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# REVIEW OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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## ECONOMIC GROWTH AND ITS TRANSFORMED DETERMINANTS

An economy is a system of inter related economic activities and economic transactions. Basic economic activities are Production, Exchange and Consumption. The economic activities are carried out in an integrated manner in order to create a sustainable and decent human life in the society. The virtues of sustainability and decency can be derived only from a capable and empowered people with a value system. The situation can be made available with a good economic system capable of providing remunerative employment and economic engagements. The economic growth rate is usually considered as a measuring rod in order to assess the capability of the economy to create and sustain with the economic pulls and pushes.

In general, economic growth means percentage increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on year to year basis. In simple terms, economic growth means a sustained increase in per capita national output for Net National Product over a long period of time. It implies that the rate of increase in total output must be greater than the rate of population growth. If output and population growth are at the same rate, there would be no increase in the per capita income and there would be no improvement in the general standard of living despite increase in the output. Such a growth is considered as a stagnated growth. On the other hand, increase in per capita income as a result of faster decrease in population than the decrease in output amounts to general decay in the economy, there is no growth despite increase in the per capita income. Thus economic growth implies a considerable and sustained increase in the per capita income with or without increase in population.

In this context, it is imperative to look into the factors determining the economic growth of a country. There are five most important determinants of economic growth. They are: (1) Human resources and its quality, (2) Natural resources, (3) Capital formation, (4) Technological Development and (5) Political and social factors. These variables are briefly explained, in order to have a simple assimilation, as follows:

- (1) Human Resource of a country is the most crucial factor in its economic growth. Human Resource is comprised of the available labour force and its quality. Quality of labour force depends on the level of its education, training, skills and its inventive and innovative abilities.
- (2) Natural resources of a country include the area of usable land and resources on the land surface and underground. Land surface resources include natural water, forest, landscape and the like. Underground resources include oil, natural gas and minerals. Favourable climate and environmental conditions add positive values to the natural resources. Countries with rich natural resource endowments have a much larger growth potential than those lacking natural resources.
- (3) Capital is defined as man-made means of production. It includes machinery, plant and building, means of transportation, communication, energy, health care and education. Creating or acquiring man-made means of production is known as capital formation or capital accumulation. Capital formation enhances the availability of capital per worker. A high capital/labour ratio enhances the productivity of labour. In other words, a larger quantity of goods and services are produced per unit of time, leading to a high growth rate.
- (4) Technology refers to scientific methods and techniques of production. The physical form of technology is the machinery, equipments and devices available for production.
- (5) Social and political system, organisations, institutions and social values play a significant role in the development process of an economy. The form of Government and its economic roles and policies matter to a great extend in determining the level and rate of economic growth of a country.

Dr. J Rajan  
Chief Editor

## DECEMBER 2016 ISSUE

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# CASTE HIERARCHY AND TENURIAL SYSTEM IN TRAVANCORE

**\*Anu.R**

## **Abstract**

*The right to land determined the caste of the Travancoreans. The right to land was of two kinds: right to ownership and right to tenancy. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs and Ambalavasis who had ownership of land became the Caste-Hindus of Travancore. At the same time Ezhavas and Channars who had only the tenancy right over the land got the highest position among the Non-Caste-Hindus. The slaves who had no ownership or tenancy right over the land got the lowest position in the Non-Caste-Hindu hierarchy. The Caste-Hindu and Non-Caste-Hindu group emerged thus. In order to maintain the hold over this system the Caste-Hindus had to enforce civil restrictions over the Non-Caste-Hindus. On the whole, the right to land determined the caste and all of its restrictions.*

Key Words: Chaturvarnya, Caste-Hindus, Non-Caste-Hindus, untouchability, slavery, land proprietorship, caste hierarchy.

## **Introduction**

Caste is a term used to stratify the society in early India. Even though the caste system existed in the entire society of India, it had regional differences. The caste system in India is related to the socio-economic systems. The caste system in Travancore was greatly influenced by the tenurial system in the region.

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## Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the relationship between the land system and caste system; and
2. To find out the causes for the civil disabilities of the Non-Caste-Hindus.

## Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is mainly historical and descriptive.

The caste system in Travancore is the byproduct of the land system in Travancore. The caste system in Travancore was very much different from the caste system which existed in the other parts of India, especially North India. In North India, *Chaturvarnya* based Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra castes have been existing<sup>1</sup>. In Travancore a slight variation of *Chaturvarnya* system was followed. The Brahmins enjoyed the highest position in the caste hierarchy. They included *Thamprakkal*, *Aadyanmar*, *Moossads*, *Elayadsetc*. Among these categories the *Thamprakkal* and *Aadyanmar* were the highest class<sup>2</sup>. Both of them were aristocratic land lords. The Kshatriyas also had proprietary rights over the land in the name of *Cerikkal*, *Pandaravaka* or *Kandalavu*<sup>3</sup>. The third category of the *Chaturvarnya* system were Vaisyas or trading group, were more or less absent in Travancore. Hence the foreigners like the Jews, the Christians and the Arabs became dominant communities in the field of trade in Travancore<sup>4</sup>.

As they had the highest social status as controllers of the land Brahmins and Kshatriyas never cultivated the land and kept themselves away from manual labour. They left it to the Sudras called Nairs<sup>5</sup> to cultivate the land doing manual labour<sup>6</sup>. This led to the entry of Nairs into the realm of the land system. The *Kiriyathil Nairs* took over the land of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas on lease for stipulated periods paying a rent known as '*Kanam*'. The tenure of the lease used to be either 36 or 48 years or more<sup>7</sup>. These permanent mortgages were converted to permanent tenure known as '*Kudijenmam*' in the eighteenth century<sup>8</sup>. This made the *Kiriyathil Nairs* jenmis and they became the highest Nairs. But there are several middle and very low class Nairs like *Vilakkithala Nairs* and *Veluthedathu Nairs*. They were not even recognized as Nairs<sup>9</sup>.

Chakyars, Nambiars, Pisharody, Pushpakan etc occupied the space between the Brahmins and Nairs. All of them were Ambalavasis. They also had hereditary lands known as '*Viruthi*'<sup>10</sup> in Travancore. Thus Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis and Nairs who had the hereditary right over the land attained the status of 'Caste-Hindus' in Travancore society. But the same society included the 'Non-Caste-Hindus' namely Ezhavas, Channars and slave castes like Pulayas, Parayas and Kuravas but all of them did not possess ownership of land.

Among the Non-Caste-Hindu people, the Ezhavas and Channars maintained the highest and almost equal status in the Travancore society. Eventhough Kudiyans, Asans, Ayurveda physicians, weavers, toddy tappers etc. were there, Kudiyans who were lease holders of land occupied the highest position among the Ezhavas. At the same time, the Jaggery makers<sup>11</sup> and Jaggery traders<sup>12</sup> were there among the Channars. The Adiyans with palm gardens got the highest status<sup>13</sup>.

The lowest position in the caste hierarchy of Travancore was deceived by the slaves including Parayyas, Pulayyas, Kuravayas etc. They did not have the land ownership right or the land holding right. Thus they got only lowest position in the Hindu caste hierarchy of Travancore.

As a part of the existing system, the Ezhavas and Channars had to suffer a lot of restrictions. They did not have the right to worship the Caste-Hindu Gods like *Bhagavathi* and could not get entry into the Caste-Hindu temples and public places like roads, government schools, hospitals, post-offices<sup>14</sup> government courts<sup>15</sup> etc. They were deprived even political rights. When the land revenue was fixed as a basic qualification for the voter in the election to the legislature of 1904, only eight Ezhavas got the voting right.

The government also supported this kind of existing segregation in Travancore until 1930<sup>16</sup>. This was demonstrated in the reply of the Dewan dated 30<sup>th</sup> August 1931 to the Memorial submitted by the S.N.D.P.Yogam on 10<sup>th</sup> February, 1930<sup>17</sup>. In this reply the Dewan opined that out of 1071 government schools, only 12 were not opened to all classes. Besides, the *Devaswom* department premises, public roads known as *gramaveedhees* and *sathrams* or rest houses were not opened to all castes. If contrary to this is sanctioned, communal clashes would be aroused. Because they are either situated on temple property, or in close proximity to temples or Brahmin streets which are not accessible to all classes of people due to pollution or untouchability. Moreover, the Non-Caste-Hindus were prohibited from entry into temple because they were built and maintained by the Caste-Hindus and ruling *Maharajas*. Hence the Non-Castes have no right to worship there<sup>18</sup>. Thus the custom or untouchability did not give entry for the Non-Caste-Hindus to the Caste-Hindu temples and its surrounding public places. Thus one can say that all these kinds of restrictions and caste hierarchy maintained by the Brahmins and the ruling classes contributed to keep these Non-Caste-Hindu categories out of the reach of the main stream of the public life and thereby the land occupancy and ownership rights. At the same time, they were used as mere instruments for the maintenance of the same system.

A notable fact is that the Ezhavas and the Channars who were troubled by the untouchability of their castes also practiced the same towards other lower castes called slaves who are subordinate to them<sup>19</sup>.

As a result of the untouchability the slaves could not live with the ordinary people of Travancore. So, their houses are situated away from other residential quarters outside the ordinary village limits called *Paracheris*. They could not use the common well or get the service of the barbers and priests of the higher castes. So they had to maintain their own well, burial grounds, barbers etc<sup>20</sup>.

As a part of caste restrictions the slave castes lost the right to get entry to the Caste-Hindu temples and worship their Gods. Hence, there was an instance of punishing the slaves for entering into a Brahmin pagoda or temple in 1849<sup>21</sup>. So each and every caste had to maintain certain distance between them and it can be realized from the letter number 60 dated 27<sup>th</sup> January 1871 of the Cochin Dewan Shangunni Menon to the acting British Resident of Travancore and Cochin named J.I.Minjin. This letter describes that the conditions of the lower castes in Cochin and Travancore are the same. "An Ezhava may not approach a Brahmin's or a Nair's house, a *Cheruman* (slave caste) will not be allowed to go too close to an Ezhavan's habitation"<sup>22</sup>. This letter shows the Brahmins, Nairs, Ezhavas and slaves strictly maintained a particular distance in between them even though there was no written law regarding the distance. Mainly as a result of the maintenance of this custom the lower castes could not get entry to any of the public places where the Caste-Hindus freely involved.

The most severe disability suffered by the slave castes was their slavery. Not only the individuals like Brahmins, Nairs, Ezhavas and Channars but also the Government maintained slaves. There is evidence for the maintenance of slaves by the Government and the attainment of income from their services for the year 1849<sup>23</sup>. But, the life of the slaves was very pathetic. The children born to them as slaves would be sold for enforcing the court verdict or for the non-payment of the *Pattom* or tax and even, crime against them was not considered as punishable<sup>24</sup>. Moreover, they were sold in market just like the cattle<sup>25</sup>. Thus all their civil rights were denied with support of the government.

By the 1850's the Travancore Government realized the pitiable condition of the slaves and abolished slavery in 1855<sup>26</sup>. But even after it, their condition was not much improved. About that Reverent Samuel Mateer a missionary of London Missionary Society who stationed at Travancore during 1851-1891 describes: "The slaves are engaged in agriculture as the servant of the Sudra and other land owners. The slaves have no education because no one would be willing to teach the impure. There are several instances of forcible possession of the waste land cleared by the slaves. . . . . Pulaya is not allowed to use the public road when a Brahmin or Sudra walks on it"<sup>27</sup>. So they were denied the right to education in the Government schools of Travancore. Hence not even a single person from Pulayas, Parayas, and Kuravas can be seen in the percentage of different castes under instruction in the Census report of 1891<sup>28</sup>. They lack the opportunity till 1911 mainly due to the resistance showed by the Caste-Hindus<sup>29</sup>.



Besides, the slave castes had to suffer restrictions in their way of dressing. There is a bar on them from covering the upper part of the body. So, some of them covered only the lower part with some leaves and some others with a small piece of cloth<sup>30</sup>. Likewise, they could not wear gold and silver ornaments. So, they wore brass, lead and stone ornaments only<sup>31</sup>. The same restrictions in the matter of dress and ornaments existed in the case of the Ezhavas but less in rigor. From this unwritten 'Dress and Ornament Code', a Caste-Hindu person can recognize the lower caste people and thereby easily restrain the Non-Castes from entering the public places. Through continuing the custom of no-entry of the Non-Castes into Caste-Hindu temples, they could keep away the Non-Castes from all temples and thereby all of its surroundings such as roads, schools, post-offices, hospitals, courts of justice and markets. Thus, by using this unwritten religious code the Caste-Hindus could maintain the countless civil disabilities of the Non-Castes and thereby kept their hold on the entire society, polity and economy.

## Conclusion

One can analyse the maintenance of the caste hierarchy in the light of the Marxian theory. By looking at the society of that period it is understood that the land ownership was the base of the material wealth of that time even though some other high occupations were existed. Actually, the high position in the caste hierarchy was achieved only by the castes that had land proprietorship. Hence, the Ezhavas, Channars and slaves who did not have land ownership were alienated as Non-Caste-Hindus. In order to keep this status quo the Caste-Hindus maintained civil restrictions on the Non-Caste-Hindus. These restrictions were not the aftermath of the caste system only but also the consequence of the land system of Travancore.

## Notes and References

1. Census Report of Travancore, 1931, Part I, p.363.
2. Lieutenants Ward and Conner, *Memoir of the Survey of Travancore and Cochin States*, Vol.I, Thiruvananthapuram (hereafter Tvpm): Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1994, p.125.
3. 'Adhikarams' or 'Desams' administered by representatives of 'Idavakas' and 'Swaroopams' (petty chieftains) were free land and the rulers claimed its share of produce called 'komuraipadu' made it clear that the land of Swaroopams or petty rulers were *jenmam* lands like Nambudiri *Jenmam* lands and the petty rulers were also the *Jenm is* of Travancore, vide, K.N.Ganesh, 'Agrarian society in Kerala (1500-1800)' in P.J.Churian (Ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History*, Vol.II, Part II, Tvpm: Kerala Gazetteers Department, Government of Kerala, 1996, p.145.

4. P.K.Gopalakrishnan, *Keralathinte Samskarika Charithram* (Mal.), Tvpm: Kerala Bhasha Institute, 2008, p.283.
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14. C. Kesavan, *Ente Jeevitha Samaram* (Autobiography, Mal.), Vol.I, Tvpm: Publications Kaumudi, 1953, p.85
15. Ibid,p.75
16. General File No.15902/1931 Bundle No.253.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. A.N.Sathyadas, n.12, p.57.
20. Ward and Conner, n.2, p.151
21. Cover File No.15855/1849 Bundle No.23.
22. Archives News Letter, Vol.I, No.IV,September1975, pp.8-9.
23. The letter No.359/2849 dated 24<sup>th</sup> August 1849 of Travancore DewanSankara Warier to the British Resident Major General W. Cullen gives the idea that during the year of 1848-1849 (1023M.E.), the Travancore *Sirca* maintained 6760 full grown *Sircar* slaves, male &female and 1226 children making together 7986 souls and the amount of revenue derived from the full grown slaves in the respective year was Rs.3673-5-2.vide, Kerala Archives NewsLetter, Vol. I, Nos. II &III, 1975, p.8

24. Kerala Archives News Letter, Vol. IV, December 1980, No.II, p.1
25. Ward and Conner, n.2, p.149.
26. Kerala archives News Letter, No.24.
27. Samuel Mateer, n.11, pp.42&45-47.
28. Census of Travancore, 1891, pp.476-77
29. File No.911/1908, Vol.I, Education Department, State Archives, Nalanda.
30. Samuel Mateer, n.11, p.35.
31. A.N.Sathyadas, n.12, p.66



# BRAHMANISM AND MARXISM IN THE WRITINGS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD

**\*Sreepriya S.P.**

## **Abstract**

*It is hard to define what makes a truly great leader but EMS Namboodiripad was never in doubt about it. His prescient presence as leader, thinker and theoretician played a pre-eminent role in shaping a modern and cohesive Kerala out of its unsettling political and social history.<sup>1</sup> His tireless efforts as an analyst and commentator helped evolve a form of Communism that suited Indian conditions. In idealism and exhaustive pursuit of ideology, Namboodiripad stands out as a model for political India.<sup>2</sup> He thought differently from his contemporaries, lived dangerously to overcome the limitations of his times and worked constantly for the freedom of the individual and society from the clutches of imperialism, feudalism, fanatic casteism and more recently, abhorrent communalism.*

Key Words: Marxism, Communism, Historiography, Scientific Socialism, Landlordism, Dravidians. Brahmanism

## **Introduction**

The remarkable aspect of the personality EMS Namboodiripad which distinguished him from other leaders was his ability to fill the gap between precept and practice. Scholarship gave him the intellectual instrument to envision change, but it was his vast experience in actual life that gave Namboodiripad, the strength and personality to translate those ideas into action. Throughout his life he had remained a perceptive observer of life and society.

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Namboodiripad indoctrinated himself ideologically in socialist beliefs and values, but he never allowed his mind to become paranoid, or allowed blinkers to bliss his vision.<sup>3</sup> He was practitioner of honest politics candidly accepting mistakes when they were committed, never fearing to correct them and never failing to subject himself to rigorous self examination about his politics and his action.

## Objectives

1. To analyzes the influence of Brahmin identity in the writings of EMS Namboodiripad;
2. To evaluates the materialistic interpretation of history in the writings of Namboodiripad; and
3. To examines the role of working class in his treatment of history.

## Hypothesis

EMS Namboodiripad wrote history for the working class.

He was the patriarch of the Marxist historiography of Kerala.

Caste is sidelined in his treatment of history.

## Methodology

The methodology used in this work is analytical with theoretical insights. The narrative style is used in the biographical portions of the study. Empirical and interpretative modes complement the work.

## Analysis and Interpretation

*Keralam Malayalaikalude Mathrubhumi* written in 1948 was the first attempt to stand back from the exigencies of programmatic writing and engage with the problems of the history of Kerala. Dilip M. Menon analyzed three issues predominate in EMS' reconstruction of the history of ancient Kerala. First there is an engagement with the Dravidian critiques of the Brahmins as an immigrant into the egalitarian, civilized space of South India who introduced caste hierarchy and subordinated the indigenous culture. Second, the institution of caste re evaluated as a necessary stage in the transition from a primitive form of society to a more advanced one through a more efficient organization of production. Third, at a time when the ideology of language politics and of the linguistic reorganization of state was gaining prominence, it was claimed that the regional identity was promised on a unifying culture created by the Brahmins. So with *Keralam Malayalaikalude Mathrubhumi* Namboodiripad stepped back from immediate political concern to articulate the twin concern of Marxism and the trajectory of Kerala history.<sup>4</sup>

The question of how the Brahmins came to Kerala was the primary one: was this process the Southern equivalent of the Aryan invasion supplanting Dravidian culture in the north? EMS distanced himself unequivocally from the Brahmin founding myth of Kerala in the *Keralolpatti*: the Parasurama flung his axe into the sea and reclaimed land which he settled with immigrant Brahmins.<sup>5</sup> To Menon, EMS went along with the Dravidian position that the existence of an indigenous civilization in Kerala preceded the coming of the Brahmins.<sup>6</sup> In speaking of the conflict between the two cultures the persistence of the earlier culture was recognized: neither the axe of Parasurama nor the *Advaita* of Sankaracharya, or even 2000 years of continuous Brahmin power have been able to destroy non-Brahmin way of life.<sup>7</sup> However, to Menon the question of numerical and cultural strength of the Brahmins in particular regions complicated the picture somewhat.<sup>8</sup>

Comparing the different theories about the origins of the Nairs which locate their original home in places as far apart as Nepal, Chottanagpur and Southern India, EMS came down in favor of their being a Dravidian people. They were part of the civilization of the south proved by Tamil scholars to have been no less advanced than that of the Aryans.<sup>9</sup> One of the indicators of their level of advancement was the fact that they managed to retain the distinctive feature of their social organization i.e. matrilineal even after the clash with a people like the *Aryans* who possessed a superior civilization and culture.<sup>10</sup> When analyzing these statements Menon argued that throughout the text there is a constant movement between the term Aryan implying a northern origin for the *Namboodiris* and being consonant with the Dravidian position and the more neutral term 'Brahmin' locating the *Namboodiri* as one among the Brahmin originating in the Southern peninsula.<sup>11</sup> Menon argued that EMS made an interesting and unsubstantiated connection between matrilineal and the caste regime. Since the *Namboodiris* were able to make the sharpest break from mother-right to father-right they became the heist caste while those who retained the maximum amount of freedom in marriage and preserved the mother-right became the lowest of the caste Hindus.<sup>12</sup> So here again the arguments about the superiority of Brahmin civilization was phrased in the language of Marxism.<sup>13</sup>

Another argument put forward by Menon against EMS is about the Aryan invasion. According to EMS it is more logical to assume that the Brahmins came to Kerala in different groups from different regions and at different times than to suppose that there was a single immigration of one body of people from one region.<sup>14</sup> To Menon, as to when the Brahmins actually entered Kerala, EMS preferred the data suggested by R C Dutt rather than by William Logan. The migration was presented as the result of an internal movement from within the southern peninsula India i.e. from Maharashtra, Karnataka and the banks of Krishna and Godavari rather than an invasion from the north. By arguing this he was mapping onto the territory delineated by Dravidian ideologues and locating the Brahmin

firmly within it, rather than as an outsider.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the idea that the Brahmins were conquering Aryans was subtly undermined at the same time, he was careful to avoid the use of the word Aryan and Aryan culture at this juncture, except for occasional slippage throughout the text. Menon pointed out that EMS's alternative history was presented as a surmise for which he offered no evidence.<sup>16</sup> He argued that the regional differences between *Namboodiris* within Kerala were seen as arising from their migration from different parts of southern India, e.g. the observances of the *Namboodiris* of north Malabar reflect their Maharashtrian past. However, here again there was a tension. EMS stated that the *Namboodiris* of central Kerala had had the most influence on the history and culture of the region. He traced their origin to the banks of the Krishna and Godavari because after the coming of the Aryan culture, the foremost civilization in southern India was in the Andhra region.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, even as the idea of northern Aryan origin for the *Namboodiris* was rejected, it was argued that the advanced sections among them were only one remove away from the superior Aryan civilization.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the text Marxism and its notions of historical development - the motor of the mode of production- was deployed against the Dravidian rhetoric of the Brahmins as aggressive immigrants.<sup>19</sup>

Menon observed that in the introduction of the second impression of *Keralam Malayalaikalude Mathrubhumi* EMS returned to an argument about Brahmins having come from North India, but the ramification of this reversal served radical purpose. EMS hypothesized that the Brahmins came to Kerala at a time when changes were coming about within marriage practice and family organizations.<sup>20</sup> This surmise regarding the origin of the Namboodiri was given a radical edge by the statement that they were the result of *jati samkara*.<sup>21</sup> The Brahmin was moved from originating within the Dravidian space, albeit of a different race, to becoming one among the Dravidians. The caste system was the marker of the superior organization which the Brahmins instituted allowing the shift from one mode of production to another. The Brahmin was seen as the prime mover at this system. The organization of caste as a superior form of the division of labor allowed for two possibilities which were expanded upon in *National Questions in Kerala*. The development of productive forces was given an impetus by the new social division which led to accumulation of wealth, division of labor and the division of society into classes. This finally paved the way for transition to father-right among the more advanced groups.<sup>22</sup> To Menon, while *Keralam Malayalaikalude Mathrubhumi* had argued for caste as a division of labor with people allotted professions which they then developed over generation, in *National Questions in Kerala* the argument was expressed in terms of differential ranking in terms of movement towards father rights.<sup>23</sup> He continued that if the national organization of production through the caste system was one of the innovations imported by the Brahmins, the other one was the landlord system. It helped institute the system of private property in



Kerala and here EMS moves towards a curious blend of traditional *Namboodiri* myth and Marxist method.<sup>24</sup> Observing that there is a direct relation between Brahmin dominance and the prevalence of landlordism – least in north Malabar, most in central Kerala – he goes to ask.

In *National Questions in Kerala* EMS wrote that even before the coming of the *Namboodiris* land had already gone for towards being turned into private property.<sup>25</sup> To Menon it is not told how he arrived at this reversal of the earlier assumption. The argument had shifted from seeing the *Namboodiris* as the harbingers of a new economic order, which would associate them also with the deeply ambivalent heritage of caste and landlordism.<sup>26</sup> It was in another context that EMS took up what was lying beneath the surface of this benign delineation of the development of the caste system: the question of inequality.<sup>27</sup> Menon continued that in an attempt to locate the history of Buddhism in ancient Kerala he argued for a clash between those who espoused Buddhism and those who welcomed the never immigrant Brahmins. Buddhism was seen as having arisen in response to the subordination of the majority of the people to a tiny minority despite the social advancement brought about by the division of labor through caste.<sup>28</sup> The victory over Buddhism of Sankaracharya and the *Advaita* philosophy represented not only the triumph of an ideology but a shift in the relation of production. For EMS this was a crucial watershed in the history of Kerala and he went along with the tradition held by the *Namboodiris* in the *Keralolpathy* that the Malayalam era which begins in 825 AD commemorated this event.<sup>29</sup> His preference for this *Namboodiri* myth is interesting considering the other options available to him. Buddhism perished because it represented an older order which may have had greater equality between people as a premise but was tied to a stagnant mode of production.

EMS's work is a powerful example of the Brahmin coming of age in south India, emerging out of the trenchant critiques of the Dravidian movement as well as the soul searching within the *Namboodiri* community to forge a history that restored the Brahmins to their rightful place.<sup>30</sup> On the face of it, EMS's use of Marxism and its concepts is idiosyncratic at best and instrumental at worst.<sup>31</sup> EMS argued that in medieval Kerala the basis was European feudal while the superstructure was Brahmin i.e. Asiatic and it was this Brahmanical superstructure which was responsible for the further development of productive forces.<sup>32</sup> To Menon, EMS's was a purposive history which misunderstood Marxism for the political programmed of the *Malayali* region of Kerala?<sup>33</sup> It was necessary to counter the Dravidian critique to imagine a unity within the region of individuals constructed as *Malayalis* rather than as Brahmin or non-Brahmin. EMS's attempts to leap away from history by asserting the pastness of caste and morality denied their tangibility in the present and their continuing legacy.<sup>34</sup>



According to T K Ravindran the misuse of Marxian methodology can be illustrated in the writings of EMS Namboodiripad. He pointed out that in *National Questions in Kerala* EMS applied Marx's idea of Asiatic Mode of Production to explain the social formation in ancient Kerala. Practically with no observed data Namboodiripad has written a shout chapter based on wispy speculation about the primitive economic process and structure of society.<sup>35</sup> He realized eventually that the whole exercise was vain or frivolous and wrote a long tract in self criticism in his later book *Kerala charitram Samskaravum Oru Marxist Vikshanam*. In this book he has applied the materialistic conception rather wrongly making it stand on its head. Here economic determinism is made to yield up the ghost and we find caste determinism standing in its place.<sup>36</sup>

When analyzing the history of Kerala Namboodiripad introduced and elaborated a concept of *jati janmi naduvazhi medhavitwam* to explain the social formation in Kerala. According to Ravindran in doing so from materialism of Marx he goes off at a tangent and came to rest in the opposite camp of Marx Webber's religious interpretation for the rise of capitalism.<sup>37</sup> Namboodiripad takes caste as the basic factor that determines the course of history in Kerala. His reading of the historic situation is absolutely correct based on the dependable and veritable facts but to call it a Marxist perspective is patently wrong when caste is made the determining factor in history, economic elements has to seek a place in the superstructure.<sup>38</sup> Caste in fact was the real causation for the rise of *janminaduvazhidomination*. Namboodiripad's intension is to expose, the *janmi naduvazhi* dominance that grew up under the tutelage of caste. However in this attempt he was unintentionally caused to extend legitimacy to what Engels derogated as a primitive nonsense and Marx condemned as the barbaric egotism.<sup>39</sup> The factors of production and relations of production, social religious and judicial relations, art and literature were all controlled and protected by caste. This way of interpreting historical evolution cannot be considered as materialist because economic factor is not the ultimate one when caste dominates the scene.<sup>40</sup> Neither were there any specific classes that were antagonistic in the economic sense, nor any class conflict that ushered into an epoch of social revolution.

According to EMS Namboodiripad it was the supremacy of *jati* that caused the Namboodiris and Nairs to become *Janmis* and *Naduvazhis* and the leaders of culture. The caste Hindus were able to appropriate the pickings of the labor power of the *Avarnas* and non-Hindus and to dominate over them by the superiority of their caste. They gained economic power only because of their caste authority.<sup>41</sup> To Ravindran this shows that Namboodiripad is historically correct but ideology wrong. If he could have established that it was their firm holds on and control over the means of production that made the *Namboodiris* and Nairs, the lords and rulers his historical materialism would have been on safe ground.<sup>42</sup> EMS argued that the superior caste could establish their sway over the

three fields of social, economic and administrative affairs simultaneously. The untouchable caste and caste Hindus were forced to submit to that superior caste authority. Because of their religious and ideological superiority, the *Namboodiris* were able to dominate over other caste Hindus. This is the social reality behind the idea of *Namboodiris* supremacy.<sup>43</sup> This clearly indicates that the Marxist doctrinaire has strayed way from the economic determinism by installing caste as the basic factor of historical evolution.<sup>44</sup>

As according to K N Panikkar history had a central place among the intellectual and scholarly interest of EMS Namboodiripad.<sup>45</sup> A substantial part of his voluminous writings deal with history. They mainly cover two areas: the history of Kerala and the history of the national liberation movement. To the study of both he brought an analytical mode to bear that was refreshingly original.<sup>46</sup> His engagement with history was not academic but an inevitable part of his involvement with politics. Concerned with the transformation of society on democratic and egalitarian lines, he could not but be interested in the way the present was historically constituted. But his scholarship did not remain confined to the political purpose, is scaled heights and reached out to areas which became the area of many a scholar.<sup>47</sup> His works generated intense debate, within both popular and academic circle. The historical writings of EMS Namboodiripad cover two areas- the history of Kerala and the history of the liberation movement. Through this he achieved two objectives- first he outlined the course of social and political transformation from ancient time through feudalism and colonialism towards a people's democratic Kerala. Secondly he traced the formation of identity and personality of Kerala as embodied in the democratic struggles of the laboring castes and classes. While doing so he focused on the material imperatives which made social transformation possible and the role and intervention of different social classes which either facilitated or retarded their process.<sup>48</sup> He was dubbed by some as a feudal socialist and as a *Namboodiri* who was not able to overcome his caste prejudices.

Namboodiripad attracted criticism particularly because of his characterization of pre Aryan society and his description of the process of caste formation in Kerala. His critics were of the view that EMS did not give due recognition to the achievements of pre Aryan culture. They held that his sympathies lay with Aryan culture, because of which he tended to lionize it at the expense of the pre Aryan. They also attributed this to his upbringing and identity as a *Namboodiri*. Responding to this Panikkar argued that both according to him were untrue and unscientific. He questioned the wisdom of counterpoising Aryan against pre Aryan and suggested that such attempts were part of the process of legitimating of vested interest.<sup>49</sup> The second issue related to the process of caste formation in Kerala. In contrast to the then existing view that migration was the main cause of caste differentiation. EMS focused on social changes internal to society. Migration and invasion; EMS held were only catalyst which facilitated and hastened the process of differentiation.<sup>50</sup> EMS's

main interest was to identify the forces which enabled the realization of a united Kerala.<sup>51</sup> He was in this political project the expression of the democratic aspirations of the people, which were expressed in a variety of struggles, oriented around both caste and class. His analysis of Malabar rebellion of 1921 and the reform movement inspired by Sree Narayana Guru are rooted in this perspective. According to EMS Namboodiripad it is far from the truth to say that the Malabar rebellion was a communal riot, that the objectives of the rebels were the destruction of Hindu religion and that the six months of rebellion were six months of anti-Hindu atrocities. All this, however, does not mean that religious fanaticism was totally absent in the rebellion. The numbers of forced conversion which did take place cannot by any stretch of imagination be explained by any other motive than religious fanaticism. However one can and should state explicitly that the main force behind the rebellion was not fanaticism which was simply a by-product.<sup>52</sup> When analyzing this statement Panikkar pointed out that EMS was the first to highlight the anti imperialist and anti feudal character of the Malabar Rebellion and at the same time to point the danger inherent in a rebel consciousness circumscribed by religion.<sup>53</sup> To EMS the rebellion was both a call for action and a warning.

As according to Rajan Gurukkal the most important peculiarity of the historical writings of Namboodiripad was that he subjected social issues and analyze these issues on the basis of Marxism. Historical approach with realization makes EMS's writings scientific.<sup>54</sup> EMS did not interested in the details of the historical facts and to him it is not necessary for the interpretation of social formation and nature of metamorphosis.<sup>55</sup> He did not care about objectivity in his writings. To Gurukkal his historical writings are only a Marxist reading of available historical resources and it is not a scientific and theoretical interpretation of history on the basis of Marxism.<sup>56</sup> EMS was one among rare personalities in Kerala who wanted to change the ideologies which was existed in the field of literature and history. He used history as a tool to liberate the working class in the stance of nationalism.<sup>57</sup> He understood that transition was the basic nature of history and the class conflicts which existed in the society played a predominant role in this transition. He realizes that production forces are the important factor which controlled the course of history and he tried to analyze Kerala history on the basis of this theory. We can see the transition of history into political philosophy in the writings of EMS Namboodiripad. He approached history in a scientific way. K K N Kuruppu pointed out that EMS find out the social, economic and cultural history of Kerala differ from colonial approaches and the role of the working class in the construction of this new type of history. Perhaps it was the first attempt to evaluate Kerala history in a scientific and secular way.<sup>58</sup> EMS wrote history for social and political purpose. He learned lessons from events and he used these lessons for his political activities efficiently. He understood that the production forces and the changes were taking place due to this production forces

in each phase of history.<sup>59</sup> On the basis of this changes EMS analyzed political struggles and revolutions.

Like Ramachandra Guha argued that as a historian Namboodiripad interpreted everything through the lenses of class struggle and the inevitable victory of revolutionary communism.<sup>60</sup> To him Namboodiripad was a craven follower of a crude despot but as a practicing politician EMS was one of the finest in the land.<sup>61</sup> He went on to lead a double life of bankrupt ideology and meaningful practice. This was the tragedy as well as the achievement of Namboodiripad.<sup>62</sup> The main aim of the historical writings of Namboodiripad was that to create a new historic explanation based on working class sobriety.<sup>63</sup> For this he used the Marxian methodology. At the same time he realized that it is not possible to study the history of Kerala as well as India on the basis of the theory of Marxism and so he used a devised version of it.<sup>64</sup>

## Conclusion

The circumstances which prevailed in society led EMS to the writing of history. He was greatly influenced the colonial modernity. He had come out an involvement with the reform movement within the *Namboodiri* community before his encounter with Marxism. He was in all probability, the most important revolutionary figure modern India has produced. He was certainly the most accomplished, the most original and creative, and the most enduringly influential on the larger stage. His analysis of landlordism and land relations, nationality formation in India and Kerala, the character of the Indian state and society, evolving Indian politics, the opportunities and limits of Indian parliamentary democracy, the caste system and the tricky class-caste equations, the ideologies of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru and various aspects of history and culture are contributions of unsurpassed originality, brilliance and influence in the Indian left. According to EMS working class alone can develop history as science. It is the only class who was not interested in hiding historical facts and can be objective. So we can see class identity in the place of Brahmin identity. Consciously he did not approach history on the basis of Brahmanism.

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# IMPACT OF AN IMPERIALIST WAR: TRAVANCORE – A CASE STUDY

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## **Abstract**

*The Second World War and its effects in Travancore is the point of discussion in this article. Travancore was one of the Princely States of British India. The war condition forced Travancore to help the British in the warfront. The State contributed men, money and materials in total. Other than the direct contribution to the warfront by Travancore, the indirect repercussions let loose by it was very huge in areas such as trade, agriculture and economy. Imports to Travancore had fallen, especially the staple food items. Travancore's biggest industry was the coir industry and it was badly hit by the stoppage of foreign export trade. The reason for all these was the 'colonial interdependence' generated due to colonialism for so many years. Though in the form of sending soldiers or granting huge contributions to the war front, the Princely State of Travancore, became part and parcel of this exploitation on the pretext of efficient utilization of the State's productive economic resources in war time.*

Keywords: imperialism, resources, extractions, accumulation, recruitment, structural changes, hoarding, inflation, migration.

## **Introduction**

The first half of the twentieth century experienced two World Wars because of the confrontations among the imperial powers. The intensity and scale of these Wars had

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tremendous effects on every aspect of human life and it marked the final stage of imperialism. The Second World War was declared on 3 September 1939 and the Viceroy of India announced the unilateral participation of British India in the War. It was without consulting Indian leaders that India was made a participant of this European war. As happened in the First World War, among colonies, India's contribution in terms of providing men and material was very high.

### **Objective of the Study**

The principal objective of this study is to analyze and explore the effect of the Second World War on Travancore.

### **Methodology**

The methodology followed is qualitative and argumentative in nature, making use of the unpublished primary sources, hitherto unexplored, along with the published primary sources, News Papers, Ph.D. Dissertations and Journals and other secondary sources available.

The war brought the tiny Princely State of Travancore into the war-front. Consequently the State had to face many problems, challenges and new structural changes. The policy of positive response from Travancore with respect to the war was indebted to its structure of power. Travancore helped Britain and its Allies against the Fascist forces.

### **Financial Extractions for the War**

Young men were recruited to the battlefield and also for the construction works. Even during the initial years of the war, Travancore soldiers were very active in North Africa, Egypt, Central Africa, North Eastern borders of India and the North East Asian regions. Various financial extractions with respect to the war took place in Travancore. There was popularisation for investments in Defence Loans throughout the State. With the sanction of the Government, the Defence Loans Committee arranged for the conduct of a lottery for Rs. 10 lakhs, of which 50% was to be utilized for the war aid.<sup>1</sup>

### **Production of War Materials**

The predominant feature of the industrial activity in the state during the period was the production of war materials to meet the demands of the Department of supply. Even the normal industrial activities were directed towards this objective. Thus factories were working for longer hours and in full capacity to cope with the ever increasing demand. The supplies came from government as well as private industrial enterprises. Between 1939-1945 there was demand for enormous quantities of timber for the war purpose. Naturally the existing



mills expanded their output and a large number of new mills came to be started in various parts of the country.<sup>2</sup> The Forest department of the state undertook supply of all available quantity of valuable timber for War Purposes. In total various kinds of timber estimated at a value of over Rs. 20 lakhs had been supplied. The value at which the supply was made was lower than the market price for which timber was sold in that time.

There was great demand for burnt coconut shell for charcoal. Coconut oil was also much important in the war supply materials. The coir industry in the state, almost completely devoted to the production of war materials.<sup>3</sup> With a view to effecting prompt and efficient supplies, Travancore government itself undertook the contract through the Coir Association in the state. Tent components made of coir consisting chiefly of bags and camouflage nets were supplied. The possibilities of using coir for soles of boots had been explored. The Travancore Rubber works owned by Travancore Government supplied rubber goods such as ground sheets, and hose pipes.<sup>4</sup> Indian Rubber Production Board had Head Quarters in Travancore and its extensive supplies of rubber were assured for War Purposes.

Thus capital accumulation was experienced in Travancore in a great scale during the War time. As an example Harrisons and Cross field's War time production, executed large contracts for fabricated steel hutting and various steel works.<sup>5</sup> It is also worthwhile mentioning the role of War Supplies Syndicate with the leading firms, industrialists and manufactures in the state.<sup>6</sup> Such as Travancore Rubber Works, Institute of Textile Technology, Government Ceramic Works, the Travancore Wood Works at Mundakkayam etc. The cotton mills at Quilon supplied bandage and gauze cloth. Thus the total contribution from Travancore at the end of March, 1944 was for Rs. 23.41 lakh.<sup>7</sup>

Mineral sands such as Monazite, Ilmenite, Zircon, Titanium Oxide etc were, prior to the war, mined and exported overseas in large quantities.<sup>8</sup> The Ceramic Factory started manufacturing operations during the war years and large orders both for the raw material and for manufactured products had come in from the War Supplies Department, ie., the products specially meant for war purposes, not for local needs. The Government Ceramic factory at Kundara concentrated its efforts on the supply of crockery, porcelain insulators and other materials for war purposes. Other than these types of materials, crockery, insulation, cotton goods, other implements and tools, lemon grass oil...etc had items of war export from Travancore. The state undertook execution of orders under the Small Scale Industries Scheme, and there were several agencies both, official and non official which supplied various kinds of articles intended for War Purposes. Travancore government organized the business interests in the state so as to serve with the maximum efficiency the demand of the Department of Supply. Thus Travancore was fully exploited for the war purpose in the pretext of full utilization of the war demand.

## **A Negative Impact on Normal Life**

Traders and merchants in various fields experienced and confronted an unprecedented crisis due to the war. Exports to foreign countries which constituted a large portion of Travancore's trade and the import of rice from Burma on which depended her food had both come to a standstill on account of the war.<sup>9</sup> Stocks in godowns began to deteriorate. Merchants lost heavily and middlemen were almost ruined, but the worst sufferers were the depressed classes, for whom there were no escape from diseases, utter despair and privation.

## **Unemployment**

As a direct result of the war, the coir industry lost the European continental markets and the imposition of export quotas and restricted shipping facilities led to the closing down of most of the coir factories in the state. This created unemployment on a large scale among the factory labourers, and also among thousands of the population all over the coastal area who had been depending on this industry for their daily sustenance. There were hundreds of non-factory coir labourers also in the state, who had been thrown out of employment as a consequence of this war situation. A possibility of expansion of the Indian market was also seriously crippled on account of transport difficulties.

The Taluks chiefly affected by unemployment among labourers (both non factory and factory) in the state were Ambalapuzha, Shertallai and part of Vaikom.<sup>10</sup> In coastal villages like Chirayinkil and Karthikapalli also non-factory labourers had been thrown out of employment. Alleppey, the centre of the coir industry was very badly hit due to the war. Restrictions on shipping had brought the industry practically to a standstill. Alleppey was also severely hit by Cyclone. Even in that circumstance the Dewan who visited Alleppey exhorted the people to co-operate with them in their war efforts.<sup>11</sup>

Orders for coir stores placed by the Supply Department of the Government of India provided some amount of work in the coir factories. But the industry had much to say against the policy of the Supply Department, which had to a large extent upset the equilibrium of the market. On the advice of Government, the manufacturer organized themselves into an Association known as the Coir, Mats and Matting Manufacturers Association, Alleppey for promoting the interests of the industry.<sup>12</sup>

Some parts of the economy were much more vulnerable than other with respect to the War time experience. With respect to Travancore, it couldn't produce its own food; it couldn't make its own cloth. It relied entirely on export and import requirements. With respect to the unemployment generated by the war, global markets for various articles, war supply production and the resultant job opportunities were very meager. A number of

coir factories were closed down in the state due to the war situation and the consequent lull in business. The number of labourers employed in the above factories were had been thrown out of employment was about 30,000.<sup>13</sup> Because of the War, trade declined, and was disrupted, the articles for the War purposes were manufactured in large scale in Travancore. The workers in the unorganized sector lost their jobs and new technicians and other war related manufactures got employment.

### **Vulnerable Food Situation**

Travancore had received rice from neighbours like Cochin and Madras. But due to the War situation, even Cochin and Madras couldn't get needed rice. Thus decrease in the supply of grains also deteriorated the condition. The situation was serious among labourers in plantations of rubber and tea, who did essential works for the war services there.

During the wartime and even after, the food problem affected entire India. Travancore was not behind that. One cause was the disruption in sea trade and the consequent difficulty in getting sea going vessels for carrying food materials. Another cause was the allocation of the food materials for the army men in the battle field. Because of these reasons there was food shortage in the market.

### **Hoarding and Inflation**

Then there occurred a situation for hoarding. At the same time with the inflation and rise in prices of the commodities common people could never manage to buy the staple food items. The food position in this part of the country, which was more critical than that of Bengal, testifies that the aftermath of the Second World War witnessed a steep rise in the price of all commodities, especially of staple products.<sup>14</sup> Related to the food crisis poverty and unemployment naturally led to increase in theft and anti social activities.<sup>15</sup>

The severe food problem was an important after effect of the war. People were afflicted with dangerous diseases in Travancore and malnutrition. During that emergency situation generated by the War, every attempt had been made to popularise the consumption of millets and tapioca as a substitution for rice. It must also be mentioned that poverty was experienced by the soldiers in the battle field also. Vitamin tablets were supplied as food in the battle field for the soldiers.

The acute difficulty experienced by the press on account of the shortage of paper, confronted educational institutions as well. It was reported that in many parts of the world and even in certain parts of British India, examinations had been stopped, or postponed for that reason. Dewan commended them, paper is no longer used primarily for writing, it

is used for cartridge cases and munitions of all sorts. Because of the war, imports of paper diminished because of blockade on shipping.

The working of the Transport Department was seriously handicapped because of the rise in the price of petrol and oil as a natural result of the war situation. Even price of bicycles, went up during the war time. The loss of Burma Oil Fields and the vast supply of Rubber from Malaya and East Indies brought about the necessity to ensure the stocks of petrol and tire available in India which was possible only by restricting operations to the lowest possible minimum. Along with this charcoal assumed greater importance as a fuel i.e. the charcoal gas.

During this war, young men went for various services in army, navy and air force. Their mass recruitment was one of the characteristics of an imperialist War. In one sense this exploitative character seemed a blessing in disguise for the poverty stricken masses. They felt it an opportunity to join the 'British Indian Army'. The government machinery only considered these mass recruited men as mere mercenaries. That is why after the war, these people were sent to their homelands with bare hands. Because of war condition more long term jobs were disrupted and replaced by some short term jobs. The 'War Recruitment' was an example of 'short term jobs'.

Acute food distress which affected each and every family then in Travancore, least considered their caste or religion with respect to the joining of the army. In the war front they mingled each other. The mass recruitment into British Indian forces irrespective of caste diluted the compartmentalization of Travancore society. It indicates that socially a positive change occurred along with the war.

With respect to the migration there was external and internal migration. It happened as a direct result of the War. A large number of youth were recruited for war related jobs and sent to other parts of India and even to foreign countries like Myanmar, Malaya and Singapore. Internal Migration occurred as an indirect result of the War. This is connected with the expansion of cultivation. In this respect internal migration accelerated the rebirth of the old order, i.e., the resurgence of landlordism. When there occurred shortage of food materials, under the program of 'Grow More Food', there was exhortation on the peasants to cultivate the fallow lands. This episode became a cause for internal migration of peasants to the rural land. Establishment of Fertilizers and Chemicals of Travancore (FACT) in 1943, hence occupies an important position for compromising the need to increase domestic rice yields by the use of chemical fertilizers.<sup>16</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The resources of the colonies were exploited and utilised for the imperial war effort, not always justifiable. The over enthusiasm of the State of Travancore in this imperialist

effort was also unjustifiable showing concomitant imperial overstretch. State, with its economy being subordinated to the imperialist economical structure was thus bound to undergo a major impact. All these underline the idea that the Travancore economy moulded towards a greater command over its resources for the War extraction. It is evidently clear that this colonial extraction was at its peak during the respective War period. Growth of several industries during the war time shows in a sense a positive effect on the state, in connection with the production of war materials. Temporary as this phase was, it resulted in the growth of a large number of small and large employers and of skilled and semi skilled workers. Other than the direct contribution to the warfront by Travancore as men, money and material, the indirect repercussions let loose by it were very huge in areas such as trade, agriculture, economy and social spheres.

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# **SOCIAL ACTIVISM OF JYOTIBA PHULE AND AYYANKALI – A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**\*Divya.S**

## **Abstract**

*Mahatma Phule was the pioneer Indian activist, thinker, social reformer and writer from Maharashtra and he worked hard for the annihilation of caste and its evils. Age long suppressed humanity of the eighteenth century Maharashtra witnessed its liberator in the form of Jyotiba Phule. Likewise in Kerala Ayyankali was the first and foremost social reformer, hailing from the lowest rung of the society. He attempted to emulate the depressed classes from the fetters of historical segregation, intricate with hierarchical structure of society and rigid caste system. The struggles of Mahatma Phule and Mahatma Ayyankali greatly influenced the dalits in India and Kerala respectively. Today, the civic rights struggles of these reformers have undergone serious discussion in the course of history and contact with the existing system of historical knowledge and these studies are bound to be of great interest to the academic society.*

Keywords: Hegemony, public sphere, thinking revolutionaries, sathya shodak samaj, Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam

## **Introduction**

The revolt of man against dominance has been a continuing factor in history. It is marked by his march from fear to fearlessness, but in between the two, multiple forms of protests emerged. History is an important epistemological tool to evaluate and confirm the

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civilizations of the past that depict not merely the material achievements of that civilization but also its structural arrangements that defined its trajectories and offered them the required momentum for surviving. All historical writings try to analyze the past through the present historical knowledge and new research attempts to rationally re imagine the existing empirical knowledge and its epistemology.

The social awakening which ushered in the advent of modern society was achieved by the untiring efforts of various social reformers who spearheaded the movement against obnoxious social customs, obscurantism and various socio religious disabilities. Socio reform movements in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century inspired the social, political, economic cultural and religious spheres, which became an insight to all communities and introduced new ideologies and attitudes to the society. The dalits, large sections of the country underwent radical changes through the movements. The pioneers of these reformers were Mahatma Phule in Maharashtra, EV Ramaswami Naicker in Tamil Nadu and Vagbhadananda, Sree Narayana guru, Ayyankali, Vaikom Abdulkhadar Moulavi, Poikayil Sree Kumara gurudevan, and Kurumpan Daivathan in Kerala who gathered who momentum among youths about the pathetic conditions of their communities. Among them Phule and Ayyankali were the pioneering reformers who used life as a great weapon against the evils. This study therefore, is critically analyzing their social struggles to accomplish their goal.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the article is to focus the social activism of Phule and Ayyankali, the significance of the age and how much they influenced the dalits in their respective region.

### **Methodology**

The article, prepared on the basis of both archival and secondary sources is written as per the method of scientific historical research. The methodology followed is descriptive and argumentative in nature. The methodology adopted for this study is historical, analytical and theoretical and critically observed each of the themes. Major events narrated in this study are corroborated with available documents and formulated desirable findings based on the existing system of knowledge.

The nineteenth century witnessed far reaching changes in the different parts of India and it brought about a new phase in the socio economic, political, religious and educational life of the people of the region. It was because of the emergence of several leaders as reformers and their activism in the different parts of the country<sup>1</sup>. Among them the pioneers were Mahatma Phule and Ayyankali in Maharashtra and Kerala respectively.

Mahatma Phule was an Indian activist, thinker, social reformer and writer from Maharashtra and worked hard for the annihilation of caste and its evils<sup>2</sup>. Phule was born in



1827, as the son of an obscure lower caste family who pioneered the attack on the religious authority of the Brahmins. The experience in his childhood laid deep impact on Phule. The Brahmins left no stone unturned to prevent the lower class from enjoying the benefits of literacy. One such incident occurred when a Brahmon clerk prevented Phule's father Govinda Rao, from admitting young Phule in a school.<sup>3</sup> An incident of personal insult in which he was invited to the marriage ceremony of a Brahmon friend and then insulted by one of the orthodox that compelled him to leave<sup>4</sup> was highly humiliating. All these contributed to formulate the resistance movement in future.

What Mahatma Phule of Maharashtra had experienced during his younger days at the hands of the upper castes, was experienced on Mahatma Ayyankali also at the hands of the Savarnas in Kerala.

Ayyankali was born in 1863 at Venganoor in Trivandrum district and his parents were Ayyan and Mala belonging to depressed classes. During the time the depressed classes had to face the challenges posed by the caste Hindus. Such monstrous inequalities and unjust laws that hampered just practices had to be attacked by and removed from the path of life.

It is said that one day while he was engrossed in a football game during the Onam festival the ball went very high and fell over the house of an upper caste neighbor. The neighbor, who became angry with the doings of this untouchable boy lost his temper and began to scold the boy using bitter and abusive words<sup>5</sup>. This incident was more than enough for Ayyankali to feel ashamed and humiliated.

Moreover the conditions of the dalits during the time of these reformers were quite pathetic. Majority of the dalits were considered inferior in race by the caste Hindus. Everywhere existed social discrimination and oppression between man and man because of caste distinctions<sup>6</sup>. They could not tolerate the social injustice, abuses, and frustrations prevalent then. In fact, in these regions, these people were denied of all their natural rights: birth right, professional rights, educational rights, equal wage rights, right to walk on the streets, wear chappals, wear decent garments, use umbrellas, right to draw from the common wells, right to temple entry, right to seek justice in the courts and police stations. In this situation they realized the fact that they are the real victims of caste differences while others enjoying the fruits of freedom at any sense. The bad experiences of these untouchables laid deep impact on them and it made them think and act. The focus is that a man is formed by his own experience.

In order to bring changes in the life of dalits Phule established a school for girls in 1848, at Pune in Maharashtra. He expressed his view that knowledge would generate

forces that would sound the death knell of the age old order and liberate the subjugated lives. From this year Phule continued his educational efforts and gained popular support.

With a vision of fundamental change in society Phule launched a movement for the liberation of the lower class from the clutches of Brahmins. In 1873 he founded the Sathyashodak Samaj that challenged caste and Brahmanism. From 1873 he worked for the so called untouchables. His writings always influenced the people of his society. By this time he gained unquestioned recognition as a force within Western Maharashtra<sup>7</sup>.

In Kerala, Ayyankali realized the fact that the only way to liberate the untouchables was fostering of education among them. Though an illiterate, Ayyankali was fully aware of the fact that education was also necessary for them to demand their rights to live as other people lived. In order to get the same he started Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangam in 1907. Actually through the organization they enjoyed the freedom of association and this organization made the people strong.

It is the fact that both of them were fully aware of the importance of education. With a vision of fundamental change in society Phule and Ayyankali launched movements for the liberation of lower classes, this gave importance on equality of all human beings, ceaselessness, rationality and justice.

Jyotiba Phule's thinking was revolutionary from a cultural point of view. In almost all his writings he never used the term 'Hindu'. He took a stand from without and judges the whole culture in terms of two ruthlessly applied values is rationality and equality. His actions, language and writings show a clear placement among the identification with the masses and their traditions. He does not take a stand outside the society, but rather one outside the cultural system which had for so long dominated the society. Phule saw the caste system as the essence of Hinduism and sought to unmask the culture of oppression that it sustained, the brutal slavery that it sanctified<sup>9</sup>.

Phule's greatest contribution was in his rigorous cultural revolutionary stand, his drive for equality and rationality, and in the creation of an organization, the Sathya shodak Samaj, which would carry on agitation for social and religious reform at a mass level. However his followers failed to coordinate this Cultural Revolution with a consistent economic and political programme<sup>10</sup>.

Phule says Brahmon rule was a regime that used state power and religious hegemony to maintain exploitation. The exploited class was the peasantry and the key exploiters the bureaucracy, which the Brahmins dominated even under the colonial rule. He made the theory a kind of incipient historical materialism in which economic exploitation and cultural dominance are interwoven<sup>11</sup>. Phule criticized Hinduism at every point. He challenged its legitimacy and questioned its existence. According to him Hinduism is not a legitimate

religion but superstition, a bag of tricks, a weapon of domination. The feminist scholar Uma Chakravathi described Phule as a forerunner elaborating the theory of 'Brahminical Patriarchy'. Phule's argument was that knowledge, education, and science were weapons of advance of the exploited masses. Knowledge was a weapon for equality and human freedom as well as economic advance.

The humanitarian concepts of Buddha, Kabir and Tukaram inspired Phule in the battle against discriminatory Brahmanism. Phule was critical of the Brahmanic attitude towards Buddhism and the cruel persecution of its followers by tactfully absorbing the salient features of the latter and eventually deposing the same as inferior<sup>12</sup>.

Coming of Ayyankali in to the social arena is so significant in the history of Kerala<sup>13</sup>. The steps taken by Ayyankali for social freedom such as walk along public roads, to break the upper caste monopoly in education, to defy the customary ban against the untouchables entering into the public markets etc are very important in the present day context. All his activities were revolutionary in character and it was because he strongly believed that only this could generate their needs as well. He made his first entry in to the social arena in 1898 by using villuvandi which was forbidden for the untouchables. He dressed like a caste Hindu. He used the same as the means of protest and challenged the existing orders. He ultimately stood against the jathi maryada and the hegemony of the period. Actually Ayyankali, the brave and courageous leader created a public sphere for the Dalits in this period.

Ayyankali who hailed from the dalit community tried to educate and enlighten his people and thereby empower them to bargain for their legitimate rights<sup>14</sup>. In spite of social, educational and economic disabilities, the untouchables have made organized efforts under the leadership of Ayyankali to throw away the yoke that custom and caste restrictions had placed on them<sup>15</sup>.

Ayyankali realized that all the disabilities of his people were due to the lack of education among them and also due to discrimination on the basis of caste. Ayyankali was aware that education was also necessary for them to demand their rights to live as other people lived. Ayyankali felt that organization was inevitable for pushing the programs he had in mind for the uplift of the so called untouchables. It was the first time in the history of Kerala a labour strike was conducted by Ayyankali to get the educational rights.

## **Conclusion**

Phule and Ayyankali sprung up as the unquestionable leaders and exercised great influence upon the society. They dedicated their mental resource for the uplift of their society. In the galaxy of social reformers and protectors of Dalits they succeeded in carving

out an enviable position. They earned their place by their substantial contribution to the uplift of the oppressed brethren. If we look in to the activities of these reformers we can see that there were several similarities between the two. One cannot use today's yardstick to assess their worth. When one understands the socio politico environment of the era in which these people struggled, can their worth be truly evaluated.

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# COLONIAL CAPITAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF COFFEE PLANTATIONS IN TRAVANCORE

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## **Abstract**

*Coffee was the first among the plantation crops imported into India and into Travancore. The climate and the soil of Travancore were found to be perfect for coffee plantation. It was the chief crop of the planting districts of Travancore. The present study is an attempt to trace the development of coffee plantations in Travancore. The specific focus on Travancore is useful because it allows an analysis of the relationship between this formally independent state and colonial rulers. Historically the beginnings of coffee plantations in Travancore were a product of colonialism.*

Key Words: Colonialism, Plantation

## **Introduction**

The economic organization of Travancore state underwent extensive changes under the impact of the West. The pattern of revenue settlement, private property system, accessibility of cultivable land in abundance at low price etc attracted the individual entrepreneur to plantations. The British officials stimulated the creation of new politico-economic climate to attract European planters and stimulate the production of western oriented crops.

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## **Objectives**

1. To enquire into the context of the introduction of coffee as a plantation crop into Travancore;
2. To make a comprehensive study of the evolution of coffee plantation in Travancore; and
3. To search into the role of colonial government in instigating the cultivation of coffee plantation.

## **Methodology**

The reconstruction of the history of coffee plantation in Travancore is possible only through the critical study of primary sources and comparative analysis with available data. A synthesis of the descriptive and analytical styles has been used throughout the study. Chronological order has been maintained as far as possible.

The British East India Company tried to cultivate coffee in the vicinity of Anjengo. Unfortunately for the British, they were confronted by great difficulties.<sup>1</sup> The first individual effort to cultivate coffee in Travancore was made by W Huxham, who started planting in the hills of east Quilon in 1824. His plantation was named as Campalle. But he faced several difficulties. Even though first coffee plantation commenced in 1824, large coffee plantations started developing only after 1860's.

## **Role of Colonel Newall in Spreading Coffee Cultivation (1821-1827)**

The British Resident Newall played a crucial role in the development of coffee plantation in Travancore. Newall encouraged Huxham, the English planter to start an agro enterprise specializing, amongst other crops in coffee, advised him about selection of suitable land and insisted the Dewan to provide the necessary legal assistance for Huxham's undertakings. In a letter written in 1832 to Dewan, the interest of British Resident to pursue the policy to stimulate the development of plantation sector can be seen very clearly: "I cannot too strongly urge that the Sircar (ie., the Travancore state) should at once declare the policy which it proposes to adopt with regard to these jungles and make the gentleman who applied aware whether they can cultivate these jungles. Every day is of importance, and I received repeated requests from gentleman to know when they may accept answers to their applications." The correspondence between Huxham, Newall and Dewan illustrates the pioneer difficulties regarding the legal acquisition of land.<sup>2</sup>

## **Role of Colonel J.S Fraser**

Resident Fraser also favoured the development of plantation sector. At first the Travancore government was not interested in coffee cultivation by foreigners. So they

rejected the application of Huxham. In early May 1836 Huxham informed the then British Resident Colonel J.S Fraser, that “the Dewan has repeatedly promised to execute the grant for land. I commenced cultivating in 1832 but he has hither to do so”. Huxham disclaimed any desire to cause difficulties by submitting yet more applications and ask Fraser to put in a good word at suitable opportunity. “Either it has escaped his attention hither to or I have some false friend at the Huzur”, Huxham concluded his letter. After a few days Fraser reported to Huxham “I have spoken to the Dewan on the subject of the grant and he tells me that necessary papers are in preparation”.<sup>3</sup> Only two months later, the Dewan Subba Rao explained his objections to the British Resident. According to him Huxham’s cultivated ground seems to have been without any regular sanction.<sup>4</sup> However the Dewan who was aware of his subordinate position, was not able to implement his point of view by taking counter measures. Further historical evidence suggests that the Dewan, most probably strongly pressured by the resident to take immediate measures, finally complied with the British wishes making all necessary arrangements to meet Huxham’s request.<sup>5</sup> This occurred only in six months after Huxham’s initial approach to Resident Fraser and presumably following years of disagreement with Subba Rao.<sup>6</sup>

This case is highly illustrative in the political context of European plantation in the first half of the nineteenth century in Travancore. Most of the British Residents favoured the development of European plantation sector. Dewan Subba Rao, opposed the earlier agreement made between Huxham, Newall and Venkata Rao. Because of his subordinate position, he was not able to take any counter measures. As head of bureaucracy he could do no more than delay the process.

### **Role played by General Cullen (1840-60) in Spreading Coffee Plantations**

Coffee was afresh introduced into Travancore and extended to the hills about the year 1854 by General Cullen, the then British Resident.<sup>7</sup> He after procuring seeds from the Nilagiri hill planted a small experimental garden in 1854 at Velimalai near Padmanabhapuram at the height of about 1,800 feet. Here he cultivated cocoa, clover, coffee and other valuable plants.<sup>8</sup> This garden continue for a long time and was extended. Another small garden of somewhat two acres was planted at Ashambo, at a height of about 3,000 feet, which became the nuclear of a large estate opened by the prince and Sir Madhava Rao who jointly purchased General Cullen’s garden after his death.<sup>9</sup>

Cullen reintroduced coffee and tea to his many experimental gardens and they became the most important plantation crops during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> This British Resident is also credited with the discovery that the Ashambo and Cardamom Hills region were extremely suitable for the cultivation of coffee.<sup>11</sup> His experimental garden at Ashambo was the forerunner in the development of large coffee estates in that area.



Cullen was not the only the British Residents to show a great personal interest in planting. Most of his colleagues were like minded.

The coffee cultivated areas in Travancore extended to South, North and Central Travancore. By 1862, the planters secured about 15,118 acres of land and by 1879 there were 121 regular coffee estates. The period from 1850 to 1860 was known as coffee period. The production and export of coffee reached its height during the 1870s. But after 1875 this situation changed. In 1875, a leaf disease appeared and its ravages became terribly serious. The planters had to desert their coffee estates one by one. The result was that the acreage under coffee was reduced considerably. The first serious check to the coffee industry was given by the stem borer<sup>12</sup>, *Xylotrechus Quadruples*, which threatened the coffee plants in 1860's

### **The Leaf Disease of Coffee Plant – (*Hemalia Vextraitix*)**

The leaf disease must have made its entry into India by the way of the seedlings brought over from Ceylon to various entire estates, especially between Agastiar and Ashambo and numerous portions of other estates also were abandoned as unprofitable. The spores of the fungus were blown from tree to tree and from field to field by the wind and thus it very soon attacked every tree in the estate and in fact every estate in the country.<sup>13</sup>

In 1888 Travancore government issued a proclamation regarding the levying of tax on abandoned coffee lands<sup>14</sup>. In 1897 the Coffee Awareness Act was passed.<sup>15</sup> Because of the bad situation in the coffee plantation sector, caused by the coffee leaf disease and the unfavorable coffee prices on the world market in the period 1879-1888, the government abandoned land tax in the Peermade and Ashambo hills.<sup>16</sup> During the late 1870's the planters began to consider alternative crops. It appeared clearly in October 1871 on several estates, but only became common after 1872.<sup>17</sup> Travancore's coffee export increased from 910 cwts in 1843 to an impressive 49,503 cwt in 1876-1877. It declined sharply to 3,978 cwts at the end of the century.<sup>18</sup> Either tea or rubber replaced coffee in many districts and fields were simply abandoned as they were not profitable to operate.<sup>19</sup>

### **Plunge in the Price of Coffee**

Coupled with the leaf disease, there seems to have been depression in price of coffee during the ten years from 1879 to 1888.<sup>20</sup> This was another reason that discouraged coffee planting and led to the abandonment of coffee cultivation in many parts of Travancore. The severe problem faced by the planters of coffee due to consistent failure of coffee is reflected in their correspondence with the government of Travancore in late nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> It is pointed out that the main factor behind the depression in coffee prices was



the emergence of comparatively cheaper Brazilian coffee in the World market. Brazil occupied the prominent position in the market of coffee. As the depression in the cultivation of coffee continued the government suspended for the time being the collection of the land tax.

The export of coffee diminished during this period. The money value of export were Rs.1,12,909 in 1070 M.E. (1894) and Rs.1,26,982 in 1079 M.E. (1903-04); from 1890 it steadily declined reaching the lowest figure in 1073 ML (1897-98) viz. Rs.41,467. It again rose gradually till it recovered the lost ground in 1900-01. It rose very high in 1901-02 to Rs.1,50,688 and again declined to Rs.1,19,07 in 1902-03. It showed further decrease in 1903-4. These variations illustrate the vicissitudes of fortune of the coffee planting industry.<sup>22</sup>

According to a planter writing in the Madras Times, coffee is scarcely remunerative and hence is gradually giving place to tea.<sup>23</sup> The export of tea was showing a steady increase during this period. Coffee export diminished after eighties. It shows that the export which was 11,099 cwts during 1885-86 declined to 2314 cwts by 1896-97. The lowest quantity of coffee exported was in 1891. The Resident and Dewan tried to find out the reason for the failure of coffee. This is evident from the correspondence between the Dewan and planters. He insisted to the officers in various districts to calculate the quantity of the export of coffee through the ports of Travancore and Cochin. The various division officers admitted that the export of coffee diminished in 1891 though they differed in their opinion about the causes. But they agreed that the main cause of the decline was leaf disease.

Cardamom office at Arady reported to the Dewan that almost all the coffee estates in Peermade have been gradually planted with tea. This was the main reason for the failure of coffee export. According to this report the year 1890 was a good coffee season compared with 1891 and the reduction in the area under cultivation was the main cause of the failure of the export of coffee. Report from the Dewan Peshkar office, Kottayam stated that coffee is exported from none of the ports in this division. There had been a considerable decrease during the year 1888 and 1891 mainly due to production diminish on account of a kind of leaf disease which was prevalent in almost all the coffee estate in the country.<sup>24</sup>

## **Period of Scientific Rehabilitation**

From the year 1900 onwards the fall in production and consumption of coffee was a matter of great concern to the planters. The survival of the industry depended on a systematic and scientific rehabilitation. A variety of measures were undertaken with this motive. The association of the united planters of South India, inaugurated in 1893 adopted serious steps for the promotion of coffee and an attempt was made with hybrid, a cross between

coffee Liberica and coffee Arabica. This produced a plant which was largely disease resistant and yielded considerably more than the Liberica and coffee Arabica varieties. In 1890 a shade consisting of rows of out trees was introduced to contain borer attack. Robusta coffee also was tried but it did not succeed in established coffee areas, where the cultivation was in high altitudes.<sup>25</sup>

### **Impact of the Second World War**

The Second World War had far reaching effects in the coffee industry of South India. Due to the war the Western European markets were suddenly closed to the coffee export. The domestic market of Travancore was not able to absorb all the coffee produced.<sup>26</sup> This seriously affected the development of coffee plantation in Travancore; because Travancore exported coffee mainly to European countries. During the war time the export of coffee diminished to a great extent. This led to the steady decline in the area under coffee. Thus necessity arose to devise means to control coffee prices and to make them at least remunerative. The western commodity procurement system was extended to coffee also.

### **Establishment of Coffee Market Expansion Board**

A conference convened by the government of India in September 1940, unanimously recommended the constitution of the Indian Coffee Market Expansion Board on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1940. This is the predecessor of the present Coffee Board. The specific objective of the board was the marketing of coffee at home and abroad. This marks the beginning of a period of stability and recovery for the industry.<sup>27</sup> The board consisted of five persons representing the agricultural department of the provincial government of Madras and Coorg and the governments of Mysore, Travancore and Cochin nominated in the case of state representatives or by central government.<sup>28</sup>

The first Travancore Coffee Market Expansion Act was passed in 1940<sup>29</sup>. This helped to popularize coffee. India government passed the coffee control scheme. It also helped the growth of plantations in Travancore. Coffee Market Expansion Bill of 1942 was introduced in the Legislative Assembly on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1942. The Travancore Coffee Market Expansion Act was amended in 1943. These acts defined coffee as the commodity derived from the fruit of rubicanus plant and included new coffee, cured coffee and uncured coffee. Through these efforts the coffee cultivation prospered.

In Travancore the regular activities of the Board commenced from December 1942. Offices of the coffee board were opened in Kottayam, Paala, Muvattupuzha, Nagercoil and Punalur.<sup>30</sup> The coffee board succeeded in creating an impression among the coffee planters that the Indian coffee market expansion board would buy their coffee at an attractive price. It introduced the foundation of coffee control scheme. But the anticipated progress

could not be achieved. The area under its cultivation was confined to hardly 16.6 square miles.

## Conclusion

There was a discontinuity in the history of coffee plantation in Travancore. From 1860 to 1880's coffee was in prosperous condition. After 1890's it declined to a great extent. Again after 1910 coffee attained a better position. But the first and Second World War and the emergence of Brazilian coffee destroyed the popularity of Travancore coffee again. From 1940 onwards coffee cultivation prospered due to the effort of the Coffee Board. But it never attained its previous prosperity. Still the commercial interest of coffee plant was not negligible at all.

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# **SOCIAL FORESTRY PROGRAM AND THE PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

**\*Sajeer. S**

## **Abstract**

*Social forestry is a practice of forestry on the lands outside the traditional forest areas for the benefit of rural and urban communities. It aims at reducing pressure on traditional forest area for their needs of fuel, fodder, timber etc. As a community oriented program the success of the social forestry is related to the people's involvement. Their active and cognitive participation is extremely necessary. Some of the major constraints in people's participation in social forestry program are discussed in this article. It is very necessary to rectify these constraints in social forestry program for its complete success. Like any other program, the social forestry program has also invited criticisms.*

Key Words: Social forestry, Farm forestry, Cognitive participation, Material participation, Interactive participation, Siviculture

## **Introduction**

Social forestry means the activity of planting trees outside the traditional forest areas. Our forest areas were depleting day by day due to human interferences. The social forestry program must have the participation of the people at large and the rural poor in particular, in order to make this program a real people's program. A social forestry program cannot succeed without people's participation. The participation of the local population in social

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forestry at every stage is necessary viz., planning, executing, selecting areas, choosing tree species, management, harvesting, distribution of produce etc. In fact, the social forestry Program aims to be a program of the people, for the people and by the people. But there are some factors which prevent the people from actively involving in the execution of the social forestry programmes.

## **Objectives**

The present paper aims at exploring the causes and constraints in obtaining people's participation in social forestry programme. This is because the effective participation of people is the inevitable for the success of social forestry programme. Now we are on the threat of global warming and climate change. Planting and protecting trees are one of the remedies to these problems. "After the implementation of the social and farm forestry schemes on the private and individual lands, the employment opportunities have increased and each member of the family right from adult to minor, found opportunity to work and earn their livelihood."<sup>1</sup>

## **Methodology**

Both descriptive and analytical methods are followed in preparation of this paper.

## **The Planning Level Participation**

It involves the people's participation in the processes leading to decision making. Such participation of the people is usually obtained by the following methods: i) by conducting regular meetings with the local people to involve them in the process of planning. ii) Local leaders are involved in the process of planning in several ways. In several states, there are village level, block level, district level, and state level committees in which local leaders are members. iii) Organizing contest for deciding plantation plan layout of nursery etc. iv) involving local education institutions and voluntary organization, and using their surveys and reports for decision making. "Before launching the programme the peoples must be taken into confidence and made active participants in it."<sup>2</sup> It is often believed by the policy-makers and administrators alike that the success of a people oriented programme depends on the adoption of sophisticated techniques and intricate methods in its implementation."<sup>3</sup>

## **Cognitive Participation**

In cognitive participation one involves oneself with the concept idea or task without participating in it physically. Efforts have been made to utilize the radio and television for spreading the message of social forestry among the people. Similarly other agencies e.g., advertising agencies, calendar manufacturers, publishers, newspapers, magazines and social

medias, etc. have been working for popularizing social forestry programmes. “For the rapid and balanced growth of social forestry, the functioning of effective communication media plays a conspicuously important role.”<sup>4</sup> Some agencies such as the railways, the pulp and paper mills, match box units and other industries were also involved in the publicity campaign.

### **Interactive Participation**

It involves active physical participation in educating, motivating, organizing, guiding and preparing people for social forestry programmes. It also involves active publicity carried out with the help of various agencies such as films and newsreels, exhibition and publicity campaign, central and state publicity wings, etc. for obtaining maximum participation by the people. “Those sponsoring the schemes have to be thoroughly mindful of this aspect and have to stimulate the thought of the people to come forward with positive and concrete contribution.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Material Participation**

It relates to the direct participation of common people and organizations by way of sharing material inputs. People’s active participation plays an important role in shaping the development of social forestry. “Because it is an inter dependence of forest and the needs of the people in vicinity of rural settlement.”<sup>6</sup> Some examples of material participation include: providing fencing material, seedlings, fertilizers, etc., either free or on subsidized rates, providing technical and material help in establishment of nurseries and farm forestry programmes. Some of the social forestry schemes such as decentralized nurseries, tree patta etc are typical examples of obtaining people’s participation. The social forestry programmes are executed through various sections of society in which the role of agriculturist is conspicuously dominating.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Constraints in Obtaining Peoples’ Participation**

People’s participation is the central thrust of social forestry programme. In some schemes, the expected level of people’s participation was not obtained. In some schemes of the states the social forestry program is merely the programmes of the government department. “when farm forestry and social forestry schemes were started the villagers thought that the government is grabbing or seizing their land”<sup>8</sup> In some parts of the country, substantial success has been achieved in social forestry programme primarily through resource-rich farmers taking advantage of the subsidized inputs and incentives. Some of the major constraints in people’s participation in social forestry programme are as given below:

### **i) Long Term Result Effect**

Most forestry programmes tend to take a considerably long period to give results. The people in general tend to ignore the long term effects of the programme. Most people stand for short term considerations and they are greatly concerned with fulfilling immediate needs. The production of energy resources like fuel wood is one of the important factors of social forestry. "The concept of energy plantation is based on a systematic rising and cultivation of some quick growing energy crops."<sup>9</sup> Planting fast growing multipurpose tree species are likely to generate interest among the people.

### **Social Forestry Generates Common Property Resource**

The needs of the poor sections are less voiced and social forestry programs have offered very little to the landless and similar other people. The poor were unable to buy their supplies and to produce it. "Landless persons, particularly tribals and females get special reference in getting employment in it and thus social forestry helps in the formation of egalitarian social order."<sup>10</sup> Another important problem associated with social forestry plantations is social cost, ignoring behavior of the people. Most of the social forestry plantations and wasteland development program involve a huge cost which is borne by society. However since individual money is not involved there is no realization by the individuals of the expenditure incurred.

### **Inactive and Ineffective Organization**

Lack of strong and powerful organization at different levels is one of the serious constraints in social forestry program. At the village level, the panchayath, at the block level, the block panchayath and at the district level, the district panchayath, are not adequately geared to take up social forestry works. "It is necessary that there should be effective institutional arrangement for fulfilling the need of extension, training and research."<sup>11</sup> In the words of John Spears and Edward s Ayensu, "the main challenge for almost all developing countries is that of restructuring traditional forest service agencies."<sup>12</sup>

### **Lack of Experienced Staff**

The social forestry organization in the forest department is also not adequate and lacks trained staff. The forest staff traditionally engaged in forestry activity are good capable into technical decisions but they lacks experience. Therefore in several areas, social forestry program have resulted in good plantations but with very little people's participation. Social forestry necessitated a people- centered approach. "The social forestry is essentially a people's programme seeking peoples participation at all levels. Yielding benefits to the people in direct terms depends much upon its acceptability at attitudinal level and at



implementation level in terms of availability of village land and community land.”<sup>13</sup> The forest officials, entrusted with social forestry, were expected to work collaboratively with village communities. The role of the forest department in social forestry has to be one of promoter and facilitator.

### **Lack of Suitable Policies and Public Awareness**

In many areas, people are not aware of the provisions of laws relating to the use of land, growing of timber and fuel wood trees, restrictions on cutting of trees management and marketing etc.

### **Absence of Effective Technology**

The traditional forestry practices are characterized by an overwhelming concern for meeting commercial and industrial needs. The silvicultural practices developed have centers generating single tiered single species, single produce and with culture of elite trees over a large area. In social forestry, the practices should aim at developing multi tiered, multispecies, and yielding multiple products to meet the variety of needs of the farmers, i.e., firewood timber, fodder, minor forest produce, income etc.

In social forestry program a variety of wastelands and marginal lands are to be utilized for production of goods and services. It requires development of site specific and situation specific technology which should be cheap and easy. Failure in afforestation of certain categories of wastelands in some areas is due to lack of appropriate technology. The programs of social forestry were initiated with little research support. Even now, the desired research support, particularly in the field of socioeconomics, is not available which restricts participation of the people. Social forestry is the activity which would improve the quality for rural life. “It is the activity which has the potential of bringing about an economic revolution in the rural areas.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Small Size of Holdings and Land Ownership**

A shift from the traditional farming to forest farming is one of the important constrains. In India, most of the holdings are marginal and small. The small and marginal farmers who are in the majority cannot earn enough to make their living. In the absence of job opportunities in the village a large number of them live below the poverty line. The first preference of these farmers is to produce food grain. These holdings are in several fragments located in different areas and cause a serious problem in management for optimum production. These problems are further aggravated by erratic monsoon and other calamities, e.g., drought, floods, cyclones, frost, etc. Individual size of holdings being small, planting of trees is not

common as trees tend to cause some adverse effect on agricultural crops in their near vicinity.

In order to encourage poor farmers to plant trees, seedlings were distributed free of cost under the farm forestry program in several states. It is alleged that the program was elected by the bigger and resource rich farmers and farm forestry became almost a subsidized program for the bigger farmers. "These small land holding farmers have been facing some technical and marketing problems."<sup>15</sup> The evaluation of this program in Gujarat indicates that small and marginal farmers also actively participated as the number of seedlings lifted was in the proportion of 63 by marginal farmers, 112 by small farmers and 196 by big farmers. It appears that it may be true that initially only big farmers planted trees on their holdings but looking to the benefits more and more small and marginal farmers are gradually taking up tree planting on their farm lands. "The project success would depend mainly upon the understanding and participation of the rural population at large."<sup>16</sup> The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 may also have come in the way of handing over the forest management, especially of degraded forest areas, to the panchayath or individuals.

### **Credit Schemes, Market Support Measures and Tax Rules**

In several areas, people are willing to plant trees but their inability to obtain credit may be an important factor in preventing them from doing so. Uncertainty of market conditions is one of the serious constraints in agro forestry programme. Most of the farmers feel that pure agriculture may be more profitable. Barriers between agriculture and tree culture should disappear."<sup>17</sup> The poor farmers are not able to protect themselves as there is a complete absence of any government support. Establishing new wood based industries may create competition for the raw material and the farmer may get some benefit from this. Price support for forest products may help poor farmers. Reduction in marketing cost is also necessary as there is a large gap between the producer and consumer price. In some states, income from trees is tax free. Such rules tend to help only big farmers.

### **Antagonism to Trees**

In some areas, people have a genuine antipathy to trees due to cultural factors, beliefs traditions. Some trees are believed to be inauspicious. In some parts bamboos are not planted near the house as they are believed to bring destruction. In some areas, tamarind, papal, bar etc growing close to a village are believed to house evil spirits. In several areas, tree groves are not planted near habitation as people regard them as a potential hiding place for thieves and robbers. In some areas, tree planting is discouraged because trees increase wildlife population, which cause serious damage to crops. Therefore in certain areas people avoid planting trees on their agricultural lands.

## **Other Constraints**

Some other constraints such as lack of sufficient incentives, legal complication, long gestation period of forestry plantations, poverty, absence of developed marketing infrastructure etc have also inhibited people's participation in social forestry programs. Incentives have their own role in establishing new programs. In the program of decentralized nurseries the incentive provided is inadequate.

The present legal position is perhaps one of the serious constraints in people's participation. Even private forests or private lands brought under forest plantations are reported to be under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. "One of the important legal aspects relates to the control over felling of trees and control over the forest produce in transit."<sup>18</sup>

Other provisions which restrict people's participation include: nationalization of forest produce and provisions in the transit rules. With the nationalization of forest and forest products various state governments brought some restrictions in the sale of some tree woods. Such restrictions discourage people's participation. Poverty in rural areas also restricts people's participation. Most of the poor people have small holdings and cultivation of agricultural crops has the first preference. Growing of trees is limited in such holdings. Such conditions work as serious constraints in farm forestry programs.

## **Social Forestry Programs: A Critical Analysis**

Social forestry programs were initiated with a view to improving fuel wood and fodder production, reducing pressure on forest lands, regenerating usable lands, involving the community in forest management and helping the rural poor through forestry products and improved income through assets creation. Implementation of the program over the last 30 years has helped to recreate a large portion of area of wasteland and created significant wood resources in the country. In some states such as Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat UP, Karnataka, Kerala etc the program succeeded in generating a people's movement in tree planting.

The criticisms of social forestry programme are: i) In order to encourage poor farmers to take up afforestation, seedlings were distributed free. The benefits from farm forestry tend to favour rich farmers. The programme has not been able to generate similar interest among poor farmers. Therefore farm forestry became a programme of bigger farmers. ii) Fuel wood and fodder species were not always planted. Several times market oriented species were planted which did not improve consumption within the village. iii) As the demands of the poor for fuel wood and fodder are not met, pressure on forest land continues. The process of forest degradation shows no decrease. iv) Social forestry programme

could not become a people's movement. Communities were generally not given funds. The plantations raised by the forest department on community lands were seen as government trees. Sharing of goods and benefits emanating from these plantations among different sections of the community remains unresolved in many areas. v) Diversion of land from agriculture to forestry reduced employment opportunities. vi) Social forestry programmes have failed to provide adequate social and environmental benefits. In farm forestry farmers grow trees for maximizing financial returns. Individual farmers do not bother about social and environmental considerations.

Experience shows that there were several weaknesses in the community forestry programme. One serious constraint was lack of effective organization at the village level which could look after the interest of all sections of society. The resource management in various areas widely differ in people in socio economic conditions, in cultural traditions etc. Rama Chandra Guha, the Social historian, and Environmentalist Madhav Gadgil say that social forestry is another stage in the industrial orientation of the forest policy which is aimed at increasing the industrial production of pulp and rayon, and which largely benefits the commercial farmers.

## Conclusion

Many forest conservation programmes have been implemented by the government authorities, even though degradation of the natural forest continues. It has been observed that in some areas farmers planted trees on their farm lands, maintained them and sold them in the market but still collected fodder, firewood and timber from the nearby natural forest to meet their needs. However, this tendency will also be changing gradually. Effective planning, implementation and active participation of common people in every stage of social forestry is necessary for the complete success of the programme in future. It is necessary to solve the problems causing common people keep away from tree planting and conservation programmes. The success of a social forestry scheme depends upon the active and cognitive participation of common people.

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# ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED PRINT MEDIA IN DEEPENING DEMOCRACY IN MODERN TRAVANCORE

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## Abstract:

*Modern Kerala witnessed many political agitations and social movements. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these movements were organised and led by the principal communities and their leaders. The caste and communal consciousness of Travancore found expression through numerous publications of various communities and in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was an influx of community-oriented press and literature. The community organisations effectively utilised their newspapers and periodicals to educate their members, to express their grievances and publicize their programs.*

**Key words:** Vivekodayam, Mitavadi, Sahodaran, Navajeevan, Sujananandini, Desabhimani, Malayali, Nair, Kerala Samudaya Parishkari, Nair Samudaya Parishkari, Navya Keralam, Subhashini, Samadarshi, Kerala Chinthamani, Swarat, Swabhimani, The Service and M.N.Nair Magazine

## Introduction

In Kerala almost all the community organizations had their own community oriented publications to boost the caste consciousness of their members and elevate their socio-

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economic position. The articles that appeared in these publications cautioned their members to emulate the examples of the people of other countries so as to elevate their social status among the various factors that contributed for the progressive transformation of Kerala society into a modern democratic society. Politicization of caste played a very crucial role in Kerala, particularly in Travancore.

## Objectives

The present paper aims at exploring the role of community oriented press in developing community consciousness in modern Kerala and facilitating the progressive transformation of Kerala into a democratic society.

## Methodology

The method of research and the material collection have been done on the basis of guidelines in 'Writing History; A Guide for Students' by William Koehler Storey and 'Guide to Successful Thesis And Dissertations' by James .E. Mauch and Jack. W. Birth.

## Publications of Ezhava Community

For supporting the Ezhava community there were publications like *Vivekodayam*, *Mitavadi*, *Sahodaran*, *Navajeevan*, *Sujananandini*, *Desabhimani* and *Kerala Kaumudi*. *Sujananandini* was the earliest Ezhava publication from Mayyanadu, Kollam owned by Paravur Kesavan Asan. Unfortunately the Sujananandini Press was set on fire during the Nair-Ezhava riots of 1905. *Vivekodayam*, the official organ of S.N.D.P. Yogam was started in 1904 under the editorship of Kumaran Asan. *Mitavadi*, started in 1907 was owned by T. Sivasankaran and edited by Murkoth Kumaran. In 1913 C. Krishnan purchased it and published from his Empire Press, Calicut. *Sahodaran* was published by A. Ayyappan from 1917. *Navajeevan* was published from Popular Press, Kottayam. *Desabhimani* was started by Kayyalakkal Narayanan in 1915. T.K. Madhavan took over it in 1916 and continued its publication. It was started on 15 April 1915 and published from Sree Krishna Vilasam Press, Kollam. In the beginning it was published as Saturday weekly. *Kerala Kaumudi* was started by C.V. Kunjuraman in 1911.<sup>1</sup>

## Publications of Nair Community

For protecting the interests of the Nair community there were publications like *Malayali*, *Nair*, *Kerala Samudaya Parishkari*, *Nair Samudaya Parishkari*, *Navya Keralam*, *Subhashini*, *Samadarshi*, *Kerala Chinthamani*, *Swarat*, *Swabhimani*, *The Service* and *M.N.Nair Magazine*.<sup>2</sup> *Kerala Samudaya Parishkari* was started in 1904. *Nair*



*Samudaya Parishkari* began in May 1916 from Tellicherry was published by Iruvanattu K.C.Narayanan Nambiar and Chandroth K.T. Kumaran Nambiar. *Navya Keralam*, started in 1918 from Suvarna Ratna Press, Kayamkulam was edited by M.P.Nair of Mavelikkara. As early as 1903 *Nair Magazine* was started by Kainikkara Govinda Pillai. He also started another publication *Subhashini*, a daily published from Changanasserri. Later on, it was shifted to Thiruvananthapuram and edited by P.K.Govinda Pillai. *Samadarshi* was edited by Kunnathu Janardana Menon. *Kerala Chinthamani* was started in 1912 by Paliathu Krishnan from Thrissur. *Malayali* was started as early as 1886 by Malayali Sabha and in the beginning it was edited by Pettayil Raman Pillai Asan. Later on, C.V.Raman Pillai became its editor. *Swarat* was started from Kollam in 1921 and A.K.Pillai was its editor. In the beginning it was started as a fortnightly, but in 1926 it became a daily. *M.N.Nair Magazine* was started in 1935 in honour of the Nair leader M.N.Nair. *The Service*, the official mouthpiece of the N.S.S started publication from Kerala Santhanam Press Alappuzha in 1920. In the beginning K.Kannan Menon was its editor. Later on it was published from Kamalalayam Press Thiruvananthapuram.

### The Christian Publications

The Christians were the earliest to begin with their publications in Kerala. Their publications included *Sathyanadam*, *Paschimodayam*, *Sathyanadakahalam*, *Rajyasamacharam*, *Malankara Vijayithan*, *Malankara Sabha Patrika*, *Malankara Sabha Mitram*, *Pouradhwani*, *Christian Mahilamany*, *Syrian Church Message*, *Kottayam Patrika*, *Nazrani Deepika*, *Malayala Manorama*, *Dasan*, *Kerala Dasan*, *Sathyadeepam*, *Kerala Katholican*, *Kerala Mitram*, *Yuvabharathi* and *Messenger*. *Rajyasamacharam* was published in 1847 from Tellicherry by Basal Mission and edited by Herman Gundart. *Paschimodayam* was also started by Basel Mission in 1847 and its editor was F.Muller. In November 1848 C.M.S. started *Jnana nikshepam*, edited by Benjamin Beyly. *Sathyanadakahalam* was published from Karapuzha. *Christian Mitram* edited by A.M.Satyanesan was published from V.V.Press, Thiruvananthapuram. M.M.Muthuswamy Reddi edited another publication, *Christian* and published from the same press. *Malankara Vijayithan*, published from N.P.House Thiruvalla was edited by K.V. Simon. *Malankara Sabha Patrika* was owned by Marthoma Syrians and published under the editorship of M. Mamman from T.A.M.Press, Thiruvalla. T.M.Abraham was the Proprietor and Editor of *Malankara Sabha Mitram* published from C.M.M.Press, Kozhenchery. *Kerala Katholican*, edited by T.V.Augustine Fernandez started publication in 1921 from Kollam. M.M.Varkey was the editor of *Dasan*, *Kerala Dasan* and *Yuvabharathi*.<sup>3</sup> *Catholic Messenger* was the publication of the Catholic Mahajana Sabha. *Pouradhwani* was a publication of the Catholic community published from Kottayam.



## **Publications of other communities**

The publications of the various denominations of Brahmin community included *Saraswatha Youth* (1891) *Veda Vyasan* (1913) *Janmi* (1904) *Unni Nambudiri* (1919) *Sanathan Dharma*, *Bhagyodayam*, *Nirupakan*, *Yogakshemam*, *Mangalodayam* (Thrissur) and *Sree Sankaracharyan*. *Sanathana Dharma* was published from Sanathana Dharma Press, Alappuzha as a monthly edited by Manjeri Rama Ayyar. *Bhagyodayam* was a monthly published from Thiruvananthapuram.<sup>4</sup> *Muslim*, *Swadeshabhimani* and *Deepika* were published by Abdul Khader Moulavi.<sup>5</sup> The lower caste Hindu organisations had their own publications. *Sri Rama Vilasam* published by Kanjiravelil K.N. Krishnan from 1913 was the official mouthpiece of Ganaka Maha Sabha. Sadhu Jana Paripalana Yogam had *Sadhu Jana Paripalini* were started in 1913. Araya community started *Arayan* in 1917 and *Sathyavathy* in 1925.

## **Community Press and the Civic Rights Movement**

The dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the steady growth of political consciousness in Travancore. Colonial modernity and western ideas released a sense of civic consciousness among various sections of the society. This awareness led to new political alliances between communities. In Travancore, the partners of this alliance were the Christian, Ezhava and Muslim communities and the Civic Rights they demanded was in one sense their community rights. Since the appointment in the land revenue department was prohibited to the non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus due to its attachment with the Devaswom department, the agitators demanded the early separation of Devaswom from Land Revenue department. During the Civic Rights movement in Travancore the community leaders of the Ezhavas prepared to assert civic rights and initiated a campaign for educating their people, the value of civic rights through their publications. Quoting the case of the class struggle in Rome between the Patricians and Plebeians, *Sahodaran* argued, “What shows the story of the Patricians of Rome? They monopolised the liberty and civic rights for a long time claiming tradition and aristocracy. Plebeians, who constituted the majority of the population were humiliated and forced to do menial labour for the Patricians. But once the Plebeians realised the importance of civic rights they began to think about the intensity of slavery enjoyed by them. They started a passive resistance, which lasted for about two hundred years. This struggle ultimately resulted in the victory of the Plebeians. The Patricians adopted the same methods of the Travancore Savarnas. They used the same arrows like ‘the Devaswom claim’ of the Travancore higher castes”.<sup>6</sup> In another issue *Sahodaran* exhorted that “the period of feudalistic dictatorship has given place to civic rights. Civic equality is the only ideal of modern governmental policy. The First World War taught a lesson in favour of democracy and people’s power and the governments should work for the welfare of the

whole subjects instead of a selected few. The movement of civic rights elevated the prestige of Travancore outside. This is the movement of 26 lakhs of loyal citizens.”<sup>7</sup> *Nazrani Deepika*, in an editorial published in 1918, severely criticised the Savarna Hindu domination in Travancore civil service. It pointed out that as per the census of 1911, in the revenue service, out of the 34 lakhs of citizens in the state only the communities constituting of 8 lakhs got employed and they were the men belonging to Brahmin, Nair, Vellala and Chetty communities. The fate of other communities was only to remit revenues to the state and not to serve in the Revenue Department.<sup>8</sup>

In a leading article in 1918, *Mitavadi* criticised the Devaswom administration and the Savarna dominance in the society and polity. It pointed out that in Travancore there were 380 major Devaswoms and 1165 minor Devaswoms. But these Devaswoms were not beneficial to majority of the Hindus. The article pointed out that in 1917 the government spent rupees 3,18,142 for oottupuras and suggested that such amounts be earmarked for educational advancement.<sup>9</sup> In an editorial in 1918 *Mitavadi* argued that for getting revenue the government needed the avarna communities but in the case of appointments in Revenue Department they were neglected. Even the highest tax payers from the Ezhava community like Alummottil Channar were prohibited from serving in the Revenue Department.<sup>10</sup> The newspaper *Malayala Manorama* in an editorial in 1919 pointed out that the system of recruitment to public service followed in Travancore was wholly unsuitable to a so-called Dharma State. Debarring a large section of people from Revenue Department by alleging its connection with Devaswom Department is a grave injustice towards them.<sup>11</sup> *Deepika*, in an editorial requested the members of the three communities to unite and strengthen their struggle for civic rights and freedom and alleged that religion should not be an obstacle for civil freedom.<sup>12</sup> T.K.Madhavan wrote in *Deshabhimani* that people must not permit the religious, caste and class differences that affect the self respect and civic rights of the citizens.<sup>13</sup> *Sahodaran*, a publication of A. Ayyappan wrote, “it is impossible for anyone to obstruct the course of the man that pleads for equality of civic rights. Justice and reason support him. Neither the cannon, the sword, imprisonment nor the gallows can deter him in the least...( sick) In other countries that plea has overcome difficulties by the shedding of blood.”<sup>14</sup>

Because of the seriousness of the situation consequent to the strength of which was growing day by day, the Government of Travancore decided to sort out a solution at an early date. The government entrusted Krishna Aiyankar, the Forest Settlement Peishkar to study and report on the issue of the separation of Devaswom Department. He recommended the separation of all government and private Devaswoms from the Land Revenue Department, including charitable institutions. Dissatisfied with this report the government appointed a committee of both Hindus and non-Hindus to study and report the problem.<sup>15</sup>

As per the report of the committee, the government issued a proclamation, separating the Devaswom from Land Revenue Department on 12 April 1922. The Dewan reported in SMPA that, “after a careful consideration of the report of the Devaswom Separation Committee, Government have decided to place the administration of Sircar Devaswoms under a separate Devaswom Department and simultaneously with the creation of this department the age long grievance of the non-eligibility of certain classes of the people of this country for admission into the Land Revenue Service of the state will disappear.”<sup>16</sup> Through the separation of Devaswom from the Land Revenue Department, the main obstacle for the employment of the aggrieved communities in the Revenue Department was relieved.

### **Abstention Movement and the Community Press**

The Princely State of Travancore in the 1930's witnessed a turbulent political agitation initiated by the aggrieved communities like the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims for the purpose of adequate representation in the legislative bodies and public service, which produced consequences of far reaching magnitude. This agitation was in a sense, a continuation of the Civic Rights Struggle of the 1920's and the movement started by the aggrieved communities came to be called in Travancore history as Abstention Movement or Nivarthana Prakshohanam. The new agitation was started when a Legislative Reform Regulation was passed in 1932. The main feature of the reform was the constitution of a bicameral legislature - the Sree Moolam Assembly and Sree Chitra State Council.<sup>17</sup> The legislation enfranchised only about 3 per cent of the population of Travancore. Without the creation of the communal electorates, a certain number of seats were guaranteed to Ezhavas, Muslims and Latin Christians by a scheme of what was known as facultative election. Travancore in the 1930's witnessed the unprecedented growth of caste consciousness and communal rivalries in connection with the electoral politics in the State and the politics began to revolve around the castes.<sup>18</sup>

During the period of Abstention movement a fresh newspaper campaign broke out descending to fresh depths of scurrility. The aggrieved communities utilised their publications to advance their claims, keeping in view the socio-political changes happening in Travancore. Among the Christian leaders who worked strenuously for making the Abstention movement a full success, two persons deserve special mention. They are M.M. Varkey and K.C. Mamman Mappilai. Both of them were journalists who used their publications for popularising the movement. While the tone of criticism used by M.M. Varkey was very harsh, Mamman Mappilai used a polished language. A fearless journalist, M.M. Varkey used his publications, *Dasan*, *Kerala Dasan* and *Yuvabharathi* for popularising Nivarthana agitation. To start with he attacked C.P. through an article published in *Dasan* entitled ‘The

Knight Errant' on 25 March 1933. As per the Newspaper Regulation Act, government sent a memo to M.M. Varkey, the printer and publisher of Dasan, asking him to stop its publication. He submitted a declaration on 10-01-1108 M.E in which he declared that he had changed the publication from the City Press Thiruvananthapuram to Subhodayam Press, located in Alummoottuvilakam Building, Puthenchantha, Thiruvananthapuram.<sup>19</sup> Government became furious on the publication of another article in the same issue entitled 'Abstention by itself Not Sufficient.'<sup>20</sup> In this article M.M. Varkey argued that "The agitation is started by four-fifths of the population of the State aimed at establishing their rights for equal justice to one and all and at destroying undue predominance of a particular community in the legislature." Through another publication, Yuvabharathi, M.M. Varkey tried to prove that the Travancore government followed a systematic course to injure the Christian community and adopted a partisan policy favoring the Savarna Hindus. In an article entitled Akalekandanenkilum (Looking from far off) Varkey argued that the new constitutional reform was a trick to make 80 percent of the population, slaves of a dominating community."<sup>21</sup> Following these, the Government of Travancore cancelled the licenses of Dasan and Yuvabharathi.

Mamman Mappilai not only used his publication *Malayala Manorama* for popularising the Abstention movement but also richly financed for the success of the movement. He became the Chief Editor of *Malayala Manorama* in 1904 after the death of its founder Kandathil Varghese Mappilai.<sup>22</sup> In an editorial published on 3 August 1933 Mamman Mappilai explained the aims and objectives of the Nivarthana agitation. He argued that communal feeling was very rampant in Travancore that at the time of election people would think only communally. He was very critical of the policy of repression followed by the government and he argued that "it is impossible to destroy the civic rights of 16 lakh Christians, 9 Lakh Ezhavas and 4 lakh Muslims through the policy of repression".<sup>23</sup> *Malayala Manorama*, *Kerala Kesari*, *Nazrani Deepika*, *Muslim Mitram* and *Kottayam Patrika* and *Kerala Kaumudi* published articles supporting the Nivarthana agitations.

## Conclusion

The community-oriented press functioned effectively in the struggle for responsible government in Travancore as well. In this respect the role of Mamman Mappilai and his publication *Malayala Manorama* deserves special mention. When the news about the release of C.Kesavan came, *Malayala Manorama* published an editorial showering enormous praise on him. The editorial runs thus: "We are proud and happy to publish the news of the release of C. Kesavan for which the public were looking with excitement. We do not know what to say when Mr. Kesavan came out after overcoming the hardest examinations in his life. The name of Kesavan will be ever remembered, especially by the

lovers of democracy and particularly the joint political communities. He came out as a glittering jewel by opening a new chapter in the history of Civic Rights.”<sup>25</sup> However the license of *Malayala Manorama* was cancelled and the press and office sealed on 10 September 1938. It may be summed up that community oriented journalism played a very crucial role in transforming Travancore into a modern democratic state.

### Notes and References :

1. *Vivekodayam*, Book.8, Vol.1&2, January, February 1974.
2. The Statistics of Travancore 1932-33, Thiruvananthapuram, Government Press, 1934; N.Sam, *Samuhika Navodhanavum Samudayika Patrangalum* (art.), Aruvippuram Pratishta Sadabdi Smaranika (mal.), Thiruvananthapuram,1988, pp.154-58.
3. M.M.Varkey served in the Nazrani Deepika as editor in 1922.He started Kerala Dasan in 1924.Two years later he started Dasan. But its license was cancelled on 5 April 1933.He started Yuvabharathi on 29 April 1933, which was also proscribed on November 1934.
4. *Desabhimani*, 18 December 1920.
5. K.Ramakrishna Pillai who later became famous as Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai worked as an editor under Abdul Khader Moulavi who published Swadeshabhimani. But later Ramakrishna Pillai took over this publication.
6. *Sahodaran* (Mal.), Book.3, Vol.3, 1920, pp.93-94.
7. *Ibid*, Book.2, No.1, 1918.
8. The editorial alleged that it was Col. Munroe who merged the Devaswoms with the Revenue Department and in the beginning the Devaswom administration was performed by Christian Tahsildars. In Cochin the government showed no hesitation in appointing Christians in the Devaswom Department. Moreover the Devaswom expenses were meted from public money and hence the tax payers enjoyed the right to get the appointments in Devaswom Department; *Nazrani Deepika*, 19 March 1918; *Mitavadi*, Book.6, Vol.4, April 1918, pp.4-5; P.Bhaskaranunni, *Keralam Irupatham Noottantinte Aarambhathil* (mal.), Thrissur, Kerala Sahitya Academy, 2005, pp. 391-92.
9. *Mitavadi*, Book.6, Vol.3, March 1918, p.2.
10. *Mitavadi*, Book.6, Vol.12, December 1918.
11. *Malayala Manorama*, 1 April 1919.
12. *Deepika*, 18 November 1919
13. *Desabhimani*, 1 January 1919.
14. *Sahodaran*, February-March 1919.

15. The official members of the committee were K.Ananta Narayana Iyer, Dewan Peishkar, Kottayam (President), R.Krishna Pillai and John Kurien. The non- official members were P.K.Narayana Pillai, John Nidhiri and S.Sanku Iyer; Report of the Devaswom Separation Committee, 1921; See also Travancore Devaswom Manual; Travancore Devaswom Hand Book; TAR 1922-23; K.Vijaya Mohan, *Devaswom Administration in Travancore*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Thiruvananthapuram, University of Kerala.
16. SMPA Proceedings, 1922, p.166; *Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore*, Vol.V, pp.322-27.
17. TAR, 1932-33, p.16.
18. In Travancore demands for proper representation was raised in SMPA and Legislative Council by the members of the aggrieved communities. For instance in 1928 in SMPA, Ezhava members like Kunjukrishnan, Mooloor S. Padmanabha Panicker and K.P. Marthandan Vaidyan raised their complaints. Muslim members like Pir Muhammed, M. Muhammed Husain, H.B. Muhammed Rowther, Abdul Rahim Kutty and Bapukunju Moideen and Christian representatives like D. Francis and E.N. Eipe raised demands. For details see SMPA Proceedings 1928
19. File.No.4464/1944,Bundle No, 134, Confidential Section, KSA, Nalanda, Thiruvananthapuram.
20. Ibid.
21. Through these articles the author tried to prove that the Travancore government was anti-Christian in their attitude. He also alleged that government followed a policy of repression to appease the Nair community; File.no.970/1933,Bundle No.27, Confidential Section, KSA, Nalanda, Thiruvananthapuram.
22. Mamman Mappilai was born on 4 May 1873 at Niranam. He became the Chief Editor of Malayala Manorama on 6 July 1904 when its founder Kandathil Varghese Mappilai died. He started the Travancore National Bank. C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer cancelled the license of Manorama in 1938.C.P.was also instrumental in destroying the Travancore National and Quilon Bank. Mamman Mappilai died on 31 December 1953.
23. *Malayala Manorama*, 5 June 1933.
24. Geore Joseph, *Utharavadithva Bharanam* (art.), Kerala Kaumudi, 20 June 1937.
25. *Malayala Manorama*, 25 September 1937; G.Priyadarsan (ed.), *K.C. Mamman Mappilayude Thiranjedutha Mughaprasangangal* (Mal.), Kottayam, Malayala Manorama, 2004, pp.494-96.
26. *Malayala Manorama*, 6 July 1938 ●



# NEED OF GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MEDIEVAL KERALA HISTORY

**\*Shakkeela.U.V**

## **Abstract**

*The paper gives a brief sketch of historiography of medieval Kerala with the intention of establishing the need of gender perspective. History of medieval Kerala is an area left out of the experimental field of intellectual acumen of historians. The paper seeks why gender was also not applied as an analytical tool in exploring medieval Kerala and makes an attempt to point out how gender perspective enriches the existing historical literature on medieval Kerala.*

Key words: Gender- cultural binaries- caste- sexuality-trade

## **Introduction**

Meaning of gender and how it is to be applied in constructing history is still at issue among the scholars of history in Kerala. A number of gender related studies have come out of late focusing more on the terrain of colonial modernity than on pre-colonial or beyond it. Most of these studies which dealt with women's issues seemed to have taken inspiration from the 'women's question' raised in the debates of socio-religious reform movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The criterion for undertaking

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research in gender history was that the incumbent should be a woman- a woman who sympathizes with fellow women's deplorable conditions and should at times express verbal disapproval of the exalted position of men. Many of the studies with the tag of gender studies were written under this sparse conviction about women, gender and history. Issues of the history of medieval Kerala were confined more or less to the academic world and the early medieval Kerala still wants a proper make up. Historians in general seemed to be reluctant in traversing the unploughed terrain of medieval world. Therefore, an enquiry into the medieval Kerala from gender perspective is absent and those who were well grounded in gender perspective directed their scholarship to constructing modern and postmodern Kerala history. Medieval Kerala history is rich in available sources compared to ancient. The availability of sources does not make much headway in producing works of worth to unravel the unknown threads scattered in the sources of medieval period of Kerala history. Writings on medieval Kerala History from gender perspective are an unattended and unexplored area of research. The ancient history of Kerala is supposed to be engulfed in the Sangam Culture and we take it for granted that , well, let us share the culture together ...as of now nothing emerged to prove otherwise. Bewildered of the findings of the Sangam culture revealed through the studies we are bit reluctant whether to accept or graft it with the history of Kerala. Medieval culture of Kerala is free from this kind of ambiguities and therefore, scholars are comparatively free to construct history based on the evidence. The paper explains gender perspective as less partisan and in its shift from women's history to gender history; it could address the relationship between male and female experience in the past and its implications on history. An attempt is made in the paper to indicate how significant and relevant it is to apply gender perspective in constructing medieval Kerala history.

### **Objectives**

- a. Examine the availability of medieval sources compared to ancient period of Kerala
- b. Explain the limitations of women's history
- c. Potential of gender history in addressing historical issues in medieval Kerala
- d. Discuss the application of gender analysis on the existing historical constructs of medieval Kerala.

### **Methodology**

Analytical method is applied in the study for explaining the efficacy of gender perspective in the construction of medieval Kerala. Descriptive method is applied in bringing out the studies already done in the area. The paper assumes an explanatory recourse when it comes to the question of the application of gender perspective on history.



One of the hurdles that blocked the application of gender in the construction of history is the partisan nature of the word 'gender'. Though the word 'women's history' is largely replaced by 'gender history' and thus reduced the implication of the women's history as the history devoid of men, it did not do much effect on producing history from gender perspective in Kerala. The response of non-feminist historians towards women's history was not encouraging. They acknowledged the contribution of feminist historians and then separated from them (feminist historians) and simply held an attitude of dismissal.<sup>1</sup> The word had firmly implied separate realms for men and women, and carried the 'fad' of feminist politics into the realm of writing of history. The word gender seems friendlier and less exclusive. Joan Wallah Scott in her seminal article on gender application in history defined gender included of both men and women, and that information about women is necessarily information about men, that one implies the study of the other. While the efforts of Scott was to minimize the implication of separate sphere of women in the word 'gender' so as to fit into history, subsequent studies took gender as integral to the study of history and encompassing the whole of it. It analyses histories with the firm conviction that the trajectories of both femininity and masculinity are different but sometimes complementing each other. Both femininity and masculinity are in flux and undergoes constant transformation in the historical matrix. Therefore, gender history not only recognizes women as historical agents but also rejects the assumption that men's acknowledged historical agency can be understood apart from their gender- their masculinity and their sexuality.<sup>2</sup> It relocates women not at the periphery of history but on the centre of it.

Gender signifies the interaction between men and women in the society, and their activities together form social relationship. History is summed up as the activities of human beings in the society. These activities in the society are based on the gender differences which are built up or made up by cultural attributes. The cultural differences in the form of femininity and masculinity are in constant flux and reflect the values of a given society of a given period. The femininity and masculinity concepts and practices of medieval Kerala have to be analyzed from the standpoint of the society that existed at the time. One cannot gauge the sambandham system and the Nair femininity standing from the colonial modernity. Sambandham system became obsolete in the colonial period though practice was not found wrong in the medieval Kerala society. The European travelers' observations reveal that a Nair woman with more husbands was respected and admired in the medieval society. At the same time, colonial modernity found the system highly critical and Nair woman with more than one husband was found degraded to the status of prostitute. Thus each age and society has their notions of femininity and masculinity and the notions were decided on the values of the respective societies. Women in Manipravala literature were appeared to be licentious to a man in the modern period. Women were of no moral force in society. Old

values were unfortunately disappearing.<sup>2</sup> Manipravala literature supplemented the sources for the reconstruction of the Brahmanical culture and values. Mainstream history found Manipravala literature as the main source to explain the status of women. Though Elamkulam had described Manipravala works as reflecting and representing the life of the upper caste few only, it did not lead historians to look into the life of women below Nairs. On the other hand, scholars in general contented with describing the position of women as given in the Manipravala literature whenever they had to pose a question on women in medieval Kerala society. Accepting/considering upper caste women's status as the women's status in general is nothing but sheer foolishness.

Instead of tackling the issues within the traditional boundaries of history, gender perspective seems to be a better option in analyzing women in medieval society. The opinion of Joan Wallasch Scott explicitly expressed the inadequacy of the tools of history in bringing out the image of women. Historians theorize gender within traditional social scientific frameworks based on causation. They make simple generalization and this style of historians makes gender analysis difficult and creates a distinctive analysis for gender history.<sup>3</sup> In addition to looking at the construction of femininity and masculinity under a given cultural context and how it articulates in the form of social interaction, the role of power in shaping up the gender could also be applied to rebuild the medieval society from Manipravala literature. It would have certainly disclosed the possibility of constructing an impressive account of the medieval society in general and women in particular.

Manipravala literature, when it was looked at from the perspective of mainstream history which was andro-centric normally, reflected a society lacked organization and control in matters of sexual life. Manipravala heroines were taken as indications of the degeneration of medieval Kerala society. Sreedhara Menon while describing the contribution of Elamkulam in the field of Manipravala literature commented thus- the moral degeneracy of the age is reflected fully in this literature.<sup>4</sup>

Menon continues: the leisurely class of Namboodiri Brahmins also emerged as the land-owning class of jenmis. They came to be attracted towards the devadasis of the day and exercised a corrupting influence on society. They were joined by the Naduvazhis of whom there was a large number of following the fall of the second Chera Empire in the early 12th century. It became a fashion with the upper caste Namboodiris and Naduvazhis to patronize the devadasis by bestowing favours on them in return for female companionship and sexual gratification. The Devadasis as a class took advantage of this opportunity to mass wealth and enhance their status and influence in society. It was their sole concern hereafter to entertain the Naduvazhis and jenmis rather than worship God. It was in these circumstances that Namboodiri poets of the day took pleasure in composing erotic poems in praise of the Devadasis under the patronage of the ruling chiefs<sup>5</sup>.

The corrupting influence of Namboodiris on society enhanced with their association with Devadasis led to the decline of the second Chera Empire in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This prejudiced attitude about women, and men's association with women is the perpetual problem of the historians. The degeneration of men through women ultimately lead to the decline of societies, empires and administration is the dictum applied here. It always hindered historians from analyzing the society free of gender bias. Feminist historians' analytical tools like sexuality, patriarchy and reproduction, gender perspective of caste, if applied would have definitely brought out a clearer picture of the society as reflected in the Manipravala literature.

Historians pursue analysis of the images of women with 'loose morals' in the Manipravala literature and polyandrous women in *Sambandham* system were the norms and the result of social consensus. This hampers the possibility of historians in looking deep into the gender issues. The extreme austerities of Namboodiri women and the complete servility of low caste women were unlikely be the product of social consensus. Gender as analytical tool helps the historians to delve deep into the fissures in the practices. Reciprocity of Gender with power is one way of identifying the emergence of a social institution. Changes in social relationship have corresponding changes in the power relationship and vice-versa. The submission of the Nairs is complete with the subversion of man-woman relationship that had prevailed among the Nairs. A study on gender perspective would help to unravel the nuances of how power is entrenched in changing the gender relationship. The Brahmin centered power dictated chastity to Namboodiri women and loose morals to Nair women. This binary pativrata/nonpativrata was emerged out of the needs of the Brahmin power. The system became obsolete with the shift of power from Namboodiris to British. Therefore, the Sambandham system sustained with the support of power only. It was not out of the consensus of the subjugated people that system comes into being ; but it can be an imposition from the state. Political theory simply reflects social organization.<sup>6</sup> A serious attempt to study medieval Kerala can be traced to the efforts of Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai. His invaluable contribution in constructing medieval Kerala from scratches forced him to engage fully in placing the historical narration/facts in proper chronological order and turned the sparse and scattered sources into a concrete form. The dominant features of the society of medieval kerala like growth of Malayalam, Matriliney, devadasi system, caste system, Brahminical Hinduism and Brahmin centered agrarian economy were exposed by Elamkulam. His *Janmi sambradayam keralathil* (1959) explained in detail the origin of the caste from the peculiar context of medieval socio-economic factors different from the much circulated view of connecting it with Parasurama legend. It opened new ways to understand the Janmi system, landlord tenant relations and evolution of agrarian society. As opined by A.Sreedhara Menon, it was in the hands of Elamkulam that the economic history of Kerala got attention for the first time.

M.G.S.Narayanan in his seminal work, *Perumals of Kerala* (1996) explains the caste formation below the Namboodiris. He confined himself to the interpretation of the formation of Nair caste as the immediate effect of the Namboodiri dominance and explained the emergence of the rest of the castes from the point of view of the formation of material culture. Obviously, M.G.S. neither discussed women of the Brahmins nor their place in the patrilineal system under them. Matriliney was the result of Aryan migration and Nairs were to serve them. Nair women were also under the subservience of the Namboodiris. MGS did not venture into explaining in detail the gender relationship based on caste except about sexual liaison. The interpretations of both Elamkulam and MGS Narayanan about the caste formation provide a better opportunity to look at the caste formation from gender perspective. Studies, of late on caste from gender perspective have exposed the intimate connection between caste and gender identity. Feminist historians apply the role of marriage, sexuality and reproduction to explain the relationship between caste and gender. This paradigm would also be helpful in exploring the distinctive gender norms prevalent among upper and untouchable castes. Uma Chakravarty reiterated that caste controlled female sexuality and maintained the status quo in gender roles in favour of men. Studies are wanting in explaining the medieval caste from gender perspective and Medieval Kerala could be enriched with the application of gender perspective.

Travelogues of Europeans and Arabs have enriched the sources of late medieval period of Kerala. European travelogues were available in English translations. Velayudhan Panikkasseri's *Keralam Pathinanchum Pathinarum Nootanduakail* (1963) is first in the series of Malayalam translations of Arab and European travelogues available as source. A number of works based on travelogues have published on Medieval Kerala. P.K.S. Raja's *Medieval Kerala* (1953), P.A.Saidu Muhammad's *Keralam Nootantukalkumunpu* (1965) A.P.Ibrahim Kunju's *Studies in Medieval Kerala History* (1975), and, *Medieval Kerala* (2007) are some of the works which attempted a comprehensive survey of medieval history of Kerala based on the travelers' accounts. None of these works found it significant to include neither women nor gender relationship in their narrative. These works, however, provide descriptive details about medieval life in Kerala.

The description of Ibrahim Kunju shows the prosperity of Kerala in consequence of trade with foreign countries. He observed that the balance of payment in this extensive trade was favourable to Kerala, as its products were in great demand and consequently had fetched high prices.<sup>7</sup> Studies on the late medieval Kerala indicate that trade activities had confined to the coastal belt, but the products like pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, camphor, sandalwood brought from the interior. Thus well knit network of trade had formed between the rural and urban centres. These varied activities of trade indicate distinctive

gender roles in accordance with the nature of tasks involved. Women definitely must have participated in some stages of these trade like processing of spices, getting them dried under sun and some other allied work. Historian who dealt with the trade prosperity of Medieval Kerala left women completely out of the picture. Was ever trade a male business only! C.Chitra Devi's article gives an account of the brisk trading activities and made an attempt to establish the rural and urban trade link.<sup>8</sup> She linked trade prosperity with development in agriculture. The traders engaged in seaborne trade and commerce was mostly in the hands of the Jews, Christians and Muslims who had settled in the coastal towns. It was the non-Hindu trading classes like Chettis and Vaniks who had engaged in inland trade in Kerala. How did the rural area act as the production centre of the products exported from the coastal towns to foreign countries? What was the role of women and men in these trading activities and if woman is not played an important role how did the brisk trading activities and the income accrued from it changed the gender roles in medieval Kerala? If women are involved in allied activities of trade, what kind of work did they involve? The need of gender perspective is significant in unearthing the nature of women's participation in the buzzing trade of Medieval Kerala and the transformation in gender roles. One can assume that women in the medieval period participated in trade activities carried on the Coast and inland alike. M.G.S Narayanan opined that Brahmins as rice cultivators left out the sea coast as well as the High mountains which supplied the famous and coveted hill products of Kerala. Nairs as servants also occupied the interior. Moreover, they avoided trade and commerce and professions involving manual trade.<sup>9</sup> People below the Nairs had occupied the coasts and the hills- hills and its low lands produced the much coveted spices and the coasts made the transactions. Trade was not a taboo to people below Nairs. Women of the Vaniks and Chettis must have engaged in inland trade there. Many European travelers described Thiyya women on the coastal areas and many of them engaged in selling their bodies to European traders. K.N.Ganesh also pointed out the need of analyzing the coastal life different from the inland<sup>10</sup> due to its unique social formation by constant touch with foreign traders. The gender perspective would definitely help to bring out the life and role in economic activities of women who are placed in the margin of the caste society. The accounts of foreign travelers, though filled with prejudiced comments and observations, sometimes out of ignorance of the native customs, broadened the source base of medieval Kerala. It included the bubbling account of the life of coastal towns which was crowded with population belonged to low castes, non-Hindu natives and foreign merchants. It points out the need to study the life and gender relations of the coastal towns different from the inland life.

K.S.Mathew who enquired medieval Kerala within the context of Indian Ocean trade noted and explained the transformations in medieval Kerala society. His explorations into

the European sources, particularly in Portugal did throw some light into the unexplored realm of sources in Portuguese. The translation of raw sources in Portuguese into English would have benefitted the future research, but works of such kind are scanty and attempts are rare. Though Mathew did not pay attention to the presence of women in his trade oriented works his interpretation/analysis of medieval society in Kerala remains unique. Unlike the other historians who provides the picture of a strict caste division K.S.Mathew observed medieval caste rules less rigid and marriage as a loose, insignificant tie up.<sup>12</sup>

He indirectly hints the changed gender relations in the coastal life. His views on medieval features did not find many followers. Similarly the *Kerala Charithram* (1991) of Raghava Varrier and Rajan Gurukkal did deviate from the usual trodden path. The book began with prehistoric period of Kerala and concluded with the medieval period. It applied the methodologies of anthropology, folk knowledge, history, sociology and epistemology in interpreting the history. In the context of folk songs, the authors point out the possibilities of giving information on the nature of different relationships, social status of men and women, family system and social system. These works though had not attempted women or gender roles in medieval society, it did raise the possibilities for gender analysis either by enlarging the source base or bringing into new analytical tools to the study of medieval Kerala.

## Conclusion

Gender perspective looks at history from the point of view of the changing man-woman relationship. An analysis of gender roles of a given society connects it with socio, economic and political factors as the process of gendering is taken place under these parameters. Thus gender as an analytical tool enriches history and fills its gaps. The transformation of medieval Kerala to modern Kerala if viewed from gender perspective makes more sense in view of the subjects of debates under colonial modernity.

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# THE LIFE OF NAMBU DIRI WOMEN IN VENAD: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

\*Simi S.

## Abstract:

*The proposed study is concerned with the position of Nambudiri women and their life in the society of Venad. The various facts related to the life, customs, manners etc of Nambudiri women in Venad are analyzed in this article. Among the Brahmins the Namboodiris were reckoned as the highest in rank. The restrictions faced by the Nambudiri women in their own community, their marriage system, social status, relations with Nayar women are analyzed. Their life in Illams, limitations in movements, deeds, words and thoughts as well as the ex-communication related to their moral standard are studied. Their fasts, feasts and festivals are analyzed. Their customs, general rules in family and society, inheritance rights and funeral rites are also analyzed.*

**Key Terms:** Venad, Caste, Nambudiri women, Customs, Restrictions, Rules of female chastity, Marriage, Status, Festivals, Rites, Habits, Ornaments, System of inheritance, Smarthavicharam, Funeral rites.

## Introduction

A woman is an important entity in human life. Women constitute more than half of the human population on the earth. They have been treated as weaker sect in all societies of the world. They are discriminated, maltreated and oppressed everywhere. In India women enjoyed an elevated status, but due to various social factors this status was destabilized. Socially, women are harassed and ignored a lot.

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Every social condition in the present has also its roots in the past. The proposed study is concerned with the position of Nambudiri women and their life in the society of Venad.

### **Objectives of the Paper**

The main objective of this paper is to unravel the position of Nambudiri women and their life in the social fabric of Venad. The specific objective is to find out how caste determines the life of women in society.

### **Methodology**

Analytical, narrative and interpretative methodology is used in this study. The sources containing books, journals etc are utilized.

### **The Life of Nambudiri Women in Venad**

Venad was one of the important territorial principalities, which emerged after the disintegration of the second Chera Empire (800-1102 A.D.). Venad was the ancient name of Travancore up to the time of Marthanda Varma (1729-1758 A.D.).<sup>1</sup> The society in Venad consisted of so many classes, with corresponding diversities of manners, customs, habits, food, marriage, laws, religion, property and rank in society. Each caste has its own distinctive style.

The Brahmins occupied the top-most position in the society of Venad. Among them the Namboodiris were reckoned as the highest in rank. They were an exclusive caste of Brahmins.<sup>2</sup> Their houses were called *Illams* or *Manakals*. The Brahmins became privileged section through the acquisition of wealth and knowledge. They made rules for protecting their wealth and status. That made the caste system rigid and affected the life of women.

The Nambudiri women were subjected to severe restrictions and were absolutely under the tyrannical dominance of the men folk. In the social set up of the Brahmin community, women were considered not as persons but insignificant things. By and large they lived within the polygamous household observing strict rules of female chastity.<sup>3</sup>

The Brahmin community gloomily welcomed the birth of a female child. This early gloom turned into restrictions as the child grew. Her movements, deeds, words and even thoughts were so restricted. Sridevi and Savitri were the two most common names of the Nambudiri women. There were other non-classic and humorous names such as Nangaya, Nangeli, Pappi, Ittichchiri, Unnimaya and Chiruta.<sup>4</sup>

The Nambudiri women were strictly *gosha* and were styled *Antharjanam* or *Agathammar* - those who stay inside the house. They should not look at the face of any of the male sex except their husband, father or other such close kindred<sup>5</sup>. And when

compelled to travel, they were invariably preceded by Nayar women and were also protected by huge cadjan umbrellas.<sup>6</sup> The married female was not allowed to be seen by any males even of the family or of her caste people.<sup>7</sup>

The general rule among the Brahmins was that the girls should be married before attaining maturity. But as only one man in a family was at liberty to marry, available husbands were scarce and women plentiful, so it was customary to marry after maturity; and many women were left to live and die in celibacy. Widows were never permitted to re-marry. Marriage of a female after puberty involves the payment of a considerable dowry to the husband.<sup>8</sup> Sometimes young girls were married to men of fifty or sixty years of age. Living with an old and senior husband in the dawn of the youth devoid of the rights and pleasures of a happy married life was a bitter experience of every Nambudiri woman. Naturally many girls who were victims to such marriages soon became widows. Customs demanded that such widows should remain so for the rest of their lives.<sup>9</sup>

A Nambudiri seeing a widow, when setting out on a journey, will turn back.<sup>10</sup> It reveals that the widows were considered as a bad omen. Death on the husband's funeral pyre was not to be the sacred duty of the Nambudiri widow, who was advised to seek in the life of a self-sacrificing *sanyasi*, a sure means of salvation.<sup>11</sup>

Among the Nambudiri, only the eldest son married within the caste and others had *Sambandham* with women belonging to the Nayars, Ambalavasi or other communities of equal or higher rank.<sup>12</sup> But they did not eat food from the hands of lower caste on account of caste rules. Unlike their males, however, the Nambudiri women could marry only from their own caste.

There were laws insisting that women should always be subordinate to men. A Nambudiri woman could never eat with her husband, but could eat only the remains of what her husband has eaten. Wife could not call her husband by his name rather she was supposed to use certain customary terms. Wives in the Nambudiri society had to worship their husbands who were the visible representatives of God on earth.<sup>13</sup>

The temples played a decisive role in fixing the status of women in the society of Venad. Among the caste Hindus, the Brahmins were alone permitted to enter the inner shrine or the sanctum-sanctorum of the temple. Some of the important fasts, feasts and festivals observed by women only were *Varalakshmi Vritam*, *Avani Avittam*, *Gokula Ashtami*, *Naga Chaturthi*, *Garuda Panchami*, *Gauri Vritam*, *Vinayaka Chaturthi*, *Ananta Vritam*, *Mahalaya Paksham*, *Navaratri* and *Saraswati Puja*, *Deepavali*, *Vyasa Navami*, *Kartigai*, *Vykunta Ekadasi*, *Ardradarsanam*, *Ekadasi* and *Amavasya* and Eclipses.<sup>14</sup> *Tiruvathira* was one of the festivals kept by the Namboodiris. Fast and vigil in honour of Siva were observed by women only.<sup>15</sup>

Sixteen major rites (Samskaras) of the life cycle were compulsory among the Brahmins. Nambudiri women also underwent these rituals except *Upanayanam* and *Samavarthanam*. Certain important rituals underwent by Nambudiri women were *garbhadanam*, *pumsavanam*, *jatakarmam*, *annaprasnam*, *chowlam*, *karnavedham*, *vidyarambham* and *veli*.<sup>16</sup> Pumsavana was performed for the purpose of securing male offspring.

In the daily life, women were the earliest to get up in the family. There were large numbers of young Nambudiri women condemned to lead a life of perpetual spinsterhood within the seclusion of the households. The Nambudiri ladies were not allowed to take part in common prayers. Women were usually uneducated. During the days of her menstrual cycle, she was an out caste from her own house and had to stay in a room outside in total seclusion.

At home the Nambudiri women were simple in their habits, dressing like Nayar women, up to the waist. The dress of the Nambudiris consisted of purely white cloth with colored or a slightly laced border for both the sexes. The cloth of the female was called *pudavai*. The manner of wearing the cloth was also known as *Tattudukkuka*.<sup>17</sup> The upper part of the body was left uncovered while at home, but they covered themselves properly and decently when they move out of their *Illams*.

The Nambudiri women were not extravagant in ornaments. Their usual ornaments consisted of the *Tali* or the wedding ornament, a kind of necklace called *Cherutali* consisting of a number of gold coins.<sup>18</sup> She wears a string of neck ornaments called *Thalikoottam* and a number of brass bangles on both hands.<sup>19</sup> The most important and unavoidable ornament of a married woman among Brahmins was the Mangalya sutra and the metal bangles known as *Loha-Vala*, which should always be multiple and unequal on both hands. On the death of husbands it was only the *Mangalya sutra* and the *Loha* bangles that were discarded as obligatory among Malayalis. Other ornaments or the hair were not removed. They however did not use kumkum on their forehead.<sup>20</sup>

Tattooing and the use of turmeric were prohibited for the Nambudiri women.<sup>21</sup> The staple food of the Nambudiri was rice and vegetables. Widows can eat only once a day. The women were more exclusive, for they do not touch the food prepared by a foreign Brahmin.<sup>22</sup>

In Venad, most of the communities followed the marumakkathayam system of inheritance. That was, inheritance through the female line. But among the Brahmin community patrilineal system was prevalent.<sup>23</sup> Most of the sufferings faced by Brahmin women in the family and society were primarily due to the patrilineal system of inheritance. Through this system male gets higher dominance in the family.

The Namboodiris observed sixty-four *anacharams* or irregular customs. Among them the following were for Brahmin women<sup>24</sup>,

- You must not sell women
- Brahmin women must not look at any other persons besides their own husbands
- Brahmin women must not go out, unless accompanied by women servants
- They should wear only white clothing
- Noses should not be pierced
- Sati should be avoided

The status of women in Venad was closely related to the social institutions or customs. *Smarthavicharam* was one of the social customs prevalent among the Brahmin community. It was the court of enquiry into allegations for the transgression of the rules of chastity by the Namboodiris. *Vicharam* means and refers to caste trial; since it was presided over by the *Smartan* (Vedic Judge); it was called *Smarthavicharam*.<sup>25</sup>

Adultery between a Nambudiri woman and a man of inferior caste was perhaps the most serious of all caste offences. Whenever a Nambudiri woman's chastity was suspected, she was at once handed over to the society for enquiry, no considerations of personal affection or public policy intervening.<sup>26</sup> The monogamy and strict obedience to rules of chastity were forcibly imposed upon a Nambudiri woman. Any woman suspected of violations of chastity rules was excommunicated after a ritually contrived impeachment known as *Smarthavicharam*.<sup>27</sup>

For beginning a *Smarthavicharam* the sanction of the ruling Raja had to be obtained, being followed by the appointment of a *Smarta*, two *Mimamsakas*, an *Akakkoyimma* and a *Purakkoyimma*.<sup>28</sup> There were seven phases in the *Smarthavicharam*.<sup>29</sup> They were: *Dasivicharam*, *Anchapuravilakkal*, *Vicaram*, *Svarupam Collal*, *Udakavicchedam*, *Suddhabhojanam* and *Kalavicharam*.

The accused Nambudiri women henceforth became an out-caste and she would no longer be called *Antharjanam* but a *Sadhanam*.<sup>30</sup> The result of the enquiry was reported to the King, who after hearing all the facts sanctioned the excommunication of the female and allowed her a small pittance of rice and provisions to be issued from one of the *Oottupuras*.<sup>31</sup> Their children were degraded once as Chakyars and Nambiars after the excommunication of their mothers for the offence of adultery. If the accused was innocent, then the ceremony known as *Kshama Namaskarum*<sup>32</sup> was practiced and thus the female was honorably exonerated.

Every Nambudiri family would have a number of Nayars for managerial and service jobs. Nambudiri women were attended inside and outside the house by Nayar women,

who took care of most of the needs of Nambudiri children. When a Nambudiri woman was put to trial for suspicions of sexual immorality, the first person examined in the case was her attendant, a Nayar woman.<sup>33</sup>

Thus the rules laid down for protecting chastity among the Brahmin females and its trials were extremely rigorous and severe. One thing noted is that the traditional caste council of the Namboodiris was a powerful institution. The local Rajas were the supreme judicial heads of the Namboodiris. No offender could escape the trial by the caste-council.<sup>34</sup>

There were also instances that the excommunicated women were married to Mappilas and Ezhavas. If others did not marry the degraded women, it was the duty of the Raja to maintain her in a separate place and she became a slave to the Raja. If she was found innocent she was readmitted to the caste along with her family.<sup>35</sup>

The dead body of a Nambudiri woman who dies celibate cannot be cremated without the semblance of a marriage ceremony being gone through; consequently tali was tied round the neck of the corpse by a competent relative.<sup>36</sup> The funeral rites of women were similar, but, if the woman was pregnant at the time of death, the body had first to be purified seven times with pounded *kusa* grass, cow-dung, cow's urine, ashes and gold and to receive *mattu*. The belly was cut open four inches below the navel, and, if the child was found alive, it was taken out and brought up; if dead, it was put back in the womb with a piece of gold and some ghee. Children not more than ten days old were buried with little ceremony, but all others were burnt.<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

The present study has tried to give an account of the life of Nambudiri women in Venad. They had their own peculiar customs and followed rigid caste rules. It kept their tradition and culture. And it also served as a restraining force against unclean habits and even immoral conduct. Compared with lower caste women, Nambudiri women had social status but their freedom was limited. They had certain laws, rules and regulations to protect their morality in life.

The social institutions and caste-council greatly influenced their life and status. The temples also played a decisive role in fixing their status. Their life and views were limited only to the Tarawad. In their custom of marriage, only the eldest son alone was to marry from his own community and woman could marry only from her own community. Here women faced lot of problems like scarcity of husband and illicit sexual relationship.

In Venad the women of all castes were inseparably connected and interdependent.

There existed a close relation between a Nambudiri woman and a Nayar woman. The *Pumsavana* ceremony practiced by the Nambudiri community also reveals the inequality existed between a male and a female child. They gloomily welcomed the birth of a female child. All the customs followed by them also developed a separatist attitude among the whole society.

The society gave more prominence to the chastity of Nambudiri women. At that time there was no law to question the authority of men over women. The society did not give any importance to the purity of men. There is no change in this situation even today. Like in the past, women are ill-treated, exploited and abused right from birth onwards. The women of our society also wanted freedom from caste oppression, elimination of untouchability and end of social discrimination. And they need freedom with social dignity, honour and social justice.

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# SACRED GROVES AND BIO-DIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN A KERALA VILLAGE

**\*Sinitha G.S**

## **Abstract**

*Ecological sensitivity in Hindu tradition is evident from very ancient times. The interaction of human beings with nature acquired varied forms in the Neolithic period. Even though man is eager to conquer new spaces, an ecological insight is visible and it was targeted in tune with the sayings of the Rishis, 'Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu'. Hence they lived in harmony with nature and natural resources around. The dedication of thickly planted trees to a local deity led to a tradition of sacred groves and it became mostly the centers of Naga worship. These groves occupy a pivotal position in nourishing plants and animals, soil and water conservation. Among the hundreds of sacred groves in Kerala, Vetticode is one major sacred grove and Naga worship centre. There were more than sixty Kavus or sacred groves in the Kerala village of Vetticode, but now most of them are on the verge of destruction. A variety of factors like the encroachment of the people, increasing demographic pressure, changing belief etc were decisive in it.*

Key words: sacred groves, ecological sensitivity, bio-diversity conservation

## **Introduction**

Man - environment relations are as old as the appearance of man on earth. Man has made diverse interactions and adaptive strategies to join hand in hand with nature. The

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struggle of man for survival actually led to the evolution of empirical science and philosophy. In course of time he identified the forces of nature and role of each element in maintaining equilibrium, experiencing good and evil matters. The practice of considering mysterious as sacred is often based on fear and mythical beliefs. The societies of Greece, Rome, Asia and Africa had long preserved sections of the natural environment as sacred groves to Gods and Goddesses<sup>1</sup>. In the Indian context, it has been suggested that supernatural powers got associated with specific trees, groves, ponds and natural sites, as in many other global situations too; sacredness also got associated with abstract forces of nature such as earth, water, fire and wind<sup>2</sup>.

Ecological sensitivity in Hindu tradition can be best understood with the assimilation and amalgamation of the five fundamental elements, air water, fire, earth and space as a component of the natural world. As a result the Vedic Gods became the embodiment of nature. Practices and traditions of Hinduism expanded to formulate an ecological consciousness<sup>3</sup>. The true vision of the self and the universe is evident from the sayings of the Rishis '*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*'. The traditional societies in that way created and maintained a cordial relation with nature, a strong link between ecology and culture. Culture and environment have always been complementary all through various stages of human evolution, originating as a product of animistic religious belief system and fine-tuned over a period of time as the human society got more and more organized<sup>4</sup>.

### **Relevance of the Topic**

Man's thirst to dominate and to exploit the resources of nature up to the maximum level resulted actually in endangering his own existence. Signs of put in danger of all species appear in the form of global warming and other forms like drastic changes in ecology and environment. An increasing awareness to protect the very base of nature has been recently molded in human minds, as it was necessary for his survival. So each and every incident that left harmful effects on the environment is of keen concern today. Sacred groves and its existence become relevant in this context.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

Sacred groves are relics of forest patches, traditionally protected by communities in reverence of a deity. The present study attempts to make an analysis of the local attitudes towards the sacred groves and its maintenance. Furthermore it is to know more about the origin of Naga worship and sacred groves tradition in Kerala and make an in depth study on community interest in the grove and keen interest to take action towards protection, management and restoration of the sacred groves. Also to know more about the Naga worship centers in Kerala, especially Vetticode and to analyse how local environment

equilibrium was maintained by the past generations in this Kerala village. Another aspect targeted is to know the factors that led to the destruction of the groves in Vetticode village in the present times and to assess the effects of changing belief systems on the sacred groves.

## Methodology

The article is prepared on the basis of both primary and secondary sources including field study. Argumentative and analytical methods are mainly used to substantiate the crucial factors that led to the degradation of the sacred groves.

In India and in many other countries of the world, trees have been held in veneration since ancient times<sup>5</sup>. Sacred groves are found all over India and most of them are located in the Western Ghats. They are locally known in different names in different parts of the country. It is known in Madhyapradesh as *Dev*, *Deovani* in Maharashtra, *Sarnas* in Bihar, *Oran* in Rajasthan, *Devarkadu* in Karnataka, *Kovilkadu* in Tamil Nadu and *Sarpakavu* or *Kavu* in Kerala. Hindu tradition describes three basic categories of forests<sup>6</sup>. They are *Srivan*<sup>7</sup>, *Tapovan*<sup>8</sup> and *Mahavan*<sup>9</sup>. Sacred Groves comes within the group of *Srivan*, traditionally protected by tribal communities in reverence of a deity. The ancient people dedicated some thickly planted trees to a local deity and the trees on or about are regarded as sacred, allowing nobody to touch. They are naturally attached to temple and have cultural significance as festivals were often arranged by the local people there. Typically these groves survived where philosophical understanding and knowledge have been incorporated in to religious practices to ensure their observance<sup>10</sup>. It served as a culture linked ecosystem heritage by generating community interest in the management and protection of these groves. Management of the groves often varied regionally. They still possess a great heritage of diverse flora and fauna; serve as a protected shelter for birds and mammals.

In Kerala hundreds of sacred groves are scattered through the highland, midland and lowland regions. The Census Report of Travancore published in 1891 gives the first authentic report on the sacred groves. Ward and Conner reported the presence of 15000 sacred groves in Travancore. They are indicative of the worship of trees by the ancient people. These groves were local worshipping centers of Mother Goddesses and local deities.<sup>11</sup> The existence of the grove is an indispensable adjunct to each Nair and Namboodiri family. They were locally known as *Kavus*. *Kali Vettakkara*, *Antimahakalan*, *Ayyappan* and *Nagas* were commonly worshiped in these *Kavus*<sup>12</sup>.

The non-Brahmin communities were the earliest Naga worshippers in Kerala. Naga worship which is still prevalent among the Hindus of Travancore is an element of Dravidian religion which was absorbed in Hinduism when the Aryans came into contact with the Dravidians.<sup>13</sup> Deities such as Vishnu and Siva were not worshipped in these *Kavus*<sup>14</sup>. The

Travancore State Manual of V. Nagam Aiya provides a good description of the sacred groves, mainly Serpent *Kavus* in erstwhile Travancore. A Serpent *Kavu* or an abode of snakes is an indispensable adjunct to every *Nayar* house<sup>15</sup>. Sometimes ponds were located inside or near the *Kavus*<sup>16</sup>. Among the Serpent *Kavus* of Kerala, Mannarassala and Vetticode deserve special mention. Mannarassala temple, built in a grove is reputed as it contains 30000 images of snake Gods. The most sacred portion inside it is the ancient *Nalukettu*<sup>17</sup> of the family which is totally given over to the serpents and covered with ant hills; only the eldest lady of the family has admittance there; she conducts the *poojas*, instead of the males in the family.<sup>18</sup>

Vetticode is a famous Serpent *Kavu*, situated in Bharanikkavu Panchayath in Mavelikkara Taluk<sup>19</sup>. Vetticode village itself has more than sixty *Kavus*. The main grove and the temple cover an immense oblong space measuring about 2.5 acres. In the midst of lush green environment, the idol of the principal deities Nagaraja and Nagayakshi are installed. The main serpent deity here is Anantha and local tradition says that after killing the Kshatriyas twenty one times and seizing their lands, it was given to Kashyap. But it was not fit to live, so Parasurama restored to a portion of land leading to the genesis of a land called Kerala. But due to the abundance of lavana and ore, the land was not fertile. To solve this problem Lord Parasurama entered in a deep meditation and the serpent God Anantha appeared before him. Parasurama requested Anantha to make the land fertile, Lord Anantha then directed the Nagas to suck out the unwanted elements or contents from the land and thus turned the land in to a fertile one. As a reward Lord Parasurama installed the idol of the deity Anantha here on the top of a soil heap created with the help of an axe. The term used for creating the soil heap in Malayalam is Vettikkuttu, and hence the place name Vetticode originated. There were two temple ponds inside the vast premises of the temple. It is believed that the ponds are in the spot where Parasurama took the soil to heap the land to erect the temple.

The most auspicious day here is the day of Ayilyam in the month of Kanni, known as Vettikkottayilyam<sup>20</sup>. During the festive days thousands of people are assembled to worship and propitiate the serpent Gods. Among the ceremonies offered to the deity, *Sarpabali*, *Noorumpalum* and *Urulikamizhthu* are prominent.<sup>21</sup> *Sarpabali* is a ritualistic ceremony for the *Nagas*. As a part of the ceremony *Padma* is drawn on the ground. In the middle of an *Ashtadala* or eight petals, the onward triangles denote *Prakrithi* or nature and *Purusha* or man.<sup>22</sup> In the upward and downward triangles indicate the close association between the two. This *Padma* for the *Sarpabali* can only be seen there. Another major offering was the *Noorum Palum* and for this two *Swastika* symbols were drawn on the ground. These deities were placed parallel to each other and *poojas* were performed with the assistance of *Pachavadya*.<sup>23</sup> Milk and turmeric powder are used to make the solution for

the *poojas*. *Urulikamizhthu* is a particular offering done in the Nagaraja temple, performed by the couples without children, in the belief of avoiding *Sarpakopa* or wrath of the snakes. Symbolic objects that are dedicated to the deity include *Puttum Muttayum*, the image of the snakes in gold, silver, the mold of man and woman, pure turmeric powder etc.

## Major Observations

Besides being a centre of Naga worship, the *Kavus* or the groves in Vetticode village display the traditional method of conserving nature and its resources. In almost all the major and minor groves of the village we can see a wide variety of trees, shrubs and herbs, climbers, epiphytes and parasites. Having tracts of virgin forest and rich diversity, sacred groves have been protected by the local people for centuries. They reveal the long held traditions of community management of forests. They have abundant social and cultural values that provide inextricable link between the present society to the past in the realm of bio-diversity, culture, religious and ethnic heritage. The *Kavus* of the Vetticode village reflect the ecological sensitivity of the past generations by creating community interest and participation in protecting and maintaining them.

These sanctified patches of forest left a complex array of interaction and influence in the flora and fauna of the locality. Several minor ecosystems are formed in these *Kavus*. Rare endangered species can be found in these groves. They are the abode of numerous herbal plants of extreme medicinal value. The native doctors depend heavily on these plants and are widely used for the treatment of various diseases. Among them *Vettilla Kasthuri* is prominent whose seeds have been given with the best effect in counteracting bites of venomous reptiles.<sup>24</sup> Besides it, *Kuppameni*, *Nayri*, *Chittaratha* etc are in plenty in these groves. In this eco system everyone depends on the other for its existence directly or indirectly. The roots of the trees in the grove prevent soil erosion. The leaves of the big trees serve as protector to the upper soil from being washed away. The soil of the grove is much fertile even to grow any type of seed and this fertility is through the processing of dead leaves and creatures by the grove itself. The trees of the *Kavus* absorb and control the flow of rainy water and help to maintain water levels in the nearby wells and ponds. In increasing the underground water resources the *Kavus* had a major role. In the midst of the big *Kavus* there were ponds and these ponds act as the storehouse of rain water. Moreover these *Kavus* were the sanctuaries of a wide variety of birds. Sitting near by the *Kavu*, hearing the sounds of the birds, the murmurings of the leaf - all give a mental solace to anybody. Providing fresh air is another service of the groves, they absorb carbon dioxide in large quantity. It diminishes atmospheric temperature and balances local climate. The wind blows from the groves are even helpful in curing some diseases which affect the body. Thus the ecological services of the *Kavus* are of immense value, and they were ideal centers for bio- diversity conservation.

## Conclusion

Most of these *Kavus* are on the verge of destruction in the village, except a few major ones. Pressure of population necessitating more and more habitats led to de-forestation and threat to the very existence of the *Kavus*. Another striking reason was the change in people's belief systems as the new generation ignored and is reluctant to follow the path of their ancestors. Yet another unavoidable factor was that through the pretention of developmental activities the rulers and the ruled were eager to conquer new spaces. Urbanization tendencies also led to the depletion of the groves. As a result the percentage of new species found in these groves shows a constant deterioration. Human disturbances have led to the deterioration of groves in the village. In short a number of social and economic issues are vibrant and this can be solved only through the realization that conservation of the groves is crucial for their subsistence. This can be better understood in the sayings of the past generations, *Kavu Theendalle Kulam Vattum*.

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# SOPANA MUSIC OF KERALA: A STUDY ON THE DECAYING TRENDS

**\*Soumya. S**

## **Abstract**

*From time immemorial, the splendid and vivacious culture of Kerala lured the people throughout the world. Its rich heritage is known by its songs and dances, ballads, rituals and intellectual pursuits. The soul stirring music known as “Sopana” (Ashtapadi singing) is a part of music ritual in a number of temples in Kerala. Sopana Sangeetham is as old as the establishment of the tantric way of worship in the Kerala Temples. Art was considered sacred and artists had a lot of respect in the society. But sadly, from the beginning of the twentieth century, traditions have slowly been compromised and due to the change in people’s lifestyle and advancement in science and technology, a number of art forms slowly died. Very few temples today continue to observe the music traditions that were followed by their forefathers. There are only 86 ardent practitioners of Sopana Sangeetham in the state for one lakh odd temples, sacred groves and other religious places. It will really be a pity if, with the advance of civilization these artistic and ceremonial rituals are forgotten and lost.*

Key Words: *Sopana Sangeetham, Ashtapadi, Ritual music, Kerala Temples, Temple Art*

## **Introduction**

Music has been regarded almost universally as the purest form of art because it combines and assimilates in the art and beauty, delight and love, altogether<sup>1</sup>. Music is the

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primary expression of *Bhakti* and a direct communication between the God and the devotee can be possible through the medium of music. This feeling of emotion (*bhakti*) and the faith and solace that it gave the devotees was something that Buddhism and Jainism could not give. This then was the main cause for the revival of Hinduism in a big way. The work of the saints and savants of the *Bhakti* cult, especially the Saiva *Nayanars* and Vaishnava Alwars generated a new wave of religious enthusiasm among the masses which paved the way for the rapid progress of Hinduism and led to the establishment of a number of *Saiva* and *Vaishnava* shrines all over Kerala. The role of temples in the religious and spiritual upliftment of the people became imminent and inevitable<sup>2</sup>. Kerala temples were not merely place of worship but were also centres of excellence and cultural institutions. Most of the prominent art forms of Kerala had its origin in the temples. The Art forms served as an instrument for the spreading and popularization of the message of *Bhakti*. New art forms like *Koothu* based on *Itihasa – Purana* stories and *Koodiyattom* were evolved in Kerala temples with effect from the 9<sup>th</sup> Century as part of this purpose<sup>3</sup>. These art forms grew adjuncts to religion and the temples with their vast endowments had a regular establishment with artistes like singers, composers (musicians, dancers, instrumentalists, etc.) for offering musical service in its sacred precincts<sup>3</sup>. ‘*Sopana Sangeetham*’ was confined to temples from very ancient days. This genre of music in praise of the deities is known as ‘*Sopana Sangeetham*’ as it is sung at the ‘*Sopanam*,’ the steps of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Popularly known as ‘*Kottippadi seva*,’ *Sopana Sangeetham* is recited as a ritual while various rituals are performed inside the sanctum sanctorum.

## Objectives of the Study

The study is a humble attempt to find out, the historical importance of the *Sopana* music system, its genesis and growth, reasons of the decline of *Sopana* music, the present condition of the art and the artists, survival strategies adapted by the artists, promotional, measures taken by the cultural agencies and government, as it may contribute towards a re-look on the need of taking proper measures for the protection and re-vitalization of this ritual music and its performers from further deterioration. The study then identifies and suggests promotional measures and further possibilities for a healthy sustain of this traditional temple art form.

## Methodology

The Analytical study is based on both Primary and Secondary sources. All accessible documents and music of veteran *Sopana* musicians like *Njeralath Rama Pothuval* recorded and preserved by *Njeralath Kalashramam* at *Angadippuram*, interviews conducted with the artistes of the temples, the temple priests and the *Devaswom* authorities of prominent

temples of Kerala were all pursued. Much information could be collected from sources like, reports on Sopana Music and Musicians, published in various news papers, articles published in Souvenirs, Journals and other periodicals. The secondary sources like PhD Thesis, Dissertations and published books on music, temple arts and Kerala Culture were studied in length.

## History of Sopana Music

The existence of Sopana music, the traditional music system of Kerala is now in a critical juncture. This temple art form is at present struggling to cope with the modern socio-aesthetic realities of Kerala. The new modern generation is not properly trained to enjoy these art forms. The growth of the modern theatre, popular films and television encroached into the venues of traditional performances. As a result, traditional artists are not in a position to earn their livelihood by practicing their arts. Many of the artists and their families abandoned traditional music practice and sought other professions. Art is neglected and the promotional measures of the government or cultural bodies or agencies cannot completely succeed in preserving and popularizing art forms as if in the time of feudal system. The problems and demands of the traditional temple musicians are often neglected as they are an extreme minority. These study highlight their problems and suggest solutions to the incumbents.

The style of singing combining the old ritualistic music of Kerala with the music of *Oduvaars*, the temple singers of *Thevaaram* and *Araiyaars*, the temple singers of *Thiruvaaymozhi* came into prominence under the name *Sopana*<sup>4</sup>. This music which was based on the principles of *Tauryatrikam* (combination of the vocal, instrument and dance) was handled by certain communities called *Maarar*, *Nambeesan*, *Poduval*, *Nambiar* who were the counter parts of the *Oduvaars* and *Araiyaars* of Tamil Nadu. This music system of Kerala is pristine with its own individuality and uniqueness: "Singing which is generally slow in time with the notes going higher and higher and rising in pitch and intensity as they proceed producing sweet melody and grace".<sup>5</sup> This song will be sung only when the inner sanctum sanctorum of the temple is closed for customary ceremonial offerings to gods and goddesses. Since the singer renders his eulogy to the presiding deity, standing on the '*Sopanam*' this devotional prayer in music acquired the name '*Sopana Sangeetham*'.<sup>6</sup> The songs are usually dedicated to Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva, and especially to the goddess *Bhagavathi*.<sup>7</sup>

In the remote times, *Sopana* Music was sung and danced before the sanctum sanctorum by *Devasrees* (not *Deva-dasis*) the divine clan among female temple dancers, who were treated as the consorts of Gods. When their lineage ceased and the succeeding clan degenerated to the level of the *Deva-dasis* practising their secular *Dasi Attam*, their

services at the temples were taken over by *Marars*, who were the traditional temple musicians who also sang and danced playing the drum called *Idakka*, reminding the *Araiyaars* and *Oduvaars* of Tamil Nadu temples. Gradually, the dance part was eliminated and the singing was made more stylised<sup>8</sup>.

Though the system is most ancient, the term *Sopana* came to denote itself only around the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when temples with *Vimanam*, *Gopuram*, *Sreekovil*, *Sopanam* etc were built in large numbers during the period of the *Chera* King *Kulasekhara*. As the state was once a part of the three old kingdoms of the south, viz. *Chera*, *Chola* and *Pandya*, having cultural exchanges, their music too had much in common. They all belonged to the ancient Tamil or Dravidian Music. In the early stages of development *Sopana* music was influenced by the music of the Jaina and Buddhist religious preachers. Then onwards, it came under the spell of the music of the *Thevaaram* and *Thiruvaaymozhi*, of the *Saiva* and *Vaishnava* Saints of the South. During the middle centuries, it was modified after the music of *Geetha Govindam*. With the popularity of Carnatic Classical Music in the state it now struggles hard to absorb concert norms after shedding its typical traits.

Like most traditional music forms, *Sopanam* too has its set of schools, each varying in subtleties. They include ones being sung at south Kerala temples like *Pazhoor* and *Ramamangalam* (on the banks of the river Muvattupuzha) and the northern ones like *Thirumandhamkunnu* and *Guruvayur* (to name a few). These temples have their own set of musicians hereditarily practising the art in their precincts. The late *Njeralath Ramapothuval* of *Thirumandhamkunnu* *Pani*, *Janardhanan\_Nedungadi* of *Guruvayur*, *Damodara Marar* from *Pazhoor* and *Sadanam Divakara Marar*, master percussionist, has been some of the most authentic experts of *Sopana Sangeetham*. Late masters like *Pallavur Kunhukutta Marar* used to present *Sopana Sangeetham* to the accompaniment of instruments like harmonium. Experts like *Trikkambaram Krishnankutty Marar* and *Ooramana Rajendra Marar* have strived and succeeded in presenting it in the form of a solo concert.

The doyen of *Sopana Sangeetham*, *Njeralath Rama Poduval*, is credited with having revived the traditional music performed in temples. It was this legendary singer who took the lead to popularise this art form outside the temple. He rebelled against the beliefs, breaking *Sopana Sangeetham* free from the shackles of customary rules and started performing anywhere he liked. This was done with the notion that he ardently believed that the 'God is omnipresent'<sup>9</sup>. And thus he instituted a version of the *Sopana Sangeetham* that he sang outside the temple as '*Bhajanam*' or prayer and popularized it as the '*Janahitha Sopanam*' (the *Sopanam* according to the interest of the public) of the masses and the common man.<sup>10</sup>

Njeralath Harigovindan, the sixth son of Njeralath Ramapothuval is the only singer of *Sopana Sangeetham* who adopts this method in Kerala at present. He established *Njeralath Kalashramam*, the institution formed to devote itself to the art in the state, to popularise and give a lease of life to the traditional temple art form. He built it in the memory of his father at Angadippuram. Harigovindan's effort has been to create a place where artists can come without any formalities and distinctions, and do what they do best, create music. The *Kalashramam* decide on holding the *Sopana Sangeetham* festival for art connoisseurs in the country on a regular basis every year. The recent search by *Kalashramam* for *Sopana Sangeetham* musicians in the state to restore the legacy of the temple art led to realisation that there were hardly any practitioners left. They could spot only 86 ardent practitioners of *Sopana Sangeetham* in the state for one-lakh odd temples, sacred groves and other religious places<sup>11</sup>. Among the 86 artists in the state, only 38 have been singing *Sopana Sangeetham* in temples to the accompaniment of *Idakka* and *chengila*. Though the recently-concluded *Sopana* festival saw the participation of almost all the enthusiastic practitioners in the state, a lot more has to be done to give a fillip to the traditional art form.

Kerala society is rich with art, but according to Harigovindan, there is discrimination between the creamy arts which are *Kadhakali* and *Mohiniyattam* and real rustic Kerala music. "Kerala music is not Carnatic music. It is the totality of all the village music in Kerala, which is not getting the recognition it deserves. The creamy art forms get all the media attention and help, and the traditional vocal styles of Kerala are losing out. My effort is to get these artists proper remuneration so that they can continue to practice their art."<sup>12</sup> The road has not been easy. Harigovindan has had to struggle with the authorities, who in true political style, try to take the credit for what he has done. *Sopana Sangeetham* is traditionally taught by the family members to the next generation. It is still the case, largely. However, these days there is a certified institute called *Kshetra Kala Peedam* in the temple town of Vaikom that offers training to students in *Sopana Sangeetham*, besides other Kerala temple arts<sup>13</sup>. The rendition style of *Sopanam*, though basically a temple art, also extends to providing audio accompaniment to traditional Kerala dance-dramas like *Kadhakali*, *Krishnanattom* and *Ashtapadiyattom* besides devotional music in *Kalam Pattu* and dramatic music in *Mudiyettu*.

Considering the significance of temple art forms, a proposal was mooted in 2011 by the Malabar Devaswom Board to revive temple art forms including *Sopana Sangeetham*, classical music, instrumental music and dance forms, which propagate the cultural and traditional history of the state<sup>14</sup>. The Malabar Devaswom Board had also obtained 20 acres of land for the *Kshetra Kala Academy* from the renowned *Thiruvarkadu Bhagavathi* temple, at Madayi in Kannur. Rs 50 lakh was earmarked for the purpose in

the 2012-13 budget. The Academy was planned as deemed university on the model of the Kerala *Kalamandalam*. The academy was envisaged as an institution offering courses in temple arts including *Koodiyattom*, *Koothu and Tullal*, *Krishnanattom*, *Patakam*, *Sopana Sangeetham*, *Kalamezhuthu* and murals. The *Kshetra Kala Academy* was inaugurated by Devaswom Minister V.S. Sivakumar on 7 August 2015. Though the academy was announced in 2013, it got delayed owing to many reasons and now the authorities have decided to open it temporarily on land belonging to *Madayi Tiruvarkatt* temple. The government has sanctioned only Rs 50 lakh for the academy, but to develop it to a deemed university and a premier institute in training temple arts, the government should sanction more funds.

### **Causes for the Downfall of the Sopana System of Music**

At one time, *Sopana* music system was associated with most of the rituals and the performing arts in Kerala. Owing to historical reasons, the recital of this music came to be neglected and virtually discarded in most of the areas except in temples where it was preserved as a ritual. Yet what one sadly realises nowadays is the fact that *Sopana Sangeetham* is still groping in darkness and is yet to be restored to its original spirit and charm.

Temples in earlier days gave equal importance to worship, music and dance. The artistes who performed in the temples gave the same importance to their art as worshipping God. They focused on promoting their art and not were interested in money or publicity. There was a genuine effort to preserve the art that was handed down to them by their forefathers. No compromises were made in the quality of art according to the likes and dislikes of the audience. It was at those times, that appreciation of these art forms was at its zenith.

Art was considered sacred and artists held a lot of respect in the society. But sadly, from the beginning of the twentieth century, traditions have slowly been compromised and due to the change in people's life style and advancement in science and technology, along a number of art forms, *Sopana Music* too is slowly going into oblivion. Very few temples today continue to observe the music traditions that were followed by their forefathers. Lack of funds and interest, changes in the socio-cultural background and western influences are some of the reasons why we are left with no more than a few inscriptions to convey the cultural heritage of the temples. The artists who have been playing over generations have slowly moved into other more lucrative professions. Several of these temples now have government appointed musicians for their day-to-day rituals.

Traditional temple arts are a product of the Feudal system. When feudalism declined, artists couldnot continue their traditional profession because of many reasons, especially



of financial vulnerability. Till the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Sopana Sangeetham* had enjoyed a significant place in Kerala. At that time a large number of temples in Kerala were sovereign states with a well defined territory called *Sanketham* and well-defined organs of government. The Namboodiri Brahmins who were the trustees or *Uralars* of these temples mismanaged temple properties and endowments and enjoyed all the revenues there from. The *Sopana* musicians in temples and other peoples who were rendering services in the temples called *Ambalavasis* also thus acquired better living standards. But the land reform regulations dragged the temples and the *Uralars* in to utmost poverty. Not only the *Uralars* but *Sopana* musicians also got badly affected by this as there was a reduction in the income of the temple artists.

Traditional temple arts cannot exist without a patronage of support. When the traditional patronage is lost, they failed to get proper support to sustain as if in the time of their origin. As a result, the art is declined and the artists move away from their profession. This is the present crisis. In order to overcome this situation, the artists should identify some other agencies to promote the art. This study reveals that the artists can't survive in the present socio economic situation. They cannot establish their identity in the present competitive world and have to turn to the cultural incumbents for support and sponsorship, to sustain in the field of their specialization. Otherwise it will be difficult for them to survive in the present world. Economically, it is hard for an average artist to have a decent life in the present socio-cultural context. Only a few artists are well paid. A mediocre artist is often hired for a purpose and fired after that purpose.

Artists form communities other than *Pothuval* and *Marars* have not been permitting to sing at the *Sopanam* and to play the musical instruments like *Chenda*, *Idakka* and *Maddalam* within the temple premises. This insistence can be seen in a large scale in mid Kerala. The desire of Njeralath Harigovindan to sing in the *Sopanam* of some temples was denied as he was born as the son of a *Pothuval* in a *Nair* woman. Thus by hesitating to offer opportunities to the newborn artists, caste discriminations have also been playing a role in the decline of *Sopana Sangeetham*. When the administration of the temples was taken over by the Devaswom Boards, they found it unnecessary. As a result of this attitude of the Devaswom Boards, especially in Southern Kerala, so many *Sopana* Singers lost their jobs in temples and they had to thrive hard to earn a living.

Traditional artists do not have a powerful trade union as if in the film industry. Art is not an integral ingredient or basic necessity of the society but it is only a subsidiary component. The mode of entertainment of a person is directly related to his/her social status and economic background. The performance scores of the traditional arts are historically designed for a select few and to sacrifice their aesthetic concepts for promotion really deteriorates them<sup>15</sup>. Traditional arts should always remain in their sublime bliss.



It should be added that Kerala society is extremely fast changing. The high literacy level and fewer employment opportunities have created a huge exodus of Malayalis to the big cities of India, the Gulf States, and Western countries. The foreign cash flow into the country, for instance, has on the one hand successfully supported temple arts and festivals. Its socio-economic impact, on the other hand, de-stabilises the life of the traditional temple drummers and ritual expert communities. If an art form dies once, its practitioners will cease to exist and then it is merely archived and museumised. So the preservation and conservation of our cultural heritage and promotion of all forms of art, chiefly the performing and visual arts whether it is tribal, folk, classical, ritual or modern assume great importance and is of greatest relevance today.

## Conclusion

Many temple art forms have been forgotten and have faded from public memory though they are rooted in our culture and traditions. In order to promote the traditional music system from their present state of stagnation, a conceptual change among the artists and a policy level paradigm shift among the incumbents are inevitable. Now the cultural Ministry of the State and Human Resource Development Ministry of the Central government are giving scholarships and fellowships to junior and senior traditional temple artists. This will encourage them to stick into their profession without leaving for other lucrative professions. If the profession is lucrative, artists will remain in the profession and encourage others to join their profession. The encouragement of the art and artists is closely related as it is the artist who brought the particular art forms before the public. Both the art and artists can grow only with the sincere co-operation from the part of the masses. First of all, we have to nurture a society capable of imbibing the art form in their hearts. Only then the unique art form of Sopana Sangeetham can sustain in the country.

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# **HRD INTERVENTION IN VEGETABLE AND FRUIT PROMOTION COUNCIL KERALAM (VFPCK) WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON TRAINING PROGRAMS**

**\* Sreekumar V.N**

Unknown to many, one of India's most successful agriculture development projects is being run in Kerala. Its activities and achievements put to shame much of what our state agriculture departments in this country have been doing since Independence. In VFPCK, a number of HRD intervention programs have been providing four competency developments. Among them, training is important. They have separate department for training. As a profit making organization, VFPCK wants to improve its services. But it has so many drawbacks in providing training. They are providing training in the traditional way. They have no proper mechanism for identifying the training needs. Again, they didn't assess the impact of training in the organizational and field level. They have been conducting the training in usual way and didn't make any scientific intervention upon it.

**Key Words:** HRD Intervention, Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam, Training Programs

## **1. Introduction**

Unknown to many, one of India's most successful agriculture development projects is being run in Kerala. Its activities and achievements put to shame much of what our state agriculture departments in this country have been doing since Independence.

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Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK) is one of the most successful agriculture development project in this country. Since its inception in November 1993 Kerala Agriculture Development Project (old name of VFPCCK) has disproved so many myths we are hearing everyday about Indian agriculture.

Myths like Indian farmers cannot be helped without giving subsidies; farmers are not in the habit of repaying bank loans; farmers will always be exploited by the middle men and nothing much can be done about it, the gap between the institutional research and farmers problem will always remain unbridgeable; agriculture extension project will necessarily be expenditure projects that soon run out of money and run out of halt; any farmer oriented development activity will get politicized and bureaucratized; university graduates are only fit for desk jobs and not of much use to actual farmers..... the list goes on.

Today ten years from the start VFPCCK is assisting nearly 35,000 vegetable and banana farmers in Kerala cultivating a gross area of 13,273.80 hectares spread over 9 districts of Kerala without giving any subsidies. Most of these are marginal farmers cultivating between 50 cents and two acre of mainly leased land. Nearly 75 of these farmers have witnessed an increase in their income because of VFPCCK's activities. 86% of them have reported an increase in area of their cultivation. More than 17,000 farmers most of them cultivating in leased land are receiving over 38 crores of bank loans. The credit recovery percentage of the bank loan has been nearly 90 to 100. Prior to the arrival of VFPCCK less than 50 of these farmers were able to get bank loans for agriculture. These enviable growths has attained by applying special HRD interventions in the entire organizational and field level.

Human competencies are very critical than those working in services. Those in banking sector, voluntary agencies, rural development; health and family planning, education and other service sectors have to deal constantly with people. For example an agriculture development worker deals directly with other people those who had less of education. He needs to influence these thinking and bring attitude change. Because of this, competency development is very critical for these sectors. VFPCCK is an exemption, where HRD has been given due importance

In the field of management science, 1980s can be called as a decade of computers and HRD. 1990s are likely to continue to be decade of new technologies in every field including human resources. It is well recognized everywhere that human competency development is an essential prerequisite for any growth or development effort. Research, experimentation and experience in the field of HRD have grown enormously in the last decade. Many organizations have set up new departments known as "HRD departments" which symbolize the recognition of importance of people's competency development. These

departments have done remarkable work in attempting to find out new ways of developing employee competencies. In addition to the well known mechanism of training, experiments are being undertaken to use performance appraisal, potential appraisals, feedback and counseling, mentoring, job rotation, OD intervention, career development systems etc.

In VFPCCK, a number of HRD intervention programs have been providing four competency developments. Among them, training is important. They have separate department for trainings. As a profit making organization, VFPCCK wants to improve its services. But it has so many drawbacks in providing training. They are providing the trainings in the traditional way. They have no proper mechanism for identifying the training needs. Again, they didn't assess the impact of training in the organizational and field level. They have been conducting the training in usual way and didn't make any scientific intervention upon it. These problems of the organization lead to make a subject for the study named "HRD Intervention in VFPCCK with Special Emphasis on Training Programs in Kollam and Thrissur Districts."

## 2. Objectives

Primary Objective of the study is to analyse the HRD intervention in VFPCCK through training programs. The Satisfaction regarding training programs among participants and need for further training programs in the organisation was also analysed.

The following hypothesis were tested and reached at conclusion that leads to the findings of the study. There will be no significant difference-in the impact of HRD intervention training programs among the managers and farmers.

There will be no significant difference in the impact of HRD intervention training programs with respect to the educational qualification of the participants.

There will be no significant difference in the impact of HRD intervention training programmes with respect to experience of the participants.

## 3. Methodology

In a descriptive study the investigator does not manipulate the variables, subject or the sample to any experimental treatments or arrange for events to happen, but the events are purely observed, described and analysed.

The sampling frame for the study is given from the District Project Area Offices of Thrissur and Kollam districts. The sampling frame of the study consists 16 managers, 3961 farmers in 284 SHGs from Thrissur district and 12 managers and 1584 farmers in 198 SHGs from Kollam district.

Separate questionnaire were prepared for managers and farmers. The investigator visited the SHG meetings and distributed the questionnaire among them and collected it. The same procedures were also used to collect data from managers.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

Table.1.

##### Mean Standard Deviation and percentage of the impact level of Participants

Impact level	No. of Respondents	Mean	S.D.	%
Up to 98.80 (low)	21	81.52	13.79	11.80
98.80-124.80 (Average)	135	112.66	6.95	75.85
Above 124.80 (High)	22	129.73	2.21	12.35
Total	178	111.80	13.00	100.00

Table.1. reveals that the mean value of average category (112.66) is higher than population mean (111.80). This indicates that the impact of HRD intervention training programs is above average in VFPCCK. The findings obtained by Job Hages (1984) are in agreement with the present results. The reason for these findings may be the quality of training programs provided by VFPCCK.

VFPCCK is giving more importance to training strategy and training methodology (subjective variable). This is one reason for the above result. Participant's motivation and absorption capacity (objective variables) is very high in participants and this will also contribute the high value.

Table.2.

##### Mean and Standard Deviation of the impact of training on Managers and Farmers

Category	Total No.	Mean	S.D.
Manegers	14	120.57	9.31
Farmers	164	111.05	13.02

The table.2. reveals that the mean value of impact is 120.57 and Standard Deviation as 3.02 which indicate that the mean impact of managers is high as compared total impact

(111.80) of training in VFPCCK. This higher value of mean is due to the high level of Managers' absorption capacity and motivation.

Again, table shows that the mean value as 111.05 and Standard Deviation as 13.02. This indicates that the mean value is less as compared to that of total impact (111.8) and impact produced on managers (120.57).

Table.3

**Mean, Standard Deviation and 't' value of total impact of HRD intervention training programs among Managers And Farmers**

Category	No	Mean	S.D.	t
Managers	14	120.57	13.02	3.54**
Farmers	164	111.05	9.31	

(\*\* Significant at 0.01 level)

Table.3. indicates that the obtained t' value 3.54 is statically significant at 0.01 level. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the impact of HRD intervention training programs among the managers and farmers. The higher mean value of managers indicates that the impact of HRD intervention training programs on Manager is higher than that of farmers. This may be due to the higher motivation level and high absorption capacity of managers.

Table.4

**ANOVA of impact of HRD intervention training program with respect to Educational Level of participants**

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F
Between Groups	612.48	3	204.16	1.21
Within Groups	29305.64	174	168.423	
Total	29918.12	177		

It can be seen from the table.4. the obtained F ratio (1.21) is not statistically significant. So it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the impact of HRD intervention training programs with respect to educational qualification of the participants.



Table.5.

**ANOVA of impact of HRD intervention training program  
with respect to experience of participants**

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean squares	F
Between Groups	745.62	3	248.54	1.48
Within Groups	29172.50	174	167.6	
Total	29918.12	177		

It can be seen from the table.5. that obtained F” ratio (1.480) is not statistically significant. So it can be concluded that there will be no significant difference in the impact of HRD intervention training program with respect to experience of participants.

Table .6.

**Mean and percentage values of the satisfaction of  
Mangers and Farmers**

Category	No. of respondents	Mean
Farmers	164	2.2
Managers	14	2.57
Total	178	2.23

From Table.6. it is noted that the mean value of farmers is 2.2 and percentage. By considering the case of managers it is 2.57 and respectively.

When the scores are compared, it is clear that the score of managers are high. This means that the satisfaction of managers is high as compared with the farmers. The reason for this may be the difference in the awareness level about the concept of training programs as an HRD intervention tool.

For analysing the relationship between the objective variables taken for the study are relevance of training, training methodology, training strategy and feedback mechanism and subjective variables are trainee motivation, absorption capacity and opinion for improving training programs and the outcome variables is the impact.

Table 7.

**Correlation between subjective variable and outcome variable**

Variables	Subjective variable	Outcome variable
Subjective variable	1	0.93 **
Outcome variable	0.93 **	1

The table,7. shows that there exists significant correlation between subjective variable and outcome variable. The above result can be interpreted as, if we give more interventions on subjective variables like methodology and strategy the outcome will be more.

Table.8.

**Correlation between objective variable and outcome variable**

Variable	Objective variables	Outcome variable
Objective variable	1	0.72**
Outcome variable	0.72	1

The table above indicates that there exist significant correlation between objective variables and outcome variable. The above result can be interpreted as if we give interventions to change the motivation and absorption capacity of the participants the outcome will be more.

**5. Findings**

The study reveals that the mean impact of training in average category is (112.66) which is higher than that of population mean (111.80).

Study reveals that the mean impact of training on managers are (120.57) and farmers are 111.05.

There is a significant difference in the impact of HRD intervention training programmes among the managers and farmers ( $t=3.54$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). The managers have high impact than the farmers.

The study reveals that the educational level of participants is not a significant factor ( $F$  1.21,  $P>.05$ ) in the impact of HRD intervention training program in VEPCCK

The study brought out the fact that experience in VEPCCK is not a significant factor ( $F$  1.48,  $P>.05$ ) in the impact of HRD intervention training programs.

The study explores the facts that mean of the satisfaction level of the farmers is 2.2 and that of managers is 2.57. The managers have high satisfaction level than farmers.

The study concludes that there is significant relations between subjective variable and outcome variable ( $r=0.93$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) i.e. training methodology and training strategy has a positive relationship with impact.

The study explore the fact that there is a significant relation between objective variable and outcome variable ( $r=0.72$ ,  $P<0.01$ ) i.e. participants motivation and absorption capacity with impact.

## 6. Conclusion

The study concludes that HRD intervention training programs have considerable positive impact on the performance of managers and farmers in VFPC and managers got relatively high impact than that of farmers after getting trainings. The study reveals that the educational level of participants and duration of experience in VFPC is not significant in producing the impact. The study explores the facts that managers have high satisfaction level than farmers. The study concludes that there are significant relations between subjective variable (training methodology, training strategy) and impact of training programs. The study explores the fact that there is a significant relation between objective variable (trainee motivation, absorption capacity and opinion for improving training programs) and impact of training programs and finally the managers have high satisfaction level than farmers.

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# ECONOMIC BACKDROP OF SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS IN TRAVANCORE

\* Subhash.S

## Abstract

*Socio-Reform Movements dawned in Travancore in the nineteenth Century helped a lot in restructuring the traditional caste-centric, obscurantist society. While analyzing the structural changes in Travancore due to social movements, the economic backdrop of these movements also should be analysed and interpreted. The rise and growth of colonialism and the intervention of capitalism as a mode of production was an important economic change occurred in Travancore in the nineteenth century. The introduction of finance capitalism, beginning of plantation industries, modern transport and communication etc economically altered Travancore in a form of what A.G. Frank called, 'development of under development'. But these modernization activities helped to destroy the feudal mode of production in Travancore. Caste and feudalism worked together in Travancore during this period. Thus these economic changes gradually shook the very foundation of caste system and its related social inequalities like untouchability, unapproachability etc. More over the transition from feudalism to capitalism opened umpteen numbers of new opportunities to the people of the Dalit and Depressed communities in Travancore. They got employment in plantations, coir factories, rubber factories etc. This economically empowered these people. Once they were economically empowered, they were denied of basic civic rights by both the State*

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*and the caste Hindus. The Socio Reform Movements emerged in this context were instrumental in social change in the newly emerged market oriented economic system.*

**Keywords:** Metropolis, periphery, mode of production, finance capitalism, under development, structural change, free trade, feudalism, caste feudal interplay, public sphere

## **Introduction**

In all societies economy form the base and the rest is the super structure. Social movements in Travancore played a significant role in the expansion of public sphere in Travancore. The economic backdrop of these social movements and social changes is an important area of study. The shift from feudalism to capitalism in Travancore in the nineteenth century due to the influence of the colonial capitalist intervention affected Travancore society very much. Travancore became a periphery of western metropolis during this period.

## **Objective of the Study**

The principal objective of the study is to analyse the impact of economic changes in Travancore in the nineteenth century and how it influenced the social movements in Travancore. At the same time it also focuses upon the mediating role of colonial modernity in the social change in Travancore. The linkage of Travancore economy with the economy of the metropolis is also taken for analysis and interpretation.

## **Methodology**

The methodology is analytical cum narrative. An inter-disciplinary approach is also followed.

Colonial penetration in Travancore manifested itself in the change in mode of production. Even before the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Travancore economy was intertwined with the international capitalist economy by the colonial capitalist class. This expropriation is accomplished through the action of the immanent laws of the capitalist production itself; through the centralization of the capitalists<sup>1</sup>. The destruction of the existing feudal mode of production was the need of the hour. Capitalism involves usurping of the control of means of production and labour power. The colonial economic and administrative policies always facilitated such a control over means of production and labour. The process of world capitalism entered an altogether new phase in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century with knitting together of the world economy when metropolitan capital began to directly intervene in the sphere of production, molding these frontiers to meet the needs of the world market<sup>2</sup>. Travancore became a periphery of British Empire after the signing of the subsidiary treaty in 1805 with the British. The periphery supplied raw materials and provided new markets. The position was that Britain settled more than one third of her deficits with Europe and the

United States through India<sup>3</sup>. The Periphery Travancore State provided differently coerced wage labour to the British metropolis. The appropriation of the surplus from the peripheral areas by the core was the underlying aspect of world capitalism. In southern India, the labour power of Dalit women and children was particularly sought because these formed yet cheaper source of labour<sup>4</sup>. The destruction of existing feudal structure was needed for the availability of wage labourers. The colonial policies for emancipation of the downtrodden caste in Travancore could be analyzed in this direction. The insidious advance of metropolitan capital into the high ranges of southern India brought in its wake the gradual peripheralisation of the region – its increase in participation in the global division of labour<sup>5</sup>.

The first thing that the British government in India did was surveying the natural resources in India for capitalist penetration. In the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the imperialist government was occupied itself with two major concerns: (i) An enquiry into and detailed survey of the biotic resources of the various colonies of the empire and a quest to establish the means by which these resources could be rendered accessible to the European capitalists for further capitalist accumulation<sup>6</sup>. Mention may be made in this context about the survey conducted by Ward and Conner in both Travancore and Cochin. After the survey they submitted a detailed report about the geography, flora, fauna, mineral resources, forest resources etc in Travancore to the British government. Later on, the report was published in two volumes. The objective of the survey was, to get a clear picture about the resources in Travancore periphery to expand the tentacles of metropolitan exploitation. The imperial botanical conference held at London in 1824, was a historical context with the botanists themselves, enlightening the world commerce<sup>7</sup>. Capitalism is present wherever industrial provision to the needs of human group is carried out by the method of enterprise, irrespective of what need is involved<sup>8</sup>.

Societal transition in Travancore ever since the second half of the nineteenth century is very much related to the changes in the structure of the economy of Travancore. The economy of Travancore was purely feudal in nature. The Janmi system or landlordism emerged in Travancore during the medieval times as a mode of production received its highest stage of exploitative nature during the eighteenth century. The *Uralar* (Brahmin landlords) and the *Karalar* (Nair intermediaries) exploited the *Paniyalar* (Tenants). In these relations of productions the former two groups lived on the efforts of the last group. The medieval temple culture gave ideological support for the preparation of this feudal structure. Thus both feudalism and Bhakti went on hand in hand. The position of king had been reduced as mere a feudal chief. In most cases the feudal chief did not obey him. Venad, the nucleus from which Travancore emerged was not free from Bhakti-feudal domination. They became so powerful because land was the basis of the economy and the lion's share of the total area of the land was under the ownership of them. The possession

of land by the State was nominal. As the income was mainly derived from cultivation in the land, the feudatories became economically so powerful and they even dared to challenge the king. In short, the feudal elements enjoying the patronage of the priestly class had the upper hand in the affairs of the State. Unlike other great portion of British India, where, in theory the Government was the lord of all lands, in the Malabar Coast, including Travancore, *Jenmis*, mostly Brahmins, had been unquestionably accepted as lords of the greater portion of the land.<sup>9</sup> There was a regular and complete succession of authorities who were mostly feudatories exercising all the powers of the Government. They were charged with assessment and collection of revenues, administration of justice, punishment of offenders, command of militia and defense of the State.<sup>10</sup>

Conl John Munro became the Resident-Dewan of Travancore after Veluthambi Dalawa's revolt against the British. He introduced so many administrative reforms and confiscated the properties of 378 temples and converted it into Sarkar land. The temples were administered as any other department of the government and their revenue, primarily the huge rental income derived from control of rice-tracts became a part of the general revenue.<sup>11</sup> The modernization and restructuring of the administrative machinery of the State weakened the power of feudal barons. The new administrative and revenue policies evinced by Munro helped a lot the British to start metropolitan oriented production system in Travancore. He started reclamation of waste land in Travancore. Much number of Ezhavas, Pulayas, and Muslims were engaged in the reclamation. They were allowed cultivation in the land fully tax free for a stipulated period of time. It created a small group of capitalist class among the Avarnas. Mention may be made in the context about the rise of Alummuttil Channars, an Ezhava family that became a powerful capitalist group in Travancore.

The British colonial penetration into the economy of Travancore though started in the first half of the nineteenth century, revealed its full exploitative character during the second half. However, large scale intervention by the British in the economy of Travancore by and large began after the 1850's, with the new tariff policy and the emerging plantation sector which was dominated by British capital.<sup>12</sup> In 1865 Travancore entered into a trade treaty called the Inter portal Trade convention. The essence of the treaty was that Travancore was required to follow the British Indian tariff rates for all its imports and exports.<sup>13</sup> It was an economic counterpart of the subsidiary treaty of 1805. According to the convention, export duty charged at Tiruvithamkur ports could not exceed 5 percent or go below the British Indian rate. No import duty could be charged by the Travancore Government on goods produced in British India or on foreign goods first landed in British India and brought to the State. Similarly, the Tiruvithamkur produce reaching British Indian ports could be admitted free.<sup>14</sup> The new tariff policy initiated by British government gave a great set back to the indigenous trading class. There was a powerful trading class in Travancore during



the first half of the nineteenth century. The Travancore Raja used to borrow money from such traders to pay the tribute to the British.<sup>15</sup> The free trade policy caused the decline of the indigenous trading class. In the process of making almost all imports duty free, first the state lost substantial amounts of public revenue.<sup>16</sup> Almost 88 percent of the total external trade of Travancore was with British India. The British government always revised the tariff policy to earn maximum profit. The history of trade in Travancore since the date of the Inter portal trade convention is only the record of a series of revisions of tariff in line with those of British India.<sup>17</sup> Capitalism, with its rules, attitudes, advantages and risks betokened modernity, flexibility and rationality from its earliest beginnings.<sup>18</sup>

The chief items of exports from Travancore were coir, *copra* and other coconut products. There was a great demand for coir products in the European market. The government imposed export duty on the products of coconut tree which was the chief industry of the state. Though the British Indian government persistently advised Travancore to abolish export duties, the latter pleaded inability for there was no other avenue to compensate the loss of revenue from imports on coconut of the Inter portal Convention.<sup>19</sup> The steady demand for coconut products in European markets caused the flourishing of the industry based on coconut tree products. As far as Travancore was concerned the community which engaged in industries related to coconut tree was the Ezhavas. In coir factories, Ezhavas formed 65 percent and Christians about 25 percent of the work force.<sup>20</sup> The rise in demand of coconut tree products attracted the attention of the European capitalists and they began to invest money in a large scale. Between 1871 and 1891 the price of copra doubled and coir tripled. The total value of export of coconut tree products like copra, coconut oil and coir in the year 1906 alone carried a value of Rs. 91,08,141 against the total value of export during the year Rs.2,86,32,766.<sup>21</sup> There was a great demand for coir mats in Europe. It was a fashion to use coir mats in British houses. The steady demand for coconut products economically empowered a large section of people of the Ezhava community. Thus there emerged a strong capitalist class among the Ezhavas in Travancore.

The second half of nineteenth century was marked by the expansion of finance capitalism in Travancore. A number of plantations were started during this period. Beckford, for instance, pursuing a neo-Marxist frame in analyzing various plantation economies and societies the world over, has argued that the plantations in the colonies were not agents of developments as claimed by modernization theorists but rather were “tributaries of imperialist expansion”.<sup>22</sup> But plantations opened new opportunities to the Avarnas. They got employment in native as well as foreign plantations especially in Ceylon. One explanation might be that in the situation of 1870 many people were able to survive without the help of the mission, as large scale employment was offered by the Public Works Department and the coffee estates in the neighboring hills.<sup>23</sup> Social reformers like Ayyankali also favoured

plantation industries because it opened new opportunities to the Pulayas and Parayas. The social fighter of the Pulayas and their representative in the Sree Moolam Assembly, Ayyankali, also favoured the idea of recruitment of Pulaya families to the plantations.<sup>24</sup> They got a regular income from the plantations and thus they were exposed to a money economy. More over as most of the plantations were located in far off places, they got an opportunity for mobility in public places. This changing situation gradually weakened the power of *Janmis* (land lords) and the Travancore government abolished *Uzhiyam* (forced labour without remuneration). On 7 August 1893, the government took a final decision on the issue. Accordingly, the *UzhiyaViruthi* system was abolished permanently.<sup>25</sup> The changing economic scenario compelled Travancore government to introduce land reform. The government issued two proclamations for land reform, Pandarapattam Proclamation on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1865 and Janmi Kudiyan Proclamation in 1867. In an economy, like that of Travancore, where land was considered the most desired form of wealth as well as the major source of livelihood, it caused a spirit in transaction revolving around land, and this paved the way for expansion in economic activities.<sup>26</sup> These structural changes in the economy of Travancore gave impetus to the people of the depressed caste communities to question the social evils and inequalities in Travancore. It was in this changing economic scenario that socio reform movements under the leadership of Vaikunda Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Pandit Karuppan, Poikayil Yohannan and the like emerged.

## Conclusion

The socio reform movements in Travancore owe a lot to the structural transformation of economy in the nineteenth century. Travancore economy was intertwined with international capitalist economy during this period. It helped to destroy the feudal economy of Travancore. The changing economic conditions opened new opportunities to the Dalits and the depressed. There emerged middle class among them and they were not ready to accept the inequalities in the society. This situation paved the way for the rise and growth of social reform movements in Travancore.

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# THE ROLE OF ANJENGO FORT IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF TRAVANCORE

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## Abstract

*Historical relics are not mere monuments of yesterdays, but the bearers of the stories of previous generations and incidents which transformed the society drastically. The forts of Kerala played a vital role in all the facets of Kerala, especially in the fields of military and commerce. Among them Anjengo fort deserves a special place as it is the first fort of the English in Kerala which played a decisive role in the transformation of Travancore. In ordinary cases, the forts only serve the cause of the master and not the interest of any other party. But in the case of Anjengo, it served both the English and the State of Travancore. The present study attempts to analyse the role played by the fort in the efforts of Marthanda Varma in the political consolidation of Travancore. It also attempts to understand the role played by the fort in making the English supreme in the commercial as well as political realms.*

**Key Words:** Blockade, Reinforcements, Candies, Warehouses, Merchandise

## Introduction

Anjengo fort is the first fort of the English East India Company in Kerala. It helped the English in ousting the other European powers from the area and thereby gaining considerable benefits from the area. As situated in a geographically strategic area, it helped

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the English in procuring the merchandise even from the very interiors of the land. The fort also helped the rulers of Travancore like Marthanda Varma in consolidating the country politically. It was this very fort which became instrumental in the establishment of British supremacy in Travancore.

### **Objective of the Study**

The present study attempts to trace out the role played by the fort in the progress of the commercial prospects of the English in Kerala. It also attempts to analyse the various theories regarding the origin of the fort and tries to fix it with authentic evidences. The study also attempts to assess the role of the geographical footing of the fort which helped the English in excelling other European powers in commerce.

### **Methodology**

The methodology adopted in the study is analytical and qualitative. Many primary sources were utilized to assess the commercial transactions, for getting a picture of the quantity of articles traded through the fort.

### **History of Anjengo Fort**

Anjengo, the first British settlement in Travancore exerted deep impact on the colonial history of our state. Even before the British established their trade settlement here, the place was a renowned commercial centre in the Deep South. Largely cultivated with coconut trees, Anjengo from the early days had its fame as the best coir-producing centre in the world. The availability of calico and pepper added more glory to this place and countries like Egypt, Greece and Rome made good use of the supplies from Anjengo.

What makes Anjengo so special was its peculiar geographical situation. Situated in between the Anjengo backwater and the Arabian Sea, having a coastal area of five kilometers, it seemed to be a paradise for the merchants of medieval times. More than that, provided with the splendid means of water communication, it had the capacity to serve as a good base for the commercial undertakings. This position enabled the traders to go to the interior of the country, especially to the rich pepper producing areas like Attingal and Neyyattinkara for procuring merchandise. Again, this place provided the facility to watch the movements of the enemies coming from Ceylon. So this hamlet had everything for it to be a commercial centre like backwaters, coastal areas, harbour, inland water communication, coir merchants, spices, etc.

Thus realising the commercial importance of Anjengo, foreign powers like the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English, one by one, tried to establish their position at Anjengo. Of course, the first to come to this place were the Portuguese. They made some

fortunes here, but their arrogant nature and the forcible conversions made them unpopular and so the Portuguese trade declined. They were followed by the Dutch, who established a settlement here. But what make Anjengo so famous are its connections with the English.

### **Theories Regarding the Origin of the Fort**

Actually the English had already started establishing their contacts in Travancore right from the 1680s. First of all, they entered into friendship with the Rani of Attingal and gained two places for establishing factories – Retorah (Vettoor) and Bringhom (Vizhinjam) in 1688.<sup>1</sup> Daniel Acworth was the chief of these factories.<sup>2</sup> But the English could not make great progress here because of the Dutch interventions. So they were looking for a more favorable place that they found in Anjengo.

However, historians have a difference of opinion regarding the above statement. Some of the historians opine that the Anjengo settlement came into being before the Retorah and Bringhom factories. In fact, several historians raised many views about the Anjengo settlement. William Logan states that it was in 1684 that the English got permission from the Rani of Attingal for the construction of a factory.<sup>3</sup> To Nagam Aiya, “the first political and commercial relation between Travancore and the E.E.I.C began in 1673 when a factory was established at Anjengo.”<sup>4</sup> C.A. Innes is of the view that “the English obtained a site for the factory from the Rani of Attingal in 1684 and permission to build a fort in 1690”.<sup>5</sup> This view was later echoed by the historians like K.P. Padmanabha Menon and K.K. Kusuman. According to Biddulph, “in November 1693, John Barbourne was sent to Attingal, where, by his successful diplomacy, the sandy spit of Anjengo was granted to the English as site for a fort”.<sup>6</sup> Bruce, the official historian of the Company has given the year 1695 as the date of the beginning of the settlement.<sup>7</sup>

So amidst these differing statements, it is difficult to pick the right one. The only reliable source to clarify this issue was the company records, but unfortunately the early records of Anjengo fort were destroyed by fire. However, we have one authentic source in the form of a letter from fort St. George of Madras. In that letter, Barbourne and Daniel Acworth gave information to the authorities on the success of their negotiations with the Rani of Attingal for securing permission to build a fort.<sup>8</sup> So from this, it can be assumed that the permission was granted in 1694 and its earlier activities began in 1695.

But the modern researches, based on the records of the London Archives vividly give the exact dates of the signing of the treaty. As per these studies, the treaty was signed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1694 between the English and the Queen of Attingal.<sup>9</sup> As per the treaty, the English got possession of Anjengo on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1694 and hoisted the English flag there on the same day.<sup>10</sup> The Rani who gave the grant to the Company was Aswathy Tirunal, who was popularly known as the “Pepper Queen”.<sup>11</sup>

## The Queen of Attingal and the English

Whichever be the exact date of the establishment of the factory at Anjengo, the English had a mission there – to break up the monopoly of the pepper trade which was enjoyed by their rivals, the Dutch. Very soon, they burnt down the trading outposts of the Dutch at Anjengo on the plea that it had given cover to one of their enemies. As the situation was tense owing to the threats from the Dutch and because of the complex political situation, the English decided to fortify this place. This alarmed the Dutch and they fermented suspicion in the mind of the Queen about the intention of the English. Actually, it was said, in the treaty itself that the English were provided with the right to construct a fort. But because of the Dutch intrigues, the Queen was influenced and she ordered the English factors to stop the construction of the fort.

But John Barbourne, the chief of Anjengo, ignored the orders of the Queen and decided to construct the fort by any means. Moreover, he decided to construct the fort using stones. But since the laws of the country prohibited all persons from building with stone or brick except the royal family, the company found it tough to obtain artifices and workmen.<sup>12</sup> Therefore Barbourne asked Bombay Government to send their masons, stone-cutters or some workmen who were well-versed in fortification.<sup>13</sup> It is said that stones from Tellicherry were used to construct the fort.<sup>14</sup> Again, the English faced problems in obtaining chunam. Though it was available in plenty in Quilon and Tuticorin, the Dutch influence in these areas hindered the English from obtaining chunam. Once again, Barbourne asked the Bombay authorities to send chunam for the construction of the fort. The foundation stone of the fort was laid in the month of October 1696.<sup>15</sup> The fort they designed was of 90 yards square to be mounted with 60 to 70 guns.

However, the work of the fort progressed only very slowly and continued in fits and starts for five years. At every stage, they had to face several obstacles especially lack of finance and the disapproval of the Court of Directors.<sup>16</sup> Again, they had to face another great problem from the Rani of Attingal. In fact, she had decided to blockade the fort to starve the English out. But as there was no patrolling on the coast, the siege proved to be ineffective. Soon the Rani sent a troop, but was defeated. Amidst all these difficulties, the fort was completed, which in later periods, proved to be one of the greatest strongholds of the English in the South. John Barbourne was appointed as the chief of the fort and Verdamon was the company's broker.<sup>17</sup> There were a total of 31 chiefs during the period 1694-1810, all of them made great fortunes for the company and made the English the de facto rulers of Travancore in the long run.

Although there was some rupture in the relations with the Rani of Attingal in the 1690s owing to the construction of the fort, all the misunderstandings were soon cleared



by the Ajengo authorities and they once again entered into amicable terms with her. Then, using this friendly relationship, the English gathered maximum profit by involving in vigorous trade, especially in pepper and cotton. But as the English were steadfast in their loyalty to the Rani, they ignored the Madampimars and Pillamars, which in later years resulted in the enmity between both. The English had also roused the popular feeling against them by resorting to unscrupulous methods of trading. All these led to an unfortunate incident which is referred to in history as the Attingal Rebellion. In this incident which took place on April 15, 1721, the natives murdered the English factor and his men who were on their way to give their usual presents to the Rani.<sup>18</sup> The people soon blockaded the fort also. But the fort was defended from the siege by the heroic efforts of gunner Innes with the help of a small garrison.<sup>19</sup> Later, the fort was relieved with the reinforcements from Tellicherry. All these developments have been depicted as the Attingal Rebellion, about which detailed description is not given here because volumes and volumes have been written on that subject. However, this incident had been hailed by many and sometimes been depicted as the first organized struggle against the English in the country.

Although the English had lifted the blockade with the help of Tellicherry, the conditions remained tense for a long time. The natives were suspicious and so the English always expected to be attacked by them. This situation forced them to maintain a strong garrison at Anjengo which required huge expense. More than that, owing to the negative character of the people, procuring of commercial articles became even more difficult. Thus overall, the company had a hard time during 1721-28. During that period, the pepper supply went down from 3,000 candies per annum to 1,000 candies, reflecting their decadence in trade. Thus, the high military expenses and fall in commercial transactions made the Anjengo settlement an uneconomic one.

What benefited the company during all these hardships was that their relations with the Queen of Attingal were strengthened further. Moreover, these developments led the English to establish connections with the king of Travancore also. The Queen, earlier suspected to have some role in the Rebellion, dispatched letters to Madras and sent a deputation to Tellicherry, "to express her horror at the barbarities committed by her people."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the English were provided with compensation for this incident, which is well proved by two identical *olas*. They were issued by the king of Travancore and the Queen of Attingal on January 10, 1731, conferring the grant of two gardens in Chirayinkil as compensation for the loss suffered by them in 1721. It is stated "when on the April 15, 1721, he (the Commander of Anjengo) and ten other persons went to Attingal to make presents to the Queen; they were killed by the treachery of the Pillamar and Kariakar, who seized the money of the company."<sup>21</sup>

## Relations with Travancore

The Attingal Rebellion was chiefly attributable to the Pillamars and Kariakars, who hailed themselves as the most powerful, even more than the king. This attitude not only created problems for the English at Anjengo but for the king himself. So in this regard, the reigning king Rama Varma (1720-29) thought in terms of eliminating these feudal elements. But for that he needed a strong ally. He found this strong supporter in the English at Anjengo. The Company, on their side, by now realised that as far as the king was weak, they could not enjoy a free flourishing trade. So they were ready to help the king and to strengthen his position, if they were provided with trade concessions and privileges. Hence both the parties looked to each other for assistance and this resulted in the signing of treaties. The man who was instrumental in aligning these two powers together was none other than Marthanda Varma, the heir apparent of Travancore, who already realised the superior military strength and organisation of the English at Anjengo.

Thus the ties between these two parties were strengthened from April 25, 1723 onwards.<sup>22</sup> In the same year, Marthanda Varma as the Prince of Neyyattinkara entered into an agreement with the English chief Alexander Orme on behalf of the king of Travancore.<sup>23</sup> The treaty of Anjengo, as it was called, was the first treaty entered into by E.E.I.C with an Indian State. By this treaty, the king agreed<sup>24</sup> (1) to erect a fort at Kulachal to establish a mint for coining Panams and (2) to be “in league and united in good friendship with the Honorable Company”.

Both the sides were further brought closer as a result of another agreement between them on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1723.<sup>25</sup> By this agreement, the king as a consolation measure, agreed to punish those who committed great harm to the Company. With all this, the misunderstandings of the Company with regard to the king were removed. So now they also decided to strengthen the arms of the king in his venture to eradicate the feudal elements. Therefore, the Anjengo fort declared its intention “in spite of money expenses, to put down the enemies and subject the country to the king”.<sup>26</sup> This declaration, along with the king’s decision to suppress his enemies, was of great importance in the history of Travancore because they led to the strengthening of king’s position and also to the unification of Travancore.

In consideration of this offer of help, the king of Travancore agreed<sup>27</sup> (1) to establish a warehouse at Kulachal, (2) to order for the supply of 10,000 piece goods every year in various kinds and (3) not to supply any other European nation any goods, which were necessary to the English, and to permit the Company to collect the customs on all imports and exports. In the customs accounts, the Company was to pay the king six thousand Panams annually “in gold or other articles on account”. This agreement virtually handed over the monopoly of trade to the English at the fort of Anjengo.

Thus one can see that Travancore and the English at Anjengo fort entered into perpetual friendship, which benefited both the powers. In fact, it was the Travancoreans who gained more from these agreements. To them, the English help, especially their better war materials proved extremely useful in their wars. Marthanda Varma utilized these in his wars against the Dutch, Quilon, Kayamkulam etc. This also enabled him to win over his Madampimars in his strife for political expansion and the consolidation of Travancore. But instances of the active support of the English in the war field, especially in the sending of troops to help the Travancoreans, are absent or rather stray. Still, it is quite evident that in his victory over the Dutch, Marthanda Varma received a fair amount of war supplies from the English. In the war of 1739 (Attingal), we have clear proof of the English assistance in the field. The Dutch records mention that in the Attingal campaign (December 1739) the English helped Travancore with “140 soldiers, 500 guns and six barrels of powder”.<sup>28</sup> This is further attested by a Matilakam record dated Markazhi 918 M.E. (December 1743) which mentions the expenditure incurred in supplying provisions to the English residing at Attingal.<sup>29</sup> The Anjengo records also testify this fact. So in the light of the above statements, it is very clear that it was the State of Travancore or rather Marthanda Varma who made better use of the agreements with the English at Anjengo. What is more important here is that it was Anjengo fort which enabled Marthanda Varma to achieve the political expansion and consolidation of his State, Travancore. That clearly shows the role of Anjengo fort in the politics of Travancore.

The English involvement in the Anglo Mysore Wars on behalf of the state of Travancore is quite clear and there is no need to elaborate the role played by them. Even though they have played a safe-sided game, the confidence which the English provided to the Travancore was phenomenal. The net result of all their involvements was the signing of the Subsidiary Alliance with Travancore which virtually made Travancore a tributary of the English.

### **Towards Commercial Monopoly**

What the Anjengo fort authorities expected from Travancore since 1723 was a trade monopoly, especially in pepper. They won the confidence of the ruling kings and gained the monopoly in the said commodities. These made the company’s position commercially strong and financially sound. In due course, they intrigued against the Dutch and seized all their fortunes and later on, virtually dictated the commerce of Travancore. Thus the factors of Anjengo from the 1720s to the 1740s were carrying brisk trade and it seemed to be the golden age of that fort and settlement.

However, this position of the company underwent a change in the late 1740s, when Marthanda Varma decided to introduce state monopoly in spice trade. He explained it as a move to tackle the severe expenditure he had incurred for his constant wars. The

uninterrupted supply of pepper to the English was stopped. Now the English were in a confused state and to pressurize the king, the factors even curtailed the supply of arms and other war like stores badly needed by the king. This led both the powers to look up on each other with mutual suspicion. On August 13, 1748, the Anjengo factors observed: “it seems to us very apparent that the king is determined to abolish all the Hon’ble company’s ancient privileges... the king’s resolutions are, no war like stores, no pepper... and to make what price he pleases for his pepper...”<sup>30</sup> The intentions of the king were made clear by Ramayyan Dalawa, the Prime Minister, in 1750. To him, “His Majesty is determined to keep this branch of trade in his own hands, having been at a very great expense in the latter wars, towards the maintaining (sic) of which the merchants had made every (sic) small contribution”.<sup>31</sup> So this attitude of the king affected the Company’s turnover, and the Anjengo fort went through a grim period.

But once again the English at Anjengo bounced back as a commercial force equipped with the monopoly of pepper in the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During that period, the company’s financial activities boomed. This is well proved by the Neettu records of the Central Archives, Trivandrum. In fact the Travancore Government had a kind of fear towards the fort and they thought that if the Government would not provide merchandise to the fort that would negatively affect Travancore.<sup>32</sup> More than that, Travancore was in need of articles like sugar from the fort.<sup>33</sup> They bartered cardamom and pepper for gunpowder and salt petre.<sup>34</sup> During these hectic years of business, the Government had appointed an auditor for recording the transactions. Even the Government appointed officials for safeguarding Anjengo and neighboring areas<sup>35</sup> and the company was purchasing pepper heavily during this period even from Kottarakkara.<sup>36</sup> During this period, teakwood was exported to England in bulk.<sup>37</sup> All these show the high level of business activity and the good commercial prospects of the company. In this context, it is very clear to note that the Travancore Government made all the arrangements necessary for the successful functioning of the fort.

### **From Commerce to Politics**

Along with the commerce, the company began to intervene in politics also. With the Mysorean invasion, the company’s association with Travancore’s military movements became stronger and the company’s support became inevitable for Travancore. The company kept on improving this position and this finally resulted in the signing of the Subsidiary Alliance with Travancore, which ultimately placed Travancore under the control of the English.<sup>38</sup>

Thus it is very evident that the Anjengo fort and its various chiefs played a great role in bringing about the fortunes of the company in Kerala and effecting the signing of the

perpetual defensive alliance with Travancore. After concluding this treaty, a new agent of the E.E.I.C took office in Travancore as the political resident in the year 1799.<sup>39</sup> Col. Macaulay was the first political resident of Travancore. The ensuing years witnessed a struggle for power between the political resident and commercial resident of Anjengo, which ultimately resulted in the victory of the political resident. With this, the post of commercial resident was abolished and the whole power was absorbed by the political resident in 1810. Now the Anjengo fort along with its commercial establishment was placed under the political resident and therefore its importance was undermined.

Even after the end of the commercial residency, the fort had some significance as the headquarters of the civil and judicial administration relating to Tangasseri.<sup>40</sup> The English still continued their commercial activities through the fort, though it was not viewed as their primary concern. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also, it was one of the important settlements of the English in Kerala, having 649 houses with a population of 3780.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus analysing the entire history of Anjengo fort, it is evident that the very small fort brought huge commercial as well as political fortune to the company. Actually this was the fort which made the English so strong in Kerala and enabled the English to assimilate the whole power of Travancore and Cochin.

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