</i>	The abode of Kshathriyas.

<i>Kudiyān</i>	A tenant.
<i>Kudipallikoodam</i>	Traditional school.
<i>Kudiyiruppu</i>	Consideration paid by tenant for building only.
<i>Kuzhikkanam</i>	Customary lease of land without advance.
<i>Kuzhikkanakkaran</i>	Holder of <i>kuzhikkanam</i> .
<i>Madam</i>	Monastery to educate Namboothiri boys.
<i>Malikhan</i>	Pension.
<i>Magham</i>	A stage in the education of Brahmin students.
<i>Mana</i>	Abode of Namboothiri Brahmins.
<i>Manipravalam</i>	Malayalam and Sanskrit mixed poetry.
<i>Mantra</i>	Divine chanting.
<i>Manusham</i>	Consideration for land.
<i>Marakkuda</i>	Cadjan umbrella used by Namboothiri women.
<i>Marumakkathayam</i>	Matrilineal system.
<i>Marupattam</i>	Counterpart of <i>pattam</i> deed kept by landlord.
<i>Melcharth</i>	Overlease to tenant in favour of a new one.
<i>Menon</i>	Accountant.
<i>Michavaaram</i>	Balance of rent after deducting mortgage interest.
<i>Munshi</i>	Teacher in indigenous school.
<i>Murajapam</i>	Royal ceremony held at Trivandrum every six year.
<i>Mutt</i>	Abode of Tamil Brahmins.
<i>Naduvazhi</i>	Local chieftain.
<i>Natvar</i>	Traditional judge.
<i>Nattezhuthassan</i>	Teacher in indigenous school.
<i>Onakkazhcha</i>	Gift to landlord during Onam festival.

<i>Oottupura</i>	Dining place of Brahmins attached to temples.
<i>Othupalli</i>	Religious school of Muslim students.
<i>Para</i>	Vessel for measuring, especially paddy.
<i>Paraya</i>	A slave caste.
<i>Pathayam/ pathayapura</i>	Granary.
<i>Patta</i>	Title deed.
<i>Pattadar</i>	Malabar <i>janmi</i> .
<i>Pattam</i>	Rent.
<i>Penkoda</i>	Marriage of a Namboothiri girl.
<i>Polichezhuth</i>	Deed on periodical renewal of lease.
<i>Pooram</i>	A festival.
<i>Salai</i>	Traditional school.
<i>Sambhandham</i>	Liaison of junior Namboothiris with Nair women.
<i>Sambandhakkari</i>	Brahmin boy involved in sambandham.
<i>Samuthiripad</i>	Zamorin (ruler) of Calicut.
<i>Saiv</i>	A white man.
<i>Savarna</i>	Upper caste.
<i>Subedhar</i>	A lower rank in military.
<i>Tahasildar</i>	Head of a revenue sub-division.
<i>Taluk</i>	Sub-division of a revenue district.
<i>Taravad</i>	Joint family of Nairs.
<i>Thampuran</i>	King, God or Lord.
<i>Thirandukalyanam</i>	Ritual to celebrate the puberty of a girl.
<i>Thirumulkkazhcha</i>	Gift to the landlord.
<i>Uralan</i>	Trustee of temple.

<i>Vaaram</i>	Lease amount.
<i>Vedi parayal/ vedivattam</i>	Time pass talks especially among Namboothiris.
<i>Verumpattam</i>	Simple lease for a year.
<i>Verumpattakaran</i>	Holder of simple lease.
<i>Yogakshema Sabha</i>	Namboothiri caste association.
<i>Yuvajana Samgham</i>	Youth-wing of Yogakshema Sabha.

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