



CHAPTER 4

SEGREGATION, STRUGGLE, EMANCIPATION AND PERSISTENCE

“Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion”.

Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

The caste system which was the foundation of the social behavior of Kerala in the period prior to 20th century started shaking as soon as the century began. Educational augmentation of the distressed classes through the secular establishments initiated by the colonial institutions and the works of social, religious and political activists and reformers gave a new direction to the progressive thinking and positive change towards social equity. However the Temples stood as the vestiges of the old system keeping the caste system in the guise of retaining the tradition. Unlike other structures temples architecturally defined the caste system. The social activists like TK Madhavan understood the importance of breaking this last bastion of caste society in each village of Kerala. The present chapter maps the movements which lead to the opening of temples to the masses and establishing a casteless society in Kerala.

TEMPLE AS THE NUCLEUS OF THE SOCIAL LIFE

Since my childhood I had been travelling through length and breadth of Kerala and have noticed something unique of the region. The factor that, standing anywhere in Kerala you are never far away from a temple, mosque or a church. Kerala can actually boast about more or equal number of temples as the number of villages in the state. Most of the villages and towns in Kerala like Vaikom [Kottayam District], Kodungallur [Trissur District], Ambalappuzha [Alappuzha District] and Talipparambu [Kannur District] are built around the temple. One of the major junctions in Thiruvananthapuram, called Palayam, short distance from the Kerala legislative assembly, illustrates this fact. This junction has church, mosque and temple, along with Central library, a stadium, an art college and a University in its vicinity. The Census report of 2001²⁵⁷ would provide interesting fact related to the present discussion as illustrated in the table below,

Buildings in Kerala 2001 census²⁵⁸

	Use	Rural	%	Urban	%	Total	%
1	Residence	4,870,794	76.3	1,619,786	72.3	6,490,580	75.3
2	Industry	91,922	1.4	59,770	2.7	151,692	1.8
3	Religion	81,402	1.3	19,738	0.9	101,140	1.2
4	Education	51,838	0.8	18,597	0.8	70,435	0.8
5	Hospitality	21,712	0.3	20,317	0.9	42,029	0.5
6	Medical	19,321	0.3	10,244	0.5	29,565	0.3

²⁵⁷ I have used the 2001 Census report as the 2011 report was not released by Census India.

²⁵⁸ Source: Table H-1 India : Census of India 2001,
http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/States_at_glance

According to the above chart there are 1364 villages in Kerala along with more than fifty Municipalities and five Municipal corporations sharing 101,140 places of worship along with 29,565 Hospitals and 70,435 Educational institutions. This is not the number of places of worship used by the Hindus only but includes the Mosques and Churches belonging to various Christian sects. The number of the places of worship in Kerala is almost 3.5 times higher than the hospitals [29,565]. As far as religious structures per 1000 persons, Kerala comes on the fourth place after the states of Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka and Assam as indicated in the chart below [Chart No.1]. Neighboring state of Tamil Nadu is much below than Kerala regarding the ratio of population and religious structures. Gujarat usually accused as “orthodox” is 4 positions below Kerala. Gujarat which has more villages compared to Kerala but has only 142,135 buildings categorized as places of worship. Kerala has more places of worship in the urban region [0.9 %] than Gujarat [0.8%] and Maharashtra [0.5%]. While in rural areas Kerala [1.3%] has equal number [1.3%] with that of Maharashtra and lesser number compared to Gujarat [1.7%]. As far as hospitals are considered Kerala achieves 3rd position after Himachal Pradesh and Goa [refer Chart No.3]. 100% literate Kerala is in the position closer after Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa and Assam [refer Chart No. 2] regarding Education institutions.

An interesting aspect revealed through the analysis of the data provided by 2001 Census of India is that Kerala is in the fifth position as far as density of Religious structures coming after Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa and Assam. In Kerala 1000 people share 3.1 Religious structures while in Himachal Pradesh it is the highest 4.3; Delhi has the least with 0.5 [Chart No. 4]. If one inverse the data we get an observation that every 315 people in Kerala has one religious structure much higher

than Uttar Pradesh and Haryana]. The balance which is achieved in the health and education sector is quite a recent phenomenon manifested only in the 19th century due to the western influence and the resultant social and education movements. In other words in the pre modern period the ratio between the religious structures and health and education buildings would have been much more contrasting.

The development in the social sector during medieval period in Kerala was akin to that of Tamil Nadu. In Kerala the village economy and social fabric was woven in and around the places of worship, majority among them are temples. Even the legend like *KERALA MAHATMYAM* and *KERALOLPATTI* attempts build the social structure keeping the temple as the centre. The Cola and Vijayanagara models too successfully put the same structure in practice. Development of cities around the temples like Kumbhakonam, Thanjavur, and Gangai Konda Cholapuram under the Colas and Hampi and Tirumala under the Vijayanagara rule are excellent illustrations of this theory. The best example from Kerala, where the cities developing around the temple can be Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, which developed around the Temple of Padmanabhaswami Temple after Martanda Varma, dedicated the land of Tiruvitankur to the cardinal deity of the temple through his *Trippadi Danam*²⁵⁹ in 1749. Another example from Kerala is the city of Trissur which is literally built around the Vadakkunnatha temple. The circular road around the temple *maidan* constitutes the prime market street of Trissur town. Developed during the rule Saktan Tampuran in the early 19th century Trissur became the centre for the *Pooram* festival, where all the gods of the neighboring shrines would congregate at Trissur to pay respect to

²⁵⁹ *Trippadi Danam* is the ritual through which Marthanada Varma, the Raja of Tiruvitankur surrendered the whole Venadu [Tiruvitankur] to Lord Sri Padmanabha [Vishnu] of Thiruvananthapuram. Ever since *Trippadi Danam*, the Travancore kings ruled the country as a servant/representative of Sri Padmanabha. Their records always mentioned the king as *Sri Padmanabha dasa*.

Shiva the cardinal deity of Vadakkunnatha Temple. It is worth mentioning here that the *Pooram* at Trissur was introduced by Saktan Tampuran, ruler of Nediyrippu Svaroopam of Kochi to assert his authority amongst the small *Naduvazhis* around. At Payyanur in North Kerala the principle deity, Subramanya/Kartikeya is considered as the ruler of the region. He is called as 'Perumal' the name for the rulers of Kerala [for example Kulasekhara Perumal for Ravi Varma Kulasekhara]. The local myths state that some of the gods and goddesses had to seek permission of Payyanur Perumal [Subramanya/Kartikeya of Payyanur Temple] for 'residing' in the Payyanur region. Interestingly the *Uranmas* of Payyanur temple are not Brahmins but Poduvals who are the land holding caste of Payyanur region, also given the position of 'brothers of Kartikeya' through local legends.

One distinct feature of South Indian history is the orderly stitching of the socio-cultural structure, keeping the temple as the center, with that of the *Janmi – Jati* system. The expansion of the brahmanical *Bhakti* movement has finally culminated in the established temple system, greatly nurtured by the rulers like Chalukyans, Pallavas, Pandiyans and Ceras. During Cola period the temple also achieved the position of being the hub of Urban and rural administrative system. As David Ludden observes, "Temples became the focal point for social life and creativity as deities received gifts from pious donors. Material gifts supported ceremonies. Honors distributed in ceremonies denoted human worth in relation to divine beings and to people in society. In worship, people sought solutions to problems in health, marital, and other concerns; the simultaneously defined their position in the moral universe and their

respectability among men. Leaders constituted their leadership in society patronizing temple worship as well as Brahmin, learned men and priests”²⁶⁰.

Empowering of the Castes Attached to the Temple

Empowering of the temple, politically also lead to the amplification of the economic, social status of the castes attached to it. Along with the caste based social structure came the economic structure of the society too constructed based on the relation to the temples though *Uranma*, *Karanma* system. The land was partitioned between the *Pandaram*²⁶¹ [treasury/royal land], *Devasvam* [temple] and *Brahmasvam* land. The stratification thus, provided the *savarnas* with full or partial ownership of the land through *Uranma* or *Karanma* rights. The landless communities belonging to the lower and lowest strata of the caste hierarchy, who were not the partners of the above stratification, were to cultivate the land and thus called as *Paniyalar* [workers or servants]. The process might have started in the beginning of Medieval itself as noted by EMS Namboodiripad²⁶² as, “At the time of or even before the Cera empire ... class division had started making its appearance ... class division, however took the form of caste division; those who were in a position to accumulate the greatest wealth came to be considered the highest caste; the next in point of the accumulation of wealth became the next highest caste, and so on, till we reach the class that is in a position to accumulate no wealth at all which became the lowest caste”

²⁶⁰ Ludden David, *EARLY CAPITALISM AND LOCAL HISTORY IN SOUTH INDIA*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi,, 1985, Second Edition 2005, pp. 30-32

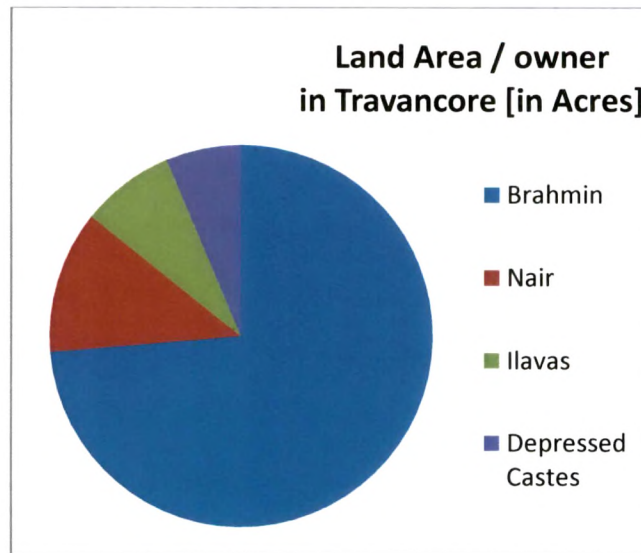
²⁶¹ Originated from the Sanskrit word Bhandar, means treasury

²⁶² EMS Namboodiripad, *Kerala Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1967, p 47 As quoted by EMS Namboodiripad in *Once Again on Castes and Classes*, Social Scientist, vol.9, No.12, (Dec.,1981), p.12-25, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3517131>

The legitimacy of land holding and monetary accumulation was emphasized through legends and myths. Brahmins kept the control of the society through aligning with the ruling class, obviously with a superior position as well wishers of the country and its rulers. Temples became the power centers defining the function of the society with *sastras* as the books of law. Gangadharan TK observes thus, “By that time the Brahmins in Kerala had acquired dominance in the society and this dominance was spread over the administration of the temple also. They utilized the Vedic tradition to make the temples the centre of the society. The rituals and worship in the temples were related with the production process in the agrarian society. The agrarian society of Kerala gradually became close with the temples. As the rulers gave so much of importance to the ideological background provided by Brahmins for maintaining their power, they extended their whole hearted help to the Brahmanical temples. This help provided by ruling class was mainly material. Thus Kerala became a temple oriented society”²⁶³.

The *Savarnas* or the upper strata of the caste system were the caste which had connected to the temple through land rights or trade. Here by the word trade I mean the occupational engagement with the temples which are specifically conducted by the *Ambalavasi/ Antarala Jati* community like the Varriors, Nambiars [except North Kerala], Marars, Poduvals [except Payyanur] etc. There were Brahmins who are related to the temple through the land like the Uranmas or through employment like the designated priest of the temple [*Santikkaran*] or *Tantri* [chief priest]. Others who do not have a role in the temple hierarchy were left out of the civil society too. Thus the temples in Kerala mapped out a stratification of the Kerala society.

²⁶³ Gangadharan TK, EVOLUTION KERALA HISTORY AND CULTURE, Calicut University Central Cooperative Stores, Calicut, p.134



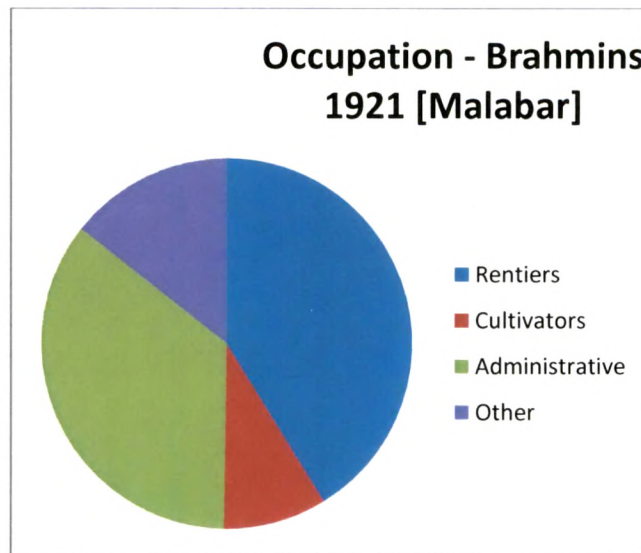
The chart above based on the 1931 Census²⁶⁴ shows the land [wet and dry] ownership of the land held by Hindus in Tiruvitankur. The dominant caste, the Brahmins held 74% of the land, while the rest of the area [26%] was shared by the castes like Nairs [12%], Ilavas [8%] and other depressed castes [6%]. In the chart above we see that in 1931 the majority of the land was held by the Brahmins [*Brahmasvam* lands and *Devasvam* land through *Uranma* rights], *Ambalavasis* and Nairs [through *Karanma* rights]. This is very close to the land rights which existed in Tamil Nadu in the pre-colonial period. Nicholas Dirks²⁶⁵ explains the Tamil Nadu scenario thus, “At the risk of some simplification, I will suggest here that the two terms used for property in Tamil suggest the somewhat different but interdependent nature of these social and political relations. *Panku*, a term meaning share and often used to characterize the

²⁶⁴ As cited by P Sivanandan, Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity in Kerala- An Empirical Analysis, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Annual Number February 1979, p 475

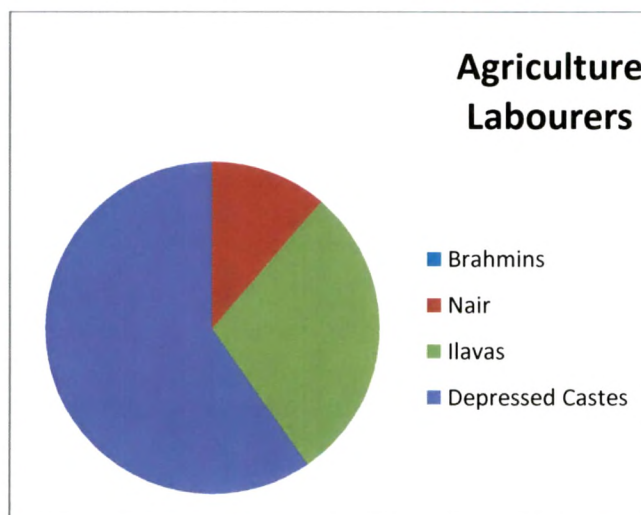
²⁶⁵ Nicholas B. Dirks, *From Little King to Landlord: Property, Law and The Gift Under The Permanent Settlement*, HUMANITIES WORKING PAPER 84, California Institute of Technology, June 1983, <http://authors.library.caltech.edu/15966/1/HumsWP-0084.pdf>

shares of rights to the usufruct as well as hereditability of land, is fundamentally a horizontal term. Shares of land were shares among a group, of family members, holders of *miraci* right, of Brahmans all granted lands together under the terms of a single *brahmadeyam* grant, and even in more extended senses of members of an entire village. These *pankus* were sometimes related to particular plots of land and sometimes to a particular proportion of a larger unit of land, proportions which would be redistributed and reallocated periodically. *Pankus* in land were related to *pankus* in a variety of other contexts: shares in local temple festivals, and shares in kinship units (in which, for example, members of the same lineage were called *pankalis*). The second term is *kani*. Meaning a hereditary right, the term suggests a vertical relation, since entitlement to a share was usually seen to have been granted by a superior agent. This agent was often a king, or the agent of a king, although in certain cases it could have been the chief of a previously resident dominant caste group. To have this entitlement, or *kani*, was to have *kaniyacci*, which was related both to control over land and to participation in the village/lineage assembly and also, as was the case with *panku*, with rights to a share in local temple honors”.

In case of Kerala the *Uranma* right is parallel to the *Panku* right of Tamil Nadu and *Kani* right of Tamil Nadu will be similar to *Karanma* of Kerala. Though Ambalavasis and Nair held 53 percent of the land the ownership through Janmi right was either with the *Brahmasvam* or *Devasvam*, thus in actuality Brahmins controlled 96 percent of the land. They also enjoyed the maximum profit from agriculture despite being an inactive member of the chain. 1921 Census of Malabar provides similar data but in a different context.

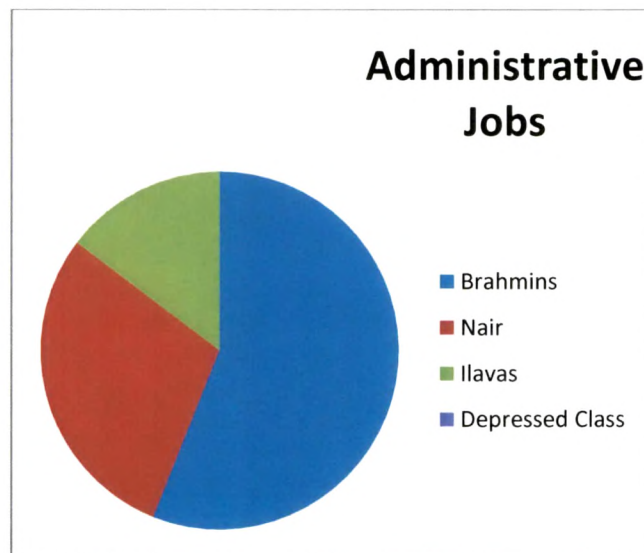


The charts above show the occupation of different castes in Malabar. Here 41% of Brahmins among the 50% related to agriculture are merely renters of the land. The categories like the agriculture labor are nonexistent. The same Census²⁶⁶ report prides the detail about the agriculture laborers thus,

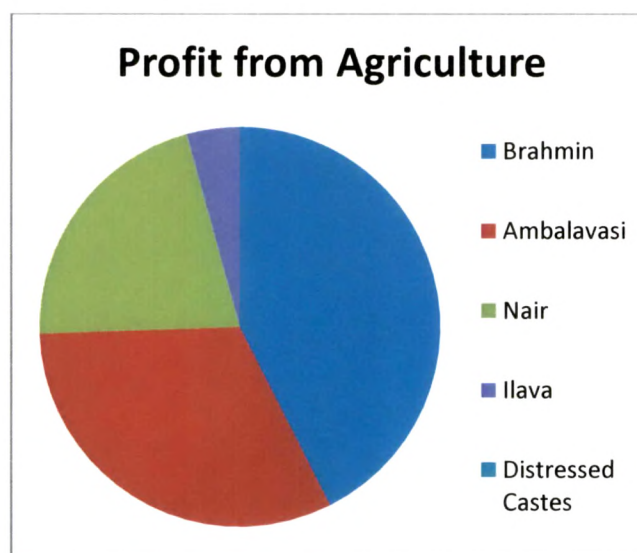
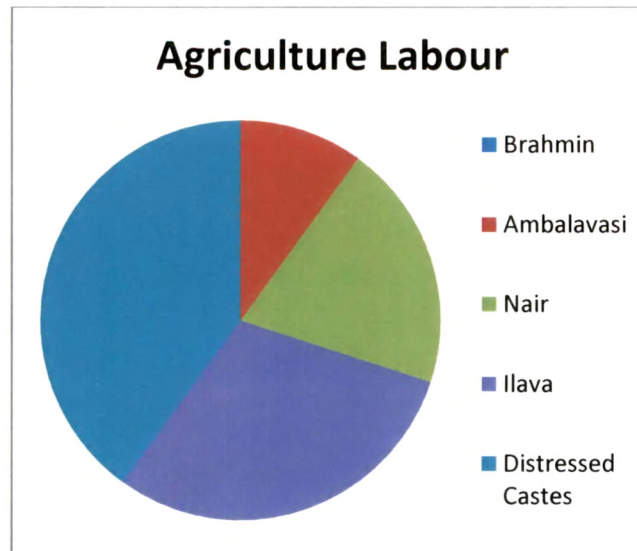


²⁶⁶ As cited by P Sivanandan, Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity in Kerala- An Empirical Analysis, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Annual Number February 1979, p 476

Brahmins who hold the 50% land does not even open their account in the agriculture labor on the other hand the Depressed Class, mainly Cheruma community who works as agriculture laborers does not own even inch of land. Similar scenario is repeated in the Administrative Services²⁶⁷ [see Chart below] where again the literate Brahmin and Nair hold 85% share of the total jobs.

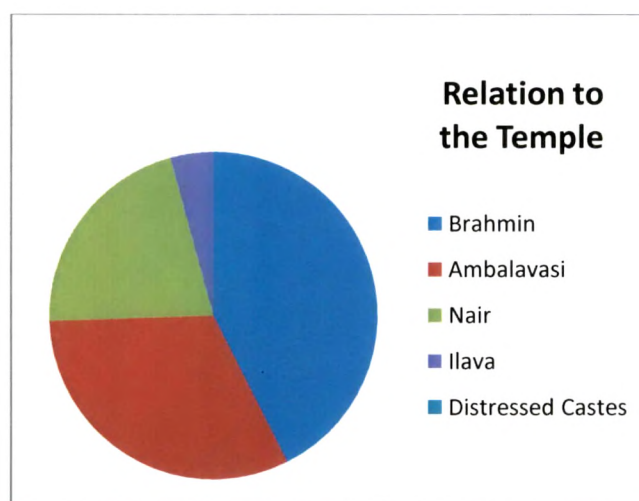


²⁶⁷ As cited by P Sivanandan, Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity in Kerala- An Empirical Analysis, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL WEEKLY, Annual Number February 1979, p 476



Above charts gives a depressing economic scenario prevailed in Kerala till early 20th century, where 70% agriculture labor is done by a majority of population belonging to lower castes but 96% of the profit is enjoyed by the minority who belonged to the upper castes through *janmam* [share of the profit belonging to the landlord (*Janmi*)] and *kanam* [share of the profit belonging to the leaser of the land [*Karanma*]].

Thanks to this economic supremacy the dominant castes dictated the terms in social hierarchy like the *Varna* system keeping out the non land holding castes away from the social fabric neatly woven around the temple. The castes that are related to the temple or the divine industry were kept together excluding the other from the society. The following charts titled Relation to the temple by various castes would further illustrate this point.



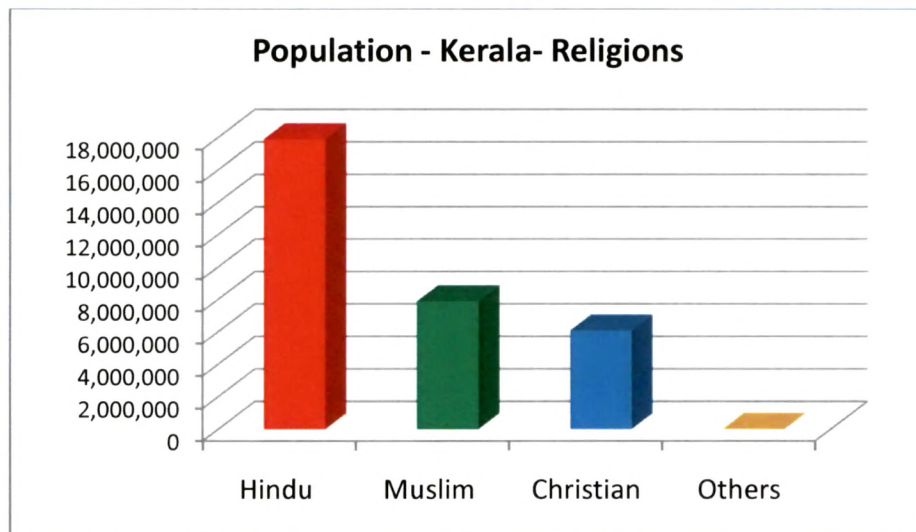
The table below elucidate further the position of the castes regarding nature of the ownership of the Land, nature of profit from agriculture, relation to the Temple through trade and profession and authority, untouchablity in relation to the upper most caste [Brahmin] and Entry right into the Temple in 19th Century. The lower portion of the table is highlighted to emphasize the position of *avarnas* [untouchable castes].

SAVARNAS					
	Land ownership	Profit from Agriculture	Relation to the Temple	Untouchability to Brahmin	Entry into the Temple [19 th C.]
Brahmin	Owners	Receiver	Closest	NA	Full
Ambalavasi	Holders	Partial	Close	Moderate	Partial
Nair	Holders	Partial	Moderate	Moderate	Partial
AVARNAS					
Izhava	Landless Tenants	Minimal	Farther	Farther	Farther
Other Lower	Landless workers	NIL	Farthest	Farthest	Farthest

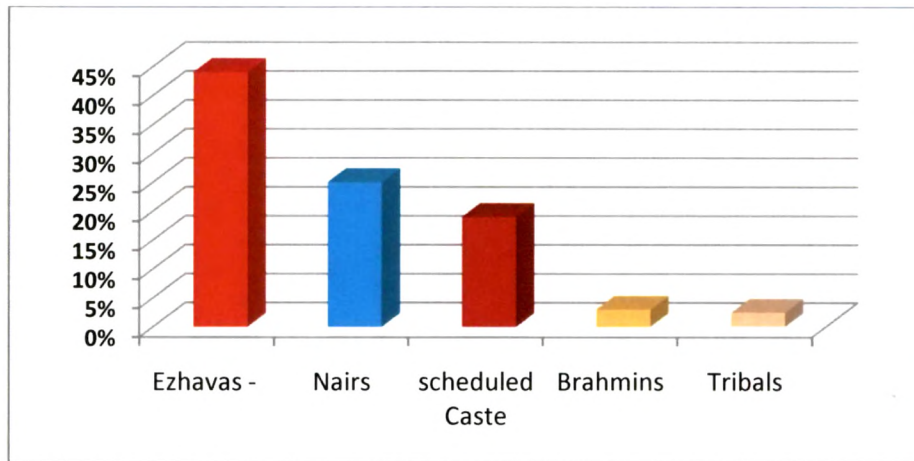
If we summaries the above data and earlier charts into the category of *savarna* and *avarna*, the pie in the chart would give a pathetic picture. The segregation of the *avarnas* from the society is clear in their omission from the “purest” edifice of temples.

I have kept the five segments of castes in the Table, placed in the descending order in the caste hierarchy starting from Nambutiri Brahmin to other castes which include most of the Depressed Castes. The Ilavas along with the other castes constitutes the

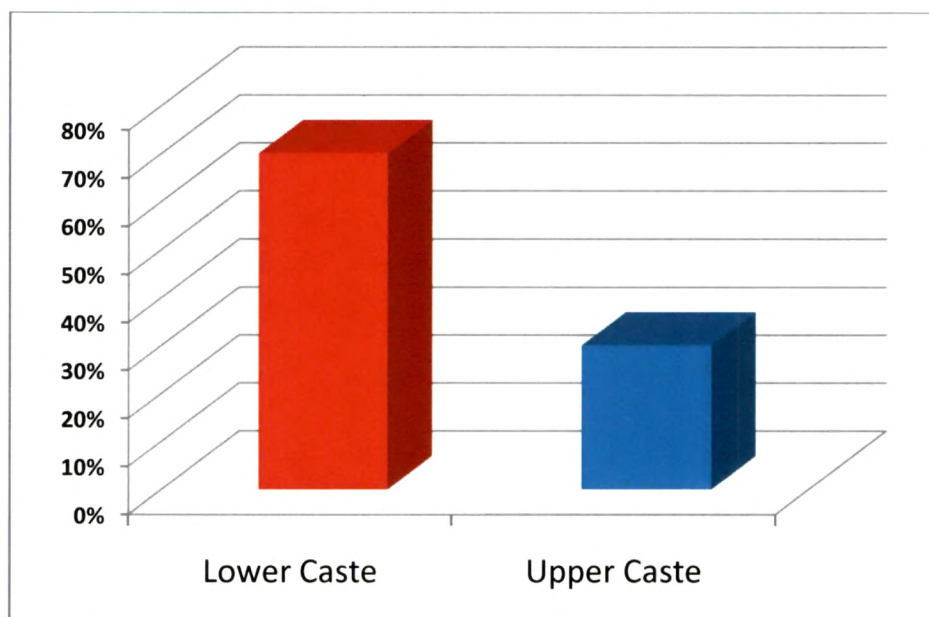
avarnas while the others are known as Caste – Hindus or *savarnas*. Interestingly the *avarnas* comprise highest percent of Hindus in the state of Kerala. The Charts below based on the 2001 Census would explain this factor further.



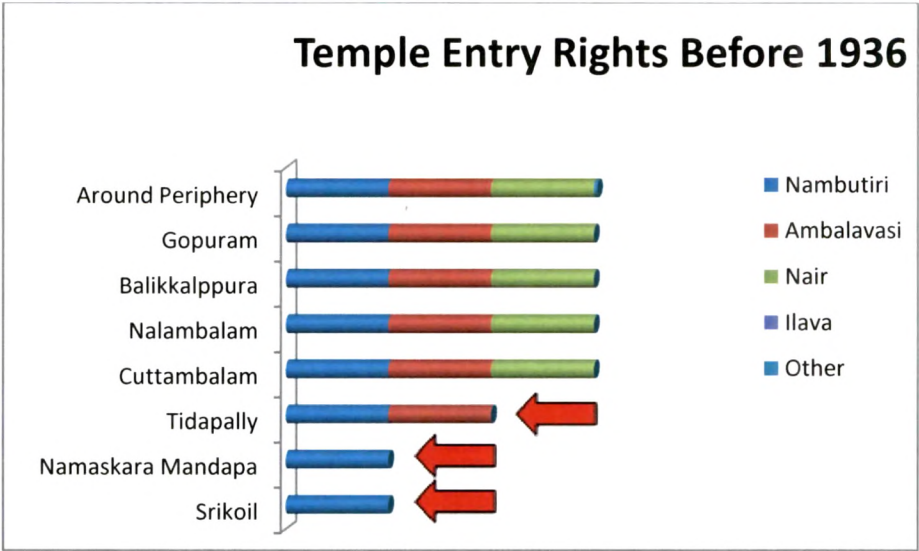
According to the 2001 Census Kerala had a population of 3,08,68,964 out of which number of Hindus were 17,883,449 [56.4%]. Among which as the following chart would show 44% were Ilavas and Scheduled castes were 19% and Tribes constituted 3%.



The Ezhavas, Depressed Castes [Scheduled Castes] and Tribals together constituted 70% of the Hindu population in Kerala. [See Chart below]



Hence the privilege of worshipping was enjoyed only 30% of the population. Among the upper castes too, the full utilization of temple architecture was the privilege of the upper most cast [See the chart below].



Here the vertical axes define the area of the Hindu temples in Kerala where *Sri Koil* is the centre of the whole complex. The *namaskara mandapa* comes immediately after the *Sri Koil* on the cardinal axis. *Tidappalli*, usually on the right corner of the *Cuttambalam* is where the offerings are cooked. *Cuttambalam* is the columned verandah like space around the shrine. *Nalambalam* including the *Valiyambalam* on the cardinal axis is walled space encompassing the *cuttambalam*. *Balikkalppura* is placed outside the *nalambalam* on the cardinal axes. *Gopuram/padippura* is the entrance gate to the whole complex.

The red arrows highlight the fact that the areas like *Sri Koil*, *Namaskara Mandapa*, and *Tidappalli* is reserved for the Brahmins and Ambalavasis. *Sri Koil* has restricted

entry where only the *pujari/santhikkaran* [officiating priest] is allowed. Ambalavasis are allowed in the Tidappalli region for professional reason. Ambalavasis are also known as *antarala jatis* who are appointed in the temple to look after the daily work of the temples. This segment includes castes like Nambiar, Poduval, Marar, Varrier etc. It should also be noted that some of the castes belong to the *ambalavasi* or *antarala* castes are considered part of the Nairs in certain regions. For example the Poduvals of Payyanur [north Malabar] are not *ambalavasis* but in rest of Kerala they are drummers in the temples and thus Ambalavasis. In north Malabar the temple drummers belong to Marar caste while in South Malabar the Marars do certain other duties as cleaning of the premise etc. Likewise the north Malabar Nambiar are not Ambalavasis and would come under the category as Nairs. It is needless to mention here again that the entry rights into the temple depend on this categorization. For example a Payyanur Poduval is not supposed to enter the *Tidappalli* while a Poduval from south Malabar is allowed to enter; same in the case of Nambiar of north Malabar. The shift in this position may be due to the traditional occupations of these castes as both Nambiar and Poduvals of north Kerala are land owners and farmers.

Namaskara mandapa on the other hand is entirely reserved for the Brahmins. Here it should also be mentioned that only Malayala Brahmins [Nambutiris] are allowed on to the namaskara mandapa. There are exceptions for this rule too in certain cases. For example, even the Nambutiri Brahmins are not allowed to enter the namaskara mandapa of Raja Rajesvara Temple at Talipparambu [Kannur District]. The reason cited for which is the usage of the said Namaskara Mandapa by the god Rama himself. **In rest of the temples Namaskara mandapa stand a reminder of the**

dominance of the caste who are the prime custodians of the structure, exclusive and segregated.

SEGREGATION AND HIERARCHY

The discrimination of the caste system was based on tenets of purity. Imagine four people walking together in 19th century without knowing each other [which is unlikely in 19th Century] and if they confront a Brahmin. In that scenario, each one of them will retain a specific distance from the Brahmin depending on the caste they belong to. Similarly each would also stop at specific distances from the temple. This system was called '*Tindal*' and the distance maintained by them is called the *tindappad*. MN Srinivas defines *Tindal* system thus, "The structural distance between various castes is defined in terms of pollution and purity. A higher caste is always status it should abstain from certain forms of contact with the lower. It may not ordinarily eat food cooked by them, or marry or have sex relations with them. Where one of the castes is very high and the other very low, there is a ban on touching or even getting very close to one another. A breach of rules renders the higher caste member impure, and purity can only be restored by the performance of a purification rite and, frequently, also by undergoing such punishment as the caste council decides upon"²⁶⁸.

The lower caste people never used the main roads and even if they used it by chance they had to shout "*Eh.. Eh*". The attendants of Brahmins [they always did have an attendant] would shout "*Yahe.. Yahe*", hearing which the people would keep the distance according to their position in the caste hierarchy. "Varthema, who drifted

²⁶⁸ Srinivas, MN SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA, First Published 1966, University of California, Orient Longman Edition, New Delhi, 1995, Reprint 2004, pp. 127



into Malabar in 1505”, says Rev. Hunt²⁶⁹ “described how the slave people never used the highways, but slunk slang through marsh and bush, shouting to warn caste people of their presence -as they still do in some out-of-the-way parts. “Should they not be crying out” writes Varthema, “and any Nayar [Nair] be going that way and see their footprints or meet any of them, these Nayars [Nairs] may kill them without punishment”²⁷⁰.

Even after the *avarnas* like the Ilavas or Channars converted into Christianity they were continued to be seen as polluting castes by the *savarnas*. Robin Jeffrey cites the case of the Mr. Cheriyan, an Izhava convert to Christianity who used the road around Tiruvalla temple on the virtue of being a Christian. When the case is referred to the Dewan of Tiruvitankur, Krishna Rao, he wrote back, “but though an Izhava becomes a Christian, he must never cease to be an Izhava, therefore you must not allow Cheriyan and other converts to the Christian religion to pass through public highway by the temple, but must compel them to go round through the fields”²⁷¹. In Palakkad, North Kerala, some of the Izhavas converted to Christianity and to celebrate this new freedom they entered the settlements of the Tamil Brahmins called the *agaraharams* in Kalpatti which ended in social friction²⁷². MN Srinivas observes about the converts thus, “Indian servants of the British, for instance, probably wielded some influence among their kin groups and local caste groups but not among others. They generally

²⁶⁹ Rev Hunt, WS. Slavery in Kerala, KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II [1928 – 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997

²⁷⁰ As quoted by Rev. Hunt, WS, Slavery in Kerala, KERALA SOCIETY PAPERS, Volume. I and II [1928 – 33] Reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1997

²⁷¹ Jeffrey Robin THE DECLINE OF NAIR DOMINANCE, Society and Politics in Travancore, 1847-1908, Manohar, New Delhi, 1976, Second Edition, 1994, pp.43

²⁷² Govinda Pillai P, KERALA NAVODHANAM ORU MARXIST VEEKSHANAM, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, a Marxist View Point, Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2003, Second Edition, 2004. pp.132

came from the low castes, their Westernization was of a superficial kind, and the upper castes made fun of their Pidgin English, their absurd admiration for their employers, and their airs they gave themselves. Similarly, converts to Christianity from Hinduism did not exercise much influence in Indian society as a whole because, first, these also generally came from the low castes, and second, the act of conversion alienated them from the majority community of Hindus. Finally, conversion to Christianity often only changed the faith but not the customs, the general culture or the standing of the converts in society”²⁷³.

C Achyuta Menon in his *Cochin State Manual* provides the preposterous state of Kerala society drenched caste hierarchy and segregation in 19th century. “There are some points of etiquette peculiar to Malabar” Achyuta Menon writes, “In the presence of a man’s elders in the family and superiors in social position, he should remove his upper cloth and remain bare to the waste. Formerly, it is said, women also had to do the same, but that practice has long ceased to exist. When speaking to or of a Namboori [Nambutiri] or a Raja, Ambalavasis and Nairs and the inferior castes have to use terms of respect which are as numerous as they are unique. Everyone connected with a Namboori’s or Raja’s person has to be referred to as **blessed**, [*tiru* in Malayalam] his head, his eyes, his nose, his face, his arms, his legs, his feet. Most of his actions and belongings, such as his sleep, bed-chamber, bed, boat, carriage, palanquin, study, hunt, sword, etc., are **worshipful** [*palli* in Malayalam]. His food is **ambrosia** [*Amrudeth* in Malayalam], his walk is a **procession** [*Ezhunnallath* in Malayalam] and so on. In contrast to them a Nair has to use terms of deprecation when speaking of himself to a Namboori or Raja. He has to refer to himself as a

²⁷³ Srinivas, MN *SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA*, First Published 1966, University of California, , Orient Longman Edition, New Delhi, 1995, Reprint 2004, pp. 62

slave [*Adiyan* in Malayalam], his house as a **dirty hut** [*Cetta pura* in Malayalam], his food as **black gruel** [*karikkadi* in Malayalam], his mother as an **ancient dame** [*Talla* in Malayalam], his son as a **slave boy**, his sleep as **reclining on the floor**, his work as **defect of hand** [*kaippizha* in Malayalam], his death as **desertion from duty** etc. Similar terms of respect and deprecation have to be used by the polluting castes when addressing the Nairs and the higher castes”²⁷⁴. Achyuta Menon is referring here to Nairs who are *savarnas* and comparatively closer to Nambutiri Brahmins. One should not imagine the plight of *avarnas* as they were not even allowed to talk to the Brahmins.

The Ramesvaram temple at Kollam has a 12th century inscription where it mentions about the penalty a king had to pay for the disrespect he showed to the Brahmins. The story of *Othikkon* [Vedic instructor] and his students rescuing the Maharaja of Kochi, when his palace was encircled by the Samutiri’s army, is quite popular among the Kerala historians especially Padmanabha Menon. Balakrishnan refers to another episode where a Nambutiri talking rather disrespectfully to Sankunni Menon, the Dewan of Kochi, and getting away with it. Kottarattil Sankunni’s *Eithihya Mala* in which a pious Brahmin is usually the protagonist, is an outpour of the author’s respect and worship of the Brahmins. Reading *Eithihya Mala* make one wish to reincarnate as a Nambutiri in that period, where free food, entertainment and sex was considered the birth right of the Brahmins.

²⁷⁴ Menon Achyuta C, COCHIN STATE MANUEL, 1911, Reprint Kerala Gazatteers, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp .275-76

COMING OF EUROPEAN AND INITIATION TO A NEW ORDER

Adam Smith states thus, "The discovery of America and that of a Passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope are the two greatest and most important events recorded in the History of mankind"²⁷⁵. Even if one denies the global significance of this discovery it has definitely changed the history of Kerala especially in the economic and social structure. Both Gama and Columbus discovered the Indies, one the West and the other the East. If Gama's discovery was significant then, the journey of Columbus was pivotal to the development of the Western World. This was the land as Gaspar da Gama would state as the "land from which there originates the spice that is eaten in the west, and in the Levant, and in Portugal and equally so in all provinces of the world"²⁷⁶. The land where "the half naked monarchs" held the monopoly over the "Black Gold" assisted by the Moorish traders who exclaimed to the first Portuguese sailors in Calicut, "Devil take you, what the hell are you doing here?"²⁷⁷

The connection of Kerala with that of western countries dates back even to pre Christian era as I have discussed in preceding portion of this thesis however the coming of Europeans directly on the shores of Kerala broke the existing economic

²⁷⁵ Field House. COLONIAL EMPIRES A COMPARATIVE SURVEY FROM THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. London : Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966

Though Field House would not completely agree with Adam Smith; "Smith was of course, taking a narrowly Eurocentric view. Europe had no monopoly of distant trading or overseas empire. ..[sic].. Hence the importance of the first expansion of Europe lay in its effects on Europe rather than its uniqueness as a world phenomenon.

²⁷⁶ Sanjay Subrahmanyam. THE CARRER AND LEGEND OF VASCO DA GAMA, New Delhi, 1998.

²⁷⁷ Livermore, Harold Victor, PORTUGAL, A SHORT HISTORY, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1973

system gave a new alternate system, significantly disregarding the social hierarchy. “They [Portuguese] started a process of change which was soon to transform many traditional features of polity, economy, society, and culture of Kerala. The internal production mechanism had become stereotyped and the overarching influence of caste system had kept the society and economy in a prolonged state of stupor. The stimuli to change now came from outside with the arrival of the Portuguese²⁷⁸.

The Dutch and English who followed the Portuguese to the Indian shores definitely got surprised with social system existing in Kerala as Duarte Barbosa would note, “When [the Nairs] walk along a street or road they shout to the low caste folk to get out of their way; this they do and if one will not, the Nair may kill him without punishment; even if he is a youth of good [high caste] family but poor and worthless, and he finds on his way a man of low caste who is rich and respected and in favor with the king, yet he makes him clear the way for him as if he were a king”²⁷⁹. Robin Jeffrey adds that, “Two features of traditional society [in Kerala] had struck European visitors since sixteen century. The first was the matrilineal system of family and inheritance. [Sic] The second feature was the rigidity, refinement and ruthlessness of system caste”²⁸⁰. Soon under the influence of western powers this system would fade away. There are many reasons for the collapse of the old order. The key factor for this shift is the new economic opportunity brought by the trade and organized agriculture initiated by the coming of European powers to Kerala. As stated by KM Panicker

²⁷⁸ Sudhakaran PP, Portuguese Relations of the Chiefs of Kerala, Cherian P.J. (Ed) PERSPECTIVES ON KERALA HISTORY- The Second Millennium, KCHR, Thiruvananthapuram, 1999

²⁷⁹ Duarte Barbosa, THE BOOK OF DUARTE BARBOSA, Translated by ML Dames, Haklyut Society, London, 1921, II, pp. 49, as cited by Jeffrey Robin *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], pp. 5

²⁸⁰ Jeffrey Robin *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], pp. 5

“Arab traders only bought the spices available in the market. The Portuguese on the other hand was eager to produce maximum [in the suitable climate of Kerala]. They even pressurized the kings and feudal chieftains for encouragement of Pepper and Ginger cultivation”²⁸¹.

Balakrishnan argues that even the coconut cultivation, which was not that popular in Kerala prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, was initiated by the European powers. His argument is based on the description of traveler’s notes both from European and Middle Eastern sources. Ibn Batuta who visited Kerala in the 14th century spends a lot of time discussing pepper but hardly mentions about coconut. However it will be erroneous to state that the coconut was not there in Kerala. It was very much there but not as a cash crop like pepper and ginger. The western trade was dominated by Pepper, Ginger and other spices. The demand which pepper in west is well put forward by Stephen Neill who wrote “In a world which as yet knew neither the potato nor the turnip, the winter diet of salt meat and hard bread must have been almost unendurable, unless eastern spices were available to disguise in some measure the unpleasant flavour of what without them would have been almost uneatable”²⁸².

Coconut could not achieve such a position in the European cuisine, but its bi-product the coir could attract the European market thanks to its utility in maritime activities. When Achuta Menon was writing his *Cochin State Manuel* Coconut and its bi-

²⁸¹ KM Panicker, A HISTORY OF KERALA, pp.179, as quoted by PK Balakrishnan, *JATHIYAVASTHITHIYUM KERALACHARITHRAVUM*, [Malayalam] [Caste System and History of Kerala], Sahitya Pravarthaka Co-operative Society and National Book Stall, Kottayam, 1983, Reprint, 1978, pp.405

²⁸² Stephen Neill. COLONIALISM AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS. Lutterworth Press, 1966. London. pp.35

products had picked up in the export market as evident from the following passage from his book which reads thus; “The manufactured products of the coconut tree form about three-fourths of the exports from Cochin – coconut oil (101.4 lakhs), coir manufactured and unmanufactured (74.4 lakhs), Copra (35.3 lakhs) and Oil-cake (12.6 lakhs). Coconut oil is exported chiefly to the United Kingdom, America, Germany, Belgium, Burma, Calcutta, and Bombay, coir to the United Kingdom, Germany and America, Copra to Germany, France and Belgium and oil-cake to Germany and Bombay. Though the major portion of the produce is exported to these countries, Cochin may be said to have customers in all parts of the world”²⁸³.

The popularity of coir and coconut lead large scale plantations under the supervision of the Europeans giving further job opportunity and economic uplift to the caste who are traditionally attached to the coconut industry. More over newly introduced cash crops like the Cashew nut and Rubber gave alternate income to the cultivators. They could now not only afford to give the land tax to the *Janmi*, which was based on the rice, but save from the sale of the cash crops. To quote Robin Jeffrey, “At the same time, communications developed rapidly. It became easier for a lower caste man to escape to towns like Aleppey [Alappuzha] or Quilon [Kollam] where the expansion of the coir and copra industries was beginning to bring cash to Izhava families”²⁸⁴. EMS Namboodiripad agrees with this statement observing the rise of lower caste as

²⁸³ Menon, Achyuta C, COCHIN STATE MANUEL, 1911, Reprint Kerala Gazetteers, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp 351

²⁸⁴ Jeffrey Robin , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8 (Mar., 1976), pp.8

capitalists thus, “majority of the cashew nut factory owners in Travancore were Ilavas”²⁸⁵.

The organized agriculture production and the processing units which was initiated by the Europeans especially the Dutch resulted in creation of new class of people who are now saw the Europeans as the top most ‘caste’, who displayed no displeasure to the proximity of the lower caste. *Mitavadi* Magazine would report an episode where the people of Anjengo, which was under the direct control of the British, pleaded to the resident governor not to merge Anjengo with the Tiruvitankur state citing caste atrocities in the state of Tiruvitankur²⁸⁶. It will be better to say that the Europeans dealt with all the Keralites from the Brahmins to Pulayas as lower to them, kind of *avarnas*. On the other hand the Brahmins and the other savarnas considered all Europeans as “mlecchas and hunas and thus untouchables whose proximity would break the *Tindal* law”²⁸⁷. Sankunni Menon also informs us that the Tiruvitankur Maharajas after meeting the British officers like the Resident, used go through the rituals of purification.

The new capitalists, thanks to the new agriculture cultivation and export or establishment of processing units and the Malayalis in the service of the European forces became the new elite or *savarnas*. In the forts owned by the Companies did not follow the caste system and everybody was allowed to do walk around freely and as

²⁸⁵ Namboodiripad E.M.S, *KERALA CHARITRAM MARXIST VIKSHANATHIL*, [Malayalam], [History of Kerala Through Marxist View Point] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 1990, pp.158

²⁸⁶ Bhaskaranunni, *KERALAM IRUPATHAM NOOTANTINDE ARAMBHATTHIL* [Malayalam] [Kerala in the beginning of 20th century], Kerala Sahithya Akademi, Trissur, 2005

²⁸⁷ Menon, Sankunni P, *TIRUVITANKUR CHARITHRAM*, [Malayalam], [original in English, A HISTORY OF TRAVANCORE FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES] Translation by CK Kareem, Kerala Bhasha Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, [First Edition 1973], Fourth Edition 1994, 307

mentioned earlier in the present thesis, even the slaves who were living in the company area were freed. This 'kind of equality' prompted Sri Narayana Guru to commend during the first world war in a lighter vein thus, "we should pray for the British victory because they are our Gurus who gave us the initiation to renunciation [*sanyasa*]"²⁸⁸. Listening to this, a disciple asked, "Swami, initiation to renunciation [*sanyasa*] is through the mantras, how come then the British be our Gurus"? To this Sri Narayana Guru answered; "Even at the time of Sri Rama the Sudras were not allowed to do *sanyas*. But now the British is allowing anyone to do *sanyasa*, so aren't they the real Gurus"²⁸⁸. On a more serious note, EMS writes thus, "(British dominance) . . . destroyed the *jati* - feudal culture and life which enslaved the majority of *Malayalis*. The British culture was in fact shown Europe the democratic system through the English revolution along with two centuries old Parliamentary system and struggles. The Industrial Revolution changed the global outlook upside down and initiated a new culture, where blind faith replaced by science; democracy in place of autocracy and feudalism replaced by nationalism. This is the culture which was brought by the British here. The new system opened the possibility that a capable person can study and get job and fame, which destroyed the earlier order, where occupations were based on *jati*. The introduction of printing press opened up hoards of knowledge to the public. When journalism and publications became a lucrative employment the relevance of the royal courts ceased to be the sponsors of literature"²⁸⁹. MN Srinivas who says, "Implicit in Westernization are certain value preferences. A most important value, which in turn subsumes several other values, is

²⁸⁸ Kottukkoyikkal Velayudhan, *SREE NARAYANA GURU*, [Malayalam], Biography, Current Books, Kottayam, 1975, 4th Edition, 2007, 2nd Impression, 2009, pp.247

²⁸⁹ Namboodiripad, EMS *KERALAM MALYALIKALUDE MATHRUBHOOMI* [Malayalam], from P Govinda Pillai [Ed], *EMSINTE SAMPOORNA KRITIKAL* [COLLECTED WORKS OF EMS NAMBOODIRIPAD Vol. 9- 1948] [Malayalam] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2000, pp.184

what may be broadly characterized as humanitarianism, by which is meant an active concern for the welfare of all human beings irrespective of caste, economic position, religion, age and sex. Equalitarianism and secularization are both included in humanitarianism”²⁹⁰, shares the thought of EMS regarding the contribution of westernization.

A word of caution should be added here that though the European Powers including the British has initiated a kind ‘renaissance’ in Kerala it was not purely to upgrade the downtrodden castes of Kerala but to achieve goals to their own advantage. The traditional system of education and occupation structure prevalent in Kerala deprived them of the work force. Moreover the feudal system extant in Kerala was not compatible to their capitalist ideals. They only undertook the historical process of transforming the ‘medieval feudal societies’ to ‘modern capital societies’. Karl Marx and Engels²⁹¹ observe in *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that “the bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part. The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his “natural superiors”, and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous “cash payment”. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value,

²⁹⁰ Srinivas, MN *SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA*, First Published 1966, University of California, , Orient Longman Edition, New Delhi, 1995, Reprint 2004, pp. 51

²⁹¹ Karl Marx and Engels, *Bourgeois and Proletarian,s* Chapter I, *MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY*, Written, Late 1847, First Published: February 1848; Source: Marx/Engels Selected Works, Vol. One, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, pp. 98-137; Translated: Samuel Moore in cooperation with Frederick Engels, 1888; from <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>

and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation”.

REGULATIONS FOR SOCIAL EQUALITY

By the beginning of 19th century British or the English East Indian company had firmly established themselves as suzerain power all over Kerala. The Portuguese had long left for their better abodes in Goa or Malacca region with the Dutch following their path. French had nominal control over Mahe, but never a threat. The Mysore Wars with Hyder and Tipu Sultan’s forces politically gave the acceptance to the English in Kerala as they positioned themselves as the saviors of Kerala from the Mysore domination. The Naduvazhis of Malabar and Kochi abandoned their subjects and land and taken shelter²⁹² in Tiruvitankur literally leaving the land to Tipu and later the English. The Treaty of Seringapatnam in 1792 made the English company the position of *de-facto* ruler of Malabar, with many Naduvazhis under their control. English now organized the newly acquired land with new judicial and revenue regulations, significantly, without providing much of concessions to the upper caste. It was the British administration in Malabar who first struck the blow against Slavery in Kerala. In 1792 itself, through a proclamation the British government abolished the

²⁹² Velu Pillai lists the name of the rulers who got political asylum in Travancore thus, “Among the princes who had taken shelter in Travancore at the time were the Zamorin [Samutiri] of Calicut, Rajas of Cochin [Kochi], Chirakkal [Kolattiri Rajas] Kottayam [North Kerala], Palghat [Palakkad], and [many] Chiefs .. [sic]”, Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.431

sale of slaves in Malabar followed by another proclamation in 1793 by William Farmer, the supervisor of the Malabar province²⁹³.

Tiruvitankur who were the ally of the British in the Mysore Wars were now falling in line, realizing the potential of their senior partner in the battle. The Governors of Madras and Bombay presidencies looked into the matters of Malabar, Kochi and Tiruvitankur with keen interest. The acceptance of the missionary activities by the British authorities in the areas in their direct and indirect control and the appointment of Col. Munro as the Resident of Tiruvitankur provided a condition conducive to the social reforms. The revolt Velu Thampi Dalwa [1808-09] brought the rulers of Tiruvitankur close to the British as the newly appointed Regent Gauri Lakshmi Bai [1811- 15] would state in her installation ceremony. Velu Pillai's quotes from the speech would reflect the relation between Tiruvitankur and the British. "The Rani frankly acknowledged" writes Velu Pillai, "that, being a young female quite unprepared and unqualified for such a high and responsible position, she could not do better than place herself under the guidance and support of the Honorable East India Company whose bosom had been asylum for the protection of an infant like Travancore [Tiruvitankur]"²⁹⁴. Rani entrusted most of the administrative decisions to English Resident, Col. Munro. She also supported the missionary activities of London Missionary Society [LMS] and Church Missionary Society [CMS] who worked predominantly among the distressed castes like Shannars in the southern extreme of Tiruvitankur. Urged by Munro and the missionaries, Rani Lakshmi Bai took the first

²⁹³ Nellikkal, Muralreedharan, KERALA JATI VIAVARANAM, [Malayalam], [Encyclopaedia of Caste System] Rainbow Book Publishers, Cengannur, Kerala, 2008, pp. 24

²⁹⁴ Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.503

legislative step against slavery in Tiruvitankur. Another legislative initiative which Rani Lakshmi Bai took which curtailed the economic dominance of the upper castes in Tiruvitankur and gave the fatal blow to the social hierarchy was the extension of the *Devasvam* lands to the *Pandaram* lands. Rani Lakshmi Bai's reform activities continued even during her successor Rani Gauri Parvati Bai's [1815 - 1829] rule may be due to the presence of Munro in Tiruvitankur.

Another attempt to bring in social equality happened in much later during the reign of Swati Tirunal [1829- 1847] who had strained relationship with British Resident Cullen. Based on the Act passed by the British Government in 1843 preventing "any decree or demand of rent or revenue by sale of slaves²⁹⁵", some of the Missionary societies working in Tiruvitankur petitioned to the Maharaja to abolish slavery in his kingdom. Dewan of Tiruvitankur replied on behalf of the Maharaja and stated that, "Emancipation [of the slaves], His Highness considers to be too important a question to be considered at present, especially as no such measure has yet been introduced even in the Honorable Company's territories, but the amelioration of the condition of the unfortunate class of the population, is a subject which will never fail to engage His Highness's consideration"²⁹⁶. As evident from the statement it was merely a letter of refusal sweetened with official jargon. But pressure of the missionaries through the British official mounted on the Maharaja and after one year, in 1853 a decree was issued freeing the future children of all slaves under the administration. With further convincing from the Resident Munro himself, Uthram Thirunal Martanda Varma

²⁹⁵ Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.567

²⁹⁶ Velupilla, TK Sadasyatilaka, THE TRAVANCORE STATE MANUEL, Volume II, History, 1940, First reprint, Government of Kerala, Kerala Gazetteers, Thiruvananthapuram, 1996, pp.567-568

[1847 – 1861] totally abolished slavery in Tiruvitankur on 24th June 1855. The system of transferring the land laborer along with land was also done away. The large scale conversion of the Pulaya community to Christianity especially in South Tiruvitankur forced the upper caste Hindus to review their policy towards the depressed classes which aided the efforts of the legislative efforts by the Maharaja of Tiruvitankur.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Apart from the initiation in the economic growth as well as ideas of social liberty European Powers and the missionaries who came along with them contributed immensely to the education initiatives of Kerala. They brought an abrupt shift to the education system in Kerala. Before entering into the contribution of European Powers in education it would be imperative look into the education system existed in Kerala at the time of the arrival of Europeans. Achuta Menon describes the 'traditional' system of education thus, "Prior to administration of Colonel Munro the Government of Cochin did not at any time directly itself in the education of the people. The State did not maintain or aid any schools, but left the people to make their own arrangements for the education of their children. There were – most of them are still in existence – several *matthas* where Nambutiri youths received their board and education free. They were taught the rudiments of knowledge in their own homes till the ceremony of *Upanayana*, or investiture with the holy thread, after which they resorted to one or another of these *matthas* for their further studies. In these institutions all of them were taught to recite the Vedas, while those who had the inclination for it were also instructed in Sanskrit literature and science. The teachers were learned Nambutiris, who generally resided in the *matthas* and received no

remuneration for their services except free board and lodging. As members of other castes were not admitted to these institutions, higher education in Sanskrit was practically monopolized by the Brahmins²⁹⁷. The other classes, however, especially the *Amabalavasis* and Nairs, were not left without education. Most of the well-to-do families had their family tutors, whose occupation was generally hereditary, and the children of the poorer families in the neighborhood were sent to them for such instruction as they stood in need of and for which they had to pay next to nothing. In the rural parts every village had its own *Ezhuttachan*²⁹⁸, or hereditary school master, who received the pupils in his own house and accepted such payments as the means of their parents, admitted of. These teachers taught the children reading the writing, the multiplication table and the recitation of Sanskrit hymns and in some rare instances, Sanskrit poetry, drama and rhetoric were also taught²⁹⁹. As children of all standards were taught promiscuously by a single teacher, their progress was necessarily slow: five to ten years were required for the acquisition of these rudiments of knowledge³⁰⁰. The education in the traditional system was purely on the basis of the traditional occupation of the castes. For instance, a person belonging to the Kaniyan caste or Poduval [from Payyanur] will be taught texts on Astrology and the Izhavas in South Kerala will be taught *Ayurveda*. In north Kerala the Izhava [known as the Tiya

²⁹⁷ Emphasis by the present author

²⁹⁸ Both Nairs and Izhavas. There is surname prevalent in South Kerala which belongs to the Ilava caste.

²⁹⁹ Even Sanskrit texts on Medicine, Astrology, Puranas were taught to non Brahmins but never Vedas and philosophy, which were exclusive to Brahmins.

³⁰⁰ Menon, Achyuta C, COCHIN STATE MANUEL, 1911, Reprint Kerala, Gazetteers, Government of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1995, pp. 373-374

in Malabar] who wanted practice the occupation as Panikkar³⁰¹ of the community is taught *tarka sastras*.

Coming of the European powers gave the education an abrupt change where a completely new curriculum was introduced, of course suiting the newer occupations. The concept of equality in the civil and social sector reflected on education too. Robin Jeffrey writes about late 19th century Kerala thus, "European Missionaries, more numerous in Travancore than in any comparable area of India, intensified their educational and proselytizing work among *avarna* Hindus"³⁰². Apart from establishing elementary level schools even small towns, missionaries like Scottish Mission, Basel Mission, Society of Jesus [Jesuits] and London Mission Society founded institutions of higher education. Madras Christian Collage at Chennai [1837], Victoria Collage at Palakkad [1888] and Malabar Christian Collage at Kozhikkode [1909] are famed examples of these educational initiatives. Brennen College at Tallassery [Kannur] established in 1862 was a private initiative of an English gentleman who made Tallassery his home. Similarly the enthusiasm of Swati Tirunal, Maharaja of Tiruvitankur, resulted in the establishment of a western style of school at Thiruvananthapuram in 1834 which grew into a college in 1866 under the Madras University. These educational institutions shunned away from traditional subjects and initiated the teaching of Science and Humanities. More over these institutions did not segregate students based on castes. The results were quite encouraging as evident

³⁰¹ In North Kerala Panikkar is an honorary title given to a person who does the ritualistic textual argument for the mother goddess shrine of a locality. Similar title is conferred on to Malaya community for a person excelling in the ritual dance practice called Teyyam. However it is an honorary title given to Nair caste in South Kerala.

³⁰² Jeffrey Robin , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8 (March., 1976), pp.5

from the data provided by Robin Jeffrey which reads, “The 1875 census put male literacy among Ilavas at 3.15%; by the 1891 census it had risen to 12.10%”³⁰³. In 1921 when there were 73082 lawyers, doctors and teachers, the number of Ilavas in the profession was 2326 while Nairs stood at 10568³⁰⁴. Though 3% may look insignificant, it is a great leap considering the deprived position Izhavas were in two decades back. MN Srinivasan explains the eagerness with which the lower castes embraced the western education system thus, “As far as the lower castes were concerned, Westernization became doubly desirable – it subsumed not only things valuable in themselves but something which the high castes had and they did not. To catch up with the high castes, mere Sanskritization was not enough. Thus they became more determined to obtain Western education and the fruits that only it could yield. High-caste dominance in education and in the new occupations thus provided the *raison d’être* for the Backward Classes Movement. It is no accident that the Movement was stronger in peninsular India where only one caste (in the *Varna* sense), the Brahmins, enjoyed a preponderance in higher education, the professions and government employment. It is also an area where a wide social and cultural gulf obtained between the Brahmins and others”³⁰⁵.

Another driving force in education was the establishment of schools and collages by the organizations as SNDP *yogam* [Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam]. Sri Narayana Guru, as discussed in detail elsewhere in this chapter, had understood the value of education for the development of the society and specifically the lower castes.

³⁰³ Jeffrey Robin , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8 (March., 1976), pp.8

³⁰⁴ Jeffrey Robin , Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8 (March., 1976), pp.10

³⁰⁵ Srinivas, MN SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIA, First Published 1966, University of California, , Orient Longman Edition, New Delhi, 1995, Reprint 2004, pp. 97

The movements like Malayali Memorial only underlined the reality that in an oppressive system as it existed in Kerala. Ninety years of missionary efforts since 1812 produced only 11.14 percent literates in Kerala and the women's share was only 3.15 percent. On the other hand, between the establishment of SNDP Yogam in 1903, the flagship organization started by Sri Narayana Guru for modernization of Hindus, and his *Samadhi* (death) in 1928, that is of twenty-six years effort of Sri Narayana Guru, the literacy rate of Kerala rose to 21.34 percent and its women share was 11.99 percent. The lower caste in Kochi and Malabar had similar development of education.

WORKS OF SOCIAL REFORMERS

"The caste system that had stratified communities on the basis of inequality was part and parcel of economic pattern of Hindu society in the past. The system gradually began to disintegrate under the impact of new forces and there was a shift of the economic balance established between community and community for the realization of social equality"³⁰⁶writes PKK Menon. The new forces mentioned in the above quote is the economic development and the rise of "new capitalists"³⁰⁷ thanks to the trade and industrial revolution introduced by the western powers, mainly British in Kerala. The colonial powers also demonstrated a kind of social equality, though conditional, as they viewed Nambutiri and Pulayan equally, subservient to them. Educationally and economically empowered common man started to view the caste system in Kerala with disgust. "Apart from the malice of caste system" writes AKG [AK Gopalan], "in

³⁰⁶ PKK Menon, HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol.II, [1885-1938], 1972, Reprint by Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001 p.538

³⁰⁷ Namboodiripad, EMS *KERALA CHARITRAM MARXIST VIKSHANATHIL*, [Malayalam], [History of Kerala through Marxist View Point] Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 1990

general each caste was shut in by its own system and rituals. So each community or caste now opted for the eradication of the biases within the caste for the common social equality”³⁰⁸.

Kerala too was fortunate to have witnessed the work of social and religious reformers in 19th century and the beginning of 20th century³⁰⁹ who relentlessly worked for the development of the depressed castes like Ayya Vaikuntha Svami [1809 - 1851], working among the Shannars, Sri Narayana Guru [1856- 1928] who worked for the Izhavas and Ayyankali [1864-1941] among the Pulayas of Tiruvitankur. Caste-Hindus like the Nairs were becoming sympathetic to the cause of the untouchables, due to the benevolent influence of Chattampi Swamikal [1853- 1924]. Similar reforms were happening in Malabar under the leadership of Brahmananda Sivayogi [1852- 1929]. The religious reform movements were not only affecting Hinduism but had its own share in Islam under Vakkam Mohammed Abdul Khadir Molvi [1873-1932] known

³⁰⁸ AK Gopalan, KERALAM INNALE INNU [Malayalam], [Kerala – Past Present] Chinta Publishers, 2002, Second Edition, 2004 p.34-35

³⁰⁹ Braj Ranjan Mani writes thus, “The late 19th century and early 20th century – a period of spectacular rise of cultural nationalism and movement for transfer of power- witnessed widespread awakening of political consciousness among the lower caste and communities all over the country. Their egalitarian aspirations produced several streams of movement against the stronghold of ascriptive hierarchy, slavery and caste-fuedal exploitation. These struggles threw up a determined lot of leaders who were unrelenting critics of caste and its consequences. These anti-caste campaigners confronted the hypocritical nationalist leadership for keeping pro-equality social movements out of the national agenda. Phule, Shahu Maharaj and Ambedkar inMaharastra; Iyothee Thass and Periyar EV Ramaswami Naicker in Tamil Nadu; Narayana Guru, Dr.Palpu, Kumaran Asan, K.Ayyappan and Ayyankali in Kerala; Bhagyareddy Varma in Andhra; Mangoo Ram and Chhotu Ram in Punjab; Acchutanand and Ram Charan in Uttar Pradesh; Hari Chanda Thakur, Guru Chanda and Jogendranath Mandal in Bengal; Sonadhar Senapathy in Assam; and many lesser known social crusaders all moked the patriotic pretensions of indigenous elite, and attacked the system of exploitation at every level”. Braj Ranjan Mani, DEBRAHMANISING HISTORY- DOMINANCE AND RESISTANCE IN INDIAN SOCIETY, Manohar, 2005, New Delhi. Reprint 2008, pp. 299

popularly as Vakkam Molvi. Poykail Kumara Gurudevan [1878-1938] worked to eradicate the caste segregation among the “*savarna*” Christians against the “*avarna*” Christians, i.e. the depressed castes of Hindus converted to Christianity.

Among these great reformers Ayya Vaikuntha Svami can be considered as the pioneer of social reforms in Kerala. Born in a Shannar family in 1809 as Mutisootum Perumal, Ayya Vaikuntha Swami worked in the southern extreme of Kerala mainly among the Shannars and Nadars. While there were large scale conversions from these castes to Christianity as a result of the missionary activity by the London Missionary Society [LMS] Ayya Vaikuntha preferred to stay within the periphery of Hinduism but proposed to worship not an image but a mirror. Ayya Vaikuntha Swami also organized public feasts where people belonging each every caste sat together, which was quite unknown in that period. Ayya Vaikuntha Svami is also the pioneer in creating a brotherhood for the development of the community, which later would be followed by social reformers like Sri Narayana Guru and Ayyankali.

Among the Socio/religious reformers Sri Narayana Guru [Fig.] holds a supreme position, entering the domain of Socio-religious reformation with the tool of Advaita, with which Sankaracharya established the brahmanical dominance in Kerala. Sri Narayana Guru born in a humble Izhava family worked for the educational and social development of his community and the whole society, propagating the principle of *advaita*. He revolted against the brahmanical religious practices through installing an “Izhava Siva” at Aruvippuram. The orthodox raised the question: “How could a non-Brahmin consecrate an image?” To which, the Guru replied, with characteristic

dryness, “I consecrated the *Izhava* Siva”³¹⁰. He also installed mirrors instead of images in the temples specially built for the *avarnas*. Guru concentrated on the reform of Religion, Morality, Education and Industry and Occupation of the *Izhava* community. He told his followers to,

*“Become enlightened, through education
Become strengthened, through organization
Become prosperous, through hard work”*³¹¹

He urged the lower castes, going through the worst oppression, being banned from worshipping the great deities of Hinduism, not to desert the religion but to fight the oppressions working within the religion. He established temples for the brotherhood of man as the entrance gate of Sivagiri Temple which reads,

*“Jati bhedom mata dwesham, Etum illaathe sarvarum
Sodaratuena vazhunna, Matrka sthanam aanithu”*

Translation: Free of the prejudice of caste, and religion, everyone here, Lives like brothers in this exemplary abode.

To work towards the development of the society Sri Narayana Guru established Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam [SNDP] in the year 1903 at Aruvippuram [Thiruvananthapuram District][Fig.]. Intellectuals like poet Kumaranasan and Dr.Palpu were members of SNDP. In 1904 *Vivekodayam* Magazine [Malayalam], edited by Kumaranasan was released, which dealt with aspirations and voices of the downtrodden community. Narayana Guru’s social reforms were well acknowledged by

³¹⁰ Braj Ranjan Mani, DEBRAHMANISING HISTORY- DOMINANCE AND RESISTANCE IN INDIAN SOCIETY, Manohar, 2005, New Delhi. Reprint 2008, pp. 302

³¹¹ As quoted by J. Indira and Rajeev Srinivasan, <http://www.parrikar.org/misc/Narayanaguru.pdf>

the national figures like Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi who visited Guru's ashram in 1922 and 1925 respectively. Reform movements lead by Sri Narayana Guru provided the spiritual stimulation to social reform movements like the Izhava Memorial and the Temple Entry movements. Sri Narayana Guru had a *padayatra* [on foot journey] all the way from Varkala in southern Kerala to Vaikom in central Kerala to give blessings to the Satyagrahis of Vaikom Satyagraha.

Issac CI summarizes the work of Sri Narayana Guru thus, "In the first five decades of the last century Kerala witnessed a Hindu renaissance. The spirit of reawakening continued over this land for over a period of half a century and cleansed the societal sin of a millennium without much pain. Behind this wonderful social transformation lay the hegemonic role of Sri Narayana Guru. He ably introduced a multifaceted strategy for the modification of the rusted Malayali psyche. The average Malayali for a thousand years was stunned before the nectar of *Advaitam*, monism, was presented by Adi Sankara (788 – 820 CE). For more than a millennium, the doctrine of non-duality remained in the psyche of average Malayalis as an indigestive one. At this critical juncture of Malayali social life, Sri Narayana Guru played the role of an incarnation and brought Sankara's philosophy of monism from its lofty ivory towers and presented it before the multitudes in an easily digestible form. He presented the glory and synchronization of Sankara's view of oneness/non-dualism in a more popular catchphrase of "one *jati*, one religion and one god for man." Through this exposition he was able to dictate the oneness of humanity, the sum and substance of Sri Sankara's philosophy, to all levels/strata of society"³¹².

³¹² Issac CI, Sree Narayana Guru: Founder of an Intellectual Religion, November 1 2009 , Sourced from <http://www.vijayvaani.com/FrmPublicDisplayArticle.aspx?id=901>

Not all the disciples of Sri Narayana Guru followed his path of Advaita, as many of them propagated the atheist approach like Sahodaran Ayyappan who wished to change Guru's teaching of, "one *jati*, one religion and one god for man" to "No *jati*, no religion and no god for man"³¹³. The other atheist thinkers include, MC Joseph, Kuttippuzha Krishna Pilla and TK Madhavan. Among them the latter two entered into socialist and Marxist political movements³¹⁴. Another socio-religious reformer who propagated atheism was Karat Govinda Menon, popularly known as Brahmananda Siva Yogi, working mainly in the Malabar region of Kerala.

Contemporaries of Sri Narayana Guru like Chattambi Swamikal and Ayyankali worked among the Nair and Pulaya communities respectively. Ayyankali [Fig.] following the model of SNDP established the Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham at Thiruvananthapuram in 1907 for the protection of the right of the depressed classes and equal opportunities to Pulayas in education and government jobs. Under the auspices of Sadhujana Paripalana Sangham a magazine in Malayalam called the *Velakkaran* [meaning servant in Malayalam] was released edited by Velappan.

Other caste Associations which followed the SNDP model were Keraliya Nayar Samajam [1907] formed by Mannath Krishnan Nair and Yogakshema Sabha, [1908] based in Aluva [Eranakulam District] who worked for the progressive development of Nambutiri community. Its prominent members were Desamangalam Sankaran Namboodiripad, VT Bhattathiripad and EMS Namboodiripad, who later became the

³¹³ As quoted by Govinda Pillai P, *KERALA NAVODHANAM ORU MARXIST VEEKSHANAM*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, a Marxist View Point], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2003, Second Edition, 2004, p.153

³¹⁴ Govinda Pillai P, *KERALA NAVODHANAM ORU MARXIST VEEKSHANAM*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, a Marxist View Point], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2003, Second Edition, 2004, p.153

great Marxist ideologue. Yogakshema Sabha also brought out a magazine known as Unni Nambutiri. In 1912, the Araya [fisherman Community] leader Pandit Karuppan staged the play titled *Balakalesam*, on the birthday of the king of Kochi, dealing with caste atrocities. KP Vallon of Kochi established Harijan Hostel which offered free lodging, food and tuition fee for the dalit student pursuing education at Kochi.

Though the leaders of the distressed classes like Sri Narayana Guru did not opt for conversion to other religions as the path towards the rebellion against Hinduism, revolutionaries like TK Madhavan threatened to convert the whole Izhava communities to Buddhism. The final blow to Hindu religious system came when Krushnati Asan, a prominent Pulaya leader from Kochi converted to Christianity in 1919. Perhaps this and similar threats of conversion to other religions by the Hindu destitute castes, opened the eyes of authorities forcing them to open the temples to all Hindus. Ambedkar mentions about such a warning thus, "... in 1936 there was held in Travancore a conference of the Yezawa [Izhava] community to consider the issue of conversion which was raised by me at Yeola in 1935"³¹⁵.

Apart from the above mentioned socio-religious movements and educational reform movements, the civil right movements like the Malayali Memorial 1891, submitted the grievances of the educated Keralite for more representations in the government jobs. Starting from the Izhava Young Men's Service Union near Mararikkulam [presently in Alappuzha District, Kerala] in 1891 were the first voices for equality and dignity raised by the lower strata of the stringent caste hierarchy. The Malayali Memorial, a memorandum bearing the signatures of over 10,000 people, including a sprinkling of

³¹⁵ As quoted by Sheshrao Chavan, GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR, SAVIORS OF UNTOUCHABLES, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001, p.180

Izhavas, Christians and Muslims, was submitted to the Maharaja of Tiruvitankur in 1891. It was really a Nair plea for privileges and positions. This was soon followed by an Izhava Memorial (1896), submitted with over 13,000 signatures pleading for extension of civic rights, Government jobs, etc. to the lower castes. Both the memoranda came to naught and the lower caste continued to bear the brunt of caste atrocities. The Dewan of Tiruvitankur T.Ramaraao would write in 1897 to an educated lower caste person, “according to the law he cannot be appointed to the government service”³¹⁶. The civil right movement initiated by the Malayali Memorial gave ample inspirations to the temple entry movements later.

³¹⁶ As quoted by P Bhaskaranunni, *Keralam Irupatam Noottantinte Aarambhattil* [Kerala in the beginning of 20th Century] [Malayalam], Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Thrissur, 2005 from Dr.Palpu [Biography] [Malayalam] by TK Madhavan, [date not provided]

TEMPLE ENTRY MOVEMENTS

"I think, it is a common perception that the Temple Entry Right and the movement is solely for the right of avarnas to enter into the temple and worship the god. Indeed, earning that would be part of the Temple Entry Right, but that is not the prime and only goal of the Temple Entry Right or the movement. Temple Entry Right is the ethical right which has religious and political facets".

TK Madhavan³¹⁷

The stories of atrocities against the *avarnas* inflicted by the upper castes and the princely state government in Kerala are many. One among them as quoted in the web site of Sri Narayana Mission Center, Washington; is quite gruesome, citing the massacre of 200 Izhava youth who tried to enter the Vaikom temple around two hundred years ago³¹⁸. Due to the public awareness created thanks to the educational, social and religious reform movements in the latter half of 19th century, the Izhava and other backward castes demanded the civil equality including the temple entry. TK Madhavan [Fig.], who can be considered as the main force behind the Temple Entry Movement gave a speech in the Sri Moolam Praja Sabha in 1904 [though he was only

³¹⁷ Speech of TK Madhavan, Ochira, [Kollam District], 1929, quoted by Govinda Pillai P [from PK Madhavan, *TK MADHAVANTE JEEVACHARITHRAM*, [Biography of TK Madhavan] Kottayam, 1986, p.79] *KERALA NAVODHANAM, YUGASANTHATHIKAL YUGASILPIKAL*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, Children and Builders of the Era], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2009, Second Edition, 2010. P.145

³¹⁸ <http://www.narayanaguru.org/Main.asp?xx=Biographies.html>

17 years old] about the atrocities of untouchability. In 1915 he founded the newspaper *Deshabhimani*³¹⁹ to publicize Izhava grievances and achievements³²⁰.

TK Madhavan should be given the due credit of linking the socio-religious movement of the Izhavas initiated by Sri Narayana Guru, a civic and political movement. He was the first one to raise the issue of temple entry in the public domain through the editorial of *Deshabhimani* in 1917³²¹. The SNDP Yogam in its annual meeting held on May 1920 passed a resolution saying that, "All public temples belonging to the Government should be open to all Hindus regardless of Caste". In the same meeting TK Madhavan moved the resolution that if the Hindu temples are not thrown open to all the Hindus regardless of their caste, they would embrace Christianity *en masse*³²². He was also successful in linking the issue of untouchability with that of national movement of freedom and equality. He met Gandhi at Tirunelveli in 1921 and informed him about the disabilities of the Izhava community, and sought his advice on the proposed temple entry movement and the support of congress party. Robin Jeffrey quotes from *COLLECTED WORKS OF MAHATMA GANDHI*³²³ about the details of the interview with Madhavan thus, "I would ask you," Gandhi began, "to

³¹⁹ There is a newspaper currently published from Kerala with the same name which has a different history linked with the Left Movement in Kerala.

³²⁰ KR Narayanan, *Ti Ke Madhavan*, [in SNDP YOGAM GOLDEN JUBILEE SOUVENIR, Vignanaposhini Press, Quilon 1953, p.45-46], as quoted by Jeffrey, Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.13 [JSTOR]

³²¹ Jeffrey, Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.13 [JSTOR]

³²² AM Ayrookuzhiel Abraham, Swami Anand Tirth, p.20 as quoted by RK Kshirsagar, DALIT MOVEMENT IN INDIA AND ITS LEADERS, MD Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p.389 [Sourced through Google Books]

³²³ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, XXI, p.185-8 quoted by Jeffrey, Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.14 [JSTOR]

drop temple entry now and begin with public wells. Then you may go to public schools." Madhavan quickly corrected him: "You seem to mistake our position in society for something analogous to that of the *Panchamas* in British India. Except half a dozen schools... all public schools in the state are open to us." Gandhi replied: "You are ripe for temple entry then." Gandhi also added that the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee [KPCC] should take up the issue³²⁴. Robin Jeffrey adds that, "The interest and approval of Gandhi was a powerful weapon for Madhavan to use, not only among his castemen but among educated caste- Hindus."³²⁵

Soon Madhavan returned to Gandhi with KP Kesava Menon, Secretary Travancore Congress Committee, at the Kakinada Congress Session in 1923. A resolution was passed at this congress session inaugurating a National campaign against the untouchability. K Kelappan, a Malabar Nair, worked in Tiruvitankur was chosen by KPCC to be the convener of the Anti-Untouchability Committee. The timing of the resolution was crucial as Kerala could join the pan Indian movement against caste atrocities and the quest for caste identity like the "Ad-Dharm movement in the Punjab (1926); the movement under Ambedkar in Maharashtra mainly based among Mahars which had its organizational beginnings in 1924; the Nama - Sudra movement in Bengal; the Adi - *Dravida* movement in Tamil Nadu; the Adi-Andhra movement in Andhra which had its first conference in 1917; the Adi-Karnataka movement; the Adi-Hindu movement mainly centered around Kanpur in UP"³²⁶. More than a caste based

³²⁴ Radhakrishnan P, INDIA, THE PERFIDIES OF POWER - A SOCIAL CRITIQUE, PRK Publications, Chennai. p. 144-45 [Sourced through Google Books]

³²⁵ Jeffrey, Robin, *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.14 [JSTOR]

³²⁶ Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, *The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 14, No. 7/8, Annual Number: Class and Caste in India (Feb., 1979), pp. 409-411+413+415+417+419-421+423-424, [Sourced through jstor]

agitation, the Temple entry movement shaped into a nationalist movement for civil rights. It was a strategically taken decision by leaders like TK Madhavan as it will clearly stated by him in a meeting at Ochira [Kollam District] in 1930, which reads thus, "I think, it is a common perception that the Temple Entry Right and the movement is solely for the right of avarnas to enter into the temple and worship the god. Indeed, earning that would be part of the Temple Entry Right, but that is not the prime and only goal of the Temple Entry Right or the movement. Temple Entry Right is the ethical right which has religious and political facets"³²⁷.

The Indian National congress which was leading the freedom movement had to address the issue of untouchability seriously as the support of the lower caste was being tilted towards the 'good' governance of the British in areas like Anjengo and Malabar. As mentioned elsewhere in the present thesis, the lower caste did not find the racial discrimination of the British any different from the prevalent caste segregation. Congress under the leadership of personalities like KP Kesava Menon, K Kelappan, and Mannath Padmanabhan took up the issue of caste system and untouchability. Congress took this opportunity to gather the support of the lower castes in Kerala and bring them together to the nationalist movement which was hitherto considered as an upper caste struggle for power. To quote Robin Jeffrey, "The rebellion against the ideology of old Kerala society gained legitimacy from the adoption by the Indian National Congress of M.K. Gandhi's programs of social reform. Although many Malayalis blamed the Congress for having provoked the

³²⁷ Speech of TK Madhavan, Ochira, [Kollam District], 1929, quoted by Govinda Pillai P [from PK Madhavan, *TK MADHAVANTE JEEVACHARITHRAM*, [Biography of TK Madhavan] Kottayam, 1986, p.79] *KERALA NAVODHANAM, YUGASANTHATHIKAL YUGASILPIKAL*, [Malayalam], [Kerala Renaissance, Children and Builders of the Era], Chinta Publishers, Thiruvananthapuram 2009, Second Edition, 2010. P.145

Mappilla rebellion of 1921, the Gandhian Congress retained a hold on the imaginations of the young. This was reinforced by its leadership of the Vaikom satyagraha in north Travancore in 1924-25 for the right of low castes to use roads near a temple”³²⁸.

Vaikom Satyagraha movement of 1924-25 [Fig.], started on 30th of March 1924 had active support from all over the country. The Akalis offered to start *langar* [community kitchen] for the Satyagrahis. Malayali Diaspora living Malaya and Singapore offered monetary support. The *Savarnas* too joined the struggle organizing *savarna jathas* [rallies] and boycotting the temples. Radical thinkers like EV Ramaswami Naikar [Periyar] [Fig.] came to Vaikom to support the Satyagraha. Sri Narayana Guru offered the Vellor Matha at Vaikom for the agitation; he even visited the Satyagrahis at Vaikom.

Vaikom Satyagraha had far reaching results. One it gave confidence to the lower castes to demand for their rights from the authorities which was controlled by the Hindu orthodoxy thus inspiring the later movements like Suchindram Satyagraha [1926–1930] Guruvayur Satyagraha [1931-32], , Kalpatti Satyagraha, and Paliyem Satyagraha [1948] to get access to the temples in Malabar and Princely state of Kochi. It also brought in the lower castes into the mainstream of national movement as observed by Patankar and thus, “in contrast to the ambivalence of the dalits' relations with caste-Hindu- based anti-caste movements, their relationship to the national movement was, even worse, an antagonistic one. The fact was that, with the notable exception of Kerala where the Congress leaders themselves undertook anti-caste

³²⁸ Robin Jeffrey, *Matriliny, Marxism, and the Birth of the Communist Party in Kerala, 1930-1940*, The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Nov., 1978), pp. 84 [Sourced through jstor]

campaigns, almost everywhere the Congress leadership was in the hands of upper-caste social conservatives who were often not simply indifferent to dalit demands but actively resisted them"³²⁹

Vaikom Satyagraha and the other Temple Entry Movements saw the temples under the public administration opening for all Hindus regardless of the caste they belong to. But it was not done immediately but had wait for decade before Maharaja of Tiruvitankur gave the historic Temple Entry Proclamation.

TEMPLE ENTRY COMMITTEE

Prior to the proclamation of Temple Entry in 1936, the Tiruvitankur government, which did not wanted the wrath of caste Hindus, appointed a high level committee³³⁰ to look into the possibilities of opening the temples to lower castes. The committee had its first sitting 1932 which secured replies from 3122 persons of whom 2867 were *savarnas*. All the *avarnas* who sent replies were of the opinion that worship was more efficacious within than outside the temple premises so far as the sight of the image was necessary for full benefit to be derived. Of the *Savarnas* who answered the

³²⁹ Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, *The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 14, No. 7/8, Annual Number: Class and Caste in India (Feb., 1979), p 415-416 [Sourced through jstor]

³³⁰ The members of the committee were Mr K. Parameswaran Pillai (High Court Judge) K. Anantanarayan Iyer (Retired Land Revenue Commissioner), M. Govindan (Retired Dewan Peishkar), T.K. Velu Pillai (Advocate, High Court), T. Kesavan Shastri, a nominee of Tarananallur Nambudiripad and Chingan Narayanan Bhattatiripad of Tiruvalla. Mr. Nambudiripad nominated Mr. Punnasseri Nambi Nilkanta Sarma, Principal, Sanskrit College, Pattambi who joined duty on in 1932. On Mr. K. Anantanarayana Iyer's death on 28 May 1933, the Government appointed in his place Mr. S.K. Mahadeva Iyer, Retired Dewan Peishkar. From Menon, PKK [Ed] THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001, p.360, foot note number 20.

questionnaire, 525 persons were against temple entry while 468 persons opined that it would very much enhance the dignity of the temple. Of the 325 *savarnas* witnesses orally examined, 238 favored temple entry. The Committee was convinced that there was a strong feeling among the *savarnas* in favor of temple entry though the opposition also was not negligible³³¹.

The recommendation of the committee is quite pertinent in the context of the current thesis as the committee recommends the entry right of Hindus based on the architecture feature of the temple and the segregation based on caste hierarchy. The committee in its report identifies the ‘important’ parts of the temple as “*Garbhagrha* or *sanctum sanctorum*; the Mandapa in front of it in the inner *Ankana*; the Kitchen; the *Balimandapa* and the *Koottambalam* or dancing hall; the last one alone is outside the *Nalambalam*”.³³² Entry right to the *Garbhagrha* is reserved only for the Brahmin directly engaged in the services to the icon. Other Brahmins and Kshatriyas can enter into the *Namaskara mandapa* and go up to the *Sopana* or the steps of *garbhagrha*. Vaishyas and Sudras can go up to the *Sopana* but not on *namaskara mandapa*. Castes lower than Sudras are to be kept outside the *nalambalam*. Castes lower than Sudras had no access into the outer precinct of the temple.

³³¹ Menon, PKK [Ed] THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001, p.360, foot note number 21

³³² Menon, PKK [Ed] THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001, p.360, foot note number 22

The committee did not give in much in comparison to the demands of the lower castes and the temple entry activists. The justification given by the committee is that as follows, “a Hindu temple was not a public school or road and that worship in the temple should be regulated by usage which, in the absence of documentary evidence as to the original intention of the foundation, might be taken as showing that intention. Though the temples were intended for the benefit of all Hindus, they were subject to the restrictions imposed by usage as to the places up to which the various communities could go for worship”³³³.

In other words, the committee could not get any *sastrik* reference regarding the segregation of the temple premise based on caste hierarchy. This is precisely the reason behind the refusal by the caste Hindus to participate in the *sastrik* arbitration suggested by Gandhi during Vaikom Satyagraha. The texts like *TANTRASAMUCCAYAM* are silent on this issue. Here I am not suggesting that the canons were in favor of the entry of *all Hindus*. The silence of the texts only proves that the caste Hindu society was not even thought about a possibility of worshipping in the temple standing next to a lower caste person, who is shooed away from the public road.

Tiruvitankur Government did not proceed on the recommendation of the committee till there was another wave of popular sentiment and organized protest for the Temple Entry Right. An All Kerala Temple Entry Conference was held at Thiruvananthapuram in May 1936 under the auspices of the Kerala Provincial Board

³³³ Menon, PKK [Ed] THE HISTORY OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN KERALA, Vol. II (1885-1938), 1972, Reprint, Department of Cultural Publication, Government of Kerala, 2001, p.361, foot note number 23

of the Harijan Sevak Sangh [originally known as All India Anti- Untouchability League formed in Bombay on 30th September 1932]. A deputation appointed by the Harijan Sevak Sangh travelled all over Tiruvitankur state to create awareness and collect signatures in favor of the temple entry. Apart from this, series of events in 1935-36 also resulted in pressurizing the Tiruvitankur Government for opening up of the temples to all Hindus. The Izhava leaders were contemplating as TK Madhavan threatened earlier for *en-masse* migration non Hindu religions. SNDP in fact resolved to do so in 1935³³⁴. CV Kunjuraman, a prominent Izhava leader, advocating mass conversion to Christianity had discussions with Anglican Bishop of Kottayam while C Krishnan and K Ayyappan preferred Buddhism. Among these, C Krishnan did convert to Buddhism in 1935. C Kuttan and friends migrated to Sikhism. Threatened by the prospects of large numbers of Izhavas suddenly becoming Christians thus creating dangerous imbalance in the population pattern of the state ruled by a Hindu king, the [Travancore] government suddenly decided to pay heed to the demands of the demonstrators³³⁵. Ambedkar analyses the change of mind by Dewan CP Ramaswamy thus, "It may be recalled that in 1936, there was held in Travancore a Conference of the Yezawa [Izhava] Community. The Yezawas are an Untouchable community spread over Malabar. It is an educated community and economically quite strong. It is also a vocal community and has been carrying on agitation in the State against social and religious disabilities. The Conference was held to consider whether the Yezawas should not abandon the Hindu Religion in favor of some other religion (This was in

³³⁴ Cyriac K Pullapilly, *The Izhavas of Kerala and Their Historic Struggle for Acceptance in the Hindu Society*, in Bardwell L. Smith [Ed.], RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA, EJ Brill, Leiden, 1976, p.41

³³⁵ Cyriac K Pullapilly, *The Izhavas of Kerala and Their Historic Struggle for Acceptance in the Hindu Society*, in Bardwell L. Smith [Ed.], RELIGION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN SOUTH ASIA, EJ Brill, Leiden, 1976, p.42

pursuance of the decision taken at Yeola in 1935 under my chairmanship). The Yezawas form a very large community. The cessation of so large a community would be death-knell to the Hindus and the Conference had made the danger real. It may not be farfetched to say that the Proclamation was issued to forestall this danger”³³⁶. CP Ramaswamy the Dewan of Tiruvitankur sensing the mass uprising against the government as well the mass conversion might have urged the Maharaja for a solution³³⁷. The result was the Temple Entry Proclamation by Maharaja Chittira Tirunal Balarama Varma of Tiruvitankur [Fig.] on his 25th birthday, which was on 12th November 1936.

³³⁶ Ambedkar BR *Temple Entry In Travancore* APPENDIX V,

[http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix_What Congress and Gandhi have done.htm](http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/41M03.Appendix_What%20Congress%20and%20Gandhi%20have%20done.htm)

³³⁷ “The Christian threat to the character of a Hindu state could, in Ramaswami Aiyer’s view, be overcome by uniting all Hindus into single, devout community without distinction of caste. Throwing open the government temples at the right moment could be a vital step in this process of consolidation”. See Jeffrey, Robin, , *Temple-Entry Movement in Travancore, 1860-1940*, SOCIAL SCIENTIST, Vol.4, No.8, [March, 1976], p.20 [JSTOR]



TEMPLE ENTRY PROCLAMATION

BY

CHITTIRA TIRUNAL BALARAMA VARMA, MAHARAJA OF TIRUVITANKUR

12TH NOVEMBER 1936

*"Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has throughout the centuries, adapted itself to the needs of changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth or caste or community, be denied the consolation and the solace of the Hindu faith, we have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering or worshipping at temples controlled by us and our Government."*³³⁸

³³⁸ Chavan, Sheshrao, GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR, SAVIORS OF UNTOUCHABLES, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, 2001, p.192