

THE  
EZHAVA COMMUNITY  
AND  
KERALA POLITICS

RAJENDRAN

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AND  
KERALA POLITICS**

**G. RAJENDRAN**

**The Kerala Academy of Political Science**

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First published 1974

Library IIAS, Shimla

59127  
28.3.78



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191

Printed at

St. Joseph's Press,  
Trivandrum-14.

32° 95' 48" S.  
R 137 E.

Published by:

The Kerala Academy of Political Science,  
Karyavattom P.O.,  
Trivandrum.

*To  
My Parents.*

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## P R E F A C E

Pressure Groups or Interest Groups were once viewed with alarm as sinister forces gnawing at the vitals of democracy or representative form of Government. But today they are accepted as social realities and recognised as wholesome factors in political dynamics. Kerala politics was not impervious to interest groups. Among them, the Communal Interest Groups or Communal Organisations as they are generally known, are of exceptional importance. While I was probing into the interaction of communities and politics in Kerala I was struck by the extraordinary transformation made by one of the principal communities of Kerala--the Ezhava community--during the last seventy years or so. The part played by the Ezhava community in Kerala politics, through its principal organisation, called the SNDP yogam, before and after independence absorbed my interest. This work is the result.

The Ezhava community has produced men and women with outstanding talents, skill and ability. So are the sister communities in Kerala. Some of them could have produced a comprehensive history of the community or a social history of Kerala. Somehow or other, that was not yet done. And this is only a modest beginning.

In preparing this work, I have consulted materials such as back numbers of daily news papers, periodicals, souvenirs published on special occasions, Assembly proceedings, Gazettes, pamphlets and administration reports of the SNDP yogam, biographies

and autobiographies of Ezhava leaders and certain office files from the SNDP yogam office, besides general books.

I acknowledge my gratitude to the librarians and staff of the following libraries for their kind and timely help: Kerala Legislative Library, Kerala University Library, The State Central Library and Sri Narayana Library, Murukkumpuzha. My special thanks are due to Sri. K. Govindan, Librarian of the Sri. Narayana Library, Murukkumpuzha, who had been kind enough to allow me to make use of his excellent collection of books and pamphlets on the Ezhava community.

I am grateful to Prof: V. K. N. Menon and Dr. V. K. Sukumaran Nair, Professor and Head of the Dept. of Politics of the University of Kerala for their valuable help. I am indebted to Dr. R. Ramakrishnan Nair of the Department of Politics, Kerala University, under whose supervision I am working for my Ph. D. Degree, on the topic "Communities and Politics in Kerala, a study in interaction," for the encouragement and help he has rendered in getting the book published. I must acknowledge my thanks to the Kerala academy of Political Science for publishing the book under its auspices.

I alone am responsible for any errors.

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11--8—1974.      }

**G. RAJENDRAN,**

## INTRODUCTION

One of the four principal communities in Kerala society is the Ezhava community. Nairs, Christians and Muslims are the other three. A peculiar feature of Kerala society is that these four communities are numerically more or less of the same strength, and balance one another. Each community has played a significant role in the politics of the state. There has been no permanent friendship or permanent hostility among these communities. Never was there any communal riot in the recent history of the state unlike in some of the northern states of the country. In fact there was general communal harmony. The three religions Hinduism, Christianity and Islam peacefully co-exist. It does not mean that there was no rivalry or competition. Indeed, there has been. Till the forties of the present century the Christian missionaries actively engaged in proselytisation. The Hindus apprehending the erosion of their numerical strength, resisted conversion and resorted to retain the edifice. Then, rivalry and competition among a few principal communities figured prominently in the public affairs of the state. Nairs and Ezhavas, Nairs and Christians, Hindus and Muslims, Muslims, Christians and Ezhavas against Nairs, Nairs and Ezhavas against Christians, Christians and Nairs against Ezhavas rallied together off and on. Their struggle, their alliances and counter alliances very often provided the propelling force for the state politics. Politics in its turn has influenced all these communities. Democratic ideas, rationalism, liberalism, Gandhism and Marxism permeated these communities. Economic changes produced cleavages in every community. Class formation had taken place everywhere. A powerful, very vocal and assertive middle class has grown in every community.

The fact that Kerala society underwent a tremendous transformation is undeniable. All the four principal communities have produced brilliant men and women, some with international reputation. Nevertheless, an authentic history of any community

has yet to be written.<sup>1</sup> Not even a social history of Kerala-people was attempted at.<sup>2</sup>

If any justification is needed for selecting the Ezhava community and not some other community as the subject of this research paper, it is because the Ezhava community, among all the four principal communities has shown the greatest dynamism and underwent extraordinary transformation. Perhaps, there is no parallel anywhere in the world for such a tremendous progress made by a community in so short a time. A community which was confined to the gutter of untouchability until yesterday, put up a heroic fight, more valiant than that of the Plebians of ancient Rome for securing basic human rights, such as to walk on highways, has, within the short span of thirty years produced Chief Ministers, Chief Justices, Chief Engineers, great poets, leading doctors, professors, journalists, business men and the like.

Ezhavas are Hindus. But they were regarded as beings, outside the four fold division of Hindu society. They were lower than sudras. They were untouchables and in some places unapproachables. They could not go anywhere a Nair, a Namboodiri or other upper class Hindus. Some of them were agricultural labourers. The traditional occupation was extracting toddy from coconut and palm trees. Some of them were weavers. The community was not a homogeneous one. Both horizontally and vertically it was divided into various sections. There were numerous caste subdivisions in the community. There were well to do families as well. But vast majority of the Ezhavas were poor people.

With the beginning of the twentieth century, signs of restlessness and awakening were noticed in all communities especially among Hindus. It was part of the awakening in other parts of India. The impact of the movements inspired and initiated by Swami Vivekananda, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Kesabchandra Sen, Swami Dayananda Saraswathy, Mahadev Govind Ranade, and others had been felt all over India. The bold steps taken by social reformers in Bengal, Punjab, Maharashtra and other places against the outmoded superstitious beliefs and practices among Hindus had reverberated throughout the country. The educated and progressive minded men who had the

benefit of contact with outside world had taken a fresh look on their communities and urged for social reforms. The miserable conditions of Ezhavas in Travancore were given expression to, by many. Perhaps, the first record was the Malayalee Memorial of 1891.<sup>3</sup> It expressed the grave concern of the memorialists at the discrimination against Ezhavas. G. P. Pillai, who was the moving spirit behind the Malayalee Memorial, had persuaded Herbert Roberts and raised the issue of Ezhavas in the British Parliament.<sup>4</sup> In 1895, at the ninth annual meeting of the Indian National Social Conference held at Poona, G. P. Pillai again raised the issue and attracted the attention of the outside world to the condition of untouchables in Kerala.<sup>5</sup> Dr. Palpu, an Ezhava who was in Government Medical Service outside Kerala because of sheer inability to get the same in his native place due to untouchability, a friend of G.P. Pillai, was the pioneer among the Ezhava community to call for and work for the social emancipation of Ezhavas.<sup>6</sup> When Sri Narayana Guru, the saint philosopher belonging to the Ezhava community gave his call to Ezhavas to awake, arise and act, several illustrious sons of the community like Kumaran Asan and T. K. Madhavan dedicated themselves and came forward to uplift the community.

Almost simultaneously, political awakening and consciousness of social disabilities and other handicaps were noticeable in other communities especially in the Nair community. While a community association, called the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, generally known as the SNDP Yogam, was formed in 1903, to work for the social emancipation and upliftment of Ezhavas with Sri Narayana Guru as patron saint, other communities also followed the pattern.<sup>7</sup> In that category that which became very famous was the Nair Service Society (the NSS)<sup>8</sup>.

In the initial stages, the SNDP Yogam and the NSS worked in co-operation as they were both fighting Hindu orthodoxy. The NSS and particularly, its founder leader Mannath Padmanabhan whole heartedly co-operated with the SNDP and its ablest leader T. K. Madhavan for redressing grievances of Ezhavas.<sup>9</sup> The leaders of both of the organisations were comrades-in-arms in fighting for the removal of untouchability, freedom of worship, right to use public roads and in short social equality.

However, by the 1930s, the S N D P Yogam joined hands with the Christians as the N S S developed an anti-Christian bias. The S N D P leadership took an active part in the joint political congress formed under Syrian Christian leadership in the company of Muslims as the joint political Congress championed the economic and political demands of Ezhavas ie. for communal representation in civil service and in the legislature.<sup>10</sup> However, the concession of these demands and the temple entry proclamation issued by the Maharaja in November 1936, satisfied practically all the demands of the S N D P. As a result, the S N D P leadership severed its connection with the Congress in 1939, and came closer to the N S S in an attempt to forge a Hindu front in 1952, against the alleged Christian domination.

The S N D P Yogam played a political role before independence in opposing the Government and later by defending the Government of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer against the Travancore State Congress.<sup>11</sup> In the period after independence the S N D P Yogam leadership flirted with the N S S for some time with the idea of Hindu politics. The calculation was to bring all Hindus in the state under one banner, so that, that would be politics of the state.<sup>12</sup> In fact in the early fifties 'The Hindu Mandalam' was formed with great hopes and ambitions. The S N D P Yogam and the N S S had gone to the extent of making a merger, welcoming and persuading all Hindus irrespective of caste and subcaste differentiation to make common cause.<sup>13</sup> The Hindu Mahasabha gladly welcomed the move and assured all out support. The Hindu Mandalam leaders indulged in a vitriolic campaign against the Congress party which they denounced as a Christian party.<sup>14</sup> As the political wing of the Hindu Mandalam a Democratic congress was formed to counter the Congress party.<sup>15</sup> At a time when it had started capturing the imagination of the Hindu public, both Hindu Mandalam and the Democratic Congress flopped. The first all India general election was about to take place. The communist party was gaining ground in Kerala that was lost by the congress by its own omission and commissions. The communists were rivals to both the congress and the Democratic Congress. Another reason was the S N D P leader R. Sankar and N S S leader Mannath Padmanabhan could not maintain their cordial personal relationship which has by the time strained considerably.<sup>16</sup>

In 1957-59, when the communists were in power in the state, the S N D P and the N S S leadership sank their differences and joined together against the communists to organise a liberation struggle. Paradoxically, R. Sankar, who was the leader of the earstwhile Democratic Congress, who wanted to bury the Congress party 'six feet deep', was the President of the Congress.<sup>17</sup> The N S S leader Mannath Padmanabhan was the supreme commander of the liberation struggle. In the coalition government which came to power R. Sankar became Deputy Chief Minister and in 1962, he became Chief Minister. It is generally believed that his Ministry was wrecked in 1964, with the blessings of the N S S Chief. Unfortunately, both R. Sankar and Mannath Padmanabhan are only memories today.

The rise of the Ezhava community was phenomenal. From the position of being a community of backward class Hindus, long considered as untouchables and even unapproachables, the community had risen to the stature of a significant force to be reckoned with in Kerala's public affairs. The S N D P Yogam has done yeomen service to the community. In building up an organisation where there was none, in inculcating the spirit of unity, in establishing a large number of educational institutions to impart modern education to the members of the community, in fighting for social equality, in redressing the grievances of the community, in bargaining for its economic and political share, the S N D P Yogam had done incalculable service. However its influence is on the decline. Old generation of leaders are dead and gone.<sup>18</sup> It does not represent the majority of Ezhavas. The majority of the community is still poor people-agricultural and industrial workers and toddy tappers. But there emerged a very prosperous minority. That is the upper and the middle classes. The S N D P Yogam is controlled by that minority. There is a wide gulf between the political attitudes of the Ezhava middle class and the Ezhava working class. Unlike the N S S, the S N D P Yogam has been unable to bridge the gap. Therefore its political influence is declining. The communist parties could make deep inroads into the community. The working class in the Ezhava community and the Harijans constitute an excellent reservoir of recruits for the leftist parties especially the communist and the R S P.

The recent trends in the state indicate that the S N D P Yogam, conscious of its erosion of influence and the decline of power, has been making a bid to rally together all the Ezhavas under one banner. Still more, its ambition goes to the extent of bringing together all socially backward communities except the Scheduled Castes and Tribes who come under a special category. Its strategy is to raise the bogey of reaction of Nairs and Christians against the backward communities. The Nair and the Christian community complained that the system of reservation in public services, originally meant for generally poor people of the backward communities, is exploited by the affluent section of the backward communities. Therefore, the system of reservation must be rationalised so as to give special consideration to all economically backward people.<sup>19</sup>. The S N D P Yogam leadership feels convinced that the discontinuation of the system would jeopardise the economic interest of the Ezhava upper class and therefore attempts to interpret the move as one directed against all members of the backward communities.<sup>20</sup> The one difficulty cropped up to the great disadvantage of the S N D P Yogam is that other communities have developed enough power of understanding to see through the game. Leadership of several backward communities have already made clear that they do not want the S N D P to champion their cause.<sup>21</sup>.

This controversy naturally affects the state politics.<sup>22</sup>. Most of the political parties are in dilemma. The communist parties cannot ignore the claims of a poor Nair, a poor Christian, or a poor Nampoodiri simply because he does not happen to belong to a backward community.<sup>23</sup>. At the same time the communist parties cannot favour the discontinuation of the system of reservation for backward communities because that would estrange many of its sure supporters. At the same time they cannot ignore the argument for reservation of seats on the basis of economic backwardness. The difficulty with the Ruling Congress is that its leadership wants to get rid of the stigma that, it is controlled by Christians and Nairs and it also wants to win over the Ezhavas who had gone to the communist and other leftist camp. In the process it does not however, want to lose the support of the Nair and the Christian elements. Among the political parties, 'Kerala Congress', is perhaps the only one that came out

boldly to support and champion the demands of Nairs, Christians and other non-backward communities.

The rapid spread of education, political articulation, and the modernisation (process) made communities castes and their organisations look increasingly anachronistic. Ezhava community and S N D P Yogam are no exceptions. One does not find in Kerala today many people taking pride of being members of this or that particular caste or community. The general tendency among new generations is not to reveal the caste or community identity. Further, very few people are making deliberate, conscious effort to maintain the interests of a community. When Ezhavas are not proud of being Ezhavas and do not want to preserve and promote the identity of Ezhava community, how long could that community survive? Same is the case with other communities. Kerala is rapidly moving towards social democracy if not social equality. The days of the caste and communal organisations are numbered.



## THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF KERALA

Twenty million people living in the fifteen thousand square miles of territory with their tradition, culture, inheritance, language, hopes and aspirations, problems and possibilities, assets and liabilities constitute the Kerala society, an integral but distinct part of Indian society. Kerala society is not what it was a few decades ago. What has been tried here is to outline the structure of Kerala society of yesteryday where caste and landlordism, though decaying, were very relevant and society was rigidly assorted into numerous mutually exclusive castes and communities. At the dawn of the present century, the one thing common to all Keralites was their language—Malayalam. Common-history culture, tradition, way of life were there, but they were feeble, bonds. Divisive and centripetal forces were more than cohesive forces and were several. Three religions divided among themselves almost the entire people – Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Hindus constituted nearly sixtyone percent, Christians twentyone percent and Muslims nearly eighteen percent of the population.<sup>1</sup>. While Hindus were inextricably mixed up with the feudal structure, Christians and Muslims were not. As Sardar K. M. Panikkar had observed, they were two parallel societies.<sup>2</sup>. Hindus did not form a homogeneous group. On the contrary, there were about 773 divisions and sub divisions among them - on the basis of caste and sub caste.<sup>3</sup>. The influence of caste was all pervasive and did not spare the Christian and Muslim communities from its influence. They were also fragmented, the more among the Christians. It is relevant to remember in this context, that Kerala was not a single political entity, but at the same time, was not divided into hundreds of mutually hostile principalities, as was the case before the advent of the British as masters, but remained divided into three clear political units – Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. A person was not known for his personal worth but first, as the subject of a Maharaja, then as a member of a religion, then as a member of

a caste and sub caste and finally as a member of a family. So the individual and society was connected not directly but only through strong intermediaries which clouded the personality of the individual.

It is impossible here to give an account of all castes, sub castes and communities which existed in Kerala. What is proposed here is only to highlight the four principal communities - Ezhavas, Nairs, Christians and Muslims - on the back drop of the social canvas. The Muslim community, wherein subdivisions are comparatively less, has been taken up first followed by the Christian and Hindu communities

There are nearly 4.2 million Muslims in Kerala according to the latest census.<sup>4</sup> Led by the Muslim League, Kerala Muslims wield considerable political influence in the state. The community derives its political influence from the fact that, its population is largely concentrated in a single compact region- Malabar, and has in its gift a large chunk of votes.

There are divisions and sub divisions in the Muslim community, though not very strong. It is a wellknown fact but difficult to prove that Muslims in Malabar consider themselves more aristocratic and superior in status than those in the Travancore-Cochin region. In the Muslim League, the influence of the latter is almost nothing. The general division among the Muslims was between the Shias and Sunnis.<sup>5</sup> The latter was further divided into four categories.(1)Mogul,(2) Pathan, (3)Saiyad and(4)Sheik.Malabar Muslims are sub divided into three categories: (1) Jonakan (2) Methan and (3) Thangal. Tamil Muslims are subdivided into three (1) Labba, (2) Rawthar and (3) Thulukkun.As has been already mentioned these subdivisions are not generally known.

As regards the origin of the Muslims in Kerala, they belong to two main categories. First the descendants of the early Arab settlers of the seventh and eighth century who came for trade.<sup>6</sup> By the tenth century, the Muslims had become an important segment of the population of Kerala and an important force in Malabar. Second, the descendants of those voluntarily or forcibly converted into Islam during the invasion of Hyder Ali and his

son Tippu Sultan of the neighbouring Mysore in the 18th century.<sup>7</sup> Muslims and non Muslims of Kerala know well that there is no plurality of culture and that they belong to the same stock. That may be one of the reasons for not having communal riots in the state. The outbreak of a rebellion by the Muslims in Malabar in 1921, resulting in the large scale loss of lives and properties of Hindus there, is not ignored here. As E.M.S. Namboodiripad has maintained, that rebellion was mostly, against the British authorities who had been suspicious and therefore unsympathetic to the Muslims, who were considered as supporters of Hyder-Tippu Sultan regime, which fought against the British.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, British authorities deliberately fomented Hindu-Muslim hostility to safeguard their own interest.

The bulk of the Muslims are poor peasants, fishermen labourers, artisans, petty traders, shopkeepers and others. A sizable section of them were, until recently, landless tenants. In fact there are very rich businessmen and landlords in the community but they constitute only a small section. However, they control the Musiim League. The community as a whole was very late in taking to modern education and therefore, Muslims were backward in professions. Very recently, the community has produced leading men of professions and high government officials.

The educated section, the elite, of the Muslim community views the Muslim League as inadequate, outdated, and antiquarian. They, therefore, formed a non-political organisation called the Muslim Education Society to work for social reforms in the community.<sup>9</sup> As the M E S leaders are not prepared to give implicit obedience to the League leadership, the latter frowns upon the former as defiant delinquents. So long as Bafaky Thangal, the grand old patriarch and the undisputed leader of the League was alive, the M E S did not count and was no problem. But after his demise the League lost a powerful unifying force and the dissidents started posing problems.<sup>10</sup> So, a non-cohesive League would find the M E S as a big challenge. A few intellectuals in the League began to feel that the League has no future in Kerala politics which is increasingly becoming secular. There are handful of Muslims in other parties and in the leadership of political parties including the Marxist Communist party.

About the social relations of the Muslims with other communities and vice versa it may be said that there was little social intercourse between the vegetarian Hindus and non-vegetarian Muslims. Muslims lived in groups, in pockets into which others do not penetrate. In rural areas the gap was very wide. But in towns and other urban areas the position was slightly different. Now as vegetarianism has been fast disappearing even from the Nampoodiri community and urbanisation is spreading caste Hindus patronising Muslim restaurants is a common sight. Inter-marriages are rare. Neither the Muslims nor others have a feeling that the Muslims are any longer neglected especially since the Muslim League had joined the Ministry in 1967. But at the same time there is a general feeling and rightly, that the Muslims must be educated in order to make them modernised.<sup>11</sup>

There are nearly 4.5 million Christians in Kerala.<sup>12</sup> Christians are not divided on the basis of caste but there are denominations some of which amount to caste divisions.<sup>13</sup> Broadly, Christians may be divided into two groups—Catholics and non-Catholics. If a division is made on caste line it would be Syrian Christians and other Christians. Syrian Christians include Catholics, Jacobites and Protestants while other Christians include Catholics and Protestants.<sup>14</sup> The Syrian Christians are reputed to be as old as St. Thomas, (an apostle of Christ) who is said to have visited Kerala.<sup>15</sup> With the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498, attempts were made to make the Kerala Christians accept the authority of Rome. But when the power of the Portuguese declined, the Jacobite section of the Syrian Christians owing allegiance to the Church of Antioch in Syria, met in 1653, and renounced their allegiance to Rome.<sup>16</sup> The Mar Thoma Church owes its existence to a reform movement in the Jacobite Church in the 19th Century. The Roman Catholics are divided into Syrian Catholics and the Latin Catholics.<sup>17</sup> The Syrian Catholics consider themselves as Syrian Christians, belonging to the same ethnic group as the non Catholic Jacobites and Mar Thomites. The Latin Catholics include a large proportion of converts from the untouchables.<sup>18</sup>

From the social and political point of view, Kerala Christians may be grouped into four – the Syrian Catholics, the Syrian

non - Catholics, the Latin Catholics and backward class Christians. Of these four groups, the Syrian Catholics and non Catholics are the most powerful group. The Christian community did not play any role in politics till the beginning of the Joint Political congress in Travancore in the 1930s. The Joint Political congress was a United Front consisting of the leadership of Christians, Muslims and Ezhavas of Travancore against the political dominance of the caste Hindus. Many of the demands of the Joint Political congress such as reservation in the legislature and government service were conceded.<sup>19</sup> In 1938, the joint political congress merged into the Travancore State Congress which was then formed to struggle for responsible government in the State.<sup>20</sup> However, a sizable section of the Catholics broke away from the Joint Political congress at the time of the merger. The leadership of the Congress was mainly in the hands of Syrian-non-Catholics. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the then Dewan of Travancore, was able to influence the leadership of the Catholics as well as he could the leadership of the Nairs and Ezhavas to stay away from the Congress for a long time.<sup>21</sup>

Unlike the Muslims, the Christians are spread all over the state though not evenly. In Kottayam, Iddikki, and Trichur districts their strength is greater than in other districts. Before the formation of Kerala state, their strength in Malabar was negligible. But since then a good number of the enterprising and hard working members of the Christian community have migrated to Malabar, primarily to purchase and cultivate the forest lands.

Christians are there in all political parties in the State. In the period after independence the influence of the Syrian Christians was strongly manifested in the Congress party, the successor of the Travancore State Congress. The overthrow of the first democratic Government in Travancore with Pattom Thanu Pillai as Chief Minister was generally believed as the handiwork of the Syrian Christians in the Congress.<sup>22</sup> A Syrian Catholic, A. J. John, became Chief Minister in 1952 and continued in office till 1954. The Syrian Christians formed the back bone of the liberation struggle against the Communist regime in 1957—59, led by the NSS leader, supported by the SNDP Yogam and mainly financed

by the Catholics. In the 1960—64 Ministry—a leading role was played by P.T. Chacko, a Syrian Catholic. In 1962, when R. Sankar succeeded Pattom Thanu Pillai as Chief Minister a pro-P.T. Chacko group emerged in the Congress. After Chacko's resignation due to differences with the Chief Minister and his death within a few months the pro-Chacko group supported a no-confidence motion against R. Sankar. In 1964, on the eve of the elections pro-Chacko group formed a new party—the Kerala Congress. The Kerala Congress which is ten years old now has been largely a catholic party—There is another political party also in which the Catholics have major share but with a difference. That is the KTP (the Karshaka Thozhilali Party) founded by a Catholic priest Fr. Vadakkan and led by his lieutenant, B. Wellington.<sup>23</sup> Fr. Vadakkan, during the anti-communist era, was the leader of a strong anti-communist front in Travancore Cochin financed by the Catholic church.<sup>24</sup> Later he went to the other extreme and the KTP is now in the CPI (M) camp. The Syrian non Catholics, Jacobites and Mar Thomites had largely supported the Congress. After the split in the Congress they more or less support the Ruling Congress. A. K. Antony is the President of the KPCC and the powerful Youth Congress is governed if not controlled by them.

The Malayala Manorama, one of the oldest daily newspapers in Kerala, probably with the largest circulation among Malayalam dailies, expresses the main points of view of the Syrian non Catholics, Jacobites and Mar Thomites. At one time it was true that Christians generally and Catholics particularly were anti communists. Now that ceases to be true. Their anti communism has been considerably watered down so much as the communism of the communists. The Christian Bishops used to play very influential role in times of elections through their exhortations to the laity. But such influences are waning.

As the Christian community is a divided house, as the Christian churches are several, as Catholic and non-Catholic political attitudes do not often coincide the Christian community as such, could not be very effective in Kerala politics<sup>25</sup>. It suffered certain disadvantages compared to the NSS or the SNDP. It could not produce one leader who could command the respect and confidence of all sections of Christians.

As regards the social status and social intercourse, the position of Christians was somewhere between the Caste Hindus and Ezhavas. (26) Christians were above the line of untouchability. But there was no question of intermarriage between caste Hindus or Ezhavas. The family organisation and the system of inheritance of the Christians differed from the Hindus and Muslims. Strict adherence to monogamy, strong marriage ties, insistence on dowry etc. were in sharp contrast with those of Hindus and Muslims. (27) Relations of the Christians with the Church were not merely religious. Church was a social organisation exercising tremendous control over the lives of Christians. In fact the role of the Church in providing unity, cohesion, mutual assistance and guidance of its members became a model for the N S S and the S N D P Yogam. The absence of joint family system in the Christian community was interpreted as a fillip for the individual initiative among the Christians. (28) The crusade against joint family system, and the impartable *taravad*, made later by Nairs and Ezhavas might have its inspiration from the Christian system. An important fact to be remembered in this context is that the Christian church had played a progressive role in Kerala in contrast with the reactionary role of the church in western Europe in the era of feudalism. The church in the west was a target of attack by the rising middle class while the church in Kerala was actually accelerating and assisting the emergence of the middle class.

The Christians as well as the Muslims were influenced by the Hindu society. In their dress, address, ceremonies, festivals, eating habits, way of life etc. to a very large extent, they were Hinduised and Keralised. The trend is towards an integrated society.

It is interesting to note that the four fold division of the Hindu community was not prevalent in Kerala.<sup>29</sup> It seems that Hinduism in Kerala also became Keralised and in the process lost the customary division. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Sudras were there but no Vaisyas. The role of the Vaisya Community—trade, business, money lending etc. was performed partly by the Christians and Muslims and partly by the Chettis of Tamilnad.<sup>30</sup> If Vaisyas were not here, there were Nairs and Ezhavas who do not fall in

the traditional divisions. Further, the Kshatriyas were numerically very weak and that gap was filled up by upper class layers of Nairs and Samanthas.<sup>31</sup>

The Hindus were divided more than united. It is not correct to call Hindu community, it is actually Hindu society. It was like a huge beehive, a huge pyramid of so many enclaves and pockets. The main caste-communal groupings may be summed up as follows: Caste Hindus, non-caste Hindus, and scheduled castes and tribes. Each was having innumerable sub divisions. The census report, as late as 1931 reveals Kerala as a mad, world of castes and sub castes many of which are unintelligible to the new generation of Keralites.<sup>32</sup>

Caste Hindus formed the upper block of the hierarchy. They were the upper class, the ruling class. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Nairs, Ambalavasis and Samantas constituted the caste Hindus, none of which was homogenous. Brahmins were unquestionably at the apex of the hierarchy. They were broadly divided into three: Malayala Brahmins, Pancha Dravida Brahmins and Pancha Gowda Brahmins.<sup>33</sup> Malayala Brahmins were sub divided into six categories, of which Namboodiris stood at the appex. The sub divisions were so fantastic that among the Namboodiris themselves there were not less than ten sub divisions.<sup>34</sup> Kshatriyas constituted a micro scopic minority. Yet there were something like five sub divisions among them. The traditional functions of the Kshatriyas were shared in Kerala by Nairs.<sup>35</sup> Nairs with local variations were the fighting class, the ruling class and the managerial class. Strangely, except the upperstrata of Nairs, others provided a reservoir of domestic servants and aides for the Brahmins and Kshatriyas in several localities.<sup>36</sup>

As there was no Vaisya community as such, below Brahmins and Kshatriyas came Nairs in Caste hierarchy. Those who were associated with temples and reilgious services subservient to the Brahmins were called Ambalavasis. Chakyar, Nambiar, Variar, Marar, Pisharody were among the twelve sub divisions of the Ambalavasis. They considered superior to Nairs, while Nairs considered themselves superior. However, now they

are also absorbed in the Nair community. Above Nairs or among Nairs at the top layer were Samantans. They were very few in Travancore-Cochin region but were common in Malabar. Of the ten sub divisions among them very well known names are Adiyodi, Eraldy, Vellodi, and Pandala.

Nairs were included under the category, caste Hindus. Nairs were not a caste. They were a community. Not less than thirty sub divisions existed among them.<sup>37</sup> At the top were Samantans. The great feudal nobles in Kerala came from the Nair community. Traditionally they were warriors, formed the militia. Their titles varied according to places. Known as Panikkar, Unnithan, Valiathan, Kaimal, Kurup, Kartha, Manna-diaras and Menons, they exercised local political power based both on feudal holding of land and compulsory military service. The common people among Nairs were cultivators. Some Nairs were managers, rent collectors, clerks, petty officers of Brahmin landlords, temples and royal courts. Poor nair families provided domestic servants.

Matrilineal descent and inheritance, imparible joint family, absolute control over the family by the eldest male member, children having no right to the properties of their father, husband living in wife's house, children's loyalty and love more to their maternal uncle than to their father, no responsibility for husband to look after his wife and children, very loose marriage ties, polygamy and polyandry in several places, Namboodiri men having freedom for sexual relations with Nair women, etc. characterised the Nair family organisation. A Nair was responsible for looking after his sisters and all the children and children of their children begetted by irresponsible Nair and Nampoodiri men. This was in sharp contrast with the system obtained among the Nampoodiris as well as Christians who had patrilineal inheritance but it was similar to those of Ezhavas.

With Namboodirimen, the cultural conquerers, who had the knowledge of Vedas, Sastras, Mantras, Tantras, Jyothisha, Ayurveda and even Kamasutra in addition to the control of landed property and temples, the Nair community had easy cross fertilisation<sup>38</sup>. The Christian and Ezhava communities might have had the same with Nairmen. Perhaps, the Nampoodiri community might

have been the only community which scrupulously avoided sexual intercourse for their women with men of any other community. Whether it is the consequence of rigorous insistence on the chastity of Namboodiri women or not, the Namboodiri community perished while a vigorous middle class emerged and prospered in other communities especially in the Nair, Christian and Ezhava communities.

The caste Hindus, the ruling class, was not a producing class. It was supported by the tillers of the soil. The slaves and the untouchables were the burden bearers of the society. They constituted the basis of the Hindu society. At the top level of the submerged class was the Ezhava community. According to the Kerala Public Service Commission, even to day, there are eightyone backward communities in the State excluding the Scheduled Castes and Tribes.<sup>39</sup> For every occupation there was one caste, or a sub caste. They include barbers, washermen, fishermen, cobbler, blacksmith, goldsmith and others. Among all these backward communities which suffered social disabilities the Ezhavas were at the top of the ladder.<sup>40</sup>

Ezhavas are not caste Hindus. They were at the top of the non caste Hindus. They are a community. They were known as Thiyas in Malabar, Chokons in Central Travancore and Ezhavas in the southern part of the State. They are spread evenly all over Kerala. Basically a cultivating class, traditionally Ezhavas were associated with growing and tapping coconut trees. A country liquor is produced by tapping coconut trees and the production and sale of that liquor was supposed to be the hereditary business of Ezhavas. But today as regards its sale and use, even Namboodiris do it.<sup>41</sup>

Before the mid 19th century, Ezhavas were considered untouchables and many social prohibitions were extended to them.<sup>42</sup> But many families among them enjoyed honours and the tradition of some of them show that they excelled themselves in the art of war. The story of Aromal Chevakan, though perhaps belonging to the 16th Century, clearly shows that there were Ezhava families who had an established position in the martial history of Kerala.<sup>43</sup> But the community as a whole was in a state of social and economic depression.

Unlike the Nampoodiris who could not adapt themselves to the exigencies of a rapidly changing phase of society under the impact of western education the Ezhavas, like the Nairs, had progressed. As among the Nampoodiris there was no biological degeneration in the Ezhava community as the women were not under any compulsion to observe any vigorous moral code. There were larger scale cross fertilisation with men from the lower levels of caste Hindus, especially Nairs. As there was no contemptuous negligence of the sexual rights of female members, the community had benefitted from the large in flow of new blood from outside.

With the advent of capitalism there emerged in the community a large mass of agricultural and industrial labourers; a section of middle class employees under private employers or government; a growing number of higher paid government officers and well to do professionals and also a small group of landlords and capitalists.

The new class, the middle class, that emerged in the community actually gave lead to modernisation. It is that class which fought for social, economic and political equality. That class resisted the domination of caste Hindus. The Ezhava middle class has done a good job through its welfare organisation called the S N D P Yogam to educate, enlighten and fight for the rights of Ezhavas.

At the bottom of the Hindu social hierarchy, below the backward communities including the Ezhavas, was what are now called the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Curiously enough, they were untouchables and unapproachables even to those who suffered the same indignity from the caste Hindus.<sup>44</sup> Their very sight would pollute a caste Hindu, especially the Nampoodiri, it was believed.

These sons of the soil, the aborigines of Kerala, who were leading a sort of primitive life were also not spared from the influence of caste. Among the scheduled castes there were nearly seventyfive categories.<sup>45</sup> Tribes in the forests were also divided into nearly forty categories.<sup>46</sup> The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes together constitute nearly ten percent of the population. Scheduled Castes are mostly found in Quilon and Palghat districts and the Scheduled Tribes in Kozhikode and Cannanore districts.<sup>47</sup>

Most of these depressed classes were landless people, under the category, tenants at will. Even at the beginning of the century many of them were like chattels, and slaves. Since independence, the universal adult franchise had made certain differences. The development of capitalism threw up an educated class, something like an elite in them, but to a far lesser extent than in other communities. There are no landlord-capitalist elements in the category. Even the number of professionals and government employees is negligible when compared to backward communities.<sup>48</sup>

The Kerala society was actually not a society but a federation of societies. The Hindu society with its pyramidal structure and the parallel societies, the Christian and the Muslim, peacefully coexisted. Religious differences, caste differences, regional differences, etc. stood in the way of integration. The self sufficient village economy, the rigorous caste system, the influence of geography, the peculiar land tenure etc. effectively prevented the formation of "the people". Yet Kerala has developed its own culture, language, arts, architecture literature and the like and contributed towards the enrichment of Indian culture, Indian civilization and Indian philosophy. Indeed there was the mad, mad caste system in its most oppressive form, with its appalling features in Kerala, unlike the rest of India. What looked like a lunatic asylum to Swami Vivekananda was the first State in India to launch an uncompromising war against it.

Now, the social hierarchy lies demolished. Nampoodiris from the apex had a fatal fall. So are the other upper class Hindus. A new people whose pedigree is uncertain, who cannot honestly claim purity of blood are being formed. Their outlook is different. Their values of life are different. They do not any longer consider traditions as trammels. They are establishing new traditions. They are more mobile. They are more democratic. In the place of Nampoodiris, Nairs, Christians, Muslims, Ezhavas, Paravas, Kuravars and others, a body of citizens are emerging. Travancoreans, Cochinites and Malabaris are yielding place to Keralites. What has been happening is not mere transformation, it is social revolution, a bloodless social revolution. A new age has been dawned.

First

## THE EZHAVA COMMUNITY

The position of the Ezhava community in the social matrix of Kerala has been indicated in the previous section. The origin of the community, its social, economic and political disabilities, and the need for reform at the dawn of the twentieth century are discussed in this chapter.

There is no indisputable theory regarding the origin of the Ezhava community or other communities of Kerala. However, there are various views expressed by different historians. William Logan, the author of "Malabar Manual", an oft quoted authority held that Ezhavas were not the aborigines of Kerala but a people, migrated from Ceylon in between the first and the fifth century A. D.<sup>1</sup> Historians, Sociologists, and Anthropologists like E. Thurston, L. K. Krishna Iyer, C. A. Innes, Nagam Aiya, T. K. Velu-Pillai, C. Achutha Menon and A. Sreedhara Menon, subscribe to this view.<sup>2</sup> Prof. Elankulam Kunjan Pillai, a scholar in Kerala history is of the view that Brahmins alone came from outside Kerala and all other communities of Kerala are indigenous.<sup>3</sup> E. M. S. Namboodiripad disagrees with Prof. Kunjan Pillai and maintained that all Keralites, including the Brahmins are natives. At the same time he does not refute the view that small groups of people had migrated to Kerala from different parts, in different periods of history. Such people got mixed up with the natives and dissolved themselves beyond recognition.<sup>4</sup>

The institutions of caste and land lordism are the products of centurise of evolution. No one has written, so far, any authentic history of that social evolution. Further, no authoritative records or documents are available. How did a minority establish its absolute control over the vast majority and successfully kept the latter under control and obedience? It still remains a mystery. Whether it was the consequence of a successful armed conflict or mere cultural conquest or both, is not known. It seems unlikely that the Namboodiri Brahmins, so mild, timid, pleasure seeking and peace loving, once had recourse to arms.

Records are available to show that Buddhism once prevailed in Kerala, though it is not possible to give the exact date of the arrival of Buddhism.<sup>5</sup> During the period of Sankaracharya, which was proved as the latter half of the 8th century A. D., Brahmin dominated Hinduism, completely overpowered Buddhism. According to William Logan, the beginning of a well established, clearcut caste system may be traced to the 8th Century A. D., when Namboodiri Brahmins finally came to power.<sup>6</sup>

It appears that, in the long dim past of Kerala history there might have been migration of people several times. Caste system is not a unique feature confined to Kerala society alone. Caste have been features of Indian society. Brahmins from the north might have come in several waves to the fertile Kerala. There might have been conflicts, conquests, mingling, co-existence, with and even coalescence of the natives, the migrated, in the course of a few centuries. The Namboodiris of Kerala have no counterpart in the rest of India. They might have been the products of cross fertilisation between the Brahmins came from outside and the culturally superior people of Kerala of those times. Nairs, Ezhavas, and others might have been the natives of Kerala without any such segregation or distinction till the establishment of Brahmin hegemony. In the ancient period, Ceylon might have been conquered by South Indian Kings like the Cholas and vice versa.<sup>7</sup> Probably some migration might have had taken place from Ceylon. They might have brought with them coconuts and the technique of drawing toddy from coconut trees.<sup>8</sup> Some of them might have been Buddhists. They also might have got dissolved in Kerala society.

With the establishment of the supremacy of the Brahmins, there might have been consequent changes in the social milieu. Some might have moved closer to the victors, and some others, drifted away. Those who got linked up with the victorious Brahmins might have got certain privileges, positions, advantages etc. as concessions or compromise. Others might have been subdued, excluded, and rigorously kept under. The former appears to be the caste Hindus and the latter non-caste Hindus and the depressed classes. So from the same stock of people emerged the distinction such as Nairs, Ezhavas and others.

In short, the people of Kerala, except the lowest strata contain elements came from outside at one time or other. Even Christians and Muslims are no exception. Ezhavas are most probably, the natives of Kerala, like Nairs and others. They may include people, migrated from Ceylon and other parts of India. They may also include one time Buddhists. The origin of their backwardness may be traced to the superimposition of caste system in Kerala.<sup>9</sup>

Ezhavas were victims of the exploitation by the caste Hindus. And in their turn, they exploited the classes below them in the hierarchy. Ezhavas were treated in many places as untouchables. They were not allowed to walk on public roads. They could not get admission in educational institutions. They were Hindus, but they could not enter temples. While their pigs and cattles could frequent the premises of temples, they were not allowed to go even there.<sup>10</sup> Ezhavas could not use public wells or public places. If some how, some Ezhavas got educated, either in private schools or schools outside Kerala, they could not get entry in government service which was practically the monopoly of caste Hindus.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, there was no incentive for them.

There were other social humiliations as well. An Ezhava should keep himself, at least thirtysix feet away from a Namboodiri and twelve feet away from a Nair.<sup>12</sup> Caste Hindus' language, they should not use. He must address a caste Hindu man, as Thampuran, (My Lord) and woman as 'Thampuratti' (My lady).<sup>13</sup> About him, he must not refer as 'I', but only as 'adiyan'.<sup>14</sup> He must stand before a caste Hindu in awe and reverence, assuming a humble posture.<sup>15</sup> He should never dress himself up like a caste Hindu; never construct a house on the upper class model.<sup>16</sup> Even in observing religious ceremonies, he was compelled to keep his inferior status in tact. About the woemen folk of the community, they were required, young and old, to appear before caste Hindus, always 'topless'. In 1859, when an attempt was made to give up that practice and some young women covered up their breasts, there was a furore created by intolerant Nair men, near Trivandrum.<sup>17</sup> Accoridng to the author of the 'Travancore State Manual' there was almost a riot. Covering up the breasts of Ezhava women was regarded, as an infringement or encroachment

on the rights of Nairmen. About the ornaments also, there were restrictions. There were certain prescribed ornaments which only they should wear.<sup>19</sup>

Illiteracy and ignorance were two big curses of the community. At the beginning of the twentieth century, out of every thousand 927, were illiterate.<sup>20</sup> Among the very few literates, what made them literate was the elementary knowledge of Sanskrit.<sup>21</sup> In Travancore state, which was actually in the forefront of other Indian States in the field of education, there were only 1359 Ezhavas, who knew English language in 1901. That was just six percent of the English knowing population of the state.<sup>22</sup> Lack of opportunities, lack of facilities, lack of incentives and untouchability were the most important causes for the poor rate of literacy among the Ezhavas and other backward classes. Educational institutions were also a few. In government owned schools, admission was denied to them on grounds of untouchability.<sup>23</sup> Even after the legal removal of that impediment there were cases of teachers and students of upper castes, boycotting classes, because of the 'polluting' presence of Ezhava students.<sup>24</sup> Further, even if they were educated, employment opportunities were very rare, for they were not given jobs in government services. According to the "Malayalee Memorial" of 1891 and the "Ezhava Memorial" of 1896, there was not a single Ezhava, holding any government appointment on a monthly salary of Rs. 5/- or above, though intelligent and educated men were not lacking among them.<sup>25</sup> Actually, the educated Ezhavas mentioned in these memorials, received their education in schools, maintained by Christian missionaries and some from outside the state. In fact, it was these educated men, who pioneered the middle class in the Ezhava community.

Illiteracy is the fertile field, where superstitions find abundant vegetation. The whole community, with minor exception, was immersed in dreadful superstitions. Witch craft, sorcery, black magic, blind faith or fear in ghosts and evil spirits like *Madan*, *Chathan*, *Yakshi*, *Bhootham*, *Arukola*, *Marutha*, *Rakshas* etc. engulfed the community more than it engulfed the upper castes.<sup>26</sup> In order to please these ghosts and countless other gods and goddesses, the community placated the priests and magicians with its hard earned money.<sup>27</sup>

The abundance of expensive social and religious customs and practices was another enervating factor. The social functions like those attached to birth, ear boring of the child, '*annaprasam*', puberty of the girl, '*talikettu*' marriage, pregnancy, and elaborate ceremonies in connection with death etc., most of which are by way of aping the affluent upper classes, were unnecessary and highly expensive.<sup>28</sup> Several Hindu families were ruined because of them. Gods and goddesses were maintained at very high costs. Each family was bound to give, its fixed share for religious festivals in terms of men and money. There were competition among families and between localities to show off their prestige in celebrating temple festivals on grand scale.<sup>29</sup> Local leaders of the community, known variously, as '*Thandan*', '*Perumban*', and '*Muthuāl Pattukan*', were there to give guidance, and leadership in family, social and religious matters. They did not know, that they were presiding over, and hastening the liquidation of the old order.

Economically, the community was very poor. The bulk was composed of poor, landless, agricultural labourers, some of them were serfs, if not slaves. There was no particular occupation for the community as a whole, as in the case of barbers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths etc. However, Ezhavas were considered, as having toddy tapping, as their traditional occupation. According to Dr. A. Aiyappan, it was an erroneous notion, because not more than three percent of Ezhavas were ever engaged in toddy business.<sup>30</sup> Ezhavas not only produced toddy like the Nadars of Tamilnad, but also practically monopolised its sale.<sup>31</sup> The production, sale and consumption of liquor was so rampant in the community, absorbing both men and women, that, complete stoppage of all the three was the first step suggested by Sri Narayana Guru, patron saint and the spiritual leader of the social reform movement of the Ezhava community, for the salvation of the community.<sup>32</sup> Coir spinning and weaving absorbed another section of the community, both men and women. Yet another section occupied itself with cultivation. Some of the cultivators were rich peasant-tenants.

There were well to do Ezhavas, educated and enlightened. Among them were Sanskrit scholars, Ayurveda physicians and astrologers. '*Kalaris*' or gymnaciums were maintained by some

Ezhava veterans. But Kalaris lost most of their charm and full or their utility with the introduction of modern warfare and weaponry by the westerners. History shows that on the eve of the arrival of the British in Kerala as masters, rulers of certain principalities like Venad and Ambalapuzha had Ezhavas as their soldiers.<sup>33</sup>

Politically Ezhavas did not count. They were, like the depressed classes, the underdogs, the downtrodden, the inarticulate, illiterate, voiceless mass. Politics, as we understand today, had not begun before the twenties of the present century. Politics before that period was politics of the bureaucracy and the royal courts where the Ezhavas had no access. It was in Travancore that the first legislative council was formed as far back as 1888.<sup>34</sup> But until 1930, there was no elected Ezhava member in the Council. The emerging middle class within the Ezhava community however noted that the Nairs whose population was 8.6 lakhs had more than 14 representatives while the Ezhavas whose population exceeded that number by a few thousand, had no representative.<sup>35</sup>

Besides the imposed social inferiority, economic disadvantages and political neglect, the Ezhava community had certain in built handicaps—divisions and sub-divisions—which prevented unity, and the system of inheritance and succession, which curbed individual initiative.

The division and sub division and gross inequality among the members of the community under the influence of caste system blocked the way for common brotherhood. Broadly, the Thiyas of Malabar assumed and posed that, they were superior to the Ezhavas of Travancore or Cochin. Many Thiyas have fair complexion unlike most of the Ezhavas who are dark skinned. It is believed that some Thiyas of Malabar were begetted by Europeans in Ezhava women.<sup>36</sup>

Taking the Ezhava community as a whole, there was a general four fold division: the Ezhavas who lived South of Quilon were called Ezhavas as such; north of Quilon and South of Cochin were called *Chokons*; in South Malabar as *Thiyas* and North Malabar as *Billavas*.<sup>37</sup> Thiyas were subdivided into eight illoms: *Koikkal*, *Vannmarikka*, *Nellikkal*, *Pazhayar*, *Mankudi*, *Tenamkudi*, *Padayankudi*

and *Villakudi*.<sup>38</sup> The Travancore Ezhavas were divided into four groups: 'Muttilam', 'Mayyanāthi' or *Vellachi Illom*, 'Machambi' *Illom*, and *Chozillam*.<sup>39</sup> Marriages within the Illoms or groups were prohibited. In order of social status the Travancore Ezhavas were grouped as follows: *Ezhavas* (proper), the *pandi Ezhavas* the *Kollattu Ezhavas*, and *Pallachi Ezhavas*.<sup>40</sup> On the basis of *patikramam* there was still further a four fold division: *Pallikkathara*, *Palathara*, *Kolathara*, and *Chenkolathara*.<sup>41</sup> Ezhava families of upper classes and higher status had no social relation with the rest. The hierarchical conception had permeated the whole community like other Hindu communities.

The family organisation and the system of inheritance and succession were also not conducive to the growth of common brotherhood, cosmopolitanism, and individual initiative. On the otherhand, they were of the contrary effect. The family organisation and the system of inheritance were replicas of those of the Nairs. The eldest male member of the family used to be the patriarch of the joint family.<sup>42</sup> As in the case of Nairs, in the Ezhava community also, the patterns varied according to variations in localities.

*Marumakkathayam* or matrilineal system of inheritance was in force among the Ezhavas of North Malabar, Kasargodu, Southern parts of Cochin and Travancore.<sup>43</sup> At the same time in South Malabar, northern parts of Cochin state, and certain parts of Travancore *Makkathayam* was practised. Among the Ezhavas South of Quilon, both systems were practised.<sup>44</sup> There was no uniformity about marital relationship. Some people practised polygamy: some others observed polyandry.<sup>45</sup> In addition there were group marriages.<sup>46</sup> Monogamy was also there. Divorce was easy. No rigorous rigidity was anywhere insisted on the right of sexual relations of the women. That was perhaps one of the most important factors which enabled the community to have advantages of cross fertilisation and the emergence of a new set of people with better talents and brilliance. In this process the male members of the lower strata of the upper class Hindus, Christians, and Muslims contributed. Unwittingly, they hastened the birth of a new class—the middle class—a class of upstarts.

The Ezhava community was in the process of an extraordinary transformation at the beginning of the century. In Kerala

feudalism had weakened. It was declining and was on the way out. The middle class had emerged. It viewed the old order as obstacles to be criticised, resisted and destroyed. It was hostile to the upper class Hindus, and endeavoured to be friendly to the lower classes. It posed as the champion of all backward classes. To surge forward it wanted an organisation to unite as many Ezhavas as possible. It was thrilled by the slogan-liberty, equality and fraternity. To break the shackles all around, to be educated, to attain economic prosperity, to secure social equality, to be politically heard, the Ezhava middle class formed the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) the story of which was since then largely the story of the Ezhava community.

## THE SNDP YOGAM

The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) was formed in 1903. The events leading to its birth are varied and form an integral part of the social history of Kerala.

The abiding honour of having taken the first tangible step towards the introduction and diffusion of western education in Kerala goes to the christian missionaries, particularly the protestant missionaries who followed the Catholic missionaries. A prussian missionary, W.T.Ringle Taube, had established some schools, for the first time in Trivandrum district, where free instruction was given to all poor children irrespective of caste and creed.<sup>1</sup> At the initiative of Col. Munroe, who was the Dewan of Travancore and Cochin states, governmental aid was given to a small extent, to the efforts of that pioneer. In 1834, the first English school was started in Trivandrum. It was a government aided private school. Caste was no bar for admission. As there was no immediate benefit, the lower classes including the Ezhavas did not make much use of the facility. They, being interested in Ayurveda and astrology, continued Sanskrit education.<sup>2</sup> However, two Ezhava brothers of Trivandrum, despite heavy odds, completed not only their school education but secured university degree from the Madras University. P. Velayudhan B. A., and his younger brother P. Palpu, who passed the L. M. S. examination in medicine were the two illustrious brothers.<sup>3</sup> Unable to get into the government service in their native state of Travancore, the former entered British service and the latter-Dr. Palpu-in Mysore Government service.

Slavery was abolished in Cochin in 1854.<sup>4</sup> Ezhava women of Travancore were granted the right to cover the upper part of the body, by a royal proclamation in 1859.<sup>5</sup> The first college in Kerala, the C. M. S. College, was opened at Kottayam in 1860.<sup>6</sup> The main thoroughfare, the Main Central Road, connecting Kottayam and Trivandrum was completed in 1877.<sup>7</sup> Kottayam became a town and headquarters of the district in 1880.<sup>8</sup> The first legislative council was established in 1888 in Travancore. In the same year

a joint stock company, the first of its kind ever started by the natives, was formed at Kottayam. It was called the Malayala Manorama Company and its founder was Kandathil Varghese Mappila an illustrious figure in Kerala History.<sup>9</sup> Under the auspices of the Company, the Malayala Manorama was started as a weekly on 22 March 1890.

The events mentioned above indicated the shape of things to come. There was a stir in Kerala society. The Ezhavas were not immune to the changes taking place. Under the impact of the starting of 'the Malayala Manorama' several periodicals appeared.<sup>10</sup> One among them was the '*Sujana Nandini*' a weekly, edited by an Ezhava, Paravur V. Kesavasan, and published from Quilon, under the auspices of a company on the model of the Malayala Manorama Company, in 1891.<sup>11</sup> It was in the same year the 'Malayalee Memorial' was submitted. As the response of the government to the memorial was disappointing to the Ezhava community Dr. Palpu, from Mysore submitted a memorial to the Dewan of Travancore highlighting the grievances of the community on 13 May 1895.<sup>12</sup> Neither his memorial nor his two reminders elicited any reply. Therefore he came to Trivandrum and met the Dewan in February 1896. The Dewan pointed out the difficulties in admitting Ezhavas to schools and appointing them in the government service, as these were contrary to tradition. However, he assured granting of special schools to Ezhavas provided Ezhavas take up the initiative. Consequently, though there were large number of applicants for starting schools, only two primary schools were granted.

Thereafter, realising that an organised agitation was necessary to change the attitude of the government and the upper class Hindus towards Ezhavas, a state wide campaign was organised and that culminated in the submission of a Memorial to the Maharaja of Travancore in September 1896. That was signed by more than thirteen thousand Ezhavas. In the reply to the memorial dated 31 October 1896, the Dewan stated that special schools could be granted to Ezhavas whenever they want; and that Ezhavas could be given jobs in those government departments where Christians are appointed, such as Forest and public works departments.<sup>13</sup> That reply was also being not satisfactory, attempts were made, thenceforth, to form an Ezhava organisation

with branches all over the state with a view to agitate till their grievances are redressed. Dr. Palpu had been working on a plan to form an organisation called the Ezhava Sabha.<sup>14</sup>

Inspired and influenced by the preachings of Swami Vivekanada, who had earned, by the time, a world wide reputation following his famous speeches at Chicago and under the impact of the Sri Ramakrishna Mission, founded by Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Palpu decided firmly to regenerate and uplift the Ezhava community.<sup>15</sup>

About that time Sri Narayana Guru, an Ezhava sanyasin breaking the monopoly of the Brahmins in the field had established a Siva temple at 'Aruvippuram' in 'Neyyatinkara', near Trivandrum. An Eleven member committee was constituted in 1900, for the purpose of managing the affairs of that temple under the guidance of Sri Narayana Guru.<sup>16</sup> With a view to promote the material and spiritual education, economic progress, and social reform of the community the temple committee was reorganised and registered as a joint stock company on 15 May, 1903 under the name Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam.<sup>17</sup> Thus the SNDP Yogam came into being, with Sri Narayana Guru, as its patron Saint, Dr. Palpu, as the main force and the famous poet N. Kumaran Asan, as its Secretary.

Originally, the membership was restricted to those, who could pay hundred rupees in atleast ten equal annual instalments. Naturally, there were only a few who could become members. Subsequently, the membership restrictions were liberalised to attract more people and by 1937, more than one hundred and ten thousand members were enlisted. The idea was to have a unit in every village and such units to be controlled and coordinated by a Taluk branch and all such branches by a District body and the district bodies by a central committee which was to be the real governing body.<sup>18</sup> After an year, the headquarters of the yogam was shifted from Aruvippuram to Trivandrum. After twelve years it was shifted to *Sivagiri* in Varkala the religious head office of the Ezhava community. Today, its head office is located at Quilon, an important commercial town in Kerala, about fifty miles north west of Trivandrum. A monthly, 'Vivekodayam' edited by N. Kumaran Asan from Trivandrum, within a year of yogam's inception, was its month piece and main publicity medium.

The yogam under the guidance of Sri Narayana Guru, focussed its attention first on having temples thrown open for Ezhavas all over Kerala, as the Hindu temples were unapproachable and inaccessible to Ezhavas and other backward classes. Flouting the tradition and practice, custom and convention, Sri. Narayana Guru went ahead installing idols in temples which was the monopoly of Brahmins. He was thus initiating a silent, but very effective social revolution, against the Brahmin dominated Hindu social hierarchy.

Almost simultaneously, the yogam started a crusade, with the blessings of Sri Narayana Guru against superstitions, irrational traditions, customs etc. which were eating into the vitals of the Ezhava community.<sup>19</sup> Religious practices and observances were to be rationalised and liberated from Brahmin domination and control. Outdated and humiliating practices connected with puberty marriage, pregnancy, birth, death etc. were to be abolished. Very expensive social and religious customs were to be given up. Outmoded systems of inheritance and successions were to be modernised. In this attempt, the Yogam could render yeomen service to the community despite severe opposition from orthodox and conservative section of the Ezhavas.

The Yogam, with the constant inspiration from Dr. Palpu, made indefatigable efforts to uplift the Ezhava community educationally. The first attempt of the yogam in this field was to remove the obstacle for admitting Ezhavas to government and government aided schools in Travancore. Later it concentrated its attention on establishing its own educational institutions. By 1972, the Yogam had under its management, 11 high schools, 3 upper primary schools and 5 lower primary schools.<sup>20</sup> Under the management of the Sree Narayana Trust (an organisation to manage the colleges of the Yogam) there are twelve colleges where more than 7500 Ezhava students are getting their higher education.<sup>21</sup>

Another field to which it directed its attention was the public services. Jobs in government services were not available to Ezhavas once. Against that injustice, the Yogam not only turned the attention of the community but also gave lead to the fight for securing their right. The fight succeeded by 1935, when the

Government of Travancore appointed a public service commission and framed rules reserving nearly forty percent of jobs for the backward communities.<sup>22</sup> For the first time the monopoly of Government services by caste Hindus was exploded. A table showing the communal representation in public services before 1936 would reveal the magnitude of injustice perpetuated towards non-caste Hindus in Travancore State services.<sup>23</sup>

Total officers	...	24,768
Christians	...	4,042
Ezhavas	...	913
Muslims	...	613
Nairs	...	13,435
Other Caste Hindus	...	5,257
Other backward classes	...	422
Miscellaneous	...	42

Both the armed forces and the Devaswom Department, which continued to be the close preserve of caste Hindus are not included in the above table. The beginning made in 1935 registered tremendous progress since then and now members of the Ezhavas and other backward communities are found in all posts in Kerala Government Service. The present demand of the SNDP Yogam is to continue the system of reservation in the Government service at least for the next twenty five years.<sup>24</sup>

Another significant achievement of the Yogam was securing communal representation in the state Legislature. A legislative council was created in 1888. But, for thirty one years there was no Ezhava in the council. It was after 1919 following a legislative reform that an Ezhava was nominated.<sup>25</sup> Between 1921 and 1932 though property owned Ezhavas had voting rights no Ezhava candidate could win the elections despite the fact that the candidates were very prominent Ezhavas like N. Kumaran Asan, N. Kumaran and others.<sup>26</sup> The SNDP Yogam urged the Government several times for reservation of seats in the Legislature. In 1928, the yogam submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission requesting for adult franchise and communal representation.<sup>27</sup> Following the legislative reform in Travancore, there was hectic activity of the Yogam to secure adequate representation in the legislature, details of which could be discussed in the next chapter. At the end of a show down, the Government

of Travancore on 17 August 1936, issued a press communique conceding the demands of Ezhavas.<sup>28</sup> Eight seats were reserved for them in the lower House and two seats in the upper House. In the 1937 elections SNDP Yogam contested and secured all the eight plus two seats and for the first time, Ezhavas got representation in the legislature through elections.<sup>29</sup> The role of the Yogam was, thus, supremely important in securing also the political rights of the Ezhava community.

The Yogam could reasonably take pride in getting all the temples thrown open to all Hindus by the historic Temple Entry proclamation, on 12 November 1936, promulgated by the 24 year old Maharaja of Travancore.<sup>30</sup> Not only it was partly because of the continuous struggle for the same by the Ezhava community under the leadership of the Yogam for the last two decades, but also because of a threat of mass conversion of Ezhavas to Christianity or some other religion.<sup>31</sup>

After independence, the achievements of the Yogam are mainly in the field of education, in establishing more educational institutions. In the democratic age, the Yogam proved to be less brilliant than in the previous epoch. With the increasing disappearance of more and more hurdles from the path of progress of the Ezhava community, the main source of strength of the organisation namely the unity, began fading. Infact, though the leadership and assistance of an organisation was very essential for the industrial and other economic progress of the community unfortunately, the SNDP Yogam could not rise to the occasion and could not be of much use, in that respect, to the community.

The SNDP Yogam was practically an affair of the Ezhavas of Travancore, as the NSS was one of the Travancore Nairs, though many prominent Ezhava leaders from both Cochin and Malabar were members and attended the celebrations called the annual conference of the Yogam. As Travancore, Cochin and Malabar were three different political units there was practical difficulty in expanding the Travancore based Yogam to other regions. The leadership of Sri Narayana Guru and the success made by the Yogam had inspired the Ezhavas of Cochin and Malabar to achieve strength through organisation. The sixth annual conference of the SNDP Yogam was held at Ernakulam in June 1909.<sup>32</sup> An

organisation called the *Cochin Ezhava Samajam*, a counterpart of SNDP Yogam, was formed in 1916, with C. Krishnan, editor of the 'Mitavadi', as the president of the Yogam.<sup>32</sup> The redressal of grievances of the Ezhavas of Cochin was its main goal. Its main activity in the beginning like the Yogam, was petitioning. In 1972 its name was changed to 'Cochin Theeya Maha Jana Sabha' and in 1938 the name was again changed to Cochin SNDP Yogam.<sup>33</sup>

In Malabar the first organisation of the Ezhavas was 'Theeyar Malabar Association' founded in 1925 with C. Krishnan as the chief.<sup>34</sup> But it could not last long. Several local organisations came into being such as North Kerala Thecya Maha Jana Sabha, and Sree Narayana Guru Smarak Samajam at Ponnani.<sup>35</sup> The last mentioned formed in 1925 with A. C. Sankaranarayanan as leader came up after 1930 into a large and powerful one. On 28 April 1938 the Samajam resolved to transform itself into the Malabar SNDP Yogam. But it was not materialised until 1945. By 20 January 1946 the Yogam became very active with several branches. A daily newspaper, *Navakeralam*, was started as its mouthpiece.<sup>36</sup> An agitation was successfully organised for temple entry and consequently on June 1947 all temples in Madras were thrown open to all Hindus. Like the Cochin SNDP Yogam, the Malabar Yogam is also not very active now.

Coming back to the SNDP Yogam in Travancore, in the fifties there were serious attempts to forge unity among all kinds of Hindus. With late R. Sankar as its chief and with an all comprehensive Hindu organisation as the object the SNDP Yogam and the NSS came closer and formed the Hindu Mandalam.<sup>37</sup> It was hoped to be a powerful force in the state politics as well.

The sixties denote a sad chapter in the history of the SNDP Yogam. Mutual denigration and quarrel among the leaders and members incapacitated the organisation. It could not hold its annual sessions for three or four years. Its ablest leader late Shri R. Sankar, was away from leadership as Deputy Chief Minister and later as Chief Minister of the State. The constitution of the Yogam was modified and new office bearers were elected, accordingly on 19 March 1966.<sup>38</sup> The sixty third annual session held in 1967, ended in complete chaos. For nearly six years the Yogam showed no signs of life. In 1970 the High Court appointed two senior advocates as administrators and dissolved the Executive. As directed by the Court the administrators took steps

to convene the the annual session. On 24 March 1973 the 68 and 69 annual sessions were held together and elected new office bearers.<sup>39</sup>

The SNDP Yogam today is an all Kerala organisation with fifty six thousand members having voting rights. It has an annual budget anticipating a revenue of Rs. 2,06,856 and expenditure of Rs. 2,05,005 excluding the colleges which are under the S.N. Trust. It presents the picture of an organisation of yesterday and definitely not of tomorrow. There were extraordinarily brilliant leaders in the past so much so that it was generally recognised as having five stages for the Yogam synchronising with five secretaries Dr. Palpu, N. Kumaran Asan, T. K. Madhavan, C. Kesavan and R. Sankar, respectively.<sup>40</sup> Leadership today is vested in lesser known people and therefore cannot command respect and recognition and cannot maintain unity and lead effectively. Another major weakness is that it does not represent the majority of Ezhavas, who are proletariat. Politically, it ceased to be a force because sizable section of the Ezhava community had gone over to the leftist parties like the CPM, CPI and RSP. The Yogam in fact, like the NSS was an organisation controlled by the middle class, but for a long time it was able to carry with it the have-nots of the community, command their confidence, and maintain a common objective. But by now it has lost the confidence and support of the vast majority. It has become an organisation of the middle class by the middle class and for the middle class. It failed and miserably, to find new avenues of services and activities. An Ezhava is not proud of being an Ezhava and does not do much to sustain that identity. Then, how long an Ezhava Organisation could hope to survive?

## THE YOGAM AND POLITICS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

In the politics of Kerala, the Ezhava community and particularly the SNDP Yogam had their significant shares, some times very prominent and some times less conspicuous. Until the thirties, the Yogam's leadership was indisputable. The Yogam gave lead to the community in its struggle for social, religious economic and political equality. In other words, the struggle for emancipation of the middle class in the community synchronised with the struggle of the Yogam for equality. There was a remarkable slackening in the political slant of the Yogam after the subsequent transfer of political power to the vociferous representatives of the people — the middle class. That middle class some times aligned with their counterparts in other communities in the state and some times clashed with them, for the preservation and promotion of its class interests.

Agitations sponsored or organised by the Yogam were never violent. They were peaceful, non-violent, and one must say, always constitutional. In this context, one is reminded of the role of the Plebians in the epic struggle against the Patricians for social economic and political equality in ancient Rome. Probably, that may be due to the leadership, class character, characteristics of the environment and the nature of the forces resisted.

Sri Narayana Guru, a Hindu sanyasin, presided over the destinies of the Yogam and moulded the shape of things to come: "Strengthen through organisation, liberate by education" was the motto he supplied. His tactics were to get things done without coming into conflict with anyone. The basis of his philosophy was the Vedas, ancient lore and Sanskrit learning by carefully and ruthlessly eschewing superstitions and excrescences.<sup>1</sup> He made the Ezhavas to construct temples all over Kerala, as a parallel system to that of the caste Hindus, who would not allow them to enter their temples and worship. He threw open the Ezhava temples to all lower classes of the Hindus. Sree Narayana Guru insisted on work, and right work, as urged by the Gita. He asked the Ezhavas

to abandon their traditional occupation - production, sale and consumption of liquor. The founder leader acted as a powerful check on irreligion, atheism, crass materialism and violence.<sup>2</sup> By 1920, with the emergence of Gandhiji as a powerful force on Indian political scene, his method of struggle-non-violent, non-co-operation - influenced millions of people and numerous institution. The leaders of the SNDP Yogam, like Dr. Palpu, N. Kumaran Asan, N. Kumaran, T. K. Madhavan, C. Kesavan and R. Sankar were not revolutionaries or extremists or radicals. They were moderates liberals.

The class character of the Yogam was another factor which prevented it from going revolutionary. It was of the middle class and not of the proletariat. Leaders were not 'have-nots'. They had something to lose had there been any open conflict. The middle class was progressive but not revolutionary. They wanted reforms not revolution. They wanted equality with those who they thought superior. They wanted to liberate themselves from the yoke of the inconvenient past. They wanted to assert themselves.

Yet another factor was the characteristics of the environment. A violent action would have provoked equal and opposite reaction. There were numerous divisions and sub divisions in the community. Below the Ezhavas there were lower classes in the hierarchy who had grounds for grievances against the exploitation of and ill treatment by Ezhavas. Any violence would have been effectively curbed by the ruling princes, with the active support of the British forces, if necessary. A peculiar thing which prevented eruption of violence was the inescapable influence of the traditional belief in destiny, fate, inevitability, the cause and effect theory and the theory of rebirth. The belief that one was in a lucky or miserable position because of one's fate and others were not to be blamed for that kept away hatred from one's mind. It meant that Ezhavas need not hate the upper class Hindus for their own inferiority because it was their fate. Yet another factor was the nature of the forces to be resisted by the Ezhavas. These forces were not the armed forces of any class or group. They were institutions. Cutting the sacred thread of a Brahmin, or manhandling a few others or forcing into the temples or private houses of caste Hindus as had done by the Dravida Kazhakam leaders in Madras would

not have produced the desired effect. The biggest enemies of the community were ignorance, illiteracy, superstition, conservatism, and orthodoxy. Also that the other communities to be resisted, were not free from such evils. Naturally, therefore Ezhavas prudently resorted to a non-violent course of struggle.

The 'Vaikom Satyagraha' was perhaps the first organised attempt of the Yogam, that invited all India attention. It was an agitation for securing the freedom of movement. It was to secure the right to use public roads around the Hindu temple at a place called Vaikom for the untouchables of the Hindu society. These roads were constructed at the public money expense. Non Hindus like Christians and Muslims were free to use these roads. There was no prohibition even for dogs and pigs and cattles. Prohibition was only for the lower class Hindus including Ezhavas. The progressive minded sections of the upper class Hindus in fact condemned that obvious injustice. T. K. Madhavan, an extraordinarily brilliant leader of the SNDP Yogam, a nationalist, a Gadhan, a Congress man, successfully persuaded the Kerala unit of the Indian National Congress to take up the issue and fight against the injustice.<sup>3</sup> He succeeded also in getting the all-out support of the Nair Service Society. He also secured the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi for the move. A peaceful, non violent agitation in the form of breaking the ban on untouchables to walk on public roads was started by the KPCC on 30 March 1924.<sup>4</sup> Facing the brutalities of the orthodox Hindus and their rowdy agents and the police repression, with exemplary self control the agitation lasted for twenty months. The progressive minded men and women of the upper classes gave out their support. A much publicised march of theirs was organised under the leadership of the NSS leader, Mannath Padmanabhan, from Vaikom to Trivandrum, with a view to evoke state wide support and to submit a memorandum to the ruler of the state.<sup>5</sup> The 'Vaikom Satyagraha' was on the whole a grand success. The roads in question were later opened to all classes of people.

Strictly speaking, 'Vaikom Satyagraha' was not a political agitation. But as it was a fight for the freedom of movement, it was political. It was a success and an encouragement to the Ezhava community. The Yogam and the community looked

forward to the Congress for future guidance. The annual conference of the Yogam were held on the model of the annual session of the Indian National Congress which were attended by some of the leaders of the Yogam like Sri T. K. Madhavan.

During this period, in February 1925, the Yogam caused its Secretary, N. Kumaran, who was a member of the Travancore Legislative Assembly, to move a resolution urging the government to grant the freedom of movement.<sup>6</sup> The Assembly discussed the resolution for three consecutive days and finally rejected it by 22 against 21 votes. The one crucial vote which caused the defeat of the resolution was that of an Ezhava himself, a senior member of the family of Dr. Palpu, one of the founder leaders of the SNDP Yogam.<sup>7</sup>

In the thirties, the Yogam and under its leadership the Ezhava community, became more actively associated with polities. Almost encouraged by the success of the Vaikom Satyagraha', a similar but more intensive agitation was made in Malabar in 1931, at Guruvayoor. KPCC decided to take up the cause of the lower class Hindus and to fight for their freedom of worship at all Hindu temples.<sup>8</sup> It was the Ezhava community which first raised the issue as a right. The KPCC resolved on 3rd August 1931, to start a Satyagraha movement from 1st November in front of the famous Guruvayoor temple.<sup>9</sup> It was the beginning of a chain of satyagrahas in different parts of Kerala. As was the case at Vaikom, the progressive sections of the upper class Hindus rendered not only active help but in fact gave the lead. K. Kelappan (later Sarvodaya leader), A. K. Gopalan (the present top leader of the CPI (M) and Mannath Padmanabhan, the Chief of the NSS (and later the Supreme Commander of the liberation struggle against the first communist government in Kerala) were all comrades-in-arms in that historic struggle conducted under the indirect guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. The struggle did not succeed in throwing open the Guruvayoor temple for all Hindus to worship but it succeeded in arousing public conscience against untouchability and also to reduce the hold and power of the orthodox conservative, Hindu landed aristocracy.

So far, there was close co-operation, alliance and alignment between the middle class in the Ezhava community and those of

the other communities in the upper class Hindus. They were together fighting against orthodoxy. But when the question came to be of political and economic matters, the alliance was not only broken but gave way to open rivalry. It was more evident in Travancore where the middle classes emerged and became powerful and assertive first. In accordance with his coronation pledge to the people the ruler of Travancore introduced certain important constitutional reforms in October 1932. A bicameral legislature was created.<sup>10</sup> The total strength of the legislature was increased to 109 (72 + 37). Provision was made for the first time for a non-official majority in each House. The strength of the elected members was raised. Franchise was further broadened. Certain restrictions on the qualification for being elected to the legislature were removed. Privileges, functions and powers of the legislature were enhanced.

When the constitutional reforms were on the anvil the Christian, the Muslim and the Ezhava middle classes realised that they must do something in order to get their due share of power. They knew that so long as the franchise was based on property qualifications. Nairs would continue to have majority in the legislature for they constituted the largest number of land tax payers in the State. The leaders of the Christian, the Ezhava and the Muslim communities submitted representations to the government urging the latter to abolish property qualification, to introduce universal adult franchise and the system of communal electorate and to reserve seats for particular communities in the legislature. These, they thought, would undo the undeserving majority of the Nairs in the legislature.

The Government turned down their demands. The government pointed out that the division in Travancore society was based on communal or sectional interests and unless popular parties formed on political lines came into existence adult suffrage was neither feasible nor practicable. The leaders of the three communities, who had already started mutual discussion among them, got disappointed and became indignant. They wanted to come together and form a United Front and to launch an agitation. A show down was imminent and inevitable. As the first step, they formed a triple alliance called the joint political conference. The

middle class leaders of the three communities succeeded in marshalling the support of their respective communities for the agitation. Their agitation assumed the shape of a boycott of the elections to the legislature under the new reforms. It is known in Travancore history as 'Nivarthanam' or the Abstention movement.<sup>11</sup> The three top leaders were C. Kesavan from the Ezhava Community, N. V. Joseph from the Christian community and P. K. Kunju from the Muslim community.

The Ezhavas and the SNDP Yogam played a major role in the formation of the triple alliance and in the agitation called the boycott movement. The Ezhava legislators submitted a memorandum to the Government on 18 March 1932. The Yogam on 31 July 1932 reiterated the demand for communal representation and threatened to agitate if their demands are not conceded. Then again on 27 November 1932, the Yogam at its Alleppey conference protested at the inadequacy of reforms and against the unhelpful attitude of the government. Further, the Yogam resolved to act in concert with the other communities like the Christian community and the Muslim community. The joint political congress was its logical product. The decision of the joint political Congress to boycott the election was ratified by the communal organisations of the Ezhavas, Christians and Muslims. The SNDP Yogam at an extraordinary meeting held at Changanassery on 14 March 1933 ratified the decision with 1941 votes against 9 votes.<sup>12</sup>

The triple alliance constituted the majority of the population of the state and it was a serious development, rather unprecedented. The total population of the state, according to 1931 census, was 50.9 lakhs.<sup>13</sup> Among them there were only 1.45 lakhs of voters. Ezhavas, Muslims and Christians together numbered nearly 28.2 lakhs and among them there were sixty thousand voters.<sup>14</sup> Their non co-operation was something serious which could not be ignored by any government. The massive boycott campaigns they made, had their echoes reverberated throughout the state and a new awakening was noticeable. Despite the campaign, the government and the upper class Hindus succeeded in leaving no seat in the legislature vacant. In that sense the boycott movement failed. But it succeeded in forcing

the government to come out with new measures to placate those communities.

When once the elections were over and the legislature started functioning the triple alliance changed their tactics and strategy. They demanded the dissolution of the legislature. The SNDP Yogam on 27 July 1933 passed a resolution to that effect.<sup>14</sup> The joint venture of the leaders of the three communities in putting pressure on the government and in arousing the emotions of the members of their communities continued at a great velocity. Thousands of meetings were held in different parts of the state. The government was rather alarmed. At that time C. Kesavan, the secretary of the Yogam and one of the top leaders of the triple alliance was arrested and on a charge of sedition convicted for two years of imprisonment.<sup>15</sup> The Ezhava community took it as an affront. It became idignant and angry. During the protracted trial of C. Kesavan the SNDP Yogam at its meeting held in June 1934, passed a resolution inviting the consideration of Ezhavas on the question of conversion from Hinduism to some other religion. The point was, while they were Hindus, they were untouchables and subjected to all sorts of humiliation. But once they became Christians or Muslims these awful inequalities vanish overnight. So, it was an excellent short cut to throw off the humiliating liabilities. At least it was proved a very effective threat to force the Hindu Government of the State to concede most of the demands of the lower class Hindus. Indeed the threat did not materialise. But within a few months the government took concrete steps to accommodate the views of the SNDP Yogam.

The demand for reservation of jobs in Government service for backward communities was conceded. A Public Service Commission was appointed. Government accepted the principle of communal representation in the legislature. A Franchise Commissioner was appointed and constituencies were re defined. To crown all such welcome developments, the Hindu temples were thrown open to all the Hindus by the famous 'Temple Entry Proclamation' of 12 November 1936. Thus all the major demands of the Yogam were conceded.<sup>16</sup>

The triple alliance succeeded in the next elections.<sup>17</sup> So far as the SNDP Yogam was concerned, all its candidates were returned. A leading figure of the alliance T. M. Varghese was elected to the highest elective office of the Legislative Assembly-Deputy President. But a no-confidence motion in the Deputy President was adopted by the House with the active support of the Nair members and the Government.<sup>18</sup> The triple alliance was cracking. Catholic members alleged that the party was dominated by the Syrian Christians. S N D P Yogam was also cooling off. However, leaders of the triple alliance realised that in order to oppose the government effectively, all communities must be united. By keeping the Nair Community antagonised, no effort for responsible government or no opposition to the government would succeed. Therefore efforts were made to replace the triple alliance by a political party. Hence the formation of the Travancore State Congress. A Trivandrum Nair, Pattom Thanu Pillai, was made the president. C. V. Kunjuraman, SNDP leader presided over the preliminary conference.<sup>19</sup>

The new party was viewed with utmost displeasure by the government. The Dewan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer thought that it was directed against him. Pattom Thanu Pillai from the Nair community, C. Kesavan from the Ezhava and T. M. Varghese from the Christian community were its top leaders. The SNDP Yogam gave active support in the initial period. V.K. Velayudhan, Secretary of the Yogam and R. Sankar a leader of the Yogam actively participated in the Congress politics. The Malayala Manorama, at that time a mouth piece of the Syrian Christian community gave strong support to the Congress. Dewan Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer dubbed it as a Christian Party. The Nair Service Society was critical of it. Sir C.P. Ramaswamy endeavoured, quite successfully, to wean away from the party the SNDP Yogam, and also the Catholic leadership. With his connivance, assistance and financial help The Travancore National Congress, a rival organisation was formed, swearing allegiance to Mahatma Gandhi, as opposed to the Christian Controlled Congress which must have been loyal to the British rulers who are Christians.<sup>20</sup>

The SNDP Yogam leaders realised the ferocity with which Dewan Sir. C. P. could liquidate his opponents and the advantages

of supporting him. On 14 August 1939, the Board of Directors of the Yogam proclaimed that the Yogam will have no connection with the State Congress.<sup>21</sup> To be more realistic, it asked those members of the board who are also members of the Congress working committee not to travel in two boats at the same time. Accordingly V.K. Velayudhan and R. Sankar resigned their Board membership.<sup>22</sup> On 4 December 1939, the 36th annual session of the Yogam, categorically stated that the Yogam was with the Dewan and definitely not with the Congress.<sup>23</sup> Further, it exhorted the Ezhavas not to be lead or mislead by the Congress when they could thrive under the protective umbrella of a considerate and, solicitous government.

That was a crucial turning point, for the state politics as well as for the Yogam. The SNDP Yogam ceased to give political leadership to the Ezhavas. A cleavage began to appear between the leadership of the Yogam and the rank and file. Some progressive minded youth of the Ezhava middle class moved towards the Congress. The working class Ezhavas generally looked to the socialist and communist parties, which appeared by the time, for leadership. The Yogam leadership remained loyal to the government till August 1947.

In Cochin State a constitutional reform was made on 4 August 1938.<sup>24</sup> It was dyarchy. In the elections to the legislature two political parties contested - Cochin Congress and the Cochin State Congress. Sri K. Ayyappan, an SNDP leader, was the prominent figure of the Cochin State Congress, which echoed the demands of the Triple alliance of Travancore. Its trump card was the demand for special constituencies and reservation of seats for minorities and backward communities.<sup>25</sup> It could not secure enough strength to form a ministry. What is relevant here is to note that Sri K. Ayyappan, a champion of the rights of the backward communities was the President of the annual meeting of the SNDP Yogam (on 4 Dec. 1939), that proclaimed loyalty to Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer.<sup>26</sup>

In Malabar, the Congress Socialists and then the Communists controlled the KPCC till the course of the World War took a

turn when the Allied forces supported Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> The Ezhava community, not as a community, contributed as much as it could to the growth of the national movement. In the Congress, in the Socialist Party and in the Communist Party there were many Ezhava workers.

In Travancore, while the SNDP Yogam, stooped to the level of supporting a very unpopular scheme of Dewan Sir C. P. - The Independent Travancore, many Ezhavas gave lead to and participated in the Congress and Communist activities directed against the government.

## THE YOGAM AND POLITICS SINCE INDEPENDENCE

The SNDP Yogam was ill prepared for democratic government. So were many other organisations in the state. The Yogam could not, may be because of its inherent defects, rise to the occasion and give correct political leadership or even guidance to the Ezhava community. At the dawn of independence, the Yogam was not pro-congress for it had been with the discredited regime until the other day.<sup>1</sup> It was not procommunist because it had been denouncing all along the violent methods of struggle of the communists, especially the armed uprising of the communist party in 1946, *Vayalar-Punnapra* in Travancore wherein the lives of many including several hundreds of Ezhava workers were sacrificed.<sup>2</sup> It was not pro-socialist for the socialist party was not taken seriously by the Yogam. The net result was that the yogam had to witness, rather helplessly, the Ezhavas, who it tried for long to bring together under one banner, going away in different political directions- some to the Congress, some to the Socialist Party and a large portion, mainly the poor section, to the Communist Party.

The Yogam, since the attainment of independence cared for getting adequate seats for Ezhavas in the state legislature, and ministry. Most of the political parties, invariably, had given adequate representation to the Ezhava community in the nomination of candidates to the elections and in their ministries. That was not because of the fear of the Yogam but because of the numerical strength of the community.

From 1947 to 1957, the Yogam leadership showed inadequate maturity of political thinking in aligning with or opposing the Congress Party off and on. Expediency appeared to be the principle they followed. Critics may say that that is opportunism. During the period once the Yogam leadership felt very much honoured when C. Kesavan, who was once the Yogam Secretary, was made the Chief Minister of the State.<sup>3</sup> The Travancore-Cochin integration did not considerably strengthen the political standing of the Yogam like the position of the Muslim League which was strengthened

by the unification of Kerala in 1956. Formation of Kerala State actually signalled the disappearance of the political boundaries that divided Travancore-Cochin – Malabar Ezhavas. But the mountain produced not much more than a mouse. The Yogam did not thenceforth show any sign of increased vitality though it had extended its field to the northern part as well. On the contrary the next decade proved just the opposite.

During the communist regime, R. Sankar, the former Secretary of the Yogam, was the leader of the Congress which was by the time a discredited, disunited, humiliated and enervated political party.<sup>4</sup> In no way it meant that the Ezhava community *enmasse* turned to the Congress. It meant only that R. Sankar had reversed his stand. SNDP Yogam leadership supported the liberation struggle against the communist government. In the 1960 elections when the Congress captured a comfortable majority of seats and came to power in the company of the Muslim League and the PSP, the comrades-in-arms in the liberation struggle, R. Sankar to his great disappointment became not the Chief Minister but a deputy Chief Minister. However, in 1962, he became the Chief Minister. The SNDP Yogam regarded it as an honour to the Ezhava community. R. Sankar Ministry was wrecked by a Christian-Nair clique in the Congress. Since then the Congress was lying low till 1970 and Yogam was fallen on evil days. Since then, it has been struggling for its existence.

The dramatic exit of Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer from the Travancore political scene was the end of an epoch and the beginning of another.<sup>5</sup> The Travancore State Congress, the leading political party in the state, which had been demanding, since its inception in 1938, for responsible government was not sure of what to do when its principal enemy — the Dewan, had gone. Its leaders including the triumvirate—Pattom Thanu Pillai, C. Kesavan and T. M. Varghese were not outstanding statesmen or democrats. They had no clear plan or picture of the functions of a Ministry or how to satisfy the expectations of their followers and of other people which they had aroused during the ten preceding years. How to make use of the political power for the good of the people was not an issue on which any serious thinking was made by the party or the leaders. They were the generals. They had won the war. For the aftermath they were unprepared, ill equipped and

one must say incompetant. So far as the party was concerned it was not sure of its own strength. It did not possess enough self confidence. It was not convinced of the strength of the nationalist force which bound the members together. When the Dewan regime came to an abrupt end and arrangements were made for the transition to democratic government the lack of self confidence of the Congress came to the fore. The Government had taken steps to form a Representative Body equivalent to a Constituent Assembly.<sup>6</sup> The congress party could have said that the Representative Body could be composed of only its own nominees. Instead of insisting on that right it meekly surrendered it and agreed to have only five congress men in a body of fifteen.<sup>7</sup> The majority was in the hands of communal organisations. It was the fatal mistake made by the congress for which it has been paying a heavy penalty for the last twentyfive years.; Nationalism was murdered in cold blood at the altar of communalism.

The Ezhava community had two of its stalwarts as members of the Representative Body — C. Kesavan (as Congress leader) and R. Sankar (as the secretary of the SNDP Yogam). In the elections followed — based on universal adult franchise — the Congress Party could win by itself.<sup>8</sup> But it acted very unwisely. It behaved as if it would not win without the blessings and support of the communal organisations. A more positive disservice to the growth of nationalism, democracy and party system could not be imagined.

In the first popular ministry that came to office in Travancore there were three ministers including the Chief Minister, Pattom Thanu Pillai.<sup>9</sup> C. Kesavan by his right as a congress leader was there as a minister. But the SNDP Yogam was satisfied as being represented by one of its earlier secretaries. The ministry could not get along well. Within nine months it collapsed, allegedly as the result of a determined move by the powerful Christian interest group.<sup>10</sup> The same group succeeded in installing a new Ministry of its own choice.<sup>11</sup> In the six member Ministry, two were Ezhavas, but not Yogam leaders. In the Assembly both the NSS Chief Mannath Padmanabhan and the SNDP leader R. Sankar were members. The domination of the congress party by the Christian community was resented, resisted and opposed by both of them.<sup>12</sup>

They worked up a mass hysteria among the Hindu population of the state. With the slogan of uniting all Hindus of the state they forged a Hindu Mandalam.<sup>13</sup> The massive support they gained was directed against the congress party which in fact was crumbling because of its own incapability as well as the determined opposition of the growing Communist Party.

Travancore and Cochin states were integrated on 1st July 1949. Cochin state was experiencing the teething trouble of democratic government.<sup>14</sup> Groupism, rivalry, personal feuds, petty ambition of leaders who were small minded men were rocking the government and eroding its popularity in Cochin. Cochin was brought together with Travancore whose political health was not much different.

In the new state-Travancore-Cochin, regionalism also appeared as an unhealthy force in addition to the already existing communalism. An Ezhava leader K. Ayyappan, who was a minister in Cochin, was given a seat in the newly expanded ministry.<sup>15</sup> That was not enough to wean away the SNDP Yogam from the company of the NSS. Unable to face the charges against the government the Ministry resigned on 24 February 1951.

The 'Hindu Mandalam' which was growing like a mighty force in the state created a political wing called the 'Democratic Congress' with the NSS and SNDP leaders as founder leaders.<sup>16</sup> The congress had to do something to remove its Christian stigma and regain its image as a political party just for sheer survival. Therefore C. Kesavan was persuaded to accept the legislature party leadership and consequently made the Chief Minister. The ground was thus prepared to have a compromise between the C. Kesavan led Congress and the R. Sankar led Democratic Congress before the 1952 elections.<sup>17</sup> An understanding was naturally arrived at. That was a game in which the SNDP Yogam had a significant role. But the unprincipled political marriage did not produce much. The Congress was miserably defeated in the elections. Even R. Sankar was defeated.

The Congress purchased the support of a minority party called the Tamilnad Congress and remained in power for a couple of years.<sup>18</sup> In the 1954 mid term elections its defeat was more

disastrous. A PSP ministry then came to power. The PSP Ministry was unique because it contained no Christian. However, no party or leader had ever shown the guts or audacity to form a ministry without an Ezhava. By undercutting the PSP ministry, the congress party leadership, which was by then passed off into the hands of a veteran congress leader, managed to form a ministry.<sup>19</sup> The Travancore political wrestlers did not like him — Panampalli Govinda Menon. Christian leaders, the NSS leaders and the SNDP leaders uniformly abhorred and apprehended Panampalli and his ministry was wrecked.

Travancore-Cochin state came to an end. Congress Ministries came to an end at least for some time. Kerala State came into being. Political gravity shifted from Travancore politics. Power had slipped off from the Travancore-Cochin leaders. The strange communist interlude commenced. C. Kesavan, T. M. Varghese, A. J. John, T. K. Narayana Pillai, K. Ayyappan, and other old guards were relegated to the background. Kerala wore a new look. The communist ministry with E. M. S. Namboodiripad and K. P. Gopalan from Malabar, Joseph Mundassery, A.R. Menon C. Achutha Menon and V. R. Krishna Iyer from Cochin, K. C. George, T. V. Thomas, T. A. Majeed, K. R. Gouri and P. K. Chathan from Travancore region became ministers. NSS, SNDP yogam and Christian groups for the first time had to face a situation where they have no hold on the Government. They could not digest or tolerate it. A strong liberation movement with their active support or on their initiative started to oust the Ministry. The omission and commissions of the communist regime fanned it up. Finally the Government was dismissed by the President and the legislature where the government had a clear majority was dissolved, an event without parallel or adequate justification in the history of Independent India.<sup>20</sup> The role of the SNDP Yogam in fighting against the Communist government was more in tune with the interest of the central middle class than with the overwhelming majority of the Ezhava community — the lower middle class and the proletariat.

The working class in the Ezhava community consisted mainly of the coir workers, cashew workers, weavers, agricultural labourers, landless tenants, and toddy tappers. The communist party indeed stood for the promotion of their interests. Therefore the

vast majority of Ezhavas had no justification in ousting such a government. They had no reason to support the SNDP Yogam leadership which opposed the communist regime.

The liberation struggle was not a class war. The communists were not the real proletariats. The communist leaders were also middle class leaders. The liberation struggle was in fact a power struggle among the middle class. The communists did not do anything of communism. They were only implementing the unfulfilled policies and programmes of the congress regime. What was wrong with them was lack of tact, diplomacy, and vices of the bourgeoisie.

The SNDP Yogam lost all its lustre after the formation of Kerala State and more precisely after the liberation struggle.

In 1960, when R. Sankar, the congress chief was not given chief ministership but to Pattom Thanu Pillai the leader of a minority party in the three party coalition, Sankar as well as the SNDP whispered in protest.<sup>21</sup> It was not cared for because so long as Pattom was in the ring he could not think anyone else to be the Chief Minister. The disgust of R. Sankar and the SNDP Yogam bore fruit. A situation where the Pattom Ministry could not any longer function developed by 1962 and the Congress High Command came to the rescue of the congress party in Kerala again and Pattom was elevated to the Governorship of the far away Punjab overnight.<sup>22</sup> In 1963, the Deputy Chief Minister R. Sankar was elevated to the Chief Ministership. SNDP Yogam also deemed it as a great honour for the community. In 1964 when the Ministry was voted out of power, likewise it was deemed as a disgrace and loss to the community. Perhaps on both occasions the Yogam might have been wrong.

Since then, even R. Sankar felt that the yogam was not going to function well. With extraordinary farsight he brought the major asset of the Yogam—its colleges and other institutions under a new body called the S. N. Trust of which he was practically all in all.<sup>23</sup> The Yogam as he apprehended not only lost its dynamism but also came to a stagnation. No effective leadership it could have. No wise programme to bring all Ezhavas together it could forward. Recently the reorganised, regenerated Yogam hopes to extend its life by putting up a show of fight against the system of reservation of posts in government service on the basis of economic backwardness. It does not get the help of any political party though no political party has opposed it.<sup>24</sup>

## AN ASSESSMENT

The numerical strength of Ezhavas of Kerala is not known as the census since 1951, does not record the castewise population. In the absence of authentic figures, interested parties give out the number they calculated on the basis of the 1941 census figures. The SNDP Yogam emphatically asserts that, it is in no way less than twentyfive percent, of the total population ie. five million. Percentage of population of various castes according to the Yogam is as follows: \*

Communities	:	Percentages
Ezhavas	:	25
Christians	:	22
Muslims	:	18
Nairs	:	15
Scheduled Castes & Tribes	:	9
Other backward castes	:	10
Miscellaneous	:	1

According to the Backward Class Reservation Commission Kerala, 1970 the population of Ezhavas is 44,57,808 which is 22.17% of the total.

The Commission reached the population figures of all communities on the basis of an estimate of the community-wise sample survey report 1968. However, it may not be the exact numerical strength of the Ezhavas.

About the origin of the Ezhavas there are various theories and the most important among them are mentioned in Chapter III.

As Dr. A. Ayyappan, the famous anthropologist has rightly remarked in his book 'Social Revolution in a Kerala Village'; that Ezhavas are not people migrated from outside; they are natives. It may be added that there might be among them, descendants of some people migrated from outside Kerala and outside India and especially from Sri Lanka. As regards the differentiation between the Ezhavas and the so called upper caste like Nairs the theory of E M S holds water. All people of Kerala including

Namboodiris are of the same stock. A section of the native population, for various reasons, have aligned with foreign invaders, who settled down here and continued their cultural conquests. They happened to be the upper class Hindus when crystallised into a social phenomenon. Ezhavas came next below the upper castes but above the Harijans.

No community, perhaps, with the possible exception of the Nampoodiris could claim purity of blood. Ezhavas of today are not distinguished from Nairs, as such and other so called upper class people. There is all probability for intermingling of blood on enormous scale during the last few centuries. In a society where the moral code about sexual relationship was not very rigid and the distance between the lower layer of the immediately superior class and the upper layer of the immediately lower class was negligible, the chances for intercaste, sexual, relationship are very high. Therefore, infact behind the label Ezhavas the contents have been tremendously changed, as in the case of other communities.

When the Kerala society came under the impact of the british capitalism, especially with the administration of Col. Munroe (1810-1819) a capitalist class slowly emerged. This new class possessed several characteristics of upstarts. In Kerala society, with the exception of Nampoodiri Brahmins at the apex and certain hill tribes below, there were upstarts in all communities and they formed the bulk of the middle class. The same was the case with the Ezhava community, the Christian and Nair communities. The middle class in these communities pioneered social reform movements. The Christians were on a better footing because of their church, family organisation and system of inheritance, which allowed more room for individual initiative and the middle class in other communities wanted to follow suit. There were attempts by them to form community organisations. The S N D P Yogam formed in 1903 and the NSS formed in 1914 are classic examples, The fact that the Ezhava community formed an organisation of theirs ten years before the Nair community could do, is a significant one. The middle class in Ezhava community was so vigorous and self assertive.

Social organisations like the SNDP and the NSS were the needs of the time. They were necessary stages in the march of society towards democracy. The individual emancipated from the bondage of joint family necessarily required an intermediary between the individual and the state. Social organisations provided that. Further the individual craving for liberty required the help of an organisation to oppose the old order. In other words, when organised attempts were necessary to fight against the old order, social organisations emerged. The new class wanted them. They, therefore, created them. They emerged with the progressive objectives. Indeed they are progressive in character and played a progressive role. And any intermediary must disappear at one time or other when their utility ceases to exist. When a healthy party system develops, that would replace social organisations like the NSS and the SNDP. When it is generally accepted that unemployment and food scarcity are general problems affecting the citizens as citizens and not as Ezhavas, Nairs or Christians, the importance of social organisations would be diminished. As the society progresses and becomes more and more mature and the field of activity expands beyond their family, caste or community, the communal organisations would be things of the past, narrowly conceived and narrowly nurtured, like nationalism becoming a narrow concept before internationalism.

The SNDP Yogam is more than seventy years old. The spiritualism, the reformism and the pragmatism of Sree Narayana Guru, whose chief message was "One God, One Religion and One caste", combined with the modernism, sense of revolt and the love of liberty, equality and fraternity of Dr. Palpu, who represented the best in the rising middle class of Ezhavas, formed the basis of the SNDP Yogam.

The Yogam spearheaded the Ezhava middle class. It was their instrument to fight against the social, economic and political disability. In the absence of a political party, to fight for the social, economic and political right, the Yogam rendered incalculable service. In preparing the ground for social democracy, the SNDP Yogam faced a situation in which it could either work along with or to compete political parties. Consequently it started experiencing difficulties. In fact the Yogam had already fulfilled

the objectives originally setforth by its leaders. The Yogam leadership was not successful enough to setforth new objectives. Therefore the Yogam seems out of date and presents a picture of an institution, which lived beyond its utility. Instead of doing service, the Yogam and similar organisations, because of their refusal to disappear in time, have started rendering disservice. Unless there is specific economic or other advantages no one in Kerala wants to show off his caste identity. Caste distinction is having a natural death. The Yogam and other communal organisations do not permit casteism to die and disappear. That itself is a disservice.

From the preceding chapters it must be clear that the Yogam sturtted through politics. When the Travancore State Congress was formed and attracted the progressive national forces of the state irrespective of the caste or community, the Yogam was called out of it. The Yogam did not and could not uphold the cause of the vast majority of the Ezhava community. It could not do much for the economic progress of the whole country. The working class of the community, that means the majority, could not be given necessary guidance or help by the Yogam. Therefore the Yogam could not command their loyalty or confidence. To resist the appeals of communism, to the vast majority Ezhavas, the Yogam was unable to do anything. And at the same time the Yogam could not accommodate or tolerate communist ideology or methods. Necessarily therefore, their remains a big gap between Yogam and the bulk of the community which is poor. What is going to be the future of the community and the Yogam ? They are going to be the relies of the past. The divisive forces in Kerala society, like communalism, casteism, and regionalism are increasingly becoming weak and are on the way out. In an egalitarian, cosmopolitan society, towards which Kerala is fast moving, communal organisations are out of date and out of time. The earlier they die, the better for the society.

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# CORRIGENDUM

<i>Page</i>	<i>line</i>	<i>for</i>	<i>read</i>
2	28	ware	were
5	24	bad	had
8	■	■■■■■	■■■■■
12	20	cyrian	syrian
15	3	untouchabislity	untouchability
15	6	inheritence	inheritance
15	9	relatious	relations
17	18 & 30	inheritence	inheritance
28	15	occusation	occupation
19	6	larger	large
21	12	L. K.	L. A.
25	3	annaprasam	annaprasanam
34	5	ttme	time
38	6	institution	institutions
51	31	22	20
52	38	extened	extend



## NOTES

### CHAPTER I

- (1) It is reported in the *Kerala Kaumudi* in the first week of June '73 that Prof.T.K.Raveendran is preparing a history of the Ezhava community
- (2) The Kerala History Association has published a book on Kerala History recently, *Kerala Charitram*, (Ernakulam 1973). Aspects of social history have been touched upon.
- (3) It is a memorandum signed by more than ten thousand people including top ranking men of all prominent communities and submitted to the Maharaja of Trivancore in 1891, demanding due share for the people in the administration,
- (4) G. P. Sekhar, (ed.) *G. P. Centenary Souvenir*, Trivandrum 1966. P. 184
- (5) *Ibid* P. 183.
- (6) Velayudhan, Panikkasseri. *Dr. Palpu*, a biography (Trichur-1970) P. 12
- (7) S N D P *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* (1953) P. 1
- (8) P. K. Parameswaran Nair, *History of the N S S (Mal)*, Changanacherry 1972), P. 28
- (9) Mannath Padmanabhan, *Ente Jeevitha Smaranakal*, ch XV Pp. 106-120
- (10) Thazhava Kesavan, *Nivartana Prakshobhanam* S N D P *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* (1953), P. 225.
- (11) K. Sukumaran, *V. K. Velayudhan* *Ibid.*, P. 203
- (12) Mannath Padmanabhan, *Hindu Sanghadana* *Ibid.* P. 145. He was the President of the Hindu Mandalam.
- (13) *Ibid.*
- (14) *The Desabandhu* (daily) edited by K. N. Sankunni Pillai and published from Kottayam was the mouthpiece of the Hindu Mandalam (It ceased publication)
- (15) *Manorama Year Book*, Kottayam (1959), P. 44.
- (16) M. S. Mony, *Janadhipathyam Thiru Cochinil* (Kottayam, 1954) P. 72
- (17) R. Sankar, an article by Dr. Henry Austin, in *R. Sankar Shashthi-abdapuri Commemoration Volume* (1969). P. 104.
- (18) Its president now is Mr. Sreenivasan, a retired judge, whose record of service to the Ezhava community is not much known. Its Secretary is Prof. P. S. Velayudhan who was not known as an active S N D P leader until elected to the General Secretaryship.
- (19) A memorandum submitted by the N S S to the Chief Minister of Kerala, March 19, 1973.
- (20) The Yogam Secretary's speech reported in *The Kerala Kaumudi*, 26 March 1973.
- (21) For a clear understanding of the issue the best available source is the Report of the Backward Classes Reservation Commission, Kerala 1970, generally known after the name of its Chairman as Nettur Commission Report.
- (22) All Kerala Thandan Mahasabha and Viswakarma Sabha had passed resolutions to this effect. *The Malayala Manorama*, 23 April 1973.
- (23) C. Achutha Menon (CPI). Chief Minister's speech at Quilon where he said it is not possible to discriminate between workers on the basis of their caste at least in the matter of employment of workers. *The Malayala Manorama*, March 1973.

## CHAPTER II

- (1) Christians—4,494,089, Hindus—12,683,277, Islam—4,162,718. Census of India 1971 Kerala State as on 1-4-1971. Final population totals pages, 19 to 21.
- (2) K. M. Panikkar, *History of Kerala*, (Annamalai, 1960) P.10.
- (3) Rao, M. S. A. *Social change in Malabar* (Bombay, 1957) gives a vivid account of the castes and sub castes existed in Kerala.
- (4) 1971 Census. Muslims 4,162,718. Population totals p. 21.
- (5) Adrian C. Mayar, *Land and Society in Malabar* (London, 1952)
- (6) A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, (Kottayam, 1967) P. 103
- (7) *Ibid.* p. 305.
- (8) E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhoomi* (second impression, Trichur 1964), pp. 363-370.
- (9) *Aims and objectives of the M. E. S.* (Cochin, 1968)
- (10) There are reports in local dailies that groupism and group rivalry have come to the forefront in the League. *The Malayala Manorama* 21 April 1973.
- (11) Krishna Caitanya, *Kerala* (National Book Trust 1971) provides a chapter on Muslims in Kerala.
- (12) Census Report 1971. Christians—4,494 089—Population totals—1971 p. 19.
- (13) M. C. Kuriakose, *The Orthodox Syrian Church of Malabar*, (Kottayam, 1952).
- (14) S. G. Pothan, *Syrian Christians of Kerala*, (Kottayam, 1952).
- (15) *Ibid.*
- (16) M. O. Joseph, *Kerala Christianikal*, (Kottayam, 1972) Ch: XIII
- (17) *Ibid* Ch: X
- (18) *Ibid* Ch: XIV
- (19) C. Narayana Pillai and K. Damodaran, *Keralathile Swatanthrya Samaram* (Trivandrum—1958) P. 130.
- (20) *Ibid* Ch: 6
- (21) C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithankoore Swatanthrya Samara Charitram* (Trivandrum, 1972) Ch: 46.
- (22) S. C. Joseph, *Kerala, the Communist State*, (Madras, 1959) Ch: III,
- (23) Karshaka Thozhilali Party (objectives and programmes) Official publication (Trichur 1962).
- (24) During 1952—54 while A. J. John was Chief Minister, the anti-Communist movement was very strong.
- (25) Dr. V. K. Sukumaran Nayar, (ed) *Kerala Society and Politics*, (Trivandrum, 1969). P. 60.
- (26) Namboodiripad, E. M. S., *National Question in Kerala*, (Bombay 1952), P. 61.

- (27) Adrian C Mayer, *Ibid* n: 5 P. 29.
- (28) Mannath Padmanabhan, the N S S Chief subscribed to this view in his autobiography.
- (29) M. S A. Rao, *Social Change in Malabar* (Bombay, 1957) P. 57
- (30) Krishna Chaitanya, *Kerala Ch: IV*
- (31) M. S. A. Rao, *Ibid Ch: III.*
- (32) *Census of India 1931.* Vol: XXVIII, Travancore, Part 1. (N. Kunjan pillai)
- (33) V. Nagam Aiya *The Travancore State Manual.* Vol. II, P. 247.
- (34) *Ibid*
- (35) K. M. Panikkar, *Ibid n: 2*
- (36) *Ibid*
- (37) *Census Report, 1931*
- (38) B. N. Nair, *The Dynamic Brahmin.* (Bombay, 1959) p: 14
- (39) Any application form issued by the Kerala Public Service Commission gives a list of approved backward communities.
- (40) For a list of the Castes and Communities in Kerala today please see the Report of the Backward Classes Reservation Commission, Kerala, 1970, Part II.
- (41) Recently there was a report in *Kerala Kaumudi* that a Namboodiri is the Proprietor of a toddy shop in Central Travancore.
- (42) An account of the miserable conditions of life of the Ezhavas is given in the Malayalee Memorial and the Ezhava Memorial—submitted to the Maharaja of Travancore.
- (43) N. R. Krishnan, *Ezhavar Annum Innum* (Trichur, 1967) Part II, P. 93.)
- (44) C. Krishnan (ed) *Tiyarude Abhivirthi Margangal* (Mal. 1934) P. 3.
- (45) L. A. Krishna Iyer, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes* (Trivandrum 1937) Volume 1, Pp. 275-76.
- (46) A. A. D. Luiz, *Tribes of Kerala* (New Delhi, 1962) P. 4.
- (47) *Kerala in Maps* (Govt. of Kerala, 1964) P. 4 and Map No. 8.
- (48) Answer given to a question in the State Assembly reported in the *Kerala Kaumudi*, 26 July 1973.

## CHAPTER III

- (1) William Logan *Malabar Manual*, Vol. 1. (1887), P.143.
- a) E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of South India* (Madras, 1909). Vol. VII. P. 37.
- b) L.A.Krishna Iyer, *Social History of Kerala*, Vol. II *The Dravidians*.
- c) L.K. Anantakrishna Iyer, *The Cochin Castes and Tribes*, (1909) P. 277
- d) Innes, C.A. *Madras District Gazetteer, Malabar*, Vol. I. (1904), P.124
- e) Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*. (1906) Vol. II, Pp. 298 99.
- f) T K. Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol. I, P. 644
- g) C. Achutha Menon, *Cochin State Manual*, 1911 P. 203.
- h) A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*.
- (3) Kunjan Pillai, *Kerala Charithra Prasnangal* (Mal) Second Impression 1963, Part I. Pp: 111–112.
- (4) E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi* (Trichur, 1964) However, such a view is rejected by L.A. Krishna Iyer in his book, *Social History of Kerala*, Vol. II.
- (5) P. C. Alexander, *Buddhism in Kerala* (1949) Annamalai Nagar) Pp. 123–135
- (6) William Logan, Ibid n: 1, Vol. I. P. 116.
- (7) E. M. S. Ibid n: 4, P. 4.
- (8) A. Aiyappan, *Social Revolution in a Kerala Village* (Bombay, 1964) p.119
- (9) P. C. Alexander, Ibid n : 5.
- (10) C. V. Kunjuraman, 'Thiyarude Avasathakal', *The Kerala Kaumudi*, 1928 July, 11.
- (11) See Appendix.
- (12) Editorial *Kerala Kaumudi*, 13 September 1923.
- (13) T. K. Velu Pillai, *Travancore State Manual*, Vol. I. P. 844.
- (14) Gundert gives the meaning of the word thus: I your servant, Gundert Dictionary (Kottayam, 1962) P. 42.
- (15) K. Damodaran, *Kerala Charitram*, Part I, P. 162
- (16) J. Bhattacharya, *Hindu Castes and Sects* (1890) P. 259.
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## CHAPTER IV

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- (6) *Kerala Kaumudi*, 13 February, 1925.
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- (8) K. Damodaran and C. Narayana Pillai, *Keralathile Swatantrya Samaram*, P. 60,
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- (11) For details about Nivarthanam see (1) Thazhava Kesavan 'Nivarthanam Prakshobhanam', *Souvenir* (1953) (2) C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithamkoor Swatantriya Samara Charitram* (Trivandrum 1972)
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- (13) Government of Travancore, 1931 Census, Population figures.
- (14) *Ibid*, n: 11.
- (15) K. Karthikeyan, 'C. Kesavan', *Souvenir* (1953) See also n: 11. and C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithamkoor Swatantriya Samara Charitram*.
- (16) R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Constitutional Experiments in Kerala* (1964) P:19
- (17) Elections were held in February 1937.
- (18) The motion was moved by P. Sivarama Pillai on 25 November 1937, Travancore Legislative Assembly Proceedings.
- (19) C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithamkoor Swatantriya Samara Charitram* (Trivandrum, 1972) Ch: VIII
- (20) *Ibid.*
- (21) *Ibid.* Ch. 46.
- (22) *Ibid.*
- (23) *Ibid.* P. 890.
- (26) K. Damodaran and C. Narayana Pillai, *Keralathile Swathantriya Samaram*, Ch: 13.
- (27) *Ibid.*
- (28) *Ibid*, n: 20.
- (29) A. K. Gopalan, *Kerala Past and Present* (London, 1959) P. 53.

## CHAPTER VI

- (1) From 1939 onwards the SNDP Yogam moved closer towards the government. While the Dewan was being criticised and opposed by the Congress the Yogam was eulogising and supporting him. It supported even his most unpopular plan of declaring independence for Travancore. *Kerala Kaumudi* 19 July 1947.
- (2) For a full account of the Vayalar-Punnappa uprising See C. Narayana Pillai, *Thiruvithamkoor Swatantriya Samara Charitram*, Ch: 54.
- (3) C. Kesavan was elected leader of the Congress legislature party on 28 February 1951. He was Chief Minister from that date till 13 March 1952.
- (4) There are several articles available on the life and achievement of R. Sankar (1909-1973). But the best is "R. Sankar—His life and Career" appeared in his 60th birthday commemoration volume (1969).
- (5) Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer was attacked by an unknown assailant. He relinquished his office and left Travancore on 19 August 1947, after serving Travancore for 16 years.
- (6) R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Constitutional Experiments in Kerala* Documents No. 11, No. 12.
- (7) See the list of members. *Ibid* Document No. 11.
- (8) Elections were held from 2nd to 16 February 1948.
- (9) The first Ministry was sworn in on 24 March 1948.
- (10) They resigned on 17 October 1948.
- (11) T. K. Narayana Pillai ministry assumed office on 22 Oct. 1948 for the list of ministers see *Manorama Year Book*, 1959.
- (12) *Deshbandhu*, (Daily) published from Kottayam was the mouthpiece of them.
- (13) Manoath Padmanabhan, *Hindu Samghadana Souvenir* (1953).
- (14) Kerala Congress directory (Ernakulam, 1964) Pp.57 to 69.
- (15) For a bio-data of K. Ayyappan see the article *Sahodaran Ayyappan* by T. C. Gopalan in the *Souvenir* (1953).
- (16) For details see M.S. Mony, *Janadhipathyam Thiru-Kochiyil* (1954, Kottayam)
- (17) *Manorama Year Book*, 1959, p.45.
- (18) *Ibid*.
- (19) A faithful account of the rise and fall of Ministries in Kerala since independence is given in, *The peaceful Transition of Communism in India* by Victor M. Fic.
- (20) For arguments for and against the dismissal of the Ministry see R. Ramakrishnan Nair, *Constitutional Experiments in Kerala*, PP:42-48.
- (21) *Kerala Kaumudi*, 23 March 1960. Report on the speech of R. Sankar.
- (22) Joseph Chazhikkat in his autobiography claims that he was the first to hint the idea.
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- (24) *Kerala Kaumudi*, 18 July 1973.



# APPENDIX

## EZHAVAS AT THE CLOSE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

### Education and Public Service \*

“The Tiyas, or Elavas of Travancore, number nearly half a million, and form the second community in the State in point of numerical importance. They have always been known for their industry and perseverance, and the author of the Travancore Census Report speaks of them thus:— “The Elavas are a most numerous and industrious class. They are an able-bodied and hardworking race, corresponding to the Tiyas of Malabar.” A great many of them are land-owners, some are Vydians, Astrologers, etc., while the majority live by agriculture, rope-making, toddy-drawing, weaving and other industries. They contribute to the revenues of the State, proportionately more than any other class as they pay the whole of the abkari revenue, in addition to the usual taxes paid by the other classes. In point of native intelligence, the community is as good as any other, and under favourable conditions, would not be slow to embrace every opportunity of improving their status. However, compared with the other classes in the State and with the Tiyas of British Malabar, the community is far behind. This can only be attributed to the political and educational disabilities to which the Tiyas of Travancore are subjected.

Public service, which it must be admitted, is the strongest incentive to education in this country, is entirely denied to them in Travancore, and to this day the Government has not shown any encouragement worth the name to an educated Tiya, whatever his qualifications may be. Even low places, such as those of office peons, police constables, public work maistries, and hospital and jail warders are denied to them on the score of their caste, even though they possess more than the necessary qualifications.

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\* This is taken from a letter written by Dr. Palpu, a pioneer of the social renaissance of the Ezhava community on 13 May 1895 to the then Dewan of Travancore State.

At present, no qualification can secure to a Tiya any of these appointments in his own native land unless he becomes a convert to Christianity or Mahomedianism or at least takes shelter under mere Christian or Mahomedan name. This hardship is felt as the more keenly as some other classes who do not possess half the claims that the Tiya community have, on the consideration on Government and whose social status is inferior, are admitted even into the higher grades of Public Service, without similar necessity of change of faith or name. The condition of their brethren of Malabar in this respect, is exactly the reverse of their own in Travancore. The Tiyas of British Malabar under an alien and Christian Government are allowed abundant opportunities of improving their condition like any other section of the native community. There is no place in British India, open to a native, to which Tiyas cannot aspire. In fact, a proportionately large number of the higher appointments in British Malabar are occupied by the Tiyas. In other parts of the Presidency also, there are several Tiyas occupying respectable situations. But the condition of the Tiyas of Travancore in their own native land and under the Government of their own Maharajah, is nothing but deplorable.

Government schools in the State were all closed to them in Travancore till a few years ago; and although some have been since opened, yet owing to the absence of State patronage, even these slight educational facilities have not been as largely availed of as might be desired. Even as it is, the number of Tiyas returned in 1891 as educated is 25,000 or 12.10 per cent of their male population while the percentage in 1875 was only 3.15. This increase, considering the absence of any kind of inducement from Government and the fact that most of the schools in the State were closed to them goes to show that the community is certainly not indifferent to education. If Government had thrown open more schools and had offered some inducement, there is no doubt they would have made much greater progress in education.

It is a matter for very great regret that the community is especially backward as regards English education. The importance of English education as a factor in the advancement of the Indian peoples, especially of the backward classes among them, is so well

recognised that it hardly needs mention here. It is now indispensable to progress of any kind in this country. Yet, the Government instead of encouraging the spread of English education, among this community have thrown barriers across their path, thus excluding them from the only means of elevation. Several of the English schools in the State, especially those in the mofussil, are still closed to the Tiyas and this accounts partly for the very small number of English educated Tiyas in the State. It has already been mentioned that Government service is the chief incentive to education and it is particularly so with regard to English education. No Indian community has as yet been known to take to it without this incentive, and the Tiyas are no exception to the rule. While special encouragements are held out to backward classes in British India, the Travancore Government has, most unfortunately followed an entirely different policy with regard to the Tiyas. Consequently, out of a population of about five lakhs many of them fairly-well-to-do, there are only between two and three dozens returned in 1891 as English literates. Even these few, have received little encouragement at the hands of the Government. One of them, the first graduate of the community who took his degree in Arts so far back as 1882, had to seek employment under the British Government; and another, who was the first Travancore Malayali Hindu that graduated in Medicine, had similarly to seek service elsewhere. If Government had shown due consideration in encouraging their services in the State, it would have created in the community aspirations favourable to the spread of English education. But so far as the Tiyas are concerned, the Government has not followed the wholesome policy adopted by other Governments, of showing special considerations to such of the members as have been the first to receive the benefits of English education. It is greatly to be regretted that it has, on the contrary, withheld from the educated Tiyas even the ordinary considerations they otherwise deserved. The community, therefore, cannot be blamed if it has not been found over-anxious to go in for English education. The late Dewan threw the entire blame on the community in the course of his reply to a memorial submitted by the native Malayali population. He said, as a plea for the non-entertainment of Tiyas in Government service, that the country, they were as a body uneducated, preferring their own

occupations of agriculture, coir-making and toddy drawing to going in for such education as would fit them for Public Service. When Government has all along denied them the inducements and the full facilities to such education, it is anything but charitable that it should accuse the community of being uneducated. "There are only two of that class", said your predecessor, "that have graduated in the local University, and very few indeed, if any, who are seeking a high education in the local Colleges." But the Government have as yet done nothing to make the two, two hundred, and the very few, a great many.

Another reason urged against the entertainment of the Tiyas in Public Service, is that their social position is low. It is strange that when elsewhere merit is the main qualifications in the State the standard social position required to make one eligible for service under the Sirkar is not stated and it is not known how high the Tiyas have to rise in society to qualify themselves for even such appointments as peons, constables, warders etc. As regards this social position, it cannot be ignored that the attitude of Government towards the Tiyas was itself the main factor in having kept the community in the backward condition. Where the Government has been liberal, the community has not been slow to take advantage of every opportunity of advancement. This is evident from the condition of the Tiyas in British Malabar. It is surprising that this ground for declaring candidates ineligible for Public Service is urged in regard only to such members as remain within the pale of Hinduism. The moment any member of the community, and for the matter of that, of even lower communities, becomes a convert, or at least assumes a non-Hindu name, his social position is no longer a bar to his entertainment. Many such members are now in Government service and it cannot be denied that the better treatment accorded by Government to converts has served as an inducement to conversion, at least in the case of some. Instances can be shown where members of the Tiyas or of lower communities have, by merely assuming non-Hindu names secured appointments which would otherwise have been denied to them. It is difficult to conceive how a man rises in social position the moment he becomes a convert or merely assumes a non-Hindu name. Outside Travancore, neither Hindu or Christian Governments recognize such means of social elevation,

nor do they, as already stated, judge one's qualification for service by any standard social status. But in Travancore, the case is different. The native Christian and Mohammedan converts there are generally in a much better position materially than the communities to which they originally belonged, and whatever may be the merits of individual members of these communities, they cannot expect from Government the same consideration that is shown to converts. This, by the way goes a great way in explaining the comparatively very high percentage of these classes in the State. According to the latest census, the native Christians in Travancore number 20 per cent of the total population, while in the Madras Presidency and the Mysore Province, their proportion is only 2 and 0.35 per cent respectively. This induced conversion is prejudicial to the interests of all the religions concerned: for while stamping Hinduism as practically uncharitable to its own members it sends to the other religious members who, not infrequently, are indifferent and insincere. I need not say anything about its demoralising influence.

Another reason assigned for disqualifying the Tiyas is that public opinion is unfavourable. But this public opinion in Travancore is mainly dependent on the attitude of Government. It is said that Hindus in Travancore, unlike their brethren in British Malabar, are more conservative and superstitious and are consequently opposed to the elevation of the Tiyas as a class. This, I submit, is an opinion not based on sufficient data. It does not apply to a majority of my countrymen. At any rate I have not known a single Travancorean, however conservative and superstitious, who is opposed to the Tiyas receiving some share at least of State patronage, and I am sure that the Tiyas in Travancore have not done anything to merit a treatment less charitable than what is being accorded to their brethren outside; nor do they merit a treatment different from what such of them as have become converts receive. It may be that people consider the Tiyas in Travancore a much lower class than their brethren in Malabar. This is due to the higher education that the Tiyas in Malabar have received and the large number of them that are holding respectable situations under the British Government. Were the Travancore Government as liberal and generous to the Tiyas as the British, it goes

without saying that, the Tiyas in Travancore would be in equally good status. Even granting that Hindus in Travancore are more conservative and superstitious, and opposed to the elevation of the Tiyas as a class, it is nevertheless the duty of an enlightened Government to discountenance such prejudices.

The opposition to the advancement of the Tiyas is said to be mostly from the Malayali Sudras. It is strange that this statement comes in reply to the memorial presented by the best representatives of that community praying for some consideration being shown to their unfortunate Tiya brethren. It may be that a few members of the Nair community have expressed their dissatisfaction at the entertainment as a magistrate of a particular Christian graduate who was not believed to belong to the upper classes. This graduate in question is not a convert from the Tiya or Elava community and it is extremely strange that Government should have interpreted the opinion of these few members of the Community in this particular instance to mean that the Nair community as a whole is against the Tiyas being given their due share of state patronage. Against the voice of the ten thousand educated Nairs that constituted the memorialists and numerous others throughout the state that helped and sympathised with them. If the memorial showed anything at all, it showed unmistakably that the other classes were in sympathy with the Tiyas. Even supposing that every member of the Nair community was against any encouragement being shown to the Tiyas, I submit, with due respect to that community, that they constitute only a fifth of the population, and however influential they may be, it is just that another community, almost as numerous, should be denied every due share of state patronage just because the former happens to be conservative and superstitious.

Whatever, therefore, may be the state of public opinion, it does not afford sufficient reasons for ignoring the claims of the Tiyas. "It cannot be said that this so-called public opinion which it put forward as a plea for Government neglecting the interests of the Tiyas has always been respected. In introducing the Stamp Act, in raising the school fees, and in various other matters, public opinion surely was not in favour; nevertheless, Government did introduce these changes against the opinion of the public, as

the measures were considered necessary in the interests of the State. It is not, I venture to ask, as much a matter of public necessity, if not a duty, to remove the disabilities of the Tiyas, and guard their interests against prejudice and superstition? A convert to a foreign religion is considered by the Hindus a "Patita" or "Chandala" and is at once excommunicated. Government, however, rightly, discountenanced the idea, and is showing the converts the encouragement they deserve. But to the Tiyas that remain within the pale of Hinduism, a Hindu Government would not extend the same consideration. Regarding the removal of their disabilities, Government said, "In the present state of society any radical measure on the part of Government in which the bulk of the population does not acquiesce, is not only not likely to be productive of good, but will rather retard progress by developing race-antagonism calculated to do much mischief." No due recognition by Government of the claims of any class of whatever caste or creed, has as yet resulted in race antagonism. The service of the State does not consist entirely of one class of Hindus, nor only of those that belong to any one particular religion; and there has as yet arisen no sign of any antagonism among the various classes that are therein represented. Nor has the encouragement shown to the Tiyas in Malabar, given rise to any such feeling. It should be noted that Government in their solicitude to avoid giving rise to antagonism, have, so to speak, only set one class against another. When the two most numerous classes in the State, viz., the Nairs and the Tiyas, have learnt to recognise the claims of each other, and asked for a due share in the service of the State, Government have pointed out the former as being opposed to the interests of the latter.

Government gave it to be understood that they were doing all they could to remove prejudices by the only means viz., the spread of education. It would seem that Government expects to eradicate existing prejudices by merely encouraging education among the other classes, without at the same time doing anything to give the Tiyas equal facilities and inducement to such education. Unless Government throw open more schools to that class and also entertain in service those duly qualified among them, it is impossible to except the existing prejudice to lessen or disappear. It is very hard that Tiyas should be made to wait with folded

arms, till the other classes have so highly advanced in education as to forget their prejudices, and I venture to say that the Tiyas would have to wait for ages should Government insist on the evolution of humanity to that prefection, before they would entertain them in their service. The feeling that is said against the Tiyas can be no means be removed or diminished, unless Government are prepared to discountenance the same as they have done in the native Christian community. The prejudice against this class was very strong at one time, and had Government not adopted a liberal policy with regard to them, the same feeling would have still existed. The remarkable advancement made by some of the lower classes in British India would not have been possible, had the Paramount Power taken up an attitude similar to that of the Travancore Government. In our country, Government can do more than any other body, to lessen at least, if it cannot remove race or caste prejudices. It is impossible that the condition of the Tiyas will ever improve unless and until the Government adopt a liberal and enlightened policy in their treatment of the Tiyas. Permit me to say, that a great deal has yet to be done by Government before it can be truly said that they are doing all they can for the Tiyas.

From this it is, however, not to be inferred that any undue consideration is solicited for the Tiyas. As they are at present placed in respect of their social position it will greatly benefit them to receive at the hands of Government the same amount of consideration that will be shown to them if they become converts. I hope this will not be considered too much for them to expect. They do not ask Government to force their social growth, neither do they ask to be placed on a level with classes that have for centuries been considered their superiors. But, times have changed, and with it their surroundings have altered their positions, while they have been forced to remain as they were centuries ago. They have to move with the times as well as other classes, and adapt themselves to their altered surroundings. For this, they need the facilities that other classes possess. In the first place, all the Government Schools may be thrown open to them. This will be only giving effect to the repeated proclamations of our Maharajahs that all classes, without distinction of caste or creed, may have access to public institutions. At present, only H. H. the Maharajah's

High School and College and two or three District Schools are accessible to them. I have received several communications from members of the community in the Districts regarding their inability to secure admissions for their children into District Schools. Government will be more largely promoting the spread of education, if they remove this disability. I am in communication with the Educational Secretary on the subject of founding scholarships for Tiya children reading in English Schools, and am making efforts to collect some money by private subscription with a view to its being placed in his charge for that purpose. Government could greatly help the undertaking by sanctioning an annual grant. The next thing that requires the immediate consideration of Government, is the entertainment of Tiyas in Government service. I need not repeat that the entertainment in service of those duly qualified, will serve as a strong incentive to education. A large majority of the well-to-do Tiyas do not care to give their children an English education, just because Government service is entirely denied to them. Public service is of course, not the end and aim of education, but the Tiyas have not yet attained that stage when they can appreciate education even though it does not secure them appointments. As things now stand, an educated Tiya cherishing the not unpardonable ambition to serve the Government of his mother country has no alternative but to become a convert. Government service presents so many attractions that educated men enter it even though they may have to leave their country for it. The case is exactly the same with the Tiyas. There are, and there will hereafter be, instances of educated Tiyas of Travancore leaving their country to seek service elsewhere. Just now, when the community stands sorely in need of the influence of educated members, their departure from its midst is very detrimental to its interests. I earnestly trust that Government will do their best to improve matters in this respect. I do not presume to say that all the appointments in the State are now to be thrown open to the Tiyas. It will be enough if Government confer on duly qualified members at least such of the appointments as they are likely to get if they become converts. This, I trust, is not too much to expect from a Hindu Government."



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