THE LAST PHASE OF COLONIALISM IN NORTH MALABAR: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION, C. 1900-1947

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SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this Thesis entitled **The Last Phase of Colonialism in North Malabar: Socio-Economic and Cultural Transformation, c. 1900-1947** submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Calicut is a bonafide research carried out by Sheeja P.C. under my supervision and that no part of this thesis has been presented before, for the award of any degree, diploma or other similar title.

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DECLARATION

I, **Sheeja P.C.,** do hereby declare that this thesis entitled **The Last Phase of Colonialism in North Malabar: Socio-Economic and Cultural Transformation, c.1900-1947** is a bonafide record of research work done by me under the supervision of Dr. K. Gopalankutty, Professor of History (Retd.), University of Calicut, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History. I also declare that this thesis or part thereof has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

On April 10, 1591, three ships left the harbour of Torbay in the south west of England for India. They had the blessings of Queen Elizabeth, who had, earlier in the year, granted permission to some merchants of London to sail to India.[1]

None of them, though, reached their destination. Neither did the ships that left the English shores in 1596, and then, in 1598.

The Englishmen were not willing to give up, yet. At the beginning of the 17th century, they found India.

The ship commanded by William Hawkins reached Surat, in western India, on August 24, 1608.[2] That was the beginning of Britain's trade with India. The British's interest did not stop with trade, as they went on to colonise India and ruled the country for centuries.

The impact of colonialism could be seen right across the country. It was quite visible in North Malabar, in southern India, too. The British presence was particularly prominent in certain areas in North Malabar, like Thalassery for instance, and in those places the impact of colonialism was especially pronounced.

North Malabar occupies a unique place in the social, cultural, economical and political history of Kerala. Part of the erstwhile Madras

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1 Lucy Aiken, *Memoirs of the Court of Queen Elizabeth*, England, 1818, p. 311.

2 John F. Riddick, *The History of British India: A Chronology*, United States, 2006, p. 6.

Presidency and situated north of the present Kerala State, this region has experienced many radical changes in the sphere of polity, society and culture.

It was the cradle of many political movements that shaped the Kerala of today. There have also been significant movements by peasants and by trade unionists. Socio-religious reform movements too have been witnessed in North Malabar.

The main objective of this study is to find out the historical factors which moulded the society, economy and culture of North Malabar during the first half of the 20th century. The period selected for the study is from 1900 to 1947.

After the treaty of Srirangapatna in 1792, Malabar came under the direct administration of Britain, and how direct colonial intervention affected the people in this region requires further studies. The main aim of the treaty was to increase economic profits by assuring the British East India Company of a monopoly of pepper. The treaty aimed to refuse all claims to sovereignty made by the Malabar princes and to ensure the long term dependence on the East India Company.

The treaty also aimed at the tax collection, guaranteed for the British by restoring the strength of Malabar's economic production through its primary crop of pepper. The treaty further aimed at creating an administrative and legal structure.[3]

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[3] Margret Frenz, *'A Race of Monsters': South India and The British 'Civilizing Mission' in the later Eighteenth Century* in Harald Fischer-Tine and Michael Mann(eds.) *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India,* London, 2004, p. 57.

The study focuses on the socio-economic and cultural transformation under colonial rule during the last phase of colonialism. The beginning of native industrial enterprises, spread of Western education and the growth of native middle class and the question of colonial modernity were some of the issues discussed in this work. It also tries to establish a link between the spread of Western education, the beginning of industrial activities, growth of indigenous 'elites' and the social mobility as a mark of colonial modernity.

In this thesis, I have concentrated on the significant changes that took place in the lives of the people of North Malabar in the first half of the 20th century, which was also the last stage of colonialism in the region. I have stressed on certain aspects, such as the role played by Western education, which helped a vast majority of people in North Malabar climb the social ladder. I have also examined the issue of colonial modernity.

Colonialism brought significant changes in the economic condition of the people. Traditional economy was gradually transforming in to a colonial one and by the beginning of 20th century, the colonial institution was trying to find out new ways to strengthen its presence in India. These changes were interlinked. For instance, the introduction of Western education had its impact on industrial activities in this region and resulted in the growth of native middle class in this region.

A noteworthy feature of North Malabar's society under colonial rule was the spread of English education. Colonialism created a conducive atmosphere for the upward social mobility of backward castes. The impact of colonialism with its concept of equality before law, and indigenous reform

movements led to the decline of caste rigidities in Malabar by the turn of the twentieth century.

In North Malabar, Western education, the presence of missionary activities and the coming in to existence of factories, where there was free mixing of castes, weakened the caste rigidities. The British rulers didn't show any caste discrimination towards *Thiyyas*, Muslims and other backward castes.

Under the British rule they could easily mingle with others and some of them were unaware of the evil effects of colonialism. They were people, from *Thiyyas* and even higher castes like *Nairs*, who supported the continuance of British rule and had a pro-British attitude; there were, however, many who opposed the British with vehemence.

Caste was modified during this period in accordance with the contemporary requirements in society. The growth of urbanisation and factory systems facilitated interaction between different castes in the public arena.

Along with the upper castes, lower castes like *Thiyyas* also made progress under British rule. Under colonialism, the agrarian subsistence economy was transformed in to a food import dependent commercial crop export economy. As a result of changes in relative prices, coconut gradually began to replace rice along the coastal tracts, while pepper dominated the foothills in the east.

The commercialisation of agriculture and the growth of industries gave a fillip to the trading activities in port towns. While trade with the Western countries was largely monopolised by European trading companies, the

Mappila merchants dominated the rice imports and the trade with the Arab countries.

Niches in the lower links of the trading networks created opportunities for *Thiyyas* to carve out riches. Since the early days of British colonial rule, which began in Malabar in 1792, the *Thiyya* community had provided most of the economic and social intermediaries for the European community in North Malabar. Some *Thiyya* women also had kinship ties with the British.

Thiyyas responded warmly to the missionary schools that were opened, and a Western-educated middle class emerged. In Chirakkal and Kottayam *taluks* of the erstwhile Malabar district, there was a steady decline in the prestige of caste and landed property and new economic and professional classes came in existence. Prestige was now associated with economic classification such as industrialists, owners of factories, employment in government service etc.

Affluent businessmen and industrialists enjoyed a greater status in the public eye than the traditional landed aristocracy. Many younger members of most of the old aristocratic families became aware of the benefits of education and equipped themselves to be eligible for Government jobs and other professions.

People from backward castes considered education as a weapon to fight caste inequalities and they hoped that joining the Government service would enhance their social status.

Though the income derived from the practise of professions or employment in government may have been inadequate, people seemed to

have preferred it to that obtained from land agriculture. The importance of caste and land, supplemented by that of wealth, education and employment, and the new economic professional classes had practically displaced the old land-owning aristocracy of the upper castes.

Bigger prestige was associated with the learned professions and administrative services. Colonial modernity was trying to establish its hold on North Malabar through different ways. Colonial institutions like Western education functioned as a symbol of colonial modernity.

Literature Review

There are many historical works that deal with the socio-economic condition of Malabar in the colonial period and many native and foreign scholars written on the topic. The study of North Malabar's colonial history mainly concentrated on agrarian studies, peasant revolts, various political movements and social and religious reform movements.

Some of the important scholars who worked on Malabar's socio-economic history are Eric J. Miller, Thomas W Shea Jr., B.A. Prakash.[4] These scholars made attempts to trace the causes behind the agricultural backwardness of Malabar. Another pioneering work was done by Somerset Playne. This work provides information about Southern India, its history,

[4] a) Eric J. Miller, *Village structure in North Kerala* in *The Economic Weekly*, February 9, 1952.
b) Thomas W. Shea, Jr., *Barriers to Economic Development in Traditional societies: Malabar, A case study* in *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 19, 1959.
c) B. A. Prakash, *Agricultural backwardness of Malabar during the colonial period: An Analysis of Economic causes* in *Social Scientist, Vol*. 16, June-July, 1988.

people, commerce and industrial resources but not giving much information specific to North Malabar.[5]

Though various aspects of social, economic and cultural history of Kerala have been studied by historians, none of these studies focussed on the socio-economic and cultural transformation during the last phase of colonialism, that is from 1900-1947, in North Malabar. Most of the earlier attempts regarding Malabar's social, economic and cultural history were confined to landlordism and agricultural economy, and that too only till the period up to 19th century.

Though there have been studies related to socio-economic history up to 1900, it is hard to do a review of literature on the present topic. However some of the earlier works provided a platform to understand the socio-economic and cultural transformation under colonial rule during the last 50 years of colonialism in Malabar.

The work of S. Ramachandran Nair titled *The State and Economy in Colonial British Kerala* gives details about the colonial political and economic activities, the land system and the existence of industry, trade and commerce, but it does not talk much about the economic condition of Kerala during the first half of the 20th century. He says that the Europeanisation and economic development of Kerala in the colonial pattern only strengthened British rule in Kerala. The work provides a very short description about the State and economy in Colonial Kerala.

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5 Somerset Playne, (compiled) *Southern India-It's History, People, Commerce and Industrial Resources,* London, 1914-1915.

In another work, the author describes the society and politics of Travancore region.[6] He explains the colonial policies and the important colonial investments in this region, such as plantation and railway. The British attitude to indigenous industry was distinctly hostile and it aimed at the destruction of existing manufacturing and cottage industries.[7]

The economy of Travancore in 1912 was predominantly agricultural and most of the manufacturing industries depended on agricultural produce. Industries employed less than 9% of the labour force, the bulk of them in traditional cottage industries like weaving and small scale processing industries like the spinning of coir yarn. Trade was confined mainly to the exchange of agricultural commodities. According to him, the growth of commercial agriculture was the most important transformation in the economy of Travancore under colonialism.[8]

Various aspects of Kerala's socio-economic history have been discussed by scholars like M. Kabir, K.T. Rammohan, Michael Tharakan and Raman Mahadevan. But most of these studies are mainly confined to the Travancore Cochin region and did not extensively focus on the period after 1900. The socio-economic and cultural changes happened during the last phase of colonialism is almost a neglected area in the historical writings of Kerala, especially North Kerala.

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[6] S Ramachandran Nair, *Social consequences of Agrarian change*, Jaipur, 1981.
[7] *Ibid*., p. 25.
[8] *Ibid*., p. 30.

K.T. Rammohan explains how colonial modernity influenced the economic development of the Travancore region.[9] Raman Mahadevan studied the process of industrialisation of Travancore. From his studies we can get an idea about how the process of industrialisation was started, commercialisation of agriculture and the growth of agro-processing industries like coir, rubber and plantation.

In Travancore, the commercialisation of the economy paved way for the growth of a new entrepreneurial class mainly from *Ezhava* and Syrian Christian community.[10] Most of the newly emerged entrepreneurs accumulated capital mainly through agro-processing industries and plantations. Gradually, they ventured into commercial banking, too.

The Travancore National Bank, controlled by a Syrian Catholic entrepreneur K.C. Mammen Mappila, and the Quilon Bank, started by C.P. Mathew, are examples of these new type of entrepreneurial ventures. He also traces the entry of immigrant capital and modern industrial investment.

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9 K .T. Rammohan, *Material Process and Developmentalism-Interpreting Economic changes in Colonial Tiruvitamkur, 1800-1945*, Unpublished Ph .D Thesis, Kerala University, 1996.

10 Raman Mahadevan,

a) *Some aspects of pattern of industrial investment and entrepreneurship in Travancore during the 1930's and 1940's,* Paper presented in the seminar on South Indian Economy, CDS,Trivandrum,1988.

b) *Industrial entrepreneurship in Princely Travancore, 1930-47* in S. Bhattacharya(ed.)*The South Indian Economy: Agrarian change, Industrial structure, and state policy,c.1914-1947*,New Delhi,1991.

Another notable research done in this area is by M. Kabir.[11] As the title of his work shows, it is mainly a comparative study of Travancore and Malabar regions. In this work, he explores wide areas like the process of commercialisation of agriculture, the beginning of banking in Malabar and Travancore region, growth of transport, growth of education and health care services.

He talks about the difference in basic agrarian structure and the system of governance in Travancore and Malabar and explains how both the regions witnessed the process of commercialisation of agriculture. He also tells us how the trade in commodities took off.

The second decade of the 20th century attracted a large number of newcomers to the trade. During 'Great Depression', traders in Malabar made heavy profits. Commercialisation created a market for credit. In Malabar, the rent revenue burden brought the peasants to a state of dependence on the local money lender and traders. During Depression, most of these money lenders withdrew from the credit market and gradually that place was taken over by commercial banks.

According to Kabir, Malabar, compared to Travancore, lagged behind in many areas and witnessed an arrested growth. So development in sectors like transport, education and healthcare were very scanty and sporadic. He says that the existing system of land relations created a powerful bulwark against changes in social relations.

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[11] M.Kabir, *Growth of service sector in Kerala: A Comparative study of Travancore and Malabar, 1901-1951*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Kerala University, Trivandrum,2003.

The State's actions in the fields of education and healthcare were motivated by political interest rather than by people's welfare; nor were they backed by popular will. Regarding the growth of transport in Malabar, he says that the road construction in Malabar was more political than economic and the necessity of the colonial government to control the peasant revolts led to the development of a wide system of railways. He also makes a comparison of caste system in Travancore and Malabar and examines how it influenced the socio-economic changes.

According to him, the major beneficiaries of the commercialisation of agriculture in Travancore were *Ezhavas* and he is of the opinion that this is mainly due to their association with the coconut palm. But he doesn't dig deep into other factors that helped this community rise in the social ladder. There is no mention about the situation of *Thiyyas* in Malabar (equivalent of *Ezhavas*) and how they made big strides despite being socially backward.

Kabir's observation regarding the growth of education also opens room for further studies. He is of the view that the demand for education in Malabar was fossilised by mass poverty and an extortionate agrarian structure. The State's actions in the field of education and healthcare were unilateral and influenced by the political interests of the state. The work does not give many details about the colonial legacy and the social progress made by people as a result of education during the first half of the 20th century. There is not much space given to explain how the British rule paved way for progressive thinking, which later ignited many socio-political movements in North Malabar.

According to the author, the benefits of commercialisation reached only the upper-caste *Janmies* and superior tenants. In short, he describes the progress made by Travancore in colonial period and argues that in almost all fields, Travancore was walking ahead of Malabar, which lagged behind in making improvements in service sectors during British period, and that it continues to be the case even today.

No one has solely concentrated on North Malabar's socio-economic and cultural transformation after 1900. However, as was mentioned earlier, there were many studies pertaining to the socio-economic conditions of this region during the 18th and 19th centuries. A notable work deals with the evolution of industrial establishments in Malabar was carried out by Jaiprakash Raghaviah.[12] The work narrates how modern industrial establishments started in this region.

His book throws lights on the contribution and work done by foreign missionary organisation called Basel Mission, important Basel Mission industries and its impact on socio-economic condition of Malabar. He also explains about the purpose of these industries and in which areas they specialised.

We get a detailed account of the early textile and tile factories in this region. The author, though, concentrates completely on Basel Mission and its work.

[12] Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara, 1834-1914*, New Delhi, 1990.

The historical factors that resulted in the growth of native entrepreneurs and the rise of middle class in North Malabar are yet to be studied intensively.

K.K.N. Kurup has studied various aspects of North Malabar's History like peasant revolts and agrarian problems in Malabar society. In *Modern Kerala: Studies in Social and Agrarian Relations,*[13] he makes some observations regarding the European impact on Malabar's society in the 18th century, peasant revolts and agrarian problems in the Malabar society. He also explains how Western education made social progress among backward castes, especially *Thiyyas,* possible. There is scope to expand these aspects and for further research in these areas.

Methodology

This is mainly a thematic presentation. Though there was scope for theoretical analysis, it was not used, largely to avoid contradictions. The unique socio-economic and cultural identity of this region does not allow us to make a generalisation. The methodology followed was descriptive, analytical and interpretative.

Sources

Important source materials used are primary and secondary.

Among the primary sources, unpublished documents and records have been largely made use of. In this category, archival sources provided a lot of information. Other sources of information included published government

[13] K. K. N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala: studies in Social and Agrarian Relations*, New Delhi, 1988.

documents and reports like Census Reports and Administrative Reports. Other important primary sources were autobiographies and contemporary newspaper reports. Another method adopted for gathering information was personal interviews.

The secondary sources included published works in English and Malayalam, journals and periodicals, biographies and souvenirs.

Apart from the introductory and concluding chapters there are four chapters in this thesis.

Chapter 1:

Malabar in the 19th century: Society, Economy and Polity

This chapter tries to explain how North Malabar's traditional economy, based on agriculture, gradually transformed into a colonial economy. Like elsewhere in India, agriculture was the main economic activity, supplemented by traditional handicrafts industry. Under the colonial rule, agriculture, handicrafts and other village industries declined.

Unfavourable and exploitative policies introduced by the colonial power in the sphere of agriculture, industry, infrastructure, trade and commerce and the caste system and the social practices arising out of the system that prevailed in Malabar gave momentum to this process of decline.

By the end of the 19th century, the British capital began entering this region and these colonial investments first opened up plantations and later spread to other manufacturing industries. Still, Malabar was lagging behind in the development of non-agricultural enterprise mainly due to its land tenure

structure under colonialism. The exception to this was the Basel Mission Industries. Basel Mission started many textile and tile factories in this region.

Chapter 2:

Western Education and Social Changes in North Malabar

Colonialism effected many changes and not all of them were bad. Some of them were positive. These changes were not forced and rather came from within. The introduction of Western education was one such activity. In Colonial India, the initiative to introduce western education was collectively taken by foreign Christian missionaries, the British government and the progressive natives.

It was Basel Mission, a German Missionary organisation that first started schools in Malabar. There were many objectives behind the introduction of Western education. Among them was the dissemination of colonial ideology and utility for administrative needs. One of the important outcomes of Western education was the rise of the middle class and native entrepreneurs in North Malabar.

Chapter 3:

Changing Face of Economy and Rise of Middle Class in North Malabar

The tile and textile factories started by Basel Mission were regarded as the forerunners of other industrial establishments in this region. These were the first capitalist industries established in the region. By the turn of the 19th century new entrepreneurial ventures by natives boosted the economic activities in this region. Taking inspiration from Basel Mission people like

Samuel Aaron started tile and textile factories in the area. Changes in the political, administrative, educational and economic fields introduced by the British provided the climate and circumstances favourable to the growth of the native middle class.

Chapter 4:

Social and Cultural Transformation of Kannur and Thalassery under British Rule

This chapter concentrates on the social and cultural changes at Kannur and Thalassery, parts of Chirakkal and Kottayam *taluks*, respectively, of the erstwhile Malabar District during the last phase of colonialism. They were chosen for a closer study because they were two of the most urban and cosmopolitan of towns in North Malabar and reflected the impact of colonialism than any other parts in the region.

The colonial modernisation in India involved the transformation of not merely the economy, but the society, politics, administration and culture as well.

Two aspects are mainly discussed in this chapter. One is colonialism and the upward social mobility of people in North Malabar. The other is colonialism and culture.

CHAPTER I

MALABAR IN THE 19TH CENTURY: SOCIETY, ECONOMY AND POLITY

As was the case in many parts of the world at the beginning of the 19th century, agriculture was the chief economic activity of people in North Malabar. A region richly endowed with natural resources such as soil, climate and rainfall, Malabar was ideal for the cultivation of grain crops and plantation crops. Agriculture provided livelihood to the almost entire population. Only a small, almost negligible, percentage earned a living through other activities, like trade, commerce, cotton weaving, carpentry and fishing.

It is estimated that the population engaged in such non-agricultural activities hardly exceeded 5% of the total population in 1837.[1] Due to the lack of growth of industrial or commercial endeavours, a vast majority of population (80%) depended primarily on agriculture for their livelihood.[2]

The crops cultivated were paddy, coconut, areca nut, pepper, cardamom, ginger, jackfruit, mangoes and plantains, among others. Paddy was the principal crop, while produced rice, the staple food, mainly met the domestic food requirements. Traditional farming implements, such as wooden plough were, used for cultivation.

Coconut was the second major crop. Coconut and Coconut products were used for domestic consumption as well as for exports. They were

1 *Statistics of Malabar*, 1873-74, p. 23.
2 William Logan, *Malabar*, Reprint, Vol.2, Madras, 1951, p. 36.

actually the second largest export earner of Malabar, accounting for about 37% of the value of exports in 1804[3].

Pepper, a native crop of Malabar, attracted foreigners to Malabar from very early times. The power-struggles waged by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English in the region were primarily with the objective of monopolising pepper trade. By the beginning of the 19th century, pepper was the single largest export-earner of Malabar; it accounted for 45% of the total value of exports.[3]Among the agricultural products, pepper, coconut and its by-products, cardamom, ginger and timber, were exported; and the agricultural products made up of 99% of the total value of exports in 1804.[4]

Agricultural economy was supplemented by traditional handicrafts industry by different village-based occupational groups. Such industries were worked by hand labour. Crafts had not separated from agriculture and were carried on primarily as domestic industries as non–agricultural occupations in the households of community peasant. Unlike the modern factory-based industries with huge capital, large labour and mechanized means of production, the organisation of handicraft industries was simple, least expensive and quite unimposing. The establishments were small. The capital investment was meagre. Workmen employed on wages were few. The artisan, his skill and capacity to work were more important than his capital. The industrial skill and vocations were mostly hereditary. Production was based on the traditional principle of rural self sufficiency which was a happy blending of agriculture and handicraft.

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3 P. Clemenston, *A Report on Revenue and Other Matters Connected with Malabar District dated 31st December*, 1838, Calicut, 1914, pp. 19-20.

4 *Ibid*., pp. 19-23.

The industries, which were mostly hereditary professions based on caste system, were very stable. Some of the caste groups were *Chaliyas* (weavers), *Thattan* (goldsmith), *Aasari* (carpenter), *Kusavan* (pot maker) and *Vannan* (oil pressers). These types of specialised occupations developed from hereditary callings, not from higher education or research. These were mainly artisanal or household forms of production such as handloom weaving, pottery, carpentry, blacksmiths, fishing and oil pressers. While the artisanal/household nature of the basis of organisation of production lent a pre-capitalist character to workers in these forms of production, they nevertheless were not immune from the penetration and expansion of capitalist production in the economy.[5] The village community crafts gave rise to another, more complex traditional form of economic organisation of handicraft production.

As the result of the operation of the laws of the social division of labour in India, the crafts separated from agriculture, resulting in a further development of productive forces. However, within the framework of the natural economy of a number of village communities some of the crafts separated from agriculture blended with it again. This blending of the crafts and agriculture assumed a unique form. A large number of professional artisans plying specific crafts began to fulfil the orders of individual peasants or the community as a whole not on the basis of commodity-money relations and of sales on the market but on the basis of direct barter.[6] Some elements of

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5 K.P. Kannan, *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles: Mobilization and Organisation of Rural Workers in South –West India*, Oxford, 1988, p. 40.

6 Alexander I. Tchitcherov**,** *India-changing economic structure in the sixteenth – eighteenth centuries- Outline History of Crafts and Trade*, Delhi, 1998, pp. 27-28.

these economic relations between farmers and village artisans still existed in Malabar in the 19th century.[7]

As the direct exchange of products of labour between the village artisans and the peasants developed, it gradually took the form of commodity relations, which prepared the ground for the remuneration of artisans in cash. On the Malabar coast, even at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the blacksmiths, carpenters, goldsmiths and other artisans were paid by the farmers in cash, while some village community artisans and servants received remuneration in kind.[8]

In the case of South India, Company trade is said to have led to the growth of cash advances and to have promoted the sub-ordination of the producer to mercantile capital.[9] A.I. Tchitcherov, a Soviet scholar, underlined the growing subordination of production to mercantile capital and asserts that India was approaching the beginning of the manufactory stage in the development of capitalism within the framework of her generally feudal economy.[10] According to him, on the 'eve of colonial rule', qualitatively new forms seems to have emerged in the economic structure of the handicrafts, agriculture and trade.[11] But in the case of North Malabar, colonialism interrupted this process and paved the way for the decline of native small scale ventures, agriculture, handicrafts, etc.

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7 William Logan, *Malabar, Vol.II***,** pp.cc, clxxiv, Madras, 1887.

8 Alexander I.Tchitcherov**.,** *Op.cit.,* p. 45.

9 T. Ray Chaudhuri, *Jan company in Coromandel, 1605-1690: A study in the Inter relation of European commerce and traditional economies,* The Hague,1962, pp. 214-15.

10 Alexander I. Tchitcherov, *Op.cit.,* pp. 159-70.

11 *Ibid.,* p. 230.

The supply of capital as advance payments[12] helped many native traders to acquire rich merchant capital which they utilised in a profitable native trade. It was the era of Merchant capitalism.[13]

The main elements of the agrarian structure were the village community, the system of land holding and land tenures and the caste system. The evolution of agrarian relations was closely connected with land tenures and the revenue system and the whole fabric of relations was interwoven with the life of the village community.

Caste system was firmly integrated with the structure of agrarian relations. The landlords as well as the majority tenants belonged to the Brahmin or other upper castes, while most of the labourers and serfs belonged to the lowest castes.[14] As a result of colonial policies agriculture, handicrafts and other village industries declined. Unfavourable and extractive policies pursued by the colonial powers in the spheres of agriculture, industry, infrastructure, trade and commerce and the caste system, and the social practices arising out of the system that prevailed in Malabar gave momentum to this process of decline.[15]

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12 This is called the putting out system.

13 Merchant capitalism, a term coined by economic historians, refers to the earliest phase in the development of capitalism as an economic and social system. The earliest form of Merchant capitalism developed in the ninth century in the medieval Islamic world and the era came to an end in the 18th century, making way for Industrial capitalism.

14 Sarada Raju, *The Agrarian Structure of the Madras Presidency: Impact of British Administration in* IHC proceeding Vol.,XXX, 1975, *pp. 265-267.*

15 B.A. Prakash, *Agricultural backwardness of Malabar during the colonial period: An analysis of economic causes, Social Scientist, vol.16,* No.6-7, June –July, 1988, pp. 51-7.

There was a general deterioration in agrarian conditions during the course of the first half of the 19th century. The colonial policy of extracting the largest share of agricultural produce as land tax and strengthening landlordism in Malabar had adversely affected the cultivation. In 1800, the colonial government fixed a revenue assessment in which 50% of the produce was earmarked to the cultivator, 20% to government and 30% to the *Janmi*. But, Buchanan, who travelled through Malabar in 1800A.D, pointed out that vast areas of rice land and coconut gardens remained deserted in Northern Malabar due to the high land tax that prevailed.[16]

The original system of land tenure of Malabar was customary sharing of produce, and each customary sharer being permitted to transfer his interest in land. Without understanding the customary land relations that existed in Malabar for centuries, British interpreted the *Janmi* as the absolute owner of the land. Further, the wrong interpretation given by the colonial administration and courts about the traditional tenures such as *Kanam, Kulikanam* and *Verumpattom* virtually resulted in the loss of security of tenure and reduced the share of the produce enjoyed by tenants.[17]

One of the consequences of the new land policy of the colonial rulers was that it legalised the feudal land relations that existed in Malabar and made *Janmies* a powerful class, who no longer depended for power and influence on protective rulers.[18]As a result of the new land tenure policy feudalism got strengthened. In the feudal structure *Janmi* stood at the top and the agrestic

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16 See, Francis Buchanan, *A journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar, Vol.II, Madras,* , 1807, p. 69.

17 William Logan, *Op. cit*., p. 604.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 584.

serfs at the bottom. Farming was undertaken either by the poor *Karan* or *Verumpattom* tenants or by a class of agrestic serfs known as *Cherumar*.[19] Though slavery was abolished in 1843 by the colonial rulers, the agrestic slave system continued in Malabar because of the feudal land ownership structure that existed. [20]

Another result of the new land tenure policy was that it prevented emergence of land market in Malabar, which is one of the pre conditions of commercialisation or capitalist agriculture. When *Janmies* were conferred absolute ownership of land, they became legal owners of vast areas of wasteland, cultivable wastelands and forest lands. As a class, which had no interest in the land, they found it advantageous to sublet the land, retaining their ownership right and earn an income, *Pattom*, without making any effort from their side.

The new land tenure policy did not provide any incentive to cultivating tenants to increase productivity, make permanent improvements or resort to extensive cultivation of wastelands and forest lands, leading to stagnation of the agricultural sector.[21] Colonial extraction of a larger share of agricultural surplus and the total neglect of irrigation and infrastructural works also contributed to the backwardness of agriculture. During colonial rule, the

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[19] *Cherumar* or *Cherumakkal* were a Malayalam caste of agricultural serfs and as an inferior caste in Malabar and they were, as a rule, toilers of the soil. In the Madras Census report of 1891, it was stated that " this caste is called *Cheruman* in South Malabar and '*Pulayan* ' in North Malabar. Even in South Malabar, where they were called *Cheruman*, a large sub-division numbering over 30,000 is called *Pula Cheruman*.(Edgar Thurston and K Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of South India , Vol.II*, Delhi, 1993, p. 45).

[20] William Logan, *Op.cit.*, p. 175.

[21] B.A.Prakash, *Op.cit.*, p. 57

rulers had made no attempt to construct irrigation projects which would have led to an expansion of cultivation.[22] P. Clemenston, collector of Malabar, in his report in 1838 stressed the need for changing the agricultural policy by constructing irrigation projects to promote agriculture. He feared that if it were not provided, it would affect agricultural production and thereby revenues of government.[23]

The neglect of development of road and inland water transportation was another factor which adversely affected agricultural development. Lower price for agricultural products also contributed towards its decline. According to B.A. Prakash, the institution of caste system and its associated evils of caste pollution and system of inheritance stood as a major social obstacle to agricultural development in Malabar. The *Namboodiri Brahmins*, a priestly caste and dominant land owners of the district were, the least commercially oriented and most tradition bound people of Malabar. They rejected exposure to Western education and took no active part in commerce, industry or civil service.

Their consumption habits were meagre and rigidly subscribed by tradition. They wanted to avoid social contact with other lower castes except *Nairs*, on the ground of caste pollution. They had no interest in cultivation and they considered it as an inferior occupation meant for lower castes. Many among the *Nairs*, imitating the *Namboodiris*, also considered cultivation as an inferior occupation.[24] During the course of colonial period, *Thiyyas* emerged as a commercially oriented caste, engaged in all economic activities such as

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22 *Ibid*., p.67.
23 P. Clemenston, *Op.cit.*, p. 3.
24 B.A. Prakash, *Op.cit.*, pp. 66-67.

cultivation, industrial activities, commerce and trade. Below them was the section of polluting castes such as *Mukkuvas* (fishermen), *Kammalans* (goldsmiths*), Aasari* (carpenters) and blacksmiths and at the bottom were the agricultural serfs known as *Cherumar*, consisting of *Pulayas* and *Parayas*. These groups supplied almost the entire labour for cultivation, to the landlords and higher caste tenants.

The caste system of Malabar did not recognise agricultural occupation as a respectable one. Caste system retarded expansion of activities in agriculture, commerce and industry by preventing movement of working population from custom bound occupations to new occupations outside agriculture.

The *Namboodiri* Brahmins and *Nairs* were the two castes of dominant land owners possessing the major portion of cultivable lands, waste and forest lands. During the period, Brahmins followed a type of patrilineal form of inheritance in which the eldest son alone was recognised as legal heir of property. This resulted in the concentration of landownership in a few hands and totally prevented transfer of ownership. The land thus ended up in the procession of feudal *Janmies* who had no interest in cultivation and prevented the transfer of ownership to actual cultivators. *Nairs*, another cast of dominant land owners, followed matrilineal form of inheritance known as *Marumakkathayam*. This system of inheritance also had an unfavourable effect on agricultural development.[25]

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

Here it is also interesting to note the view put forward by Thomas W. Shea, Jr. regarding the economic development of Malabar. According to him, the important barriers to economic growth in Malabar were: (1) Immobility of the caste structure; (2) Traditional occupational distribution of the elite; (3) Absence of the systematic government in the Pre-British period; (4) The pattern of land tenures; (5) The structure of family property laws; and (6) The pattern of population growth during the 19th and 20th centuries. The businessmen in Malabar made no concerted, systematic attempts to rationalize agricultural production, and that because of their lack of interest in bringing about changes in productive techniques in agriculture, the development inhibiting social and economic barriers were never directly challenged.[26]

The colonial rule had a negative impact on the generation of economic activities and employment outside agricultural sector. The policy of importing large quantities of piece goods and other consumer goods discouraged the domestic cottage industries. The policy of taxing skilled workers such as carpenters, ironsmiths, toddy tappers, boatmen and implements like loom, oil pressers, fishing nets and carts also discouraged the generation of productive activities and employment outside the agricultural sector.[27] The traditional combination of agriculture and manufacturing industry was broken.

A relationship between the existing traditional production and the capitalist penetration had a profound impact on these workers and occupations. It led to the phenomenon of de-industrialisation, marking the

[26] Thomas W. Shea Jr., *Barriers to Economic Development in Traditional Societies: Malabar, A Case Study, Journal of Economic History*, Vol.19, 1959, p. 508.

[27] Thomas Warden, *Reports on the Revenue system in Malabar District*, 10 June 1813, Calicut, Collectorate Press, 1916, p. 4.

decline of many traditional industries.[28] The policy of importing large quantities of mill-made cotton cloth had destroyed the cottage weaving industry that thrived in some parts of Malabar.[29] In 1813, by the Charter Act, the monopoly over Indian trade for the East India Company was abolished and this heralded a new era of free trade in North Malabar and the provisions were used to import products of Western industry. We could see that an industry like indigenous textile was affected by its integration in to the British economic system. Consumer goods, mainly factory made and mass produced substitutes, were imported to Malabar in large numbers, which impacted potters and blacksmiths, among others.

Another factor was the persistence of many of these earlier forms of production either due to increasing self-exploitation in the 'Chayanovian sense'[30] by a reduction in prices and catering for markets with low purchasing power. Thus, workers in this category were not isolated but were being increasingly subjected to the market process and commercialization of the economy under colonialism.[31]

'Chayanovian view' stresses the similarities between the merchant family and the peasant family in as much as it makes reproduction of the family rather than enlargement of its assets, its primary goal, leading to the behaviour which could be 'anti-accumulationist'. The central notion for

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28 K.P. Kannan, *Op. cit*., p. 40.

29 P. Clemenston, *Op. cit*., pp. 19-23.

30 Alexander V. Chayanov was a Soviet agrarian economist. He was a proponent of agricultural co-operatives, but was skeptical about the inefficiency of large-scale farms. Chayanov's skepticism was rooted in the idea that households, especially peasant households which practised subsistence farming that tended to produce only the amount of food that they need to survive.

31 K.P. Kannan, *Op.cit*., p. 41.

merchants was that of credit, which was largely equated with honour and social prestige: its preservation was deemed more precious than any aggrandizement.[32]

Under colonialism, only those industries survived which could withstand competition with the factory products. Even the village tanner, potter, blacksmith, workers on other metals, oil pressers and others suffered a lot due to the increased vogue of the machine made products even in the remotest parts of the country. The railways accelerated this trend.

The railway, introduced primarily to serve the economic, political and military interests of Britain, helped the historically progressive new economic forces to destroy the economic foundations of the old Indian society. They helped the penetration of India by the Industrial products of the modern society, thereby breaking the economic autarchy of the village. It helped to weld India in to a single economic unit and also linked India with world market.[33]

While the process of driving out people from their old crafts and industrial moorings was proceeding apace during the whole 19th century, the growth of new industries to absorb the displaced persons was in no sense proportionate.[34] The period witnessed the growth of large groups of landless

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[32] Claude Markovitz, *Merchants, Traders, Entrepreneurs-Indian Business in the Colonial Era,* New Delhi, 2008, p. 178.

[33] A.R.Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Reprint,* New Delhi, 1996, p. 130.

[34] Hiralal Gupta, *The economic impact of the west on Indian industries,* Journal of Indian History, Vol. xxxviii, part-1, April, 1960, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, p.98.

labour comprising those who lost their lands through sequestration to the money lenders and those thrown out of employment in industry.[35]

In India, the decline and decay of native handicrafts was not due to the rise of indigenous manufacture or machine industry; it was more because of the arrival of cheap products of foreign machine industry. The destruction of urban handicrafts, without the parallel growth of substitute modern industries, led to the disequilibrium of industry and agriculture in India. The decline and decay of the urban handicrafts and the capture of their market by the cheap products of modern foreign and subsequently also Indian industries, along with the crippling of the village artisan industry, steadily transformed India in to an industrial market for those goods.[36]

The import of British goods destroyed India's traditional industry or handicrafts, which added to the number of agricultural labourers.[37] Here it is also apt to note that along with the effects of colonialism and the opening of chief industrial products from Britain, the handicraft industry responded to the stimulus of commercialisation by undergoing a process of adaptation and transformation which had a very different outcome sector wise.[38]

The second half of the 19th century witnessed a change in the socio-economic structure of North Malabar. The improved means of communication, especially the new railways and roads, greatly assisted the

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35 Sarada Raju, *Op.cit.*,p. 271.

36 A.R.Desai, *Op. cit*., p. 90.

37 Tirthankar Roy, *The Economic History of India, 1857-1947*, New Delhi, 2006, p. 12.

38 Claude Markovits, *Colonialism and Traditional Crafts*, in Economic and Political Weekly (EPW), November,4, p. 3939., book review of Tirthankar Roy's book '*Traditional Industry in the Economy of Colonial India.*

change in socio-economic fields and helped to carry the Indian raw materials and food stuffs to the ports, and the British-manufactured goods to every nook and corner of the country. Construction of railways and roads took a tremendous pace under the British. The roads that existed earlier were useful for travellers of foot and horses, but other vehicles could not be carried along.

It was under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan that networks of roads were constructed in Malabar. They undertook the tremendous task of knitting their vast kingdom by a network of roads. The whole of Malabar was connected with a chain of roads.

The speedy transmission of conveyance, quicker and easier arrangement of communication and safer means of travel and transport are indispensable for commercial and industrial development. Tipu's network of roads guaranteed political security, economic prosperity and commercial development.[39]

The Pazhassi Rebellion paved way for the construction of roads.[40] The motive of the British to build roads was more political than economic; they wanted to contain the riots, including those by peasants, which were potentially dangerous.

In 1861, Madras Railway was extended to Chaliyam and the first railway line in Malabar opened between Kadalundi and Kuttipuram. Railways provided limited opportunities for employment to the local people, even as making business transactions and travelling easier. The improved means of

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[39] C.K. Kareem, *Kerala under Haider Ali and Tipu sultan*, Cochin, 1973, p.159.

[40] C.A. Innes, *Madras District Gazetteers: Malabar, Vol.1*, Reprint, Madras, 1951, p. 269.

transport –visibly seen as a legacy of colonialism--had certain positive effects on India, like spreading ideas of nationalism, giving employment opportunities, lessening caste rules and superstitions, uniting India as a single geographical unit, strengthening internal and external trade.

But to a larger extent, it adversely affected our economy and promoted the exploitative policies of the coloniser. In Malabar, it affected the agricultural economy negatively. "Agricultural prices over different regions began to converge and Indian trade became linked to the world market. The latter process led to an improvement in agriculture's term of trade. But the impact of this improvement was in part wiped out by increased taxation, where indirect taxes tended to rise as the proportion of land revenue decline."[41]

By 1890, railways were carrying large proportion of hardy and cheap food grains to distant markets and producers were caught in credit pressures previously unknown.[42] Burton Stein states that railways did not hasten industrialisation in India. Apart from employment as unskilled labourers, India gained neither money nor experience in modern engineering from the building of locomotives and rolling stock, for these came from Britain and benefitted owners and workers there. Very few advanced technical skills were imparted since Indians held a mere 10% of superior posts in railways by 1921,

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41 Shireen Moosvi, *"The Indian Economic Experience(1600-1900):A quantitative study"* in K.N.Panikkar, et al.,(eds.),*The Making of Modern History,* Essays presented to Irfan Habib, New Delhi,2001,pp. 345-346.

42 Burton Stein, *History of India*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 260.

and only 700 locomotives were made in India over the century before independence.[43]

Much of the transport and communication systems was built mainly to facilitate the export industries of the colonies and while this was impatient in stimulating the development of exports, it left to the colonies with a system which was lopsided as that transport links which served to integrate the domestic economy were generally assigned a lower order of priority or simply ignored.[44]

The railways of India were a tool by which the British capitalism was strengthened by the colonial connections.[45] Railways became the typical example of how capital investments favoured the British economy. According to Karl Marx, Railway was useless to Hindus and the dividend paid for the railways, like the military and civilian expenses which involved remittances out of India, as all constituting part of the process of drain of wealth.[46]

The construction of railways stimulated the demand for rails, locomotives, railway cess and other products of the iron steel and machine industries in Britain.[47] The Indian railway acted as a great modernising instrument of colonialism and was planned and constructed to serve the

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43 *Ibid*., p. 259.

44 Michael Havinden and David Meredith, *Colonialism and Development, Britain and Tropical Colonies (1850-1960)*, London, 1993, p. 135.

45 *Ibid*., p. 248.

46 Aditya Mukherjee, *The Return of Colonial in Indian Economic History: The last phase of Colonialism in India*, Social Scientist, Vol.36, Nos. 3-4, March-April, 2008, p. 7.

47 Henry Magdoff, *Essays on Imperialism and Globalisation*, Kharagpur, 2002, p. 83.

strategic and economic need of metropolis.[48] For example, the English mill owners intended to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses the cotton and other raw materials for the manufacturers.

Certain international developments in this field also boosted this transition, such as the opening of Suez Canal in 1869, which stimulated British investment in India. This marked the beginning of deep penetration by the British into Kerala's plantation economy, including rural industries. It also marked the dawn of factory industries in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, the erstwhile administrative divisions of Kerala.

The new trends in trade and commerce had a vital and far reaching effect upon Indian agriculture, for it was no longer meant merely for the production of food for internal consumption; it was naturally made to sub serve the new commercial policy. A revolutionary change took place in Indian cultivation towards the last quarter of 19th century. Old objective of village agriculture, namely production for the use of the village, was replaced by that for market.

Under the new system, the peasant produced mainly for the market, which, with the steady improvement of means of transport and expanding operations of trading capital under the British rule, had become available to him. He did so with a view to realizing maximum cash, primarily to pay the land revenue to the state which was fixed fairly high and, in course of time, to meet the claim of moneylender in whose hands he progressively fell into due

[48] Sugata Bose & Iyesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture and Political Economy*, New Delhi, 2004, p. 83.

to numerous causes. This change is generally styled as the 'commercialisation of Indian agriculture'.[49] This also led to the practice of growing specialised crops by the peasants. The new facilities of transport and communication, coupled with changes in the method of marketing, made this transformation easy.

According to E.M.S. Namboodiripad, "The establishment of British rule on the one hand accelerated the creation of the national market and made the biggest transformation in the mode of production that is, it replaced the production of articles mainly for one's own use by production for the market.[50]Those were the years of Industrial Revolution and there was big demand for raw materials from the colonies. The agricultural pattern of Kerala had to satisfy the British capitalism that was growing at a tremendous pace.

Diversion of the village agricultural production from serving the personal needs of the peasant and village requirements to catering for the Indian and world market, not only led to commercialisation and specialisation of crops, but also disrupted the ancient unity of agriculture and industry in the traditional Indian villages. The growing social division of labour, the separation of crafts from agriculture and the town from the country side, created an objective basis for the expansion of the domestic market and for an intensification of India's foreign trade.

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[49] A.R.Desai, *Op.cit*., p. 43.

[50] E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *The National Question in Kerala,* , Bombay, 1952, p. 70.

Landlords and local merchants profited from the sales to British export firms and bought pressure on the peasants to grow them in their role as wage labourers, serfs, tenants, or indebted small holders. In Kerala, despite the expansion of the total cultivated areas, the production of export crops reduced the area available for subsistence farming.[51]

The growth and development of towns in India was one of the most important results of the deepening social division of labour, the separation of the crafts from agriculture and the expansion of commodity-money relations. The development of domestic and especially foreign trade exerted enormous influence on the growth of towns, transforming of villages in to large commercial and industrial centres.

The emergence and development of such towns were linked with the activities of English merchants. In Malabar, many urban centres and towns were developed during this period. Under colonial regime, places like Thalassery, Kannur, Vatakara and Kozhikode emerged as important urban centres.

Impact of Basel Mission

The Charter Act of 1813 passed by British Parliament permitted evangelical activities in India. With this, a new chapter began in the socio-economic history of North Malabar. In 1815, the Basel Mission was founded in Switzerland to train people in a mission seminary for employment by other

[51] Kathaleen Gough, *The Indian Peasant Uprising* in A.R. Desai (ed.), *The Peasant Struggles in India,* New Delhi,1979, p. 90.

agencies.[52] In the field of economic activities, they were the first to initiate industrial activities in Malabar. Industrial activities formed an integral part of the Mission's proselytization work and identified as core of the missionary activity. Through starting economic activities they intended to provide the rehabilitation of converts and to increase their social and economic status, and the propagation of Christian values through instilling industrial discipline.[53]

The Basel missionaries had placed all possible facilities in the way of the people of the presidency to enable them to engage in manufacturing, weaving or in becoming skilled in handicrafts, but their primary object was the uplifting of those who were cradled in ignorance and superstition and who were almost entirely without enlightenment in all matters pertaining to their social and moral welfare.[54] It was in October 1834 that the first three workers connected with the Basel Mission College in Switzerland landed at Kozhikode.[55] And it was about six years later that the first steps were taken in the organisation of industries.

The mission invested in a number of economic activities, which led to the establishment of modern industrial units in weaving and tile-making. These industries were the first capitalist industries established in the region and used the latest the then available technologies in Europe. The industrial establishment which the Basel Mission operated was a unique mode of missionary work in the 19th century.

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[52] The Malabar Church Council Centenary, *A Short History of the Basel Evangelical Mission*(Mal.*)*,1934, p. 2.

[53] Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and south Canara, 1834-1914*, New Delhi, 1990, p. 2.

[54] Somerset Playne, *Southern India: Its History, People, Commerce and Industrial resources*, London, 1914-1915, p. 154.

[55] The Malabar church council centenary, *Op.cit.*, p. 6.

The Basel Mission's earliest experiments were in the field of agriculture. But this did not succeed and they started experiments in certain traditional crafts like weaving and carpentry by engaging native craftsmen to train the converts. This experiment wasn't a great success, though. The social environment might not have supported the entry of new artisans in professions traditionally handled by certain castes.

During the period 1852-1882, they established factory-type production and started handloom weaving and tile factories at various centres, beginning with Mangalore. In 1852, a weaving factory was established at Kannur. The first Basel Mission tile factory in Malabar district was opened in 1874 at Kozhikode. During this period Malabar and South Canara were the only districts where tiles were made by machinery.[56]

From 1882 onwards, the expansion of industrial activities along the Malabar coast gathered momentum. A greater specialisation of labour was involved in the process introduced by the Basel Mission. The Basel Mission's entry into industrial activity resulted in not only technical up gradation of production process but in the specialisation of the labour process as well. The introduction of new techniques like fly shuttle, dyeing techniques, use of jacquard loom to weave intricate designs and pattern, use of power in certain operations like winding of thread etc helped the production process.

They introduced new products in the market. The Basel Mission industries catered to the highly competitive international market by achieving product specialisation and continuous technological improvements. The Basel

[56] The Fifth Tour of H.E. The Hon. Sir Arthur Lawley, Malabar, September 13th to 24th, 1907,Kozhikode Regional Archives.

Mission's entry into weaving industry was in the form of penetration of capital in to traditional industry, thereby transforming the technology and the organisation of the production.[57]

The Basel Mission industries established a marketing channel within the country and outside. The demand for the products of weaving industry mainly came from Europeans residing in India and from the emerging urban middle class who tended to imitate the Europeans in dress and manners. The market for the tile industry and weaving materials came mainly from the metro cities in the country as well as from the government, for organisations like the army, the railways and the post and telegraph. Their weaving factories were situated at Kannur, Chombala, Kozhikode and Codacal and those of tiles were at Kozhikode, Feroke, Codacal and Palakkad.

There are various causes behind the origin of industries in this region. One major cause is the existing caste rigidities during this period. Lower castes like *Thiyyas* and *Cherumas* experienced untouchability and other social evils. Education was also denied to them. By the end of the 19th century, the Basel Mission started a network of elementary and high schools and lower caste groups like *Thiyyas* were the first to join these institutions.

The impact of Basel Mission's missionary activities attracted *Thiyyas* towards the educational institutions of the Basel Mission. Many *Thiyyas* got education through the Basel Mission schools, because of which, they could take up employment and it helped their upward social mobility. Improved

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[57] Federick Sunil Kumar N.I., *The Basel Mission and Social Change: Malabar and South Canara, A Case Study 1830-1956*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Dept. of History, Calicut University, 2006, pp. 84-128.

social and economic position helped the backward communities rapidly advance in the social ladder. New areas of employment were thrown open for them. The *Thiyyas* of Malabar showed far more interest than any other community to receive Western education offered by the Basel Mission schools. Not surprisingly, by the end of the 19th century, several official posts became a sort of monopoly for the *Thiyya* community.

The colonial and missionary presence in North Malabar helped *Thiyyas* in improving their social status. Schools and factories started by the mission helped various castes like *Thiyyas* and *Cherumas* climb the social ladder and to seek an existence outside their caste-based occupations. Many gave up their traditional caste professions. New opportunities and employment provided by the mission. The Basel Mission's activities helped the transition of a caste-based society into a class-based society.

In Malabar, factory workers and labourers owe their origin to the Basel Mission industries.[58] The origin of the Basel Mission industries gave birth to industrial labourers and these labourers were the forerunners of those labourers who later led the historical class struggles in Malabar.[59] The Basel Mission industries introduced work discipline in their factories, where the strikes by workers were rare. Labourers in these factories were unorganised.

When the Basel Mission started weaving and tile factories, the labourers mainly came from backward communities. The Basel Mission took

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58 *Ibid.*

59 Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism & Communism in South India, Malabar, 1900-1948,* Cambridge, 1994, p.102.

advantage of that and converted many of their employees into Christianity.[60] Caste rigidity and consequent social ostracism and loss of traditional jobs for converts forced them to initiate economic activities. The weaving establishment was thus begun with the object of providing a living for converts, who the Basel Mission feared, might get disenchanted with Christianity; their allegiance to their newly-adopted religion was not beyond doubt.

Another view is that "in those days caste prejudices were strong in Hinduism and many lower castes desired to adopt Christianity. But these first converts became outcastes and lost all employment opportunities and wholly dependent on the missionaries. This prompted missionaries to devise ways and means to find employment for their first converts and thus the Basel Mission industries came in to existence." [61]

Besides, conversions in families, where *Marumakkathayam* (matrilineal form of inheritance) existed, conversion and consequent expulsion from joint families would have certainly resulted in the loss of even subsistence claim from the family resources. The social evils like untouchability prompted lower castes like *Thiyyas* and *Cherumas* to embrace Christianity, which offered them the freedom of movement. Though the large number of converts came from lower castes, *Nairs* were also among the converts.

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[60] R. Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charitram* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1979, p. 9.

[61] H. Hofmann, *The Basel Mission Industries*, Mangalore, 1913, p. 4.

After conversion, many of them lost or denied their traditional occupation of paddy labour which was controlled by *Janmies* (landlords). Thus to encourage prosylitization of Christianity they were forced to start new employment opportunities and social security to converts. Beside, missionaries found that many of the lower castes converts were condemned to the life of low social esteem even after adopting Christianity. So they wanted to create a condition for the converts to earn economic prosperity and through that social esteem. One of the best means that was available to them was commercial and industrial enterprises.[62]

As was pointed out earlier, with the growth of transportation system and the introduction of railway in the second half of the 19th century in Malabar, industrial activities had got a shot in the arm. In 1861, Madras Railway was extended to Chaliyam and the first railway line in Malabar opened between Kadalundi and Kuttipuram. Thus the transportation of materials became easy. Railways and roads brought in revolutionary changes in the field of agriculture and it made agricultural production marketable. The introduction of commercial agriculture helped to break the social and cultural stagnation, which was the main cause of economic isolation of traditional Indian villages.

Railways impacted in many areas. As elsewhere in India, in Malabar too it heralded a new era. It acted as an important instrument of modernisation. It played a significant role in unifying the Indian people socially. Railways and buses gave birth to the mass migration of people, from one part of the country to another.

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[62] Jaiprakash Raghaviah, *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

It also boosted the process of urbanisation in Malabar. It proved effective dissolvent of orthodox social habits regarding food, physical contact and others. It also helped to spread progressive social and scientific ideas among the people.[63]

It would not be wrong to say that railways, along with the Indian trading class, sections of landlords and rich intellectuals, made the birth of independent Indian industries possible.

[63] A.R. Desai, *Op.cit.*, p. 133.

CHAPTER II

WESTERN EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGES IN NORTH MALABAR

When the British decided to educate India, their goal was largely selfish; they wanted to strengthen their presence in the country they colonised. Education, however, benefited the colonised too, though it was primarily introduced to suit the interests of the coloniser.

The introduction of modern education in British India was mainly motivated by the political, administrative and economic needs of Britain in India. As Bipan Chandra points out, colonialism brought many changes and some of them were positive and these changes came within and as part of the colonial framework and became, therefore, part of the process of underdevelopment.[1] The introduction of Western education was one such activity.

The British realised that the best way to conquer (subjugate) a colony was through capturing the mind of the colonised through cultural invasion. Education was a cultural tool for colonial domination. Education becomes the means for the subjugation of the colonised and hence, every colonialist took care to educate the dominated people, in the image of the colonialists themselves.[2] The consolidation of colonial power reached its culmination with the introduction of Western science and technology. With the establishment

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1 Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, New Delhi, 2000, reprint, p. 79.

2 K.N. Ganesh, *Cultural Encounters under Colonialism: The Case of Education in Keralam* in K. N. Ganesh (ed.), *Culture and Modernity-Historical Explorations*, university of Calicut, 2004, p. 152.

of the new education system with its schools, colleges and universities colonial cultural invasion reached its zenith.

The newly developed institutions like Western education and evolving structures formed an interconnected and mutually reinforcing network which sub served and brought into being the colonial structure.[3] In British India, there were three main agencies through which the spread of modern education fulfilled. They were the foreign Christian missionaries, the British government and the progressive Indians.

There were many factors which promoted English education among native Indians. Missionaries used it as a tool to strengthen proselytization. They believed that their campaign to convert the Indians into Christianity was a 'civilizing mission'. They saw India as a place where caste rigidities, poverty, other social evils existed and they had the conviction that Europeans possessed superior scientific knowledge and value systems forced them to embark on a programme of civilising mission. So while imparting modern secular education, the educational institutions started by them also gave religious instruction in Christianity.[4]

The British government organised a huge administrative machinery to administer the conquered territory. A large number of educated individuals were required to administer India properly[5].

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3 Bipan Chandra, *Op. cit*., p. 79.

4 A.R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Mumbai, 1996, Reprint, p. 139.

5 *Ibid*., p. 140.

For expanding trade with India, as well as for the industries increasingly being established in India, Britain needed clerks, managers and agents who knew English.[6] Thus political, administrative and economic necessity prompted British government to start schools and colleges in Colonial India.

The Western-educated Indians served as clerks for the government and commercial offices, lawyers well-versed in colonial legal system, doctors trained in Western medical science, technicians and teachers. This colonial bureaucracy served as the backbone of administration in British India. They created a huge administrative machinery by recruiting thousands of natives as subordinate state employees, who played a supporting role, but without whom there could have been no colonial bureaucracy.

Another reason behind the introduction of Western education was the zest for spreading British culture and colonial ideology. Thus, the dissemination of colonial ideology and utility for administrative needs were the twin objectives of the educational policy of the British government.[7] We could see that colonialism began to create a market for the employment of English-educated Indians to fill the lower rungs of various administrative departments.

We could get a British perspective on introducing Western Education in India from a book published in 1866. It was written by John Bruce Norton, Advocate General and the Member of the Legislative Council, Presidency of

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6 *Ibid*.

7 K.N. Panikkar, *The Intellectual History of Colonial India: Some Historiographical and conceptual Questions'* in S. Bhattacharya, R. Thapar (eds.), *Situating Indian History*, Delhi, 186, pp. 403-33.

Madras. The book, *The Educational Speeches of the Hon'ble John Bruce Norton*, is just that: a compilation of the speeches the author made at the anniversaries of Patcheappah's Charities, the college established in Madras in 1842 (it is now known as Pachaiyappa's College).

Norton admits that there were some British men who did not want to educate India. Lord Broughton, President of the Board of Control of the East India Company, had proposed that it was not expedient to extend the education of the natives, because he reasoned that their extended intelligence was incompatible with the continuance of the English rule in the East.[8] Norton assures that such a proposition and its reason will find an echo in very few of the British bosoms. He argues that it is the duty of the British to educate the natives.

> "...we have accepted the rule, its power and its benefits; and we cannot shirk or refuse its duties and responsibilities. Now one of the paramount of our responsibilities, and most urgent of our duties, is to elevate the people from their degraded condition, whether that is such as we have made or found it. What the result may be is immaterial. The issue is in the hands of Providence: we have only to preserve in that which our consciences tell us is our duty. I believe that, if there is to be a severance of our union, we should so employ the interim, that when the time comes, we may part friends, with a sense of

[8] John Bruce Norton, *The Educational Speeches of John Bruce Norton*, Madras, 1866, p. 6.

benefactions conferred on your part,and of duty fulfilled on ours."[9]

Norton points out how the view of Lord Broughton was challenged in Britain: "Lord Glenelg (British Colonial Secretary) rested upon the noble stand of duty; and illustrated the impossibility of checking education in India...Mr. Halliday, the late Secretary to the Government of India, in his examination before the House of Commons' Committee, propounded true theory, that our true "Mission" in India is to teach the Natives to govern themselves. Let us then perform our mission; for honesty in public, as well as in private life, will ever be found the best policy."[10]

Norton also illustrates the benefit of education by referring to brilliant native students such as T. Madhava Rao (Madava Row), who studied at Patcheappah's and went on to become the *Diwan* of Travancore. He describes Rao as the most distinguished of all the alumni and compliments him on how he discharged his duties in Travancore, where he was initially invited by the Raja to superintend the education of the young Princes.[11]

As elsewhere in Colonial India, in Malabar too, the initiative to introduce Western education was collectively taken by foreign Christian missionaries, the British government and the progressive natives. The early decades of British occupation had not brought substantial changes in the traditional system of education in Malabar.

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9 *Ibid*., p. 7.

10 *Ibid*., p. 8.

11 *Ibid*., p. 60. Also see 'Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao K.C.S.I' in the *Indian Nation Builders, Part II(IIIrd ed.)* Ganesh and Co.,Madras, n.d.

The changes in economic structure under colonialism had, however, affected changes in social system in the first half of the 19th century. Here it is worthwhile to mention that the colonial educational machinery never attempted to bring all individuals into their system. Only a limited number of schools were run by the government directly. A major portion of their educational venture centred around providing grant in aids to schools founded by other agencies such as missionaries and other private individuals. They were not interested in mass education.

Western education that came later accelerated those changes and brought social mobility across different castes. It was Basel Mission, a German Missionary organisation that first started schools in Malabar. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the Charter Act of 1813 passed by the British parliament allowed missionary activities in India. In 1815, a German missionary organisation was formed at Basel in Switzerland. In 1839, Dr. Hermann Gundert, a Basel Missionary, founded an elementary school at Nettur near Thalassery.

Among the Basel missionaries, the contributions made by Dr. Gundert stood out. He was the first German Basel missionary who started his missionary work at Thalassery in 1839. He learnt Malayalam from Ooracheri *Gurukkalals*[12], one of the traditional *Thiyya* families of Chokli, near Thalassery.[13] He contributed greatly to the Malayalam language. He prepared a Malayalam Grammar Dictionary and was the first to publish printed

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12 Kunhikannan, Kunhikoran and Kunhichandu , Chandachan and Othenan were famously known as Ooracheri *Gurukkals*.They had a Sanskrit school at Kaviyur near Chokli in Thalassery.

13 K.K.N. Kurup, *The Basel Mission in Malabar: Its contribution to language and literature* in *Basel Mission Triple Jubilee Souvenir*, Cannanore, 1984.

Malayalam books on subjects such as History and Geography to teach in Basel Mission schools. Under the supervision of Gundert, Basel Mission started schools at places like Nettur, Thalassery.

When the Government constituted Education Department in Malabar, he was appointed as the first School Inspector.[14] Along with educational and literary activities, he also showed interest in proselytisation, and many natives belonging to *Thiyya* and other castes became Christians. Even among higher castes like *Brahmins* many adopted Christianity under the influence of missionary activities.

Under the supervision of Gundert's wife Julia Gundert, two orphanages, separately for girls and boys, were started at Illikkunnu near Thalassery. In 1849, Mr. and Mrs. Gundert moved to Chirakkal near Kannur; that year the orphanage for girls also moved to Chirakkal.[15] In 1843, Chirakkal *Thamburan* (Chirakkal ruler) granted a piece of land behind *Chaliya Theruvu* (street of Chaliya caste) to Basel Mission. There they built a house and a school.[16]

In 1841, Rev. Samuel Hebich, one of the three pioneering missionaries of Basel Mission in South-Western India (Johann Christoph Lehner and Christian Leonard Greiner are the others), started an English

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14 The Malabar Church Council Centenary , *A short history of the Basel Evangelical Mission*, 1934, p.19.

15 *Ibid*., p. 20.

16 *Ibid*., p. 51.

school at Barnasserry near Kannur. Ambu Gurunathan, a Thiyya who was popular among the natives, was appointed as a teacher at the school.[17]

Under Hebich, missionary activities gathered momentum and many people adopted Christianity. One such example was the conversion of Bappu, a *Thiyya* servant of Hebich, who later accepted the name Peter.[18] Basel Mission started a primary school at Kallayi near Kozhikode in 1848 and it was transferred to Kozhikode town in 1872. Another school was set up at Thalassery in 1856 -- the B.E.M. (Basel Evangelical Mission) School. It marked the beginning of English education in Malabar. Later, it came to be known as B.E.M.P. School (Basel Evangelical Mission Parsi),[19] after Kaikose Ruderasha, a Parsi philanthropist helped the development of the school by donating funds.

The Basel Mission started Anglo-vernacular schools at Kannur, Thalassery and Kozhikode. But they were all discontinued by the 1875. The main purpose of these schools was to bring Hindu youths desirous of a higher standard of education under the influence of gospel. In the latter half of the 19th century, the primary schools in these centres were raised to middle schools and subsequently as high schools. By the end of the century, the high

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17 P. S .Velayudhan, *Kerala Charitram: A Compilation of Kerala History, vol.I,* Cochin, 1973, p.120, also see K.K.N. Kurup, *Peasantry, Nationalism and Social change in India*, Allahabad, 1991, p.104.

18 The Malabar Church Council Centenary, *Op.cit.*, p. 56.

19 During the second half of the 19th century there were around 300 Parsi families in and around Thalassery, Kannur and Kozhikode. During the First World War, One among them (one wealthy Parsi) gave a big amount as donation to this school. Since then this school came to be known as BEMP school.

schools were upgraded to second grade colleges affiliated to the University of Madras[20].

Although the Mission took great pains to give secular education to Hindu youths, they never lost their chief aim – proselytisation -- and succeeded in it.[21] Secular education was seen as the best means for educating in Christian ways. The Missionaries were not only interested in educating the colonised, but also to educate then in their way. Among the pioneers of Basel Missionaries who founded schools in Malabar were Dr. Hermann Gundert, Samuel Hebich, J.M. Fritz, Christian Mueller, J. Strobel, J. Bosshard G. Wayner and W. Schmolch.

The Mission schools admitted students from all castes. But most of them were from backward castes and among the lower castes it was *Thiyya* caste which responded most eagerly to the Basil Mission educational work. A great majority of the students in the Mission schools were from *Thiyya* community and few of them had some traditional background in Sanskrit language.

Teachers also came from *Thiyya* caste. The Mission in fact sought the help from the local people in getting right persons as teachers in their schools.

In 1844, The British government announced that those who passed English education would get priority in government service. This created a general feeling that English education will ensure job in government

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20 C. A. Innes, *Malabar District Gazetteer,* Madras, 1951,edn, pp. 295-303.

21 Federick Sunil Kumar.N.I., *The Basel Mission and Social Change: Malabar and South Canara, A Case Study 1830-1956,*Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Dept. Of History, Calicut University, 2006, p.135.

service.[22] But those from the upper caste did not seem to be tempted by the announcement from the British.

The upper and middle class Hindu society desired English education, for the simple reason that English was the language of the rulers and therefore it would help them join and flourish in the government service. But in North Malabar, they were not too keen to consider government service as a source of their livelihood. Besides, they had a good background in regional language and education, and certain caste-related restrictions made them less interested in English education.

The untouchables and backward castes were financially not capable to get English education and they were not included in the traditional education system. Earlier, native vernacular schools existed in Malabar. They were known as *Ezhuthupally* or *Nattezhuthupally*. Students learned reading and writing from these institutions and after getting proficiency in language they studied literary works like *Kilippaatu*, *Thullal* and *Manipravalam*. There were no schools and books related to education and knowledge was transmitted orally.

On the other hand, in Thalassery and Kannur, *Thiyyas* had a strong background in Sanskrit and traditional education.[23] In the caste-based social hierarchy, *Thiyyas* were considered as *avarnas* but still they produced scholars, physicians (*vaidyan*) and even warriors. Even in some places in North Malabar, they were equal to *Nairs*, socially. C.H. Kunhappa remembers

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22 K. K. N Kurup, *Aadhunika Keralam-Charitra gaveshana prabandhangal* (Mal.),Trivandrum, 1982,p. 20.

23 *Ibid*., p. 21.

in his autobiography that at his birth place Peralassery in Kannur, no clear caste distinctions had existed and there were no major differences between *Thiyyas* and *Nairs*, in looks or occupations. The only visible difference was that *Thiyyas* did toddy tapping, *Nairs* didn't. But all *Thiyyas* were not engaged in toddy tapping. He further says that untouchables adorned many important positions in the society and there was no strict practice of untouchability. Many well known Ayurveda physicians were *avarnas*, such as Chirukandan Vaidyar, Koran Vaidyar and Kadachira Kannan Vaidyar.[24] *Thiyyas* were culturally advanced enough to get English education and they had no restrictions from their caste when it came to experimenting new things in the society.

From the days of the East India Company, *Thiyyas* had served as produce brokers, suppliers of provisions to the cantonments, and were monopolists of toddy and arrack distribution. So they had a rapport with foreign administration right from the inception of the foreign rule. They also served as butlers and engaged in conjugal relations with the British. An uncle of Murkot Ramunny[25] worked as a butler at the house of a senior employee of the East India Company.[26]

Thiyyas came forward to receive Western education. It is also interesting to know that the British administrative policies brought changes in the economy of Malabar and castes like *Thiyyas* got an opportunity to

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24 C.H.Kunhappa, *Smaranakal Matram*(Mal.), Thrissur, 2000, pp. 36-39.

25 Murkot Family in Thalassery was one of the dominant *Thiyya* families which made progress under colonial rule. Their family history provides a good illustration of the *Thiyya* social mobility. Murkot Ramunny(Sr) was in to Toddy business and he rose from toddy shop owner to the foremost toddy magnate of his time.

26 Murkot Kunhappa, *Murkot Kumaran*(Mal.), Kottayam, 1975, p. 29.

improve their economic condition through trade and accepted many small jobs under British.

They were engaged in trade at important European centres like Kannur, Thalassery, Kozhikode and Palakkad. From among *Thiyyas*, many came forward to become trade contractors and acquired trade monopoly with the company in groceries, toddy and vegetables, among others. Some of them worked as labourers under European owners, too. *Thiyyas* had no fear of losing their caste sanctity because they were *Avarnas* and they easily mingled with the Europeans without fear.

Thiyyas succeeded in engaging new commercial and economic relations. Some *Thiyya* women were also willing to live with European businessmen. Such associations too took *Thiyyas* closer towards English education.[27]

The Basel Mission schools also gave education to the children of the labourers who worked in their factories. The setting up of elementary schools under Basel Mission helped the spread of basic literacy. This enabled the Basel Mission industries to recruit a better, educated labour force. The schools admitted children regardless of caste or creed, and most regular students or scholars in each class were exempted from paying the school fees.

Murkot Kumaran was one such student who studied at the Tellicherry Mission School. He was a free scholar right up to the matriculation class and there were significant number of men who were similarly benefitted from the

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[27] K.K.N. Kurup, *Op.cit.*, p. 21.

scheme.[28] He went on to become one of the most prominent writers and social reformers of North Malabar. He was a Municipal Councillor of Thalassery for 18 years. He was a prolific writer of articles too. He edited several publications like *Mitavadi, Deepam, Sathyavadi, Bhashaposhini, Kerala Sanchari* and *Vidyalayam*.[29] He was also the biographer, as well as a great follower, of Sree Narayana Guru. According to poet Ulloor, Murkot's achievements as editor, critic, writer of fiction, journalist, poet, biographer and public speaker were enviable[30].

Basel Mission also encouraged female education. But it was a slow process, even among the *Thiyya* women.

In 1912, the institution of Basel Mission had given elementary teacher training to 18 Christian women. But there was no one from the non-Christian families.[31] We could presume that this have been due to the initial reluctance showed by traditional societies towards female education. In this context, it is worth to remember the efforts of Julia Gundert, who started a boarding school for girls at Chirakkal near Cannanore, where female manual-labourers were taught. This school was later moved to Chombala, near Vatakara.

By the end of the 19th century, Basel Mission started a network of elementary and high schools across the regions of Malabar where Mission's activities took place. The main centres of Mission's activities in Malabar were Kannur, Thalassery and Kozhikode. Since the government made a rule that all

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28 Murkot Kumaran, *Basel Mission Sangham*, Speech delivered on the celebration of 100th year of Basel Mission in India, Tellicherry, 1934, p. 23.

29 Swami Guruprasad (ed.), *Murkot Smaraka Grandham* (Mal.), Thalassery, 1942, p. 3.

30 *Mathrubhumi*, July 2, 1942, Kozhikode.

31 K.K.N. Kurup, *Op.cit*., p. 24.

the candidates who applied for government job should pass government school examination, those pupils who wanted a position in government offices left mission schools. As a result, the school at Kannur was closed down in 1861 and the Kozhikode school in 1863.[32] In the initial years, Basel Mission received support from the British government. With the outbreak of First World War, Basel Mission properties were handed over to the Commonwealth trust.[33]

With the spread of English education, the Malabar society witnessed many drastic changes towards the end of 19th century. Those who received Western education were impressed by the material and scientific progress achieved in the West and the rational spirit which guided its people.

As a result of Western education, lower classes could enter the State service for various jobs which had been denied to them earlier. Castes like *Thiyyas*, especially the wealthy among them, were quick to make use of the opportunity. A majority of those who passed matriculation were *Thiyyas* and were thus qualified to be inducted into Government services. That paved way for the emergence for the class of salaried people.[34]

The opening up of the State services to people who had been hitherto kept out was significant development. It enabled them to share power and prestige of position in the hierarchy. This process helped to instil a sense of equality among them.[35]

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32 Federick Sunil Kumar.N.I, *Op.cit*., p. 136
33 The Malabar Church Council Centenary, *Op.cit*., p. 190.
34 K.K.N. Kurup , *Op .cit.*, p. 23.
35 M.S.A. Rao, *Tradition, Rationality and change*, Bombay, 1972, p.135.

English education and the principles of equality of men brought into the minds of lower castes a new sense of personal importance and vitality. The spread of English education also hastened the breaking down of caste system. The missionaries as well as the British government did not follow untouchability rules; neither did they care for caste taboos of keeping a certain specified distance from the superior caste.

English education also had a positive impact on higher castes, who were also forced to go easy in their caste taboos. Disregarding all the restrictions imposed by caste, people became free to seek any job they liked. Another result of Western education was the strengthening of national consciousness among natives. It boosted national opinion and free exchange of ideas. It accelerated intellectual growth and cultural development. Englishmen like Mount Stuart Elphinston held the view that English education 'would make the Indian people gladly accept the British rule.' It was hoped that 'the enlightenment due to education would reconcile the people to British rule and even engender a sense of attachment to it. Education in English, according to Elphinston, was a political necessity.[36]

Western education also created a subordinate group of people who supported foreign rule and acted as loyal followers of Western imperialism. Some of them claimed to be the protagonists of nationalism and independence, but they wanted to enjoy the power and privilege they had under the British rule; they even brazenly showed loyalty to their foreign

[36] A.R.Desai,*Op.cit.*, p. 141.

rulers.[37] This declaration from K.U. Narain Nair, quoted by C. Gopalan Nair in a book he wrote in 1923, proves this point eloquently:

> "Who can deny that the British Government in India leaves much to be desired? It has many defects and short-comings, I make bold to challenge any honest man to lay his hand on heart and declare, calling God Almighty to witness, that we had, during historic times, any Government or a system of Government, which assured to the people anything approximating the security of life and property that we have enjoyed during the last century and a half, the general sense of personal freedom and liberty we now claim as our own, and the even-handed justice meted out to us."[38]

Under the British rule, wealthy *Thiyyas* in Thalassery didn't experience overt caste discrimination and they actually enjoyed some priviliges. Most of them were not even aware of the evil effects of colonialism.[39] Many *Thiyyas* in Thalassery and Kannur believed that the British rule made them economically and educationally progressive and that the Britishers were the sole supporters of downtrodden castes in India.

Prominent *Thiyya* leaders like Mukot Kumaran and Kottieth Krishnan preached against Congress and national movement. Many *Thiyya* youths were influenced by Murkot Kumaran's speeches. *Thiyyas* felt that it was their

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37 Interview with A.V.Sreenivasan at Thalasserry on 29.03.2013.

38 Diwan Bahadur C. Gopalan Nair, *The Moplah Rebellion, 1921*, Calicut, 1923, preface.

39 Interview with Prasanna Kesavan (83), at 'Murkot' in Thalassery on 23.12.2013. She is the Granddaughter of Murkot Kumaran.

responsibility to oppose Congress and to support the British rule in India. There were even allegations that Kumaran was an agent of British Government and that he received money from the British to spread hatred against non-cooperation. The Britishers tried to create a rift between communities through such methods. Another allegation was that Kumaran established his leadership through such means.[40]

The British became successful in recruiting and disciplining natives to administrative departments and these Government officials played the role of subordinates to strengthen the colonial bureaucracy. We could see that in each stage of development of colonialism in India, natives played a crucial role. For instance, in early years *Janmies* or landlords supported British rule to protect their interests. In return, British introduced land policies suited to the interests of *Janmies.* The main intention behind this act was to strengthen colonialism through such loyalists. The Britishers, we could find, gave more importance to collaborative mechanism than violent means in the establishment of imperial authority.

Colonialism is viewed as an alliance between imperial and local forces, an alliance which is dictated by the small number of 'the men on the spot' and the tendency by the imperial factor to economize its efforts which were nonetheless meagre. So, just as traditional chiefs and *Janmies* functioned as collaborators in earlier days, the second half of the 19th century and in the first

[40] Moyyarath Sankaran, *Ente Jeevithakatha*, Reprint, Kollam, 2006, pp. 79-80.

half of the 20th, the English-educated elite played the role of the collaborator.[41]

David Arnold describes indigenous participation in colonial bureaucracies as a species of 'collaboration'.[42] He borrowed the concept of Anil Seal, who says that "collaboration in its most palpable form was embodied in those Indians who were employed by the State".[43] According to Seal, the men who worked under foreign regime acted as subordinators did so for a variety of reasons. The wish to keep position of importance or the hope of gaining such a position, the intention of working for an attractive regime or the habit of working for any regime however unattractive encouraged people to opt job under British government.

Seal further says that all those groups could be classed as collaborators whose action fell in to the line with purposes of the British.[44] There was a multitude of Indians who held official positions under the central government and in the service of provincial governments. Many of the sub divisions, *talukas* and *tahsils* (the largest units inside a district), were administered by Indian officers who thus controlled another hierarchy of Indians down to the headman in charge of a village (the smallest unit inside a district).

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41 Bonaventure Swai, *Notes on the Colonial state with special reference to Malabar in the 18th and 19th Centuries* in *Social Scientist, Vol.6, Number 12, July, 1978*, p. 46.

42 David Arnold, *Bureaucratic Recruitment and Sub ordination in Colonial India: The Madras Constabulary, 1859-1947* in Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies, Vol.IV.*, New Delhi,1985,p. 2.

43 Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth century*, Cambridge, 1971, p. 9.

44 *Ibid*.

The British could look for collaboration of a more instructed sort from those men who were being educated in their schools and colleges. They required collaboration from a large body of native bureaucrats. According to Seal, education, which was a means to office, was a vital weapon in the effort either to conserve or to improve status; consequently much of the eagerness for the new learning which first gratified and then embarrassed the British, came from an Indian desire to surpass other Indians.

Receiving the new education was a method of defending an old primacy, or of challenging it.[45] As E.M.S. pointed out, the main aim of the Western education under colonial rule was not to increase the horizon of knowledge or to help to increase the knowledge of natives; it needed clerks and other lower officials to run their administration and strengthen their trading activities.[46] British administration required matriculation-passed clerks, B.A., B.L. passed clerks, M.B.B.S. doctors, the lower officers who passed I.C.S. and other Services examinations.

The British didn't show any interest in imparting education in science and technology. The public education system introduced by the British government gave importance to arts and literature and ignored education in science and technology. Another important outcome was the growth of middle class and native entrepreneurs in North Malabar.

According to K.N. Panikkar, colonial education with English as the medium of instruction drew upon the elements of alien culture and the

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45 *Ibid*., p. 11.

46 E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi*(Mal.), reprint, Thiruvananthapuram, 2009, p. 234.

historical experience of a different civilisation was primarily denationalising, as it alienated the members of the educated middle class from their cultural moorings and made them blindly imitate what others have done. He further says that this was not conducive to the cultivation of mind and hence was a stumbling block in the national progress.[47]

Saraswatheevijayam and Emancipation through English

However, according to social reformers and intellectuals who lived at the time, English as the medium of instruction was a tool of emancipation, especially for those who were oppressed. In this context, it would be worthwhile to discuss a novel written in 1892, *Saraswatheevijayam*, the main theme of which is how English education helps an oppressed individual succeed in life and overcome obstacles posed by the prevailing customs and superstitions, dictated by the privileged and the upper caste.

A work of art reflects the time it was created. As we go through *Saraswatheevijayam*, we could see vivid reflections of India during the last phase of colonialism. It was, to boot, written by a social reformer, Potheri Kunhambu (1857-1919), who was never given his due by history.

Saraswatheevijayam is one of the earliest novels written in Malayalam and it may pale, artistically, in comparison with O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha*, published in 1889 and widely regarded as the first Malayalam novel meeting all the required characteristics of the format. The origin of Malayalam novel itself owes to the English language. Not only did

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[47] K.N. Panikkar, *Culture and Ideology-Contradictions* in *Intellectual Transformation of Colonial society in India in Economic and Political Weekly(EPW)*, December, 5, 1987, p. 2119.

Malayalam borrow the method of telling a story from English, but even the term 'novel'.[48] All the first three major novelists in Malayalam, Appu Nedungadi (*Kundalata,* 1887), Chandu Menon (*Indulekha*, 1889) and C. V. Raman Pillai (*Marthanda Varma*, 1891) were English-educated. R. Easwara Pillai in his book *Chintha Santhanam (Part III)* wrote in detail about how Malayalam became a richer language by associating with English. At a time when there was criticism for the English education in India, he proved how Malayalam gained, rather than lost, like the coinage of new words.[49]

The Kannur-based Kunhambu may have lacked the literary skills of Chandu Menon, who belonged to the neighbouring Thalassery, but the objective of *Saraswatheevijayam* was not primarily literary.

Kunhambu was a social reformer first. He was deeply disturbed by the way *Pulayas* and other downtrodden castes were treated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A lawyer by profession, he worked tirelessly for their progress and started a school, at Pathiriparambu, near Kannur, for them too. Because of his concerns for *Pulayas*, he was even ridiculed by people, who called him 'Pulayan Kunhambu'. Chances are, he might have considered that an honour, rather than feeling offended.

He explains clearly why he wrote *Saraswatheevijayam.* "I decided to write this novel because of the depressing state the *Pulayas* in the land of Malayalam," he wrote in his preface to the novel on January 1, 1892.[50] "Having read in some English newspapers about *Parayas* in Madras and other

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48 K.M. George, *Western Influence on Malayalam Language and Literature*, Thrissur, 1972, p. 89.

49 R. Easwara Pillai, *Chintha Santhanam (Part III)*, Thrissur, 1927, p. 98.

50 Potheri Kunhambu, *Saraswatheevijayam*, Reprint, Kottayam, 2004, p. 26.

places, I realised how bad the condition of *Pulayas* here is...If anyone reading this tale becomes sympathetic towards them and do something to improve their plight, I would consider my effort worthwhile."

Kunhambu believed that only education would offer them any hope of salvation, as the higher castes had not regarded them even as human being. It was said that one's eyes had to be washed at the sight of a *Pulaya*.

The very name of the novel *Saraswatheevijayam* refers to the importance of education. Its literal meaning is 'victory of Saraswathy' (the Hindu goddess of learning). And the opening line of the preface is a quotation, *Vidyadhanam Sarvadhanal Pradhanam* (Education is the most important of all wealths).

A recipient of English education himself, Kunhambu knew very well how much one could benefit from it. He rightly believed that English education would be a great leveller for the underprivileged.

The lower castes, especially belonging to *Pulaya* and other castes were subjected to atrocities of all kinds during Kunhambu's time. His novel vividly describes some of them.

Saraswatheevijayam is essentially the story of a cruel, rich Brahmin, Kuberan Namboothiri, who swore by *Manusmriti*, which he interpreted to suit his actions, nearly all of them evil. One day, during a journey, he happens to hear someone singing sweetly and sends his trusted lieutenant Raman Kutty Nambiar to find out who it was. Nambiar is shocked to see a young *Pulaya,* Marathan singing, that too in tune and with perfect diction (something he

cannot do). To make things worse, Marathan is a slave belonging to Kuberan, so he needs to be punished for this gross insolence.

He kicks Marathan hard and the unfortunate young man falls unconscious. Later, a dead body is found, suspected to be that of the poor *Pulaya* youth. The two perpetrators of the crime panic and when they fail to bribe their way out of the mess, they flee. After some 15 years though, they are finally caught and are produced in front of a judge named Yesudasan, who turns out to be Marathan.

The young Pulaya, now we know, was not dead, but had left the village, received English education thanks to Basel Mission, became a judge and converted into Christianity. He had also married the granddaughter of Kuberan, Saraswathy. Her mother, Subhadra, was excommunicated after *Smarthavicharam*, necessitated by a false charge of adultery.

All is well at the end as nobody was killed and therefore nobody is guilty. And Kunhambu proves his point that English education and conversion to Christianity would help the lower castes overcome their handicap of birth and attain emancipation.

CHAPTER III

CHANGING FACE OF ECONOMY AND RISE OF MIDDLE CLASS IN NORTH MALABAR

Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, written in 1747, contains the first ever recipe of curry in the English language. In the piece titled 'To make a curry the Indian way', she shows how to spice up chicken. Pepper is, of course, a main ingredient.[1] Britain's fascination with pepper had begun long before that though, from the time the ships of the East India Company first sailed to the subcontinent in late 16th century, in fact.

Under the colonial rule, pepper and other cash crops went on to grow in stature, at the expense of more traditional, subsistence food crops. Colonial policies actually strengthened the process of commercialisation of agriculture.

Peasants, who needed to pay revenue in cash, were forced to produce commercial crops in place of subsistence food crops. Towards the last quarter of 19th century, the commercialisation of agriculture got momentum due to various factors. The agriculturist now produced for the Indian and the world market. With the British economic penetration, and the advent of railways and the increasing sea trade at the beginning of the 20th century, North Malabar got intimately connected with the world market.

The cash crops of the region enjoyed growing demand from outside, as a result of which their price level maintained an upward trend. The

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1 Hannah Glasse, *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy*, England, 1774, p. 100.

commercialisation made the agriculturist competitive, dependent for sale of his product on the middleman and merchants. In North Malabar, this period witnessed a growth in internal and external trade. This period saw a steady decline in paddy cultivation. There was a commercialisation of agriculture and a growing international demand; small cultivators were willing participants and they profited too.

It was an eagerness to cultivate pepper and coconut for an export market, and the shift away from subsistence cultivation, which highlighted the latent flaw in the nature of the agrarian economy. Malabar did not produce sufficient paddy to feed itself. Thus, instead of a tale of consistent poverty within a subsistence economy, we have the picture of fragile affluence created by a cash crop economy.[2]

During the early years of 20th century, pepper was grown on large scale in North Malabar and both large landowning *tharavadus* as well as pioneering cultivators were at the forefront of the expansion of the cultivation into the forests of the eastern region. Paddy was produced in both the eastern and western regions of North Malabar. In the western regions, coconut was the main crop and it was exported, along with pepper, from the port towns of Thalassery, Kannur and Vatakara. Merchants, mainly *Mappila* Muslims, were responsible for the import of rice to these ports to feed the region.

Towns along the coast were also the source of casual employment and work in the factories, and credit for petty trade as well as larger ventures.[3] The

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2 Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India, Malabar, 1900-1948*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 22.

3 *Ibid*., p.10.

boom in world prices for pepper in 1920's underlay the prosperity of the few, large *tharavadus* with plantations and of small entrepreneurial cultivators. However, the profit from pepper export relied on two factors. Firstly, Malabar was a secondary supplier to the world market and prices were determined, in the last instance, by the availability or failure of crops from the plantations in South-East Asia. Secondly, Malabar could not avail itself of the economies of scale that these plantations possessed since cultivation was largely in the hands of small cultivators. While this allowed flexible responses to fluctuations in world demand, in the long run, Malabar pepper was relegated to the sidelines.

The soaring prices of pepper resulted in deforestation and expansion of cultivation in the first two decades of 20th century. New clearings were opened up in the forest hillocks of Chirakkal and Kottayam. Landlords made large sums of money yearly by leasing out areas from the un-surveyed parts of their forests for cultivation. The fluctuations in pepper price and export continued till the Great Depression.

Pepper vines, once planted, would bear fruit only in three to four years. This made cultivation a risky business as there was no guarantee of a steady demand over such a long period. In 1914, at the beginning of First World War, there had been an artificial spurt in demand due to the activities of the speculators, but through the war there was a steady decrease in exports. The period between 1925 and 1929 again saw a rise in the exports of pepper as a result of a failure of crops in the East Indies. Until the Depression, the price of the pepper was determined by the pressure of demand from European markets

and the fluctuations in supply from the Malay Peninsula and the Straits settlements.

From the early thirties, the effects of Depression combined with increasing competition from plantations in Southeast Asia led to a steady decline in demand from Europe. So, from 1930 onwards pepper lost its importance in export trade and the small cultivators who had spearheaded the pepper boom were forced to shift to the cultivation of subsistence crops.

Coconut was another main cash crop which received a boost in the first decades of 20th century. The commercialisation of agriculture led to the development of agro-processing industries like toddy-tapping, copra making, oil processing and coir processing. Compared to the Travancore region, in North Malabar these industries were not turned into big industrial enterprises. But still, castes like *Thiyyas* gained benefit from the boom in coir and coconut products.[4] The western coast of North Malabar was most suitable for cultivation due to its sandy soils. As a fully grown coconut plant required less care, the individual cultivators engaged in other related occupations in their free, like toddy tapping, making coir, and manufacturing oil from copra.

Thiyyas, *Mappilas* and *Vettuvans* along the coast were engaged in making coir ropes and mats for the market, and some banks were willing to lend money on the mortgage of coir yarn.[5] The port towns of Kannur, Thalassery and Vatakara handled both the exports of coconut as well as the

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4 Control over the production and distribution of toddy became a lucrative source of accumulation of wealth for *Thiyya* families like the Murkot family of Thalasserry. Murkot Ramunny (Sr) was one of the biggest toddy contactors in Chirakkal taluk in 19th century.

5 D. Narayana Rao, *Report on the survey of cottage industries in the Madras presidency,* Madras, 1929, pp.133-6.

vital imports of paddy which fed the region. Mappila merchants, petty traders, and moneylenders clustered along the coast and constituted a significant proportion of the population of these towns. In 1921, the Mappilas constituted 42% of population in Kannur, 38% in Thalassery and 50% in Vatakara.[6]

The first two decades of the 20th century saw a boom in coconut cultivation and Malabar became the leader in world market in copra trade. The prices of coconut reached their peak in 1928. By the middle of 1930s though, coconut trade declined. Like in the case of pepper trade, small cultivators were unable to face the competition from planters in South East Asia and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The rise of large scale plantations in the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines and Ceylon and the subsequent import from these countries also caused a decline in export.

The only relief for coconut farmers during this time was the domestic market. Due to the increase in the import tariff during the First World War, the oil mills in Mumbai and Karachi drew the surplus copra from Malabar.[7] After Depression, pepper lost its importance and manufactured goods began to play a role in internal and external trade.

The period after the First World War witnessed the initiation of a rapid phase of import substitution in most of the major consumer goods industries and certain intermediate and capital goods industries like textiles, sugar, matches, soap, cement, paper, glass, sulphuric acid and other basic chemicals, magnesium chloride, tinplate and iron and steel. Indigenous producers, who

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6 Census of India 1921, XIII, Madras, Table 4 and 5.

7 Review of Seaborne Trade Of the Madras Presidency (RSTMP),1914-15,18; RSTMP, 1917-18,16

were earlier producing for export, moved towards the home market; the cotton industry is one good example.

International trade began to decline after the First World War. At the same time, the internal trade began to grow. Some viewed it as the period of de-colonisation. But scholars like Aditya Mukherjee rejected the idea of de-colonisation. According to him, instead of de-colonisation, what this period witnessed was not only the continuation of colonial exploitation (though in an altered form) but its blatant intensification in many respects at great cost to the Indian economy and its people.[8]

After the First World War, areas where traditional foreign capital dominated (colonial capital investments, like plantations, jute and foreign trade) underwent a relative stagnation. The colonial interest was not so powerful in terms of expansion of plantations in Malabar. In Malabar district, which was directly under the British control, the plantations developed at a lower rate, compared to Travancore, which was under native rule.

Before discussing the penetration of colonial capital and the nature of colonial economy in the last phase of colonialism in North Malabar, it is necessary to understand the nature of the colonial State and how colonialism brought underdevelopment or arrested growth in the colonies. During colonialism, all changes -- social, economic and cultural -- occurred in North Malabar. There are various opinions regarding the impact of colonialism on

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[8] Aditya Mukherjee, *The Return of the Colonial in Indian Economic History: The Last Phase of Colonialism in India*, in *Social Scientist, Vol. 36, No. 3 & 4, March-April*, 2008, p. 19.

the colony. In fact, the 19th century saw a rich debate on the impact of colonialism on the colony.

There is a series of literature dealing with the nature of colonialism its features, and in this context it is not necessary to go into such details. It is generally accepted that colonialism created under-development in the colonies and development in the 'metropolis' (the coloniser's country is referred to as 'metropolis').

Primarily, economic exploitation was the main objective of the coloniser. India was seen a source of primary accumulation of capital and as a market for the industries of the colonizing power. To fulfil this mission, they adopted various methods. In the early years of Imperialism, India witnessed a growth in trade and commercial activities. Flourishing trade occurred between the Malabar coast and foreign countries.[9] In India, a classic colony, the penetration of capitalism went through three main stages.

In the first stage, they acquired monopoly over trade and made direct revenue appropriation. It was the era of merchant capitalism and putting-out system. During this period, they used colonial power to extract surplus and whenever craftsmen or other producers were employed on account of the colonial state, corporation or merchants, their surplus was directly seized.[10] In this early stage the producer gradually lost control over his production.

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9 For details see, William Logan, *Malabar, Vol.II*,Reprint, Madras,1951, C.A. Innes, *Madras district Gazatteer: Malabar* , Reprint ,Madras, 1951. Margret Frenz, *From Contact to Conquest: Transition to British Rule in Malabar(1790-1805)*,New Delhi, 2003.

10 Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 63.

The next stage was exploitation through trade (age of commercial capitalism). The spread of industrialisation in Europe in the second half of 19th century ushered in a new stage of colonialism in India. During the period of Industrial Revolution in England, India served as a market for their finished products and thus, de-industrialisation occurred in India.

The third stage was the period of foreign investments and competition for colonies. Politically and administratively, the third stage of colonialism meant renewed and more intensive control over the colony. During this stage, colonial administration furthered its reach over every port, town and village so that they could extract maximum. The administration also became more bureaucratic, detailed and efficient. They showed little interest in the industrialisation of the colony.

Limited foreign capital was invested in only those agricultural or industrial enterprises whose products had a ready market outside the colony or in providing infrastructure for such exports. The colonial market was of little use to the foreign capitalists, for it had already been captured, squeezed to the maximum, and wrecked. The period saw the efforts of the coloniser to transform the colony's economy, society and culture but generated paltry results.

Gradually there developed a tendency to abandon social and cultural modernisation and colonisers increasingly assumed a neutral stance on social and cultural question and then began to support social and cultural reaction in the name of preserving indigenous institutions.[11] It was the era of Industrial

[11] *Ibid*., pp. 69-70.

capitalism in Europe. Marx clearly saw the unrequited transfer of capital from the colony to the metropolis in various forms (drain of wealth) ruinous to the colony but critical to the process of primitive accumulation and therefore to the transition to and growth of industrial capitalism in the metropolitan countries.[12] To quote Bipan Chandra, 'colonialism is structured from the moment of contact between the capitalist metropolis and the colony, whose economy and society are subordinated to the metropolis from the beginning, though the pattern of subordination undergoes changes over time. Consequently, colonialism has led to underdevelopment from the beginning.[13]

Chandra challenges not only the traditional capitalist-colonial view but the traditional Marxist view as well. The traditional capitalist-colonial view sees colonialism as an effort at modernisation, which did not fully succeed in some cases, as for example in India, because of the weight of the past backwardness, leading to a dual society, part modern and part traditional.[14] On the other hand, the traditional Marxist view is that colonialism went through two stages, one positive and the other negative.[15] Here it would be useful to mention Karl Marx's view on British colonialism in India.

Marx raised some key issues concerning the impact of colonialism on India. He emphasised on the 'destructive' and the 'regenerative' role of colonialism. He saw in the very process of destruction by colonialism of the pre colonial Indian society, the regenerative role of colonialism, as it opened up the possibility of growth of capitalism and industrialisation in the colony.

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12 Aditya Mukherjee,*Op.cit*.,p. 6.
13 Bipan Chandra, *Op.cit*., p. 61.
14 *Ibid*., p. 58.
15 *Ibid*., p. 61.

He characterized Indian society as a 'changeless Asiatic society' which needed to be destroyed. He further expected that new elements introduced by the British rule, such as electric telegraph, railways, steam navigation, private property in land, Western education, free press, and political unification would create conditions for the evolution of a modern Western type of society. In short, England had to fulfil a double mission in India -- 'destructive' and 'regenerative' -- that is, annihilation of the old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of a Western society in India.[16]

Marx was of the opinion that certain `new elements' were introduced to Indian society which would enable it to move on the path of social progress. At the same time, he was anticipating the need for the overthrow of colonialism if India was to actually reap the benefits of the 'new elements' that the British colonialism was to engender. As he put it, "the Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the new ruling class shall have been supplanted by the Industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether."

He suggested that the British rule would "neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people."[17] During the first half of the 19th century, modern Indian intelligentsia had a perspective similar to Marx and regarded that colonialism opened up route to capitalist modernisation but very soon they changed their attitude and began to see

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16 Aditya Mukherjee., *Op. cit*., p. 4.
17 *Ibid*., p. 5.

colonialism as a major obstacle to the transition to capitalism in India.[18] Regarding the nature of the colonial legacy, nationalist writers had unanimously a similar view. Colonialism ruined our economic structure and social institutions. It destroyed India completely in every aspect -- politically, culturally and economically.

According to Mukherjee, the 'new elements' that emerged as a result of colonialism failed to create a regenerative effect on colony (as Marx emphasised). Chandra says that colonialism did not lead to capitalist modernisation. According to him, colonialism brought in certain new elements to the society and some of them were positives, like railway and Western education for instance, but these changes came within and as part of the colonial framework and became, therefore, part of the process of underdevelopment.[19] To him, colonialism is best seen as a totality or a unified structure. The newly developed institutions and evolving structures formed an interconnected and mutually reinforcing network which sub served and brought in to being the colonial structure.[20]

The early colonial policies and institutions played a crucial role in further penetration of colonialism in Kerala. These factors mainly worked towards transforming Malabar's economy according to colonial interests. The incorporation of Malabar into the world economy under colonialism brought about significant economic changes over time. In Malabar, we could see that the British established supremacy over the regions which were commercially and militarily had strategic importance.

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18 *Ibid*., p. 4.
19 Bipan Chandra, *Op. cit*., p.79.
20 *Ibid*., p. 80.

In the case of Malabar, Britain showed less interest in making big capitalist investments (in Travancore, the situation was different). We could see that North Malabar under British rule suffered the absence of large-scale foreign industries and even the limited foreign capital was invested in only those agricultural and industrial enterprises whose products had a ready market outside the colony, or invested in providing infrastructure for such exports. Exception to this was the Basel Mission industries, which was started by a missionary organisation. The agro-processing industries did not develop in North Malabar during this period. The coir industry is a good example.

The expansion of commercial agriculture and the rise in demand for its processed and semi-processed products necessitated the growth of agro-processing industries in Travancore region. But in Malabar, the base of industrialisation remained, till 1930's, in the hosiery, brick and tile factories originally set up by the Basel Mission.[21]

Among the modern Indian industries, the earliest to be developed were the plantation industries like tea, coffee, indigo, rubber, cinchona and jute. Merchant capitalism gave place to colonial mode of production (economy) or transforming into a colonial economic structure and foreign money began to be invested in Indian industries. Thus, through the colonial mode of production, the colonisers continued their economic exploitation and capital was drained out of the colonies in the form of consumption goods and raw materials.

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[21] Michael Tharakan, *Development of Colonial Economy in Kerala(1500-1947)* in P.J. Cherian (ed.), *Perspectives on Kerala History* ,Trivandrum, 1999, p. 392.

At the end of the 19th century, British capital began to enter Malabar and these colonial investments first opened up plantations and later spread to other manufacturing industries. The plantation industries were organised in a similar fashion as the large-scale factory industries, although they controlled the actual cultivation of crops as well as the preparation of the produce for the market. Most of the plantations were set up by Europeans on a large scale, with European capital, in areas sparsely populated previously. The labour supply, as a rule, was obtained from a considerable distance, and the same workers took part at different times in both agricultural and industrial processes.

The major sources of labour for the plantations of South India during the early years of plantation were the emancipated slaves, dispossessed tenants and tribes, migrants from villages hit by famine and other natural calamities and attached labourers often released by the land lords during the 'off-season' in the plains.[22] There were many factors which attracted labour towards plantation industry.

The colonial administration hastened the decline of the peasantry. The increase in land revenue, changes in the mode of payment of tax to the advantage of larger farmers and the failure to make paddy cultivation profitable compelled peasants to seek employment on the plantations. The plantation economy opened up new possibilities of work and mobility, which were unavailable to untouchables within existing local agrarian relations. Development of plantations itself resulted in large scale eviction of tribals

[22] Ravi Raman, *Labour under Imperial Hegemony: The case of tea plantations in South India, 1914-1946*, in S.Bhattacharya, (ed.), *South Indian Economy* ,New Delhi, 1999, p. 246.

from forest land; forests were cleared for the spread of plantation. These tribals also contributed to the labour force in the plantation industry.

Forcibly uprooted from their indigenous base, many of the tribes were forced to make themselves available for naked exploitation. The direct purchase of the forest land in many regions in Kerala and administrative restrictions forced many hill tribes to seek employment in the plantations. The dispossession of tribals from their pastures and land provided both land and labour to the planter capitalists.[23]

Another source of labour supply was the villages affected by famine and natural calamities. Each plantation thus forms a productive unit employing a large band of labourers, under capitalistic management, like a factory or a mining concern. Both cultivation and preparation of the products for the market are usually carried out scientifically, the factories being well equipped with plant and machinery.[24] Rise in prices, growth in transport facilities, increase in credit facilities gave additional impetus to the opening of plantations, which had already begun towards the end of the 19th century.

The British were the initial investors in plantations. The plantations were one of the first organised industries to be introduced in Kerala. The first plantation in North Malabar was started by Europeans in 1798.[25] This spice plantation at Anjarakkandy in North Malabar was the first major investment

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[23] *Ibid*., p. 247.

[24] M. Arokiaswami and T. M. Royappa, *The Modern Economic History Of India,* Madras, 1957, p.147.

[25] a) T. C. Varghese, *Agrarian change and Economic Consequences: Land tenures in Kerala, 1850-1960,* Calcutta, 1970, p.42.

b) Francis Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the countries of Mysore, Malabar and Canara, vol.II*, London,1807, p. 186.

of the East India Company in south India and the first of its kind in India.[26] The investment was made in response to the initiative taken by a European merchant, Murdoch Brown.

The plantation labourers at Anjarakkandy were mainly from backward castes. (In 'Saraswatheevijayam', a 19th century Malayalam novel written by Potheri Kunjambu describing the contemporary social condition, a central character, a Pualaya, Marathan, was a plantation labourer at Anjarakkandy). Many converted Christians were also offered work in these plantations. The complex land-ownership pattern and the not-so-encouraging prospect of obtaining cheap labour did not favour the expansion of plantations.[27]

Malabar lagged behind in the development of non-agricultural enterprise mainly due to its land-tenure structure under colonialism.[28] Only exception to this was the Basel Mission industries started by Basel Mission, a German Missionary organization, and it was the only European agency interested in the industrial development of Malabar region. The tile and textile factories started by Basel Mission were regarded as the forerunners of other industrial establishments in this region. These were the first capitalist industries established in this region. Primarily these industries were started by Basel Mission to provide employment to their first converts.[29]

These early industrial establishments had a strong impact on North Malabar's society. Changes in the political, administrative, educational and

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26 *Ibid*.

27 K.P. Kannan, *Of Rural Proletarian Struggles-Mobilization and Organization of Rural Workers in South-West India*, Oxford, 1988, p. 51.

28 T.C. Varghese, *Op. cit*., p.115.

29 H. Hofmann, *The Basel Mission Industries*, Mangalore, 1913, p. 4.

economic fields introduced by the British provided the climate and circumstances for the growth of native entrepreneurs.

Many socio-economic, political and cultural changes began to appear in Malabar. With the initiative given by the Basel Missionaries, the last decades of the 19th century witnessed the growth of native entrepreneurs.

Emergence of Middle Class

It is interesting to trace the factors which led to the emergence of new social class named 'native entrepreneurs' in colonial India. The 'middle class' is a term first deployed in the context of European History. It didn't comprise elements of just the industrial bourgeoisie, but it included fellow travellers who supported the changes that came with modernity and capitalism such as writers, novelists and intellectuals.

In British India, the rulers were reluctant to concede the presence of middle class and Viceroy Dufferin chose to call them as 'microscopic minority'. In 1893, Aurobindo Ghosh, an emerging radical in the Congress, expressed the view that the 'new middleclass', a group of journalists, barristers, doctors, officials, graduates and traders, did not represent the people of India.

Western education played an important role in the birth of middle class in India. The rise of middle class in India is generally traced to the middle decades of the 19th century, when Macaulay's programme outlined in his famous 'Minute on Indian Education' of creating a class of persons, Indian in

blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.[30] The core of nationalist economic doctrine was a neo-mercantilist theory of imperialist exploitation based on the concept of 'drain of wealth.' In this formulation, the scarcity of capital caused by this drain was seen as the major obstacle to the economic development of India.

Economic regeneration of the country required the emergence of a strong and enterprising indigenous capitalist class, and existing Indian capitalists were found wanting.[31] Radical changes accompanied the advent of the British in India. In the absence of an adequate political and economic system, they transplanted into India their own form and principles of government and economic organization which they modified only to suit local conditions.[32]

Regarding the origin of Indian middle class, there are varying opinions among scholars. With the onset of colonialism, English assumed the status of the official language of the State, relegating Indian languages to a subaltern status. Westernising changes were effected in the content of the educational curriculum and the idiom of public discourse. Scholars like B.B. Misra, K.N. Raj and Burton Stein put forward different theories regarding its origin.

The first academic author to deal in a systematic way with the question of the Indian middle class was B.B. Misra. He equated the rise and growth of the middle class in India with a phenomenon of modernisation induced by

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30 Quoted from Claude Markovits, *Merchants, Traders and Entrepreneurs-Indian Business in the Colonial era*, New Delhi, 2008, p.168.

31 *Ibid*., p.12.

32 B.B. Misra, '*Middle class of colonial India- A product of British benevolence*" in Sanjay Joshy (ed.)', *Middle Class in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 2010, p. 40.

colonialism and the impact of the West.[33] He also emphasised the economic character of the middle class. He included primarily merchants, proprietors of modern trading firms, salaried executives, civil servants and others.[34]

Scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Tanika Sarkar and Dipesh Chakrabarty shared a similar perspective on Middle class in India. The middle class as per this perspective was an educated elite which was situated between the colonial rulers and the large majority of illiterate/semi-literate rural masses of the Indian society.[35]

According to Claude Markovits, there are two dominant narratives -- the 'Macaulayan' and the 'Kaleckian'.[36] The 'Macaulayan' narrative puts at the centre of the stage those who were English-educated and directly linked the Indian middle class to the modernisation theory.[37] K.N. Raj and Burton Stein were influenced by Michal Kalecki's[38] article on 'intermediate regimes' and put forward a different perspective on the origin of middle class in India, which Claude Markovits termed as 'Kaleckian' narrative.

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[33] B. B. Misra, *The Indian Middle class: Their growth in modern times*, Bombay, 1961, p. 69.

[34] B. B. Misra, *Op.cit*., pp. 36-46.

[35] For details see, Sanjay Joshi (ed.) *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 2010.

[36] For details see,

a) Claude Markovits, *Op.cit*., pp. 168-171.
b) B.B. Misra, *Op.cit*.
c) K.N. Raj, *The politics and economics of "Intermediate Regimes", EPW, VIII*: 27 (July, 1973) pp. 1189-98.
d) B. Stein, *Towards an Indian petty bourgeoisie: Outline of an approach, EPW XX/VI:4*(January 1991) pp. 9-20.

[37] Claude Markovits, *Op. cit*., p. 170.

[38] Michal Kalecki is a famous polish economist who had written an article 'Social and Economic aspects of "intermediate regimes" in *Selected Essays on the Economic growth of the socialist and Mixed economy*, Cambridge, 1972.

Markovits says that the earlier narratives to locate middleclass in India give little detailed attention to the historical process of formation of a class of merchants and entrepreneurs.[39] He identifies one middle class group as having played a significant role in the modernisation of the colonial economy and in the commercialisation of agriculture. He sets that group apart from the educated middle class. Interaction between the two groups was quite limited, with the educated group being more receptive to Western influences, while the mercantile group retained it connection with the traditional Indian ethos and orientation to a large extent.[40]

He tried to present an alternative narrative -- a narrative of the slow emergence, from within a merchant world, of a strata of entrepreneurs who had become an important component of the India middleclass. When we talk about North Malabar, there were no big industries here, so the scope of the definition for 'middle class' in North Malabar is confined to those people who did not belong to the low-income majority like merchants, salaried people, traders and medium and small scale industrialists. It was the upper strata of the lower castes (*Thiyyas* and *Mappilas),* who by acquiring English education, and consequently, obtaining government jobs, constituted the majority of Middle class in the urban centres like Kannur and Thalassery.

Through the creation of native elites in its own image, the British hoped to continue their administration. Unlike other colonial powers such as the French and the Dutch, the British followed a much more liberal policy of

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39 Claude Markovitz, *Op.cit.*, p. 171.

40 Claude Markovits, *What about the Merchants? A Mercantile Perspective on the Middle Class Of Colonial India* in Sanjay Joshi (ed.) *The Middle Class in Colonial India,* New Delhi, 2010, pp. 118-130.

giving English educated Indians access to posts in the administration. Among the newly emerged social group some of the enterprising people came forward to experiment in new economic field.

As elsewhere in India, in North Malabar too, the changing socio-economic and political conditions encouraged the growth of native entrepreneurs, and many textile and tile factories, mills, *beedi* (cigar) industry and soap industry were started.

Handloom factories were set up in Malabar in the early decades of the 20th century. Their growth was facilitated by the Basel Evangelical Mission's introduction of fly shuttle technology, and by new cotton products catering to export markets and to army requirements. Many *Thiyyas* who were associated with Basel Mission rose to prominent positions and later set up their own factories. The new technology attracted enterprising *Thiyyas* and caused weaving factories to mushroom in and around Thalassery and Kannur.[41]

In Kannur, C. Aaron, a Basel Mission convert, started a 'company' (at the time small textile factories were known as 'companies'). A *Thiyya* by birth, he began his life as an employee in Basel Mission establishment and later founded his company with the help of the Mission.[42]

When Aaron started his company, there were no big modern textile factories except that of the Basel Mission. Here, traditional weaving existed mainly through pit looms and it was the Basel Mission who first used modern

41 Samuel Aaron, *Jeevithasmaranakal*,(Mal.), Cannanore, 1974, pp. 45-48.
42 *Ibid*., pp.17-18.

type of textile weaving. Among the native entrepreneurs the first to establish a weaving mill (1890) was Samuel Santhosh, father-in-law of C. Aaron.[43]

During the first half of the 20th century, the *beedi* industry provided a source of livelihood to many people in North Malabar. In the history of North Malabar, *beedi* workers played a crucial role and in many political movements during this period, like in trade union, they made a big contribution. By the 1920's, the adjacent coastal towns of Kannur and Thalassery and the neighbouring town of Mangalore had grown into important *beedi* manufacturing centres.[44]

Muslim entrepreneurs were big players in the tobacco processing industry, and as per the census report of 1921,[45] 28 of the 67 registered private establishments (42%) in the tobacco industry were owned by Muslims. Among the customers too, Muslims contributed a large part.[46] The concentration of Muslim traders in and around these towns may have contributed to the establishment of the *beedi* industry in the Malabar region.[47]

The industry became firmly established in North Malabar after the First World War when Muslim merchants utilized their trade connections to start exporting *beedis* to Ceylon and later, to Burma.[48] The local demand for beedis also expanded, especially after 1930.

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43 *Ibid.*

44 T.M. Thomas Issac,et al., *Democracy at work in an Indian industrial co-operative-The Story of Kerala Dinesh Beedi*, Ithaca , 1998,p. 23.

45 Census Report 1921, Government of India 1921, p. 30.

46 Census Report, 1931, Government of India, p. 230.

47 T.M. Thomas Issac, et al., *Op.cit*.,p. 24.

48 *Ibid*.

The Swadeshi movement also encouraged the *beedi* industry. The call to boycott foreign goods prompted many smokers to give up imported cigarettes and to switch to *beedis*, which boosted this industry. The expansion of domestic market attracted many new entrepreneurs towards this industry and, by1930s, many new *beedi* firms were established. Important among them were Chatta, Madan, Sadhoo and Haridas.[49]

The number of *beedi* workers rapidly expanded after the First World War and, by the mid 1930s, this industry gave employment to a big number of people. According to 1921 census[50], 14 *beedi* establishments in Malabar employed 373 workers. In 1937, there were around 1,000 *beedi* workers in Kannur town alone.[51] In Kannur, *beedi* workers were mainly drawn from the lower castes, especially *Thiyyas.*

The beginning of the 20th century witnessed a new type of socio-economic changes within the colonial framework. The period saw a slight improvement in Malabar's economy and a few large-scale industries were established. The important large-scale industries included cotton spinning, weaving, saw mills, match factories, brick and tile factories, handloom weaving and coir factories etc. The cottage and small scale industries also witnessed some changes. The first two decades of the 20th century were a period of economic boom. Malabar pepper and copra (dried coconut) ruled

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[49] *Ibid.*
[50] Census report, 1921, Government of India, p. 30.
[51] T.M .Thomas Issac , et al., *Op.cit*.,p. 25.

the European market. The main beneficiaries of this export trade were the lower caste *Thiyyas* and *Mappilas* (Muslim) merchants.[52]

During the course of the colonial period, *Thiyyas* had emerged as a commercial-oriented caste engaging in all economic activities such as cultivation, industrial activities, commerce and trade. The caste system retarded the mobility of the people and prevented people from accepting new occupations outside agriculture.

The tradition-bound lifestyles of various castes prevented the introduction of new goods, new consumption habits and limited the wants and material requirements.[53] Even the economically backward upper castes stood away from activities such as agriculture, industry, trade and commerce, fearing doing such things would not suite their dignity and social status. Samuel Aaron, in his autobiography, says that traditional families, mainly from higher castes, were reluctant to start industries largely due to the lack of support and encouragement from the family members. Most of the higher caste people preferred to sit idle at home and loved to earn income through giving their land on lease. Those days, social status was linked with having big-landed property and earning income through land lease.[54] Meanwhile, lower castes and Muslims came forward to experiment new things under British rule.

In North Malabar, among the *Thiyyas,* and even among the *Mappilas* (Malabar Muslims), the matrilineal system existed. But most of the lower

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52 Dilip M. Menon, *Becoming Hindu and Muslim identity and conflict in Malabar, 100-1936,* C.D.S. Working paper, No.255, p.7.

53 B.A. Prakash, *Op. cit.*, p. 67.

54 Samuel Aaron, *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

castes did not own land. The absence, or the limited amount, of joint-family property compelled individual members to take up jobs other than the family occupation. During this period, *Mappilas* and *Thiyyas* were the most economically active communities in the society. They also engaged in non-agricultural ventures such as trade. Little wonder, these groups were the main beneficiaries of trade in the beginning of 20th century. With the income they earned through trade and other activities, they were able to acquire the landed properties that had earlier belonged to the superior-caste joint families.[55]

By the beginning of the 20th century, a lower-caste *Thiyya* elite had emerged on the strength of the profits from cash crop cultivation, education and association with colonial administration. *Thiyyas* were to be found in different roles in the society, as pleaders, merchants and landlords. Some of the enterprising *Thiyyas* also ventured into in banking. They also tried to accumulate wealth through banking and money-lending business. The commercialisation also created a market for credit.

In Malabar, the rent-revenue burden brought the peasants to a state of dependence on the local money lenders and traders. Compared to Travancore, the organised banking system came in to existence at an earlier date in Malabar. The withdrawal of a large number of traditional moneylenders from the rural scene encouraged the growth of banking in North Malabar.

C.Krishnan started the 'Calicut Bank' in1909 at Kozhikode and opened its branches at Mullassery, Thalasssery, in 1916 and at Kochi in 1918.[56] This bank financed a wide range of activities, like giving loans to professionals and

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55 T.C.Varghese, *Op.cit*., p. 98.

56 K.R.Achutan, *C.Krishnan*(Mal.),Kottayam,1971, p.73.

merchants and lending money for the setting up of tea shops and stalls. Potheri Kunhikannan, son of Potheri Kunhambu, started a bank at Kannur (Bank of Commerce) and he is popularly known as 'Kunhikannan Banker'.[57]

They also began to move into urban centres. Along with the newly rich *Mappilas,* they started investing in land. During the same period, the lower caste people, influenced by colonial modernity, adopted certain colonial practices. Unlike the upper-caste Hindus, they were not reluctant to accept jobs under the British government or to follow even their style of dressing. Most of them overcame the stigmas attached to long-distance travel and many people went abroad seeking new jobs.

The Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition held at Kannur in 1907 created new energy among the natives.[58] *Thiyyas* were the organizers of this exhibition. This was held along with the fourth anniversary meeting of the (SNDP) Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Sangham. There emerged gradually an atmosphere conducive for starting new entrepreneurial ventures.[59]

The newly emerged wealthy social group began to play a prominent role in the socio-economic activities. Building on the profits of cash crop cultivation, trade and other means, *Thiyya* entrepreneurs started to set up weaving factories, brick and tile industries and saw mills.[60] *Mappilas* were

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[57] a)Interview with Vjayaraghavan(83) and Pankajam(81), at Potheri house on 22.12.2013.They are the grandchildren of Potheri Kunhambu.
b) Also see K.Balakrishnan, *Kannur Kotta-Kannurinte Pradesika Charitram* (Mal.),Thrissur, 2008.

[58] D-R files(public),1907, B.No.58,Kozhikode Regional Archives(Hereafter KRA).

[59] Samuel Aaron, *Op.ct.*, p. 32.

[60] *Ibid*., pp. 45-48.

another economically sound group, who often competed with *Thiyyas* for commercial and trade supremacy. Commercial jealousy existed between these two communities.[61]

Thiyyas and *Mappilas* also started to invest in lands. As the migration to urban centres increased, there were also conflicts between people, mainly between *Mappilas* and *Thiyyas* in Kannur. These communities acquired large portion of land in the towns of Thalassery and Kannur and this also was cause for the struggle between these two prospering groups for urban space.[62]

Many emerging entrepreneurs during this time accumulated capital through investing in lands and lending money. A case in point was C. Krishnan, a *Thiyya* social reformer and the editor and publisher of *Mitavadi*. He supplemented his income by collecting rent on lands and through money trade. Later on, this money trade business prompted him to start Calicut Bank.[63] One interesting development during this period was the encroachment on the commercial monopoly of *Thiyyas* in toddy trade by *Mappilas*. By 1915, *Thiyyas* had gradually grabbed control over urban commerce and money lending business.

With the increasing employment opportunities in the towns there was a migration of lower caste from the villages to work in the factories in the towns. For example, labourers and workers from villages and even from other parts of Malabar came to Samuel Aaron's factory seeking employment.

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61 Dilip M.Menon, *Becoming Hindu and Muslim Identity and Conflict in Malabar 1900-1936*,CDS Working paper, No.255,p. 7, p. 8.

62 *Ibid.*

63 K.R. Achutan, *Op.cit.*, p. 70.

With the outbreak of the First World War, industrial activities in Malabar gathered momentum. The period saw some growth of the indigenous industry and a substantial growth of the indigenous capitalist. Favourable conditions during the inter-war period created a demand for commodities. The local capital was also invited for the production. With small amounts of surplus accumulated from local trade, local capital also entered the same fields as those established by European capital because those were the only avenues guaranteeing a market.[64]

During this period, manufactured goods played an important role in external and internal trade. The war affected Indian economy in many ways. The partial interruption of trade routes provided a kind of protection for India's industries which rose to the occasion by fully utilizing the situation**.**

Till the outbreak of the First World War, the hand-weaving industry was not in full bloom. Local people mainly used the hand-woven clothes. The traditional weaving was mainly done by a caste group known as *Chaliyas.* The establishment of factory system during the second half of the 19th century hastened the end of the monopoly of handloom weaving by *Chaliyas.*

In the development of textiles in North Malabar, there were three different phases. In the first phase of its development, the weaver catered more or less to the primary need of the villagers and the weavers were servant classes of artisans or such classes as country weaver. Another group in this phase form part of the urban industry, better quality and finish. In the

[64] K.P. Kannan, *Op. cit*., p. 70.

case of village artisan, luxury industry was a rare feature. The handloom industry in Malabar was confined to the production of coarse varieties of *dhoties* and other lesser quality products. In this stage, industry began with the independent weaver who was supplied with raw material by his customer and paid wages in kind or cash for working it up.

In the next stage, we could find the independent weaver, particularly in bigger villages and towns, preparing generally ordinary coarse cloths and disposing the wares locally and he himself collecting raw materials. He had no capital and he could buy only a small quantity of yarn at a time; he had to begin his work and sell the products before he could get a further installment of yarn. He came into direct touch with the customer in the weekly markets to sell his products. To satisfy the seasonal needs for finer fabrics, he depended on other people because he could solely engage himself in producing them. This was the stage in which the middleman first put his appearance.

Consequently, the weaver had to depend on middleman on the production of coarser cloths too. Thus began the exploitation of independent weaver. The emergence of such yarn dealer-cum-creditor resulted in weavers working under him. Through him a weaver could sell his products to very distant places. At the same time there originated a class of weavers who worked entirely according t the order of the middleman. In this way, the house industry or commission industry developed.

The last stage began with the introduction of factory system where artisans worked at a common workshop under a capitalist. This system was

disliked by the traditional weavers on many grounds. He was not used to hard-work and discipline and they didn't enjoy the atmosphere in a factory at all. The higher wages offered in factories were not sufficiently attractive to induce him to leave his home.

However, in Malabar district, the factory system was much advanced than other parts of the Madras presidency. In Malabar, this industry employed full-time and part-time workers. Part-time workers were mainly agricultural labourers. Besides, a large number of women and children were engaged in preparatory process in spinning and weaving. The artisans had their own holidays and these are regulated by the customs and practices prevalent among the community in the several localities. They took a long holiday, extending to a week or more during the *Onam* festival.

But with the introduction of the Basel Mission industries, textile production entered a new era. Traditional weaving gave way to factory production..

The factory products were mainly sold in the markets like Mysore, Neelagiri and Wayanad. During the inter-war period, there was a great demand for the Malabar cloth. Mill-made clothes were diverted for military purpose and this forced common people to depend on hand-woven cloth. The Malabar cloth found market even in North India. Several weaving factories emerged during this period. It is estimated that at the end of the War, there were nearly 150 weaving factories in Kannur and neighbouring areas.[65]

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[65] Samuel Aaron, *Op. cit.*, p . 48.

The important factories were Aaron Mills and Malabar Weaving Factory of Sri. Pandan Karuvan. Most of these companies were founded and flourished in 1916-17. Apart from textiles, other industries were also set up in the region during the inter-war years. The Soap and Oil factory at Kozhikode, established by the Department of Industries, was another major industry during this period. Many tile factories were also built during this period. Samuel Aaron also founded Valapattanam Tile Factory in Kannur with the help of Muthedathu Mallisseri Kuberan Namboodiripad, Chevidichi Chirukandan and Chandroth Raman Nambiar.[66]

By the 1930's, there was a drastic reduction in the import of British clothes to India and this also gave a fresh impetus to the native mills. The boycott movement launched as part of our national movement with a determination not to purchase and use foreign articles benefitted indigenous industries very much. The boycott movement accompanied by *Swadeshi* campaign also helped the growth of textile industry in the country.

The widespread use of *Khadi* during this period helped the indigenous industry. Factories employing four or five weavers each increasingly registered themselves as *Swadeshi* mills. By 1931, there were of 46 mills registered in North Malabar, as against 25 in the previous year.[67] The boycott movement was later called off along with civil disobedience movement. But the conditions created by the boycott movement remained.

Another factor which encouraged the growth of native industries during this period was the fallout of Great Depression. Despite the severity of

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66 *Ibid*., p. 39.
67 *Ibid*., pp. 45-8.

the Depression, the steep fall in price, the huge loss of purchasing power of the population, capitalist development went on unaffected during this period. During 1934-39, the number of factories in India with 20 and more workers increased from 8658 to 10466. The number of workers also increased from 14,87000 to 17,51000.[68] In Madras presidency, the largest proportion of work force was in the textile mills. In 1932, cotton mills employed 34,753 workers but in 1937 the strength of workers rose to 49,110.[69] More important than the handloom industry was the weaving mills and factories of which there were 13 in 1931 (nine at Kozhikode and four at Kannur) having a total of 1500 looms at work in them.

By 1935, many weaving factories were established in Malabar district, where there were about 9270 looms at work, with the Calicut and Chirakkal *taluks* accounting for as many as 672 and 1434 of them, respectively.[70] These factories gave employment to many people. In Chirakkal *Taluk* alone, where the weaving establishment was located, there were 1434 looms at work.[71] Among the weaving establishments in Chirakkal *Talk* were the Victoria Weaving Establishment and the Mangalodayam Weaving Establishment.

Victoria was equipped with 145 handlooms and accessories and it was managed under the proprietorship of Kalathil Kunhonakkan.[72] Mavilakkandy

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68 E. M .S Namboodiripad, *A History of Indian Freedom struggle*, Trivandrum, 1986, p. 565.

69 Irschick, *Tamil Revivalism in 1930s,* Madras, 1986, p. 235.

70 B. No.23, Sl.No.69, Development department (1935) in Madras records, KRA.

71 B.No.24, Sl. No 106, Development department,(1936),in Madras records, KRA.

72 B.No.23, Sl.No.69, Development department(DOD)(1935) in Madras records, KRA

Chemminiyan Kunhikannan was the proprietor of Mangalodayam,[73] which was equipped with 27 handlooms and accessories.[74]

The goods from these factories were marketed chiefly at Amritsar, Secunderabad, Karachi, Culcutta, Bangalore and Coorg.[75] The Commonwealth Trust, M.N. Nayar & Co. and the Standard Cotton and Silk Weaving Company owned the more important of the factories. They did not compete with local handloom-weavers and avoided weaving the kind of products made by them. Mills were mainly confined to the production of articles like sheets, towels, table-cloths, shirtings and trouserings.[76]

Samuel Aaron started Aaron Spinning and Weaving Mills Ltd. in 1936. This was one of the largest spinning and weaving mills in South India. In 1944-45, Aaron took the initiative to found Kannur Spinning and Weaving Mills. With the support of Aaron, Kayath Damodaran, a former director of Aaron Mills, became the Managing Director of the new mill.[77] In Kannur, these entrepreneurs had a relationship with the National Movement. During the *Swadeshi* movement of 1905-7, direct links were established between political and economic demands and between national freedom and indigenous enterprise.

Economic nationalism became an essential feature of nationalist programme. The entrepreneurs paid more attention to charities, *Khadi*, social reform activities and nationalist struggle. They made financial contribution to

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73 B.No.24, Sl.No.106,DOD1936,in Madras Records, KRA
74 *Ibid.*
75 B.No.23, Sl.No.69, DOD(1935) in Madras records, KRA
76 C.A. Innes, *Madras District Gazetteers:Malabar,* Reprint, Madras, 1951, p. 254.
77 Samuel Aaron, *Op. cit.*, pp.184-186.

the Congress party. In Kannur, entrepreneurs and businessmen like Govardhandas Kimji (Gujarati cloth merchant), Purushotam Gokuldas, Kunjonakkan and Jamnadas, among others, actively supported Congress and made arrangements to receive Gandhiji when he visited Kannur in 1920. Jamnadas and Kunjonakkan were the public figures in Kannur and they were owners of weaving factories. Here it is interesting to note that during this period, many traders and merchants from Gujarat and from other North Indian cities came to North Malabar and started their businesses, which they continue till date.

During the Khilafat movement, Gandhiji and Shoukat Ali visited Kannur as part of their Kerala *jatha*. During this occasion, a public meeting was held at Kannur, where Rs. 4,000 collected under the leadership of Vellaram Veettil Kunji Onakkan and Samuel Aaron was given to Gandhiji. This was a morale booster to the local people.

K. Kunjimayan Haji was another famous industrialist who actively participated in the Congress activities.[78] From the point of view of the Congress, the most obvious advantage gained from the businessmen was the assurance of a regular and dependable service of financial contribution to the party. People like Samuel Aaron, popularly known as the 'Birla of Malabar', contributed generously to the party. This helped Congress to raise large amount of money and to transform Indian National Movement into a mass movement. In this context, it is also noteworthy to mention the fact that by financing these movements, often on a generous scale, they could assuage

[78] Samuel Aaron, *Op. cit*., pp. 91-93.

their consciences without having to engage too openly with a public arena. By doing such things, they conformed to the code of conduct prescribed by Gandhiji; they were acceptable, even honourable and their workers were advised to treat them as paternal benefactors rather than as greedy exploiters.

At the same time there was an allegation that the newly formed native middle class did nothing to improve the socio-economic condition of the downtrodden people. The native elites remained dominant without having the will or the ability to transform the society. The inception of capitalism which came about through the onslaught of imperialism lacked integration with the local economy. The origin of an indigenous capitalist class failed to release any production dynamic which could encompass the entire people. Thus, the dominant classes could evolve no organic links with the entire society and therefore create no consciousness that could enlarge their class sphere morally and ideologically on a national scale.[79]

Among this newly emerged entrepreneurial class there was no feeling of community, no national bonds and no political organisation adequate for the task of social transformation. Under the colonial regime they could access wealth and resources. To quote Asok Sen, "they could operate from the core of society and economy, keeping themselves in strategic control and manoeuvring their way through the corridors of colonial politics by claiming to be the protagonists of nationalism and independence. Their career in the history of Indian nationalism was characterised by an amalgam of loyalty and

[79] Asok Sen, *Subaltern studies: Capital, Class and Community* in Ranajit Guha(ed.) *Subaltern studies V, Writing on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 206-7.

opposition to foreign rule, a combination in which their scramble for power and privilege prevailed over national consciousness."[80]

It was an era in which the downtrodden castes had to face exploitation both from the coloniser and the indigenous dominant class. It all resulted dualities and hybrid mode of exploitation.

Antonio Gramsci's "concept of passive revolution"[81] could be applied to the attitude of the middle class at the time. Samuel Aaron, the attitude of the middle class towards foreign rule and the growth of factories in this region, the rise of native entrepreneurs and the emergence of a new, wealthy powerful social group in North Malabar probably prove that point.

The period also saw the origin of the proletariat in North Malabar. And they had to fight against colonial rulers and against indigenous capitalists, who were produced by the colonial era and actually became responsible for the rise of the proletariat in the North Malabar region.

We have already seen that the industrial labourers in Malabar took birth with the Basel Mission industries, established during the second half of 19th century. These factory workers were the forerunners of those labourers who later led the historical class struggles in Malabar. The Basel Mission industries introduced work discipline in their factories and the strikes by workers were rare in these factories. Labourers in these factories were

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80 *Ibid*., p. 207.

81 Antonio Gramsci was an Italian thinker and Philosopher. 'Passive revolution' is a term coined by him during the interwar period in Italy. Gramsci coined the term to refer to the way the bourgeoisie went beyond its immediate economic interests in favour to make certain concessions in favour of long term preservation of order.

unorganised and they were not aware of their rights. Even if they had any grievances or resentment they were suppressed through brutal punishment.

Many of these early factories worked under unhygienic conditions and there was no regulations regarding safety and welfare of the workers. The situation was hardly different at Aaron Mill at Pappinissery, Kannur, where the workers were forced to go on a strike on February 26, 1946.[82] With the growing native industrial enterprises and the rise in the exploitation of such nascent capitalists led to the trade union movement in North Malabar.

In the First World War, the Germans were defeated and in India after the War, their properties were handed over to British. As a result, properties of Basel Mission in Malabar handed over to British Commonwealth Trust. In Malabar, it was in the tile and textile factories of Commonwealth Trust that the earliest activities of trade unions started.[83]

Being an industrially backward region it took time to form trade unions. According to N.C. Sekhar, one of the prominent leaders of Trade Union Movement in Kerala, it was only after the Railway strike in 1928 that a consciousness was formed among the workers to form trade unions in this region.[84] During 1930-31, many strikes were held at Commonwealth Cotton Mill (Calicut), tile factories at Olavakode and Puthiyara, and power loom textiles at Kannur. But the labourers were unorganised. Besides, there was no organisation to give leadership to such strikes.

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82 B. No. 70, Development Department (1946), 25-05-1946, KRA.

83 P. Narayanan Nair, *Aranoottandilude* (Mal.), Kerala Sahitya Academy,Thrissur, Reprint,1999, p. 108.

84 R. Prakasam, *Keralathile Trade Union Prasthanathinte Charitram* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1979, p.41.

The initiative to start trade unions in Malabar was carried out by Suryanarayana Rao and V.R. Nayanar. During 1934-35, many strikes were held at Thiruvannur Cotton Mill (Kozhikode) and the tile factories at Feroke and Cheruvannur (near Kozhikode). This laid the foundation of the modern trade union movement in Malabar.[85] Besides, *beedi* workers at Thalassery and Kannur were organised and conducted many strikes to gain their rights. Since 1934, many trade unions were formed and prominent among them were the Thalasssery Beedi Workers Union, Kannur Beedi Workers' Union (1936-37) and the Commonwealth Workers' Union. Trade unionism went on to become very vibrant and active over the years in this region.

85 P. Narayanan Nair, *Op.cit*., pp. 108-109.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF KANNUR AND THALASSERY UNDER BRITISH RULE

The Kannur district of today was two *taluks,* namely Chirakkal and Kottayam, under the British rule. They were part of the Malabar district at the time. Kannur (Cannanore) and Thalassery (Tellicherry) were the two most prominent urban centres in this region.

These two towns witnessed some drastic changes in the social and cultural spheres during the last phase of colonialism. Those changes had a long-lasting impact on North Malabar.

The Chirakkal *taluk* was divided into 76 *amsoms* (administrative units) with 272 *desoms* (lowest administrative units). It was bounded on the north by South Canara district, east by Coorg and Mysore, south by the Kottayam *taluk* and on the west by the Arabian Sea. Cannanore, the headquarters of the Chirakkal *taluk* was a military station with a Municipality and a cantonment.[1] Cannanore was the headquarters of the troops in Malabar.[2]

Tellicherry, part of Kottayam *taluk,* was an important port town and the oldest settlement of foreigners on the Malabar coast. Kottayam *taluk* had 34 *amsmos* and 269 *desoms.*

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1 B. No. 315, Sl. No. 2, Dept. of Revenue, 1941, Kozhikode Regional Archives (Hereafter KRA).

2 Settlement Register, Descriptive of the Cheracul Talook of North Malabar, KRA, p. 37.

Telllicherry and Kannur were under the direct rule of British and an important European settlement. The European impact on the social structure of this region was considerable.

The British administration brought in several changes. Some of those changes impacted positively on the society, which was traditional and stagnant. Some changes impacted negatively, too. Certain changes came within and as part of the colonial framework. To quote Bipan Chandra, colonialism brought certain new elements in Indian society and some of them were positive.[3]

The newly developed institutions and evolving structures formed an interconnected and mutually reinforcing network which sub served and brought in to being the colonial structure. Although colonial relations are primarily economic, they ushered in changes in socio-cultural fields.

New elements introduced by the British rule, such as electric telegraph, railways, private property in land, Western education, free press and political unifications all helped in transforming a society, which became more of a modern, Western type. The colonial modernisation in India involved the transformation of not merely the economy but the patterns of social, political administrative and cultural life as well.[4]

India indeed underwent a cultural transformation during this period. The contact with the West left both destructive and constructive forces to function in the traditional society of Malabar. We could see the dual character

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3 Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, Delhi, 2000, reprint, p. 79.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

of the British rule here. While the British destroyed the caste atrocities and feudalism to a certain extent, they did not allow the growth of democracy and scientific culture.

The influence of colonialism was not just limited to the education system; it was there in the social, economic and political spheres as well. The main intention behind the progressive changes the British brought in was to strengthen their presence in India. They wanted to establish their supremacy. They destroyed the caste and feudal systems only to the extent that suited them.[5]

The colonial rule had two sides and it produced two kinds of people. They were people who were servile imitators of the modern West and admirers of Western practices. But there were also people who vehemently opposed the ill-effects of colonial rule. The changes colonialism brought in were not just political and economical, but psychological as well. To quote Ashis Nandy, colonialism is also a psychological state rooted in earlier forms of social consciousness in both the colonizers and the colonised.

Nandy says colonialism is a shared culture which may not always begin with the establishment of an alien rule in a society and end with the departure of the alien rulers from the colony.[6] The effects of colonial rule and the ideology of colonialism still exist in many sectors of life.

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5 E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Keralam-Malayalikalude Mathrubhum* (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, reprint, 2009, p. 235.

6 Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy-Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 2.

Colonialism created a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter. Colonialism never seems to end with formal political freedom. According to Nandy, a colonial system perpetuates itself by inducing the colonised, through socio-economic and psychological rewards and punishments, to accept new social norms and cognitive categories.[7]

During the last phase of colonialism, cultural intrusions were visible in many parts of Kerala. This chapter dwells on such changes which occurred during the first half of the 20th century and will try to explain how these changes moulded the socio-economic and cultural life of the people in Chirakkal and Kottayam *taluks*.

Under the colonial rule, North Malabar underwent several radical social, economic and cultural changes. The previous chapters tried to analyse how colonialism brought changes in society and economy. It brought significant changes in the economic condition of the people.

The traditional economy was gradually transforming into a colonial one, and by the beginning of 20th century, the colonial institution was trying to find out new ways to strengthen their presence in India. These changes were interlinked. For example, the introduction of Western education had its impact on industrial activities in this region and fast tracked the growth of native middle class in this region.

This chapter examines how colonialism impacted the life of the people in this region. And the impact was deep and not all of it was negative. The

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7 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

positive role played by Western education, a product of colonialism, in North Malabar cannot be ignored.

The focus here would be on two aspects:

1. Colonialism and the social mobility of people (in North Malabar, backward castes made remarkable progress, unlike in other parts of Kerala) in Chirakkal and Kottayam.

2. Colonialism and culture.

The spread of Western education and the transformation of traditional economy into colonial economy paved the way for the rise of the native middle class. It also promoted the Western culture. But the society retained several elements of the traditional culture too.

During this period, the cultural institutions and practices were sought to be fashioned in the light of colonial modernity. Access to higher education, and the consequent employment in the government service, had been one of the means through which the lower castes, especially *Thiyyas*, had acquired social mobility. *Saraswatheevijayam*, a novel written by Potheri Kunhambu in 1892, stresses the importance of Western education in emancipating lower castes like *Thiyyas* and *Pulayas*.[8]

Since the inception of the foreign rule, *Thiyyas* and *Mappilas* in Chirakkal and Kottayam *taluks* had worked with Europeans. Among *Thiyyas*, many worked in the military of the English East India Company and were

[8] See Chapter 2.

employed in ranks such as *subedar* and *jamedar;* they constituted the native army.

Thalassery was an important centre of trading activities of the English East India Company. *Thiyyas* were appointed as sentinels in the military at places such as Mylankunnu, Morakkunnu, Dharmadomkunnu, near Thalassery.[9]

Thiyyas, though, have had to struggle to achieve the status they got in North Malabar during the last phase of colonialism. They wasted no opportunity to bring into notice of the British authorities the injustices that they were subjected to. In 1936, for instance, the *Uthara Kerala Thiyya Mahayogam* presented a memorandum to Lord Eskine, Governor of Madras, when he visited Kannur.[10]

The memorandum was presented under the leadership of O. Sankaran, the president of the organisation and a retired District Munsif. He met the Governor on November 5, 1936, along with members Uppot Narayanan, retired sub-inspector of police, P.C. Govindan, retired political agent (Bombay Service), K. Bharathan, advocate, K.N. Kunhambu, retired Head Post Master, and P. Kunhambu, member, District Board, Malabar, in the presence of the Malabar District Collector, A.R. MacEwen.

In the memorandum, the organisation spoke of several problems faced by *Thiyyas* and sought redress from the British government. “Although we form the largest Hindu Community in this District we in political influence

[9] Murkot Kunhappa, *Murkot Kumaran*, Kottayam, 1975, p.17.
[10] B. No. 1-A, Sl. No. 18, Public Department (1936), KRA.

and economic wellbeing are far behind other communities," the memorandum pointed out. "As a class we are agriculturalists and toddy-tappers but very few among us own *jenmam* lands which are mainly in the hands of a few high caste Hindus and Mohammadans. The unprecedented fall in the prices of all agricultural produce within the last few years has affected the *Thiyyas* of Malabar more than any other class in this District."

One of the main points in the memorandum was the poor representation of *Thiyyas* in various government services ("In spite of the fact that we contribute the whole of Excise Revenue from this District in addition to the major portion of the land revenue which are contributed by as tenants of *jenmies* our representation in the public service is very poor compared with other *Sudras* in the District. We are afraid that the communal G.O. which was passed by the Government has improved the lot of other *Sudra* communities in the District at the sacrifice of interest of our community").

It is interesting to note that *Ezhavas* in Travancore (equivalent of *Thiyyas* of Malabar) too fought spiritedly against the injustice. In an editorial in *Vivekodayam*, known popularly as the Ezhava Gazette, poet Kumaran Asan, who was also the founder editor of the magazine, writes about the efforts put in by the lower castes to gain the right to study at the Government Ayurveda College, Thiruvananthapuram. Their fight for two years ended in their victory, with the government allowing students from all communities to seek admission into the college.[11]

[11] Kumaran Asan (ed.), *Vivekodayam*, Book 11, No. 7, 1914, p. 233.

Thiyyas were into the toddy business in a big way. It was an industry they virtually monopolised for decades. They were not, however, willing to be classified as a community on account of that trade alone. *Deepam* (an illustrated monthly published by Thomas Paul from Kochi and edited by Murkot Kumaran[12]) magazine reports about the cold response from *Thiyyas* of Thalassery to a meeting that was proposed to unite their community with *Nadars* of Southern Kerala and *Billavas* of Karnataka just because all of them were employed in the toddy industry.[13]

Thiyyas were involved in other businesses too. They imported rice from Mangalore, for instance.[14]

The European impact on the social structure of Malabar was considerable and traditionalism was partially destroyed under foreign rule. The European rulers included lower castes like *Thiyyas*, *Mukkuvas* and *Mappilas* in their garrisons to fulfil their defence purpose, which was in sharp contrast to the prevailing practice that dictated only higher castes, like *Nairs*,

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12 Swami Guru Prasad (ed.), *Murkot Smaraka Grandham* (Mal.), Thalassery, 1942. p. 126.

13 *Deepam*, Vol.1, No.8, 1930, Thalassery.

14 Murkot Kunhappa, *Op. cit*., p. 19.
One of the *Thiyya* elites, Pullambil Mooppan, was one such contractor who worked under the English East India Company. At the time many, *Thiyyas* accumulated wealth and engaged in such trading activities. Many *Thiyyas* had constructed *Nalukettu* (large house) and they were known as *Thiyya Thamburakkanmar*. Pullambil family had a *Nalukettu* near Chirakkara, Thalasserry. Among other big *Thiyya Nalukettus* (house) were Oyitti and Ambalavettam.

form the army. The French at Mahe included native troops consisting of *Thiyyas*.[15]

Religious Conversion

Some sections in the native society largely benefited from colonial rule. The missionary activities, with the main aim of proselytisation, became successful in making many natives accepting Christianity. When missionaries arrived in the colonies to proselytise for Christianity, the saving of souls by conversion was cited as another justification for colonialism.[16] As was mentioned earlier, people belonging to many backward castes accepted Christianity more readily than those from the higher castes. For many centuries, downtrodden caste groups were suffering from atrocities on account of their castes and they hoped to improve their condition through choosing a foreign religion, which stood for brotherhood among different classes and had no restrictions based on caste. Thus, the entry of Europeans provided a good opportunity for these people to get emancipated from caste ridden social rules and customs. Untouchability was such a big issue in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore in the early 20th century. *Sahodaran* magazine (started by social reformer Sahodaran Ayyappan) reported in 1918 about the problems faced by Ezhavas just because they had given a representation to the Cochin King seeking admission to the Government High School at Tripunithura.[17]

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15 K.K.N. Kurup, *Modern Kerala: Studies in Social and Agrarian relations*, New Delhi, 1988, p.11.

16 Paul Gillen and Devleena Ghosh, *Colonialism and Modernity*, Australia, 2007, p. 135.

17 *Sahodaran*, Book 1, No. 10 & 11, 1918, p. 157.

The ills of untouchability were highlighted by some higher caste people too, such as Moyarath Sankaran, a freedom fighter belonging to the *Nair* community. He wrote in an article that it was the higher castes that suffered more than the lower castes on account of untouchability. "In Kerala today, it is *Namboodiris* who are the highest class in terms of education, wealth and tradition, but where do they stand in public life? A community that has had contact with them and imitated them is *Nair,* which has attained prominence because of education, wealth and population. But for untouchability, these two communities should have dominated the business in Kannur and Thalassery," he opined.[18]

Poverty was a major factor which forced natives to accept Christianity. Among the labouring class, missionary activities were so large that many plantation labourers and factory workers accepted Christianity in North Malabar, especially at important European centres in Chirakkal and Kottayam *taluks*. A contemporary literary work in 1892[19] describes how backward castes worked at Anjarakkandy plantation accepted Christianity.[20]

We could see discussions about conversions from Hinduism in the literary works at later periods too. In a short story written by Murkot Kumaran in the Special Issue of *Mathrubhumi Weekly* in 1935, the hero, Gangadharan,

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18 Kadathanat Madhavi Amma (ed.), *Murali,* Book 1, Issue 5, Thalassery, 1934, p. 39

19 See the novel Potheri Kunhambu, *Saraswatheevijayam*

20 Many East India Company officials bought land at Anjarakkandy to cultivate spices like pepper, coffee, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom and clove and entrusted Murdoch Brown to supervise these gardens. He was an employee under the East India Company. But with the treaty of Srirangapatna in 1792, Malabar came under the direct rule of the British and gradually many company officials sold their land to Brown and left India. Brown thus became the owner of this plantation.

gives up his name and his religion because he believes his caste has been getting a raw deal from Hinduism.[21]

In earlier days, slavery existed in Malabar. Records show that there were, according to an 1819 report from the Madras Board of Revenue, as many as 180,000 slaves in the Malabar and Canara regions.[22] Many agricultural serfs like *Pulayas*, *Cherumas*, *Vettuvas* and *Kanakkas* were sold along with the property. Along with the transaction of the agricultural land the *Janmies* also transferred the rights over agricultural labourers to the new landlord. As per this custom, Murdoch Brown received the ownership right of many untouchables who were the labourers in these plantations. During the period of his successor Frank Brown, Father Michael reached here to convert these labourers to Christianity.[23]

With the establishment of the direct British rule in Malabar, the East company officials sold their gardens. Places like Barnasserry, near Kannur, Chirakkal, Chovva, Nettur and Thalassery were some of the urban centres where missionary work was particularly active.[24] It was mainly through Basel Evangelical Mission that the activities were carried out in this region. The conversion of poor students, studying in Basel Mission School at Thalassery, was common in those times.[25]

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21 Murkot Ramunny, *Changathiyude Parivarthanam* (Mal.) in Mathrubhumi Special Issue, Kozhikode, 1935, p. 291.

22 James Peggs, *Slavery in India: The Present State of East India Slavery*, England, 1828, p. 85.

23 The Malabar Church Council, *A Short History of the Basel Evangelical Mission*, 1934, pp. 14-16.

24 *Ibid*., pp.14-89.

25 Moyyarath Sankaran, *Ente Jeevitha Katha*(Mal.), Reprint, Kollam, 2006, p.31.

It was not just people from the lower castes in the Hindu religion that chose Christianity as their new religion. Under the colonial rule, they were takers for Christianity from those belonging to the Hindus of higher castes and other religions. It would not be wrong to argue that colonialism provided an ideal platform for proselytisation. It wasn't just the economic exploitation that took place under the colonial rule. The foreign rulers did not colonise just the land, but the mind as well.

It is interesting to note that the spread of Christianity in India mainly occurred under the colonial rule. Colonial administration facilitated the spread of Christianity. Some people influenced by Christianity converted into it.

In North Malabar, such conversions took place across all sections of the society, including higher castes, *Thiyyas* and *Mappilas*. At places like Thalassery and Kannur, along with *Nairs*, even *Brahmins* chose Christianity.[26] In Malabar, an 18-year-old Nair youth named Parayil Krishnan Nair was the first from Malabar to convert to Christianity, under the influence of the Basel Missionary, Samuel Hebich.[27] On March 14, 1840, Krishnan Nair became Thimothios.[28]

The Christian religion, the facilitator of colonial modernity, also encouraged even wealthy *Mappilas* to embrace Christianity. Under the influence of the Basel Missionary, Samuel Hebich, a *Mappila* converted into

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He mentions one such incident at Thalasssery Mission School, where a girl student, Cherichal Nanikutty, studying in the 8th Standard, converted to Christianity unexpectedly.

26 The Malabar Church Council, *Op. cit*., p. 34.

27 *Ibid*., p. 47.

28 *Ibid*.

Christianity in 1886 in 'Kannur sabha'.[29] ('Kannur sabha' means the group of Christians lived around Kannur and Chovva).

C.H. Kunhappa in his autobiography describes an incident from his student days at the Basel Evangelical Mission School, Thalassery. "While I was studying at the Fourth Standard, there was this boy called Aziz, who came to the school riding on a 'Governor's cart', driven by two white horses," writes Kunhappa. "His father was rich and I was told that he was an Arakkal *diwan*. A few months later, Aziz stopped coming to school. I met him at Calicut some time later; he had become a Catholic then. Both his sisters were well-educated and were well-placed. One of them became mayor in Colombo, while the other contested the elections on a ticket from the Socialist Party, though she didn't win."[30]

This small paragraph from Kunhappa's book not just shows how conversion knew no religion, but how colonialism provided opportunities for the education of the female. Women of that time craved for English education too. In an article published in a periodical for women, P. Kavamma, who was a regular contributor to magazines, argued that women should be educated in English. "If our children have to make progress, our women should be taught English," she wrote.[31]

There were women from Malabar who even travelled overseas for higher education, like E.K. Janaki Ammal, one of the greatest botanists of India. Her achievements were well documented in her own time and there is a

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29 *Ibid*., p. 82.
30 C.H. Kunhappa, *Smaranakal Mathram*(Mal.), Reprint, Thrissur,*1971, p. 85.*
31 *Lakshmibhai*, Book 8, Issue 10, 1926, Thrissur, p. 335.

glowing tribute to her paid by *Mitavadi* in 1929. From that profile, we could learn that she scored 99 out of 100 in Mathematics in the SSLC examination of 1935 (she was a student of the Sacred Heart Convent School, Thalassery) and that was, apparently something of a rarity at the time. So rare that Mooliyil Krishnan, who was teaching Malayalam at the Women's Christian College in Madras, got off at Thalassery, on his way to Kannur, just to meet her.[32]

Janaki passed Intermediate examination from Queen's Mary College and B.A. Honours from Presidency College, both in Madras, before taking up a teaching post, at the Women's Christian College. But, in 1926, she got a scholarship from the University of Michigan, United States. Undaunted by the floods in Kerala and Coimbatore that year, she went to Bombay via Madras to board a ship for France. She stayed for a few days in France and then in England before finally reaching Michigan. It wasn't a journey many young women in India, let alone Kerala, would have undertaken at the time. She also did her D.Sc. at Michigan.

Mitavadi notes that no woman, in any community, could boast such outstanding academic feats. She was Professor of Botany at Maharaja's College, Trivandrum, for three years. After working as geneticist at the Sugarcane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore, she went to London as Assistant Cytologist at the John Innes Horticultural Institution. She came back to India in 1951, on an invitation from Jawaharlal Nehru to reorganise the Botanical

[32] *Mitavadi*, Special Issue, Kozhikode, 1929, p. 43.

Survey of India[33]. She made great contributions to Indian science and was honoured with Padmashri in 1957.

Notwithstanding the sterling example of Janaki Ammal, a *Thiyya* in spite of her name, the community still had a long way to go in education, according to *Mitavadi*, which noted that out of the 17 lakh *Thiyyas* in the regions of Malabar, Travancore, Kochi and the rest of the Malayalam-speaking regions, only 2.5 lakhs were literate, whereas out of 13.5 lakh *Nairs*, 4.5 lakhs were literate. *Mitavadi* argues that it was precisely because of the lack of education that *Thiyyas* lagged behind the higher castes such as *Nairs* and *Brahmins*[34].

Mitavadi further notes that as far as education is concerned, *Thiyyas* in Travancore were easily the most enthusiastic while those in Palakkad the laziest. If 23 out of 100 *Thiyyas* were educated in Travancore that number was just seven in Palakkad. *Mitavadi* expresses fear that if *Thiyyas* in Malabar continued to remain uneducated, they might be considered as a lower caste by their counterparts in Travancore. History has shown that those fears were misplaced.

Mitavadi, however, points out that when it comes to English education, *Thiyyas* of Malbar are better off than those in Travancore and Kochi. If nine in a thousand *Thiyyas* in Malabar were English-educated, the corresponding numbers in Travancore and Kochi were just eight and four, respectively. In

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[33] C.V. Subramanian, *Lilavati's Daughters: The Women Scientists of India* (Ed. Rohini Godbole & Ram Ramswamy), Bangalore, 2007, p. 2.

[34] *Mitavadi,* Special Issue, Kozhikode, 1929, p. 63.

1921, the population of Malabar was 30,98,871, among whom 7,60,178 were *Thiyyas.*[35]

Many English-educated and wealthy *Thiyyas* chose Christianity under the influence of missionary activities. They decided to convert because they faced social discrimination from those belonging to higher castes, despite being rich and well-educated. Some *Thiyya* elites saw themselves as standing outside Hinduism, a religion tainted in their eyes with inequality and subordination. They probably felt they could climb the social ladder by choosing Christianity, which apparently, had no caste divisions. These Western-educated *Thiyyas* were influenced by foreign religion and colonial modernity.

Potheri Kunhambu, a social reformer and novelist belonging to the *Thiyya* caste, advocated religious conversion. He, however, remained a *Thiyya.* But his two daughters Dr. Paru, who opened one of the earliest private clinics in Kerala (Potheri Nursing Home, Kannur), and Janaki converted to Christianity. Dr. Paru married an Englishman named Major Christian Bernard Miller, who was a Doctor at the Kannur military hospital and after her marriage she accepted Christianity.[36]

Another prominent *Thiyya* family with a rich history of conversion is the Murkot family at Thalassery. A half-sister of Murkot Ramunny (Sr.) and

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[35] Census of India, 1921.

[36] a) Interview with Vijayaraghavan (83) and Pankajam (81),on 22.12.2013 at 'Potheri House', Chovva.
They are the grandchildren of Potheri Kunhambu.
b) Interview with Heera Krishnan, on 22.12.2013 at Kannur. She is the great granddaughter of Potheri Kunhambu.

his brother's family became Christians.[37] Murkot Kumaran, Ramunny's son, however, did not believe in conversion and he opposed strongly views that *Thiyyas* should leave Hinduism and embrace Budhism.[38] Many prominent *Thiyyas*, such as Keeleri Kunhikannan, the father of Indian circus, social reformer C. Krishnan (popularly known as *Mitavadi* Krishnan) converted to Budhism, in fact. Krishnan was one of the most powerful voices of the Thiyya community and he was widely regarded among the greatest religious leaders of his time[39].

Another social reformer from the *Thiyya* community, Kottayi Kumaran, also embraced Budhism, along with his wife and children in 1935. He had strongly advocated for conversion into Budhism through his speeches at several meetings and articles in *Mitavadi*. He believed that if *Thiyyas* had accepted Budhism, their sufferings, on account of their caste, would cease[40]. *Mitavadi*, in fact published a compilation of essays titled *Thiyyarude Abdhivridhi Margangal*, in which writers like K.R. Achutan, proposes that *Thiyyas* should leave Hinduism[41].

A well-known *Thiyya* who converted to Christianity was Mooliyil Ramotty Gurkukkal. He belonged to the famous *Thiyya tarawadu* 'Mooliyil'. Later he chose the name Abraham Mooliyil and became the gospel of

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37 Interview with Prasanna Kesavan on 23.12.2013 at her residence 'Murkot' in Thalassery. She is the granddaughter of Murkot Kumaran.

38 Swami Guruprasad (ed.).,*Op.cit.*, p. 125.

39 V.R. Parameswaran Pillai in *Vivekodayam* (C. Krishnan Birth Centenary Supplement, 1967, p. 19.

40 S.K. Balakrishnan, *Dheerasree Kottayi Kumaran* (Mal.) Thalassery, 1954, p. 21.

41 C.Krishnan(ed.) *Thiyyarude Abhivridhi Margangal* (Mal.), Kozhikode 1934, p. 46

Christianity[42]. Mooliyil Joseph, the author of Malayalam novel *Sukumari,*[43] was his son.

There were several other prominent families, or some members of them at least, of North Malabar that decided to forsake Hinduism for Christianity. Among them was the Choorakkat family of Kannur, Ettikulam near Ezhimala, headed by Choorakkat Aaron, the father of industrialist Samuel Aaron.[44]

With the establishment of the British military cantonment, Kannur[45] became one of the important European centres in Malabar. The military presence, both European and Indian, was pretty strong in and around Kannur. People called the Indian Army 'Black Army' and the European Army the 'White Army'. Because of the large number of military men and their servants – the number was around 1,500 – the infrastructure grew at rapid pace.

Houses, hospitals, offices and markets were set up. The military covered a large area, including Kannur Fort, Thavakkara, Chovva Chungam and Thalap. An offshoot of the new settlement, mainly the coastal area, was that those belonging to higher castes, such as *Brahmins* and *Shudras*, migrated to places like Chirakkal and Pallikkunnu, as they did not want to

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42 The Malabar Church council, *Op.cit*., p. 68.

43 This novel was published by the Church Council in 1897. It deals with people from downtrodden castes converting to Christianity. The novel also features Dr. Herman Gundert.

44 C. Samuel Aaron, *Jeevithasmaranakal* (Mal.), Cannanore, 1974, p. 27-28.

45 Following the treaty of Srirangapatna in 1792, Kannur and Fort at Kannur (St. Angelo Fort) came under the control of British and they made it the biggest military centre in the South-West coast. Till 1878, they kept the Indian and European military contingents separately.

mingle with foreigners and those from lower castes and other religions (Muslims).[46]

This could perhaps explain the presence of numerically strong *Thiyyas* and *Mappilas* in the urban centres in Kannur. This factor might also have helped these people to interact more with the Europeans, from which they obviously gained.

At this time, many *Mappilas* and *Thiyyas* worked under the Europeans as servants. This association with the British helped *Mappilas* and *Thiyyas* move ahead in life. Unlike their counterparts in the rest of North Malabar, the *Thiyyas* and *Mappilas* of this region got an opportunity to serve the British military. They happily worked as servants and maids. They also became *Dhobies* (washermen) and butlers too. Unlike those from the higher castes, they had no problem even serving the British in their homes. Maybe they were well aware of the dignity of labour, all those decades ago.

Many of these servants wisely made good use of this opportunity; their families, and especially from the next generations, rose high and fast socially.[47] Aasu Bhai, a famous cricketer from Thalassery,[48] was a *Dhobi* who worked under British. Even working as butlers under the British was

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46 The Malabar Church Council, *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

47 a) Interview with A.V. Sreenivasan at Thalassery on 18.12.2013. He talked about Choyi Butler, whose sons went on to get prestigious jobs such as Judge, DIG and Army Officer.Also see Murkoth Kunhappa, *Op. cit*.
b) Interview with Dr. Sundaram, at Thalassery. His sister's husband Prof. Raghavan was a professor at Presidency College. His father was a butler at a British officer's house.

48 Interview with A.V. Sreenivasan on 29.03.2013 at Thalassery.. He remembers his conversations with Cricketer Aasu Bhai, who told him how he learned cricket from the Europeans settled at Thalassery. He was a spectator to begin with, then a ball boy before he became a player for Town Cricket Club.

considered a status symbol by many *Thiyyas* and *Mappilas* ('Who does he think he is, a butler?' people would make fun of someone who thought too much of themselves).

Among the backward castes, *Thiyyas* were preferred by the British because of their personal hygiene and clean habits. Castes like *Pulayas* were considered too unclean. The British could not have hired servants and maids from higher castes, who stuck to their customs and traditions and feared that if they kept in contact with Europeans they would lose their caste sanctity.[49]

During the colonial period, many Europeans had conjugal relations with *Mappilas* and *Thiyyas* in North Malabar. Concubinage also was prevalent between Europeans and native women.

Some ambitious *Thiyya* women found an easy way to be rich was by being concubines of Europeans. There were not many of them, probably a hundred, according to Murkot Kumaran.[50] But it is interesting to note that *Thiyyas* were dead against such relations and the families involved were ostracised by the community. Murkot Ramunny (Sr.), father of Murkot Kumaran, and some other prominent *Thiyya* elites convened a Panchayat meeting and decided to ex-communicate such women and their children.[51] Even after they were excommunicated, they still wanted to remain in the Hindu religion and did not convert into Christianity. Many children born from such relations later had to struggle to do well in life, but they did succeed because of education. Gradually, *Thiyyas* became willing to include them in

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[49] Interview with K.K. Marar, at Thalassery on 22.12.2013. Marar is a well-known artist.

[50] Murkot Kunhappa, *Op.cit.*, p. 24.

[51] *Ibid.*, p.16.

their community. In the 1920's or the early 1930's, there was an attempt to reinstate these families in the community.

People like Murkot Kumaran were against such discrimination towards them.[52] Kumaran, however, says that such conversions and conjugal relations did not improve the condition of *Thiyyas.* He was of the opinion that if the Western-educated and wealthy *Thiyyas* converted to other religions there would be no one to raise voice for the upliftment of *Thiyyas* and their condition would further deteriorate. So, converting to other religions would not solve the problems face by *Thiyyas*.[53]

Those who were excommunicated from their matrilineal *tharavadus* (*Thiyyas* in North Malabar followed matrilineal form of inheritance) were denied the services of other castes and were excluded from public events.[54] A sharp divide developed between those who had a 'White connection' and those who did not. The children born out of such relations (they were known as *vellavaka,* meaning children of the Whites) had to hide their father's identity fearing ex-communication. It has to be mentioned that it was not just the *Thiyya* women who had such relations with the Europeans. Some *Nair* women too were romantically linked with the British.

There is an interesting incident Murkot Kumaran talks about in his autobiography. At Chirakkara near Thalassery, a *Nair* woman had a baby boy out of her relation with a European. The boy looked very European, with

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52 a) *Ibid*., p.25.
b) Interview with Prasanna Kesavan. She spoke about an incident in her family.

53 Murkot Kumaran, *Thiyyarude Nila* (Mal.), Kannur, 1934, p. 7.

54 a) Interview with Prasanna Kesavan.
b) See Murkot Kunhappa, *Op.cit*., p. 17, 24.

white skin, blond hair and blue yes. On the same day, a *Thiyya* woman also delivered a baby boy and the kids were exchanged, after the *Nair* family spent a considerable amount for the favour received. Thus, that European-*Nair* kid grew up as a *Thiyya*, while the *Thiyya* kid became a *Nair*![55]

Some of the families which had a history of White connection are Palleri and Kalathil.[56] Russell, I.C.S., Collector of Malabar, had a relation with a woman in the Kalathil family[57]. Historians say that Edward Brennen, the master attendant under English East India Company and founder of Brennen College, had a relation with a *Thiyya* woman in Thalassery and had a daughter by her.[58]

As we have already seen, *Thiyyas* worked in various capacities for the British during colonial rule – they served the British as domestic staff, plantation labourers and in various posts under colonial bureaucracy.

During the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, many native women lived as concubines of Europeans. Among *Thiyyas*, very few were engaged in

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55 Cited in Murkot Kunhappa, *Op.cit*., p. 17.

56 Interview with Madhavi on 23.12.2013 at ' Murkot' in Thalassery. She is the great-granddaughter of Murkot Kumaran. For details, also see, Janaki Abraham, *The Stain of white-Liaisons, Memories, and White Men as Relatives* in *Men and Masculinities*, Vol.9, No. 2, October, 2006, pp. 131-151.

57 Janaki Abraham, *Op. cit*., pp. 138-139.

58 The Hindu July 16, 2013. Recently, a researcher claimed that there were records to prove that Brennen had a daughter named Flora Brennen with a native lady.Also see the article by A.Valsalan, *Brennen Sayippinte Makal* (Mal.), in *AKGCT'S Sangasabdam,* August-September, 2013, pp.27-30.
(M.G.S. Narayanan supports this view and says that the possibility of Brennen having a daughter cannot be ruled out because many Europeans had married or kept local woman as concubines and had children in those relationships too (see Times of India, July 11, 2013).

such relations and many Muslim women also had such liaisons with Europeans.

Apart from concubinage many ladies from Thalassery and Kannur were legally married to Europeans during the first half of the 20th century. Daughter of Potheri Kunhambu, Dr. Paru, a well known doctor and the founder of Potheri hospital at Kannur married an Englishman named Major Christian Bernard Miller. At that time he was working as a doctor at the Military hospital in Kannur.

Some of the people who had White connection also embraced Christianity. In the late 17th century, the English East India Company encouraged the growth of the Eurasian/Anglo-Indian community in India as a means to support English activities.[59] As colonial power grew in the mid 18th century, there was a shift in this policy. According to Janaki Abraham, since fewer colonial offices were open to Eurasians and fears were expressed that Eurasians could pose a possible threat to colonial power.[60]

With the opening of Suez Canal travel from Europe to India became easier and since many European women came to India. That opened up the possibility of European men stationed India marrying women of their own race. Thus many Europeans could marry, have children and settle down India. At the same time, there were also children of mixed race by Europeans. The Indian society did not accept them. Neither did the Europeans. They were thus forced to live as a separate community and came to be known as Anglo-

59 Janaki Abraham, *Op.cit.*,p. 135.
60 *Ibid.*

Indian Community. At Barnasserry in Kannur, there was an Anglo-Indian settlement during the colonial period.

The Anglo-Indians stood as a separate community claiming kinship to the British through genealogy and also through cultural affinities of language and dress. Though they were welcomed neither the British nor the natives, they were provided with many concessions. The Anglo-Indian children were admitted to European schools and preference was given to them in getting jobs under British and compared to the Indians, they received better salary too. For example, an Anglo-Indian loco-pilot received the double amount of salary than his Indian counterpart.

A major feature of the North Malabar's society under colonial rule was the spread of English education. Colonialism actually helped, though unintentionally, backward castes climb up the social ladder. Colonialism with its concept of equality before law, and indigenous reform movements, led to the decline of caste in Malabar by the turn of the twentieth century.

In North Malabar, Western education, the presence of missionary activities and the setting up of factories, where there was free mixing of castes, weakened the caste rigidities. Adrian Mayer, in his account of Malabar in the mid-twentieth century, talks of an occasion when a *Nayadi* walked up and talked without embarrassment while he was with a *Brahmin*, only for the latter to comment later that such a thing could not have happened a few years ago.[61] Till the early Twentieth century, caste barriers, though no longer as strong as in the past, prevailed.

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[61] Adrian C. Mayer, *Land and Society in Malabar*, Bombay, 1952, p. 38.

Vivekodayam, an *Ezhava* Magazine (popularly known as the *Ezhava Gazette*) published under the editorship of Kumaran Asan, condemned the town magistrate of Calicut, Gopala Krishna Aiyer who, in the open court, observed that a *Thiyya* who had not got out of the way of a Nair on the road was 'lucky not to be killed' and that such people deserved to have bones of their body broken.[62] In 1908, the same magazine welcomed the move of Madras University senate, which recommended to the Government that the Basel Mission High school at Calicut should be upgraded to Second Grade College.[63] The Zamorine's College, upgraded to Second Grade College in 1879, only served for the progress of upper castes. *Thiyyas* and other backward castes were not admitted.

Thiyyas expressed the view that it was the responsibility of the government to arrange the facilities for the education for all castes and creeds and hoped that the Basel Mission School would be promoted to a college by the government. Of the students studying at the school at the time, 150 were *Thiyyas*.[64]

Under the direct rule of the British, the caste rigidities were relatively milder. Although caste system remained institutionalised amongst the Indian officials in the colonial bureaucracy, in an urban milieu, caste identities became less important.[65] Friendships cutting across caste lines became

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62 Kumaran Asan (ed.), *Vivekodayam* (Mal.) September 31, 1906, pp. 346-7.

63 Kumaran Asan (ed.), *Vivekodayam*, October-November, 1908, Edn. 4, 1908, p.7.

64 *Ibid*.

65 The socio- religious reform movements in the 19th and 20 th centuries further improved the status of backward castes. Here it is important to note that even Western educated and wealthy backward castes like *Thiyyas* were denied entry in temples in Chirakkal and Kottayam taluks. But, social reformers like Sree Narayana Guru and Vagbadanantha hit back by constructing temples themselves.

common, similar professions and common public interests bringing them together. The period saw several close friendships between *Nairs* and *Thiyyas* despite the latter occupying a distinctively lower status in the traditional caste hierarchy. Murkot Kumaran, a *Thiyya* elite in Thalassery, had close friendship with K.T. Chandu Nambiar,[66] a well known criminal lawyer as well as a leading literary critic in Thalassery. He was also a close friend of O. Chandu Menon.[67] In North Malabar, the British rulers didn't show any caste discrimination towards wealthy *Thiyyas*, Muslims and other backward castes. Western-educated people, irrespective of their castes, obtained jobs in the British government service.

Still, there were many *Nairs* who were deeply conscious of their superiority because of their birth. An interesting anecdote narrated by K.R. Achutan in his biography of C. Krishnan proves this point.[68] In 1907, while Krishnan was practising as a lawyer, he appeared on behalf of Hajiyar, against whom a defamation case was filed by Raman Nair in the court of Malappuram Assistant Collector Ellis (who later became the Collector of Malabar). The case was that Hajiyar had just addressed Raman and not Raman Nair in a letter. Raman Nair argued that the omission of Nair, the name of his caste, was deliberate and that it was done to insult him. It was dismissed by the magistrate, quoting a previous judgement that it was no

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66 Interview with Prasanna Kesavan (83), granddaughter of Murkot Kumaran, at her residence 'Murkot', Thalassery, on 23.12.2013. Also see C.H. Kunhappa, *Op.cit*., p.81.

67 He was the famous Nair novelist and author of *Indulekha*, the first Malayalam novel meeting the literary requirements.

68 K.R. Achutan, *C. Krishnan*, Kottayam, 1971, pp. 59.

crime to address someone without the title of the caste. This incident also reflects the attitude of the British towards caste.

In fact, the regions under native rulers witnessed more caste discriminations compared to North Malabar under British rule. In the erstwhile Travancore, during the second half of the 19th century, *Ezhavas* and other backward castes were denied jobs in Government service. For instance, P.T. Pappu, (father of Dr. Palpu),[69] a document writer, wanted to appear for the Lawyers' Examination conducted by Travancore government and applied for it, but he was denied the opportunity just because he was an *Ezhava*.

Dr. Palpu and his brother were English-educated by missionaries at home in the 1870's, as Government schools were closed in Travancore's Hindu princely State to even wealthy *Ezhavas*. Another son of P.T. Pappu, Velu, passed B.A. in 1882, but he was denied a Government job despite the fact that only seven people had the Degree in Travancore at that time. Later, he joined the British government service as 'Rao Bahadur'[70] and was then promoted as permanent deputy collector.

When Dr. Palpu applied for permission to take the Medical Examination, it was denied and he had to attain the degree from Madras Medical College.[71] While visiting Travancore as a qualified Medical doctor, he went to the palace and pleaded that he be permitted to return to his home

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[69] He was an Ezhava doctor from Travancore and the brain behind 'Ezhava Memorial', submitted to the Travancore ruler on September 3, 1896, highlighting the difficulties faced by Ezhavas to get government jobs and other benefits.

[70] `Rao Bahadur' was a title of honour issued during the era of British rule in India to individuals who had performed great service to the nation. It was awarded to both Hindus and Christians.

[71] K.R Achutan, *Op. cit.*, p.47.

State and serve the Rajah (native ruler). The Rajah's response was to offer Palpu a patch of land with coconut trees on it told him that he could tap toddy from them without having to pay any tax![72]

The discrimination in getting government jobs in Travancore forced *Ezhavas* and Palpu to present a memorial, which was popularly known as Ezhava Memorial, addressed to the Travancore Diwan. Palpu presented the first Ezhava Memorial in 1895, but that received no response. Then, on September 3, 1896, the memorial was presented again, this time as a mass petition signed by 13,176 *Ezhavas*.[73] According to the memorial, 'the condition of our *Thiyya* brothers in British Malabar is so advanced compared to Travancore. In British Malabar the foreign government, which mainly include Christians, provided all facilities to improve their condition in par with other castes. Without any hindrance a *Thiyya* can obtain the highest job available at that time in government service. The majority of the higher government posts are occupied by *Thiyyas* in Malabar. But the situation in Travancore is different. There is no encouragement for English education. There are no opportunities to get government jobs. *Ezhavas* are not interested in giving education to their children. The number of English-educated *Ezhavas* is very small. In, Tranvancore at the time the umber of English educated *Thiyyas* was a mere 25 (the total population of *Ezhavas* in Travancore was approximately 5 lakhs then). In Malabar, lower castes were

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[72] Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella, *Once upon a Time in the West? Narrating modernity in Kerala, South India* in K.N.Ganesh (ed.), *Culture and modernity-Historical Explorations*, Calicut University Press, Malappuram, 2004, p. 43.

[73] Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, *Social Mobility in Kerala: Modernity and Identity in Conflict*, England, 2000, p. 192.

given special incentives receive English education. In Malabar, a majority of *Thiyyas* were English educated and had respectable jobs under British.'[74]

There is a reference in the biography of C.Krishnan to the *Ezhava* Memorial. When Palpu decided to submit the memorial, he sought the opinion in forming an organisation at Madras for the well being of *Ezhavas* there and told about this to C. Krishnan. When Krishnan told him that *Thiyyas* in Malabar considered themselves superior to their counterparts in South Kerala and they had reservations joining the venture. So he cancelled the plan to form such an organisation.[75] This clearly shows how North Malabar, under the direct British rule, enjoyed greater caste mobility of lower castes, compared to other regions in Kerala.

The British rule provided opportunity for higher education, healthcare and employment in the government service irrespective of their caste status. Thus, under the British rule they could easily mingle with others and some of them were unaware of the evil effects of colonialism.[76]

Some *Thiyya* elites even supported the continuance of the British rule and had a pro-British attitude. Caste was modified during this period in

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[74] Quoted from Velayudhan Panikkassery, *Doctor Palpu,* Trichur, 1970, pp. 56-65.

[75] K.R. Achutan, *Op. cit*., p. 48.
Also see C. Krishnan, B.A,(Chowghat) *The lower classes in Travancore* in *Madras Mail*, dated Ist September, 1900.

[76] Interview with Prasanna Kesavan on 23.12.2013 at her residence, Murkot, Thalassery. She said that, they did not experience any obvious caste discrimination as they belonged to a wealth family and they had no problem with British rule, initially. Her father got a job in Burma and she and her grandfather (Murkot Kumaran) went there. When they saw racial atrocities, they could realize the evil effects of colonialism. Burma, then, was a British colony and there were separate settlements or streets for Whites and non-Whites. Even there were separate hospitals for Asians and Europeans (Asiatic and European hospitals). Lunki Line was a settlement of non-Whites.

accordance with the contemporary requirements in society. Under colonialism backward castes like *Thiyyas* in North Malabar achieved progress and considered themselves superior to their counterparts in Travancore-Cochin and in South Malabar.[77]

It is interesting to note that some *Thiyyas* even considered themselves as equal or even superior to higher castes. C.H. Kunhappa in his autobiography, talks of how the numerically dominant *Thiyya* boys at the Thalassery Mission High Schools used to make fun of Nair students, calling them "Nayarukutty nayakkutty, thiyyarukutty theekutty", meaning "Nair children are puppies and *Thiyya* children are smart boys." They also said, "Njayar, thingal, chovva, nayaru thiyyare thozhuka", which could be translated as "On Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, *Nairs* should bow before *Thiyyas*."[78]

During the first half of the 20th century, many higher castes, including *Nairs*, lost their earlier wealth and social status. *Nairs* also suffered because their famed martial skills were not in demand during the British rule. According to an article in the *Nair Samudaya Parishkarini* (a monthly founded by C. Krishna Pillai), the British did not encourage *Nairs* to be warriors either because of insecurity or distrust. The article also stresses the importance of education[79]. But, even after being educated, many of them were jobless.

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77 K.R. Achutan, *C. Krishnan*, Kottayam, 1971, p. 48.
78 C.H. Kunhappa, *Op.cit*., p. 79.
79 Madhavan Nair in *Nair Samudaya Parishkarini*, Book 1, Issue 12, 1905, p. 370.

But at the same time, *Thiyyas* in this region were highly modern and Western-educated.[80] According to Pazhayannoor Rama Pisharodi, *Thiyyas* were remarkably advanced and progressive. It was not surprising that such people did not care for the higher caste, who claimed to be superior purely on account of their birth. When it comes to intellect, willingness to work hard and character, few from other castes could surpass *Thiyyas*.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the growing rate of urbanisation and factory system, among other factors, facilitated the interaction between the different castes in the public arena.

Along with the upper castes, lower castes like *Thiyyas* also made progress under the British rule.

Under colonialism, the agrarian subsistence economy underwent a drastic change. The economy now depended on food import and commercial crop export. As a result of changes in relative prices, coconut gradually began to replace rice along the coastal tracts, while pepper dominated the foothills in the east.

The important centres of European activity in Malabar were Kannur, Thalassery, Kozhikode and Palakkad. These centres provided more job opportunities even in the early period of European contact. A group of native contractors from the *Thiyya* community was attracted to these centres, which monopolised the supply of provisions, vegetables, toddy etc.[81]

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[80] Pazhayannur Ramappisharodi, *Naveenabharatam (Vol. 1)*, Thalassery, 1938, p. 118-119.

[81] Murkot Kunhappa, *Op. cit.*, 1975, p. 2.

Thiyyas also monopolised *Abkari* (liquor) trade in North Malabar.[82] The commercialisation of agriculture and the growth of industries gave a fillip to the trading activities in the port towns. While the trade with the Western countries was largely monopolised by European trading companies, the *Mappila* merchants dominated the rice imports and the trade with the Arab countries.

The development of urban centres like Kannur and Thalassery in the colonial period helped many native traders to acquire rich merchant capital, which they utilised in a profitable native trade. This encouraged many merchants and traders from neighbouring areas to migrate to these urban centres. As a result of Britain's commercial policies internal and external trade increased and this helped the growth of urban centres. The rural industry tended to cluster around these trading centres, or the trading stations located themselves near large villages or groups of villages. They called their trading stations as 'factories'. These factories formed networks of circulation of money, merchants and material. The European factories sometimes had a powerful attraction for artisans as sites that could offer them greater security

[82] Murkot Ramunny (Sr.), father of Murkot Kumaran, was into toddy business. In the 19th century, his company had the monopoly of the toddy trade in Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurubranad and Kozhikode taluks of erstwhile Malabar district. *Thiyyas* in these taluks were engaged in all activities related to toddy business. Among them were shop-owners and toddy-tappers; they had, in short, monopolised the entire business of toddy.
There were also *Thiyya* toddy business magnates like Karayi Bappu and his brother Karayi Kutty. They were very rich. Karayi Bappu had a company that had direct trade with Britain.

of life and livelihood.[83] Thalassery, a port town in erstwhile Madras district, was an important trading centre under British and there they had a factory.

The growth of industrial establishments in the second half of the 19th century resulted in the migration of backward castes like *Thiyyas* and *Cherumas* to these areas. Being important British settlement and military stations, these urban centres maintained law and order and many people took refuge here with their valuables. Those merchants who stayed within the limits of English settlement also enjoyed considerable security. This could have been the reason behind the presence of numerically large population of *Thiyyas* and *Mappilas* in Kannur and Thalssery Municipalities.

Even backward caste people from other parts of Malabar migrated to places like Chirakkal *taluk*. These urban centres provided a source of livelihood also to those people who converted to Christianity. Apart from the Basel Mission establishments, native industrial firms like Aaron Spinning and Weaving factory, owned by Samuel Aaron, provided employment opportunities to backward castes and Christian converts. Being an important European centre, even converts from distant places like Ponnani migrated to Chirakkal *taluk*.[84]

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83 Thirthankar Roy, *The Economic History of India, 1857-1947*, Third Edition, New Delhi, 2012, p. 35.

84 Interview with Sumitri Samuel (83), on 17-10-2010. She was a worker at Aaron Spinning and Weaving Mill, Pappinisseri, Kannur. She is a converted Christian. Her father's name was Daniel, a Christian convert from a Hindu family at Ponnani. His earlier name was Achutan Menon and worked as a school Teacher at Ponnani. After the conversion, he was offered a job at Aaron's company as a 'Mesthiri'.
The visit to Pappinissery, the place where Aaron Spinning and Weaving Mill was located, revealed that many people from the Hindu community embraced Christianity during the second half of the 19th and in the early decades of 20th

Muslims of Malabar

Among the important Muslims families, famously known for their merchant activities, were Keyi[85] and Oliyath Vazhayil (O.V.). Muslim families like Malieckal and Mayan families also benefitted from foreign rule. The Keyis were one of the biggest landed aristocracies in Thalassery[86]during the colonial rule and they still maintain that stature. The socio-economic and political structure existed in British India gave ample opportunities to Keyis to establish their supremacy in trade and commercial activities and to grab wealth at an astonishing level.

They owned the famous Malabar Hill in Mumbai. The compensation offered by the Saudi Arabia government for the demolition of Keyi Rubat, which Mayin Kutti Keyi had built in Mecca, for the right heir is now 1 billion US dollars.[87]

The Keyis extended support to the British. They were considered as the wealthiest among the Muslims in Kerala. Regarding the origin of these

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century. Sumitri said that among this Christian converts many came from distant places and later settled in Chirakkal taluk. Her husband's family had also come from South Malabar.

85 Facilities for maritime trade in Thalassery and its growth as an important centre for profitable trade during 17th and 18th centuries attracted many traders and merchants to this coastal town. Among them was a Mappila merchant named Chovvakkaran Aluppy Kakka. The fascinating history of Keyis starts with him. His descendants amassed immense wealth through trading activities. They could acquire landed properties in places as diverse as Malabar, South Canara, Coorg, Bombay, Tinnevelly, Cochin, Travancore and Mecca.

86 C.H. Kunhappa, *Op. cit*., p.55.
Also see Churia Vasudevan,*The Keyis of Malabar*, Tellicherry, 1930 ,
A.P. Ummerkutty, *History of the Keyis of Malabar*(Mal.), *Part I*, Cannanore, 1916.

87 Report in the *The Telegraph*, London, dated April 23, 2013.

Muslim families there are many stories. Most of the Malabar Muslims were of indigenous origin.

One view is that they are of Arab descendant. Arabs had traded at this coast and formed fugitive alliances with native *Thiyyas* or *Chogon* women. Concepts regarding such marriages are rather peculiar in Malabar. The children never seemed to have been claimed by the fathers; in fact, the very fact the word *Mappila* (Malabar Muslims) is said to have been derived from mother ('ma') and child ('pilla'), indicating to whose care this offspring fell.[88]

Another version is that some of them were converted Hindus. There is an argument that during Mysorian interlude many Hindu *Janmies* were forced to embrace Islam; otherwise they would have lost their wealth.[89] Many *Thiyyas, Nairs and Mappilas* in Thalassery and Kannur had the same house names. Notable examples are Murkot and Keloth. This strengthens the argument that Muslims were converted Hindus.

The origin of the Arakkal family challenges this argument though. The Arakkal family was there even before the Mysorian interlude.

Muslims and Hindus had a cordial relationship. Muslims appointed Hindus (*Nairs* and *Thiyyas*) as their 'Karyasthan' (kind of a manager).[90] Prominent servants in the Keyi family were Hindus.

There were many educated Muslims in North Malabar at the time, like M. Mackey of the Keyi family. He was a Registrar and consistently

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88 K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala, vol.2,* New Delhi, 1983, p. 534.

89 Pazhayannur Rama Pisharody, *Op.cit.,* p. 119.
Also see C.H. Kunhappa, *Op.cit.*, p. 55.

90 *Ibid.*

maintained a dairy for several years. Those dairies make interesting reading now, eight decades after he wrote them.

In the diary entry on February 6, 1937, he writes about a cricket match between Europeans, led by H.P. Ward, about whom there is a reference by S. Muthiah in his book Madras Miscellany[91], and Indians, captained by C.P. Pocker, a member of the Keyi family, played at the Tellicherry Maidan[92].

In his diary of 1947, we find him write on August 14: "Power was transferred to the Dominion of Pakistan from British leaders by Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India at Karachi. Jinnah was sworn in as Governor General of Pakistan. Very enthusiastic and colourful scenes were witnessed at Karachi."

On August 15, 1947, Mackey writes: "Independence Day was celebrated all over India. Mountbatten was sworn in as the Governor General. In Tellicherry, the occasion was celebrated in a jovial sense. Muslim League celebrated the day separately at the Juma Masjid." [93]

Mackey also wrote an unfinished book, an autobiography, which gives us several glimpses of life in North Malabar in the last phase of colonialism. The book runs into some 40 hand-written pages. It is interesting to note that he chose to write the book in English, when he could have easily written it in Malayalam. It shows how colonialism impacted those living at the time in different ways.

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91 S. Muthiah, *Madras Miscellany,* Delhi, 2011.
92 M. Mackey, Personal Diary, 1937.
93 M. Mackey, Personal Diary, 1947.

In the book, there are his reflections on various issues of the day. The book, which he began to write in 1949, begins with a reference to Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. He writes:

> "The year 1948 was very important in every respect. It was full of events and tragedies. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, at the hands of one Nathuram Godse, was the most shocking one. It was in the beginning of the year, on Friday, January 30. The culprit was a journalist and a member of the R.S.S; it is an organisation of Hindus having branches all over India and one of its objectives is to establish a Hindu Raj and drive away Muslims from here. They considered Mahatma Gandhi as a well-wisher of Muslims and that was the main cause for the brutish assassination."[94]

Mackey's book is a good source of information about the Muslim life in colonial India. He writes: "Uncle Bambau was one of the few educated men among our community. He studied up to SSLC in our Municipal High School and got himself employed in Arakkal Palace as the secretary to the Rajah of through my father's influence. Though his remuneration was small, he was getting very good benefits and he was considered to be a member of her family by Sultana Aysha Beevi, their ruling lady...

"In my early boyhood, I used to observe the old system of Oathupalli education. Some *Mullas* were running such institutions in their own house and Quran was taught on 'oath palaka'..."

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[94] M. Mackey, manuscript of unpublished book, 1950.

In the book, Mackey also talks a great about freedom fighter Mohammed Abdurahiman Sahib, whose disciple, he says, he was. He writes: “Then came the Central Assembly Election in 1934. The fight (for South Canara constituency) was between Haji Abdul Sathar Essack Sait, now Pakistan ambassador in Egypt, and late Mohammed Abdurahiman Sait. The jurisdiction comprises S. Kanara, Malabar and Nilgiris. About all big people of the districts sided with Essack Sait and the majority of the youngsters with Abdurahiman Sahib. I was staying then at Edakkad and…I decided to support the latter (Abdurahiman Sahib) along with a handful of youngsters. All my uncles and other relatives were in the opposition. So we earned their displeasure. However we worked boldly against the old opposition and we could secure 10 or 12 votes out of 30 from that *firka* (revenue circle). In the election our party was defeated by a small margin. That was the most highly contested election and it created a rift in the community and the rift was in existence till the achievement of Independence. There was a clash at Calicut where the result (of the election) was announced….

> “Mr. Abdurahiman was a great leader of the Moplah community. He was very sincere in his actions, religious, bold and kind-hearted. He was also a staunch Congress leader till his death in 1946. He left school when he was studying for B.A. (Honours) during Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921 and Kilafat. Several times he courted arrest and went to jail. In 1931 he was carrying on with Salt Satyagraha. He received *lathi* charges while he was making salt at Calicut beach and was arrested…”

Mickey's book also shows how much importance was given by the middle class, including Muslims, of the day to education. He writes: "As mentioned previously, I joined Govt. Brennen College in June, 1935 and some time later I shifted my stay from Edakkad to Tellicherry. I saw great changes in my new life at Tellicherry. I stayed at Bengalayil house with my stepmother and her six children, who were much under my care and control. The financial position of our family was never sound. However father somehow managed our education…As soon as I came here, the first thing I did was that I got admitted the first two brothers Pocker and Kunhahmed into Mission High School."

The O.V. family too was literally inclined. They had brought out publications such as 'Viswabhanu' in 1936 and it contained contributions from eminent writers of the day, such as P. Kunhiraman Nair, Changampuzha, Idappally Raghavan Pillai, Murkot Kumaran, Kadathanat K. Madhavi Amma, E.M.S. and V.K. Narayana Bhattathiri. The foreword was written by poet Vallathol, who praised the four young publishers, O.V. Abdulla, O.V. Abubacker, O.V. Ummer Kutty and O.V. Abdulkader, for their effort at a time when Muslims in Kerala hadn't made their presence felt in literature.[95]

Niches in the lower links of the trading networks created opportunities for *Thiyyas* to carve out riches.[96] Since the early days of the British colonial rule, which began in Malabar in 1792, the *Thiyya* community had provided most of the economic and social intermediaries for the European community

[95] See O.V.Abdulla, et al., (pub.) *Viswabhanu*, Calicut, 1936.

[96] T.M. Thomas Issac, et al., *Democracy at Work in an Indian Industrial Co-operative -- The story of Kerala Dinesh Beedi*,Ithaca,1998, p. 27.

in North Malabar; some of the *Thiyya* families continued to have kinship ties with the Anglo-Indian community.

Thiyyas responded warmly to the missionary schools that were opened, and a Western-educated middle class emerged.[97] In Chirakkal and Kottayam *taluks* of the Malabar district, the decline in the prestige of caste and landed property paved way for new economic and professional classes. Prestige was now associated with economic classification such as industrialists, owners of factories, employment in government service etc. Affluent businessmen and industrialists enjoyed a greater status than the traditional landed aristocracy.

Many younger members of the most of the old aristocratic families were aware of the advantages of education and attained qualifications that made them eligible to enter professions and Government jobs**.** Among them were quite a lot of people belonging to *Nair* and *Nambiar* castes. The early representatives of the professional middle class among this community were O. Chandu Menon, A.C. Nambiar, V.K. Ryru Nambiar,[98] C. Sankaran Nayar, K.T. Chandu Nambiar, C. Kunhirama Menon and K.P. Achutha Menon.

However, *Namboodiris* in 19th century did not care much for the Western education, though some of them *Namboodiris* worked as 'Amsom'[99] *Adhikaris*. A minority of them was engaged in the activity of tile making and weaving.

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97 *Ibid.*

98 He is the father of A.K. Gopalan, famously known as AKG, the first opposition leader in India and a great communist from Kerala.

99 *Amsom* was the lowest administrative unit. *Adhikari* means head or superior officer.

Namboodiris were mainly employed in religious activities and most of them were landed aristocrats and belonged to the wealthy class. So it wasn't entirely surprising that a good majority of them didn't show any interest in the Western education. Those employed in the Government services were negligible.

The rise of *Thiyyas*

They strictly followed old customs and traditions and a majority of them feared that they would lose their caste sanctity if they freely mingled with backward castes. But for lower castes, the only way to reach higher position was through education. *Thiyyas*, Kambil Ananthan argues in his book, were always educated.[100]

Backward castes like *Thiyyas* had nothing to lose by receiving Western education and gaining Government jobs. In fact, people from backward castes considered education as a weapon to fight caste inequalities and hoped that joining the government service would enhance their social status. *Thiyyas* appreciated the role of English education played in their climb up the social ladder.[101]

The income derived from the practise of professions or employment in government service may not have always been adequate, but people seemed to have preferred such income to that obtained from land agriculture. The importance of caste and land supplemented by that of wealth, education and

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[100] Kambil Ananthan, *Kerala Charithra Niroopanam Athava Thiyyarude Pouranikathvam* Mal.), Kannur, 1935, p. 162.

[101] Murkot Kumaran (ed.) *Kerala Chinthamani* (Mal.), Book 7, Vol. 8, 1913, p. 210.

employment, and the new economic professional classes had practically displaced the old land owning aristocracy of the upper castes.

Prestige was increasingly associated with the learned professions and administrative services. At the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of the English educated people belong to *Thiyya* castes; their number was significantly higher than their counterparts in Travancore and Cochin.[102] Among the English-educated women in Malabar, *Thiyyas* stood first. The following table shows the statistics in 1913.

Thiyyas	**Out of 1000 literates**			**Out of 10,000 English educated people**		
	TOTL	**MALE**	**FEMALE**	**TOTAL**	**MALES**	**FEMALES**
Malabar	**99**	**176**	**23**	**51**	**92**	**12**
Cochin	**82**	**154**	**12**	**14**	**27**	**1**
Travancore	**101**	**186**	**17**	**22**	**50**	**3**

We could find that the number of educated *Ezhavas* in Travancore was larger than in Malabar but in the case of Western education, Malabar had the upper hand.[103]

[102] Kumaran Asan , (ed.) *Vivekodayam*, November-December, 1913.
[103] *Ibid.*

In a colonised economy, Western education and colonial modernity went parallel to each other. These two were closely related. Colonial education fastened the idea of colonial modernity.

In North Malabar, which was under the direct British rule, there were opportunities for backward castes to seek Western education. Those who were Western-educated were impressed by the progress, scientific and otherwise, achieved in the West and the rational spirit which guided its people.

In the second chapter we had analysed how a favourable atmosphere for the spread of Western education was created and schools and colleges came in to existence in Malabar. In the latter half of the 19th century, the primary schools in these centres were upgraded to middle schools and subsequently as high schools. By the end of the century, many high schools were further upgraded to second grade colleges affiliated to the University of Madras.

In 1888, Victoria College (Palakkad) and in 1891, Brennen College (Thalassery) were started.[104] However, the facilities for higher education were meagre in Malabar and many wealthy families sent their children to places like Madras, Coimbatore and Mangalore. Presidency College (Madras), St. Alosious College (Mangalore), St. Joseph's College (Trichinopoly) were some of the colleges where students from North Malabar studied.[105]

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[104] C. A. Innes, *Madras District Gazetteer: Malabar*, Madras, 1951 (edn.), pp. 295-303

[105] Interview with A.V.Sreenivasan at Thalassery on 18.12.2013. He says that many of his relatives studied at these places. Changat Gopalan, his grandfather's sister's son studied at St. Alosious, Mangalore.

Many of the *Thiyya* families utilised the limited educational facilities available during that time and a good number of Matriculates in the region came from that community. A *Thiyya* boy named Palleri Kannan Kutty in fact scored the first rank in the Matriculation Examination in the Madras Presidency. In 1916, he was appointed as the first headmaster of the newly started Upper primary school at Koodali near Kannur.[106] The school was owned by 'Koodali *Yajamananmar*', famous feudal *Nair* landlords.[107]

Many people benefited from foreign rule and they played an important role in shaping the socio-cultural history of the region. Among them were Potheri Kunhambu, Thatha Kanaran, E.K. Janaki Ammal, Murkot Kumaran and Murkot Ramunny.

During the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, many backward caste people were recruited in several government services on the basis of merit. Their inferior caste status did not usually come in the way of getting employment under the British government. Under the colonial rule, many *Thiyyas* rose to the higher positions in the society.

Colonial interaction resulted in the emergence of a new social group in the society of North Malabar. Many backward caste people considered a job in the British government service as a symbol of social status and hoped it would free them from caste discriminations. At that time, government servants were considered as the successors of old rulers ('pazhaya thamburakkanmar').[108] The British were not much bothered about their caste

[106] Murkot Kunhappa, *Op. cit.,* p. 97.
[107] This shows that education can uplift the social status of an inferior caste.
[108] Murkot Kunhappa, *Op.cit.,* p. 158.

status and even a peon in revenue service belonging to a lower caste enjoyed special privilege because of which he could visit a Brahmin house; such a visit was otherwise not allowed by the existing caste rules.

Many members from the prominent *Thiyya* families in Chirakkal and Kottayam *taluks* rose to the highest positions available at the time for an Indian, like deputy collector, sub-judge, Taluk Tahasildar and College Principal. They were many lawyers too. They worked in I.C.S. as well. Some of these prominent families were Potheri, Cheruvari, Murkoth, Churyayi and Vachali.

Many *Thiyyas* worked as Municipal Chairmen, surveyors and teachers. Churayi Kanaran[109] and Uppot Kannan were Deputy Collectors.

Kanaran, in fact, was the first Malayali to reach that position. He drew the full salary (Rs. 600) as pension from the British Government, but he got it only after presenting his case strongly. He had a highly successfully career in the service and he wrote to Collector that he was eligible for a larger pension than he was granted, as he had put in 16 years in the judicial department and another 23 in the revenue department.[110]

The Collector forwarded the request to the Revenue Board, adding a note praising the fine work Kanaran had done for the government while in service. In that board was William Robinson, who was a Malabar Collector earlier. He recommended strongly the case of Kanaran, making special

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109 Interview with Prasanna Kesavan on 23.12.2013. Churyai Kanaran was her grandfather's (Churyai Raman Tahsildar) brother.
Also see Murkot Kunhappa, *Op. cit.*, p. 5 & 52.

110 *Deepam*, Vol. 8, Thalassery, 1930, p. 297.

mention of his efforts during the *Mappila* riots and about how his life was in danger on more than one occasion, especially when Henry Valentine Connolly (Malabar Collector) was murdered.

The Madras Government supported the recommendation and the Secretary of State for India, Duke of Argyll decreed that Kanaran be given Rs. 600 as pension as a special case. Kanaran settled down at Thalassery, where he was the vice president of the Municipal Council till death. Though he was a faithful servant of the British government, he never showed any soft corner for the British when they ganged up against him. Once at the Municipal Council, when a European member behaved improperly, he showed him the door, literally and told him: "That is the way for you to go."[111]

Kanaran had indeed led an active social life. He had set up the first girls' school at Thalassery, in 1870, the Town Girls' School.

There were several other prominent *Thiyyas* who held important positions. The first Indian Principal of Victoria College, Palakkad, was a *Thiyya*, P. Sankunni[112] (from June 4, 1916 to September 21, 1921). He was popularly known as 'Principal Sankunni'.

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111 *Ibid.*, p.298.

112 See 18th tour of H.E the Right Hons, The Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras, Malabar and Coimbatore on October 14 th to 25th, 1917,KRA.
Also see Murkot Kunhappa, *Op.cit.,* p. 29.

Churyai Raman,[113] Karayi Govindan, Panagatan Krishnan,[114] Onden Kunhambu and Kunhiraman Tahasildar[115] were Tahsildars. Panangatan Kannan, Divan Bahadur and E.K. Krishnan were sub judges. C.V. Gopalan Munsif,[116] Churyayi Kunhappa, Kottieth Ramunny,[117] Kottieth Krishnan (he was the member of Madras Legislative Assembly from 1925 to 1929),[118] Oyitti Krishnan, Potheri Kunhambu and C. Krishnan were prominent advocates. In 1930, the British Government nominated Krishnan as a representative of the Madras Legislative Council. Cheruvari Govindan was the Shirastedar at the Thalassery District Court for a long time and he was also a Municipal Councillor for six years.[119]

Murkot Ramunny, son of Murkot Kumaran, served as a pilot in the Second World War veteran and went on to become an I.A.S. officer. He was also involved in the reorganisation of the Indian Air Force. After the independence of India, it was his responsibility to partition the Indian Air Force officers between India and Pakistan[120].

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[113] Interview with Prasanna Kesavan on 23.12.2013. Churyai Raman was her grandfather and the father-in law of Murkoth Kumaran, an eminent Thiyya literary figure at Thalassery.

[114] B. No. 123, Sl. No. 4 & 7, Revenue Department Files, 1912.

[115] Interview with A.V. Sreenivasan on 29.03.2013. He is the grandson of Kunhiraman Tahasildar.

[116] Interview with A.V.Sreenivasan on 23.12.2013, C.V. Gopalan was his father's uncle,
Also see B. No.2, Sl.No.81, Public(1934) Department, KRA.

[117] In 1906, Kottieth Ramunny and K.Chantan, a retired Deputy collector founded the *Sri Gnanodaya Yogam* for the upliftment of the Thiyyas of Malabar.

[118] Speech delivered by Murkot Kumaran at the condolence meeting held at Thalassery in memory of Kottieth Krishnan in C.K.Damodaran(publisher), *Sreeman Kottieth Avarkal*, Thalassery, 1939.

[119] *Deepam*, Vol. 8, Thalassery, 1930, p. 300.

[120] Murkot Ramunny, *The Sky was the Limit*, New Delhi, 1997, p. 1.

C.K. Lakshmanan, who belonged to the Cheruvari-Kottieth family of Kannur, was a multifaceted personality, who became the Director-General of Health Services during the British rule. He was the also the first Malayali to compete at the Olympics. He took part in the 110m hurdles at the 1924 Olympics in Paris. He also played first class cricket for Madras. "He excelled the British in sport and was widely respected by them," said Col. C.K. Krishnan, Lakshmanan's grandnephew.[121]

Many occupied subordinate ranks of the colonial bureaucracy, such as clerks of advocates. According to Antonio Gramsci, "the ruling classes achieve power through brute power and wily trickery. Coercion was one of the many means by which ruling ideologies were maintained."[122]

Acts of collaboration

Colonial bureaucracy was one of the mediums through which colonialism spread its tentacles over the colonised people. The perpetuation of domination through an acceptance of domination by the subject was through an internalisation of the 'virtues' of domination itself. In other words the consent of the 'subjected' was ensured.[123] This cultural hegemony works not by propaganda, but by appealing to people's common sense, or the values they understand and experience through their everyday life worlds.[124] For example, British ruled India with a relatively small number of soldiers and bureaucrats, and much of their oppressive colonial apparatus was managed

[121] Interview with Col. C.K. Krishnan at his house at Kannur on 22.12.2013.
[122] Quoted from Paul Gillen and Devleena Ghosh, *Colonialism and Modernity*, Australia,2007, p. 135.
[123] K.N Panikkar, *Colonialism, Culture and Resistance*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 20.
[124] Paul Gillen and Devleena Ghosh, *Op.cit*., p.135.

and supplied by Indian employees, people whom lord Macaulay in his notorious 'Minute' called a "class who may be interpreters between us and the million whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect."[125]

Here colonial bureaucracy became an active collaborator in making the domination of the Britishers over the colonised Indians. But it has to be mentioned that there were orders prohibiting government servants from taking part in political movements.[126] In the case of North Malabar, there were many historical evidences which show that many people who became part of colonial bureaucracy, who were the products of social and cultural changes engendered by colonial intervention, openly supported foreign rule. One such example is the Murkot family.[127]

In Murkot Kumaran's autobiography, written in the form of a letter to his son Kunhappa, he talks about Achuthan, a Congress MLA. He was a staunch Congress worker and Kumaran accuses that his life's ambition was to obstruct the progress of *Thiyya* by joining hands with *Savarnas* in the name of nationalism. He also alleges that Achuthan tried to ridicule the unification of *Thiyyas* and gave it a communal colour.[128] *Mitavadi* [129] was of the view that

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[125] Quoted from Paul Gillen and Devleena Ghosh, *Op. cit*., p.135.

[126] Sl. No. 19, B. No. 204, Revenue Records (Malabar Collectorate), 1916-20, KRA.

[127] Interview with Prasanna Kesavan on 23-12-2013.

[128] Murkot Kunhappa, *Op.cit*., p. 20.

[129] *Mitavadi* was started from Thalassery in 1907 under the editorship of Murkot Kumaran but its publication ended in 1909. In 1912, the paper was bought by C. Krishnan, a prominent lawyer and *Thiyya* leader, who published it from Kozhikode, as a magazine, on behalf of *Thiyyas.* Poet Kumaran Asan's masterpiece, *Veenapoovu*, was first published in *Mitavadi*. In 1921, it was

'Nationalism' as an ideology was not able to find a satisfactory solution for the problem of caste inequality.

C. Krishnan wrote in *Mitavadi* that Achuthan was not just a traitor of the nation but an enemy to their community.[130] Through *Mitavadi*, he criticised the attitude of Congress. According to him, the British rule ensured equality among all castes and said that self rule was not a substitute for a good British rule. Till backward castes became capable of having their share in the administration, the British rule should continue, he wrote. This was the reason why he criticised Congress's policies.[131] According to *Mitavadi,* an India without the British Government would be like a house with nobody to protect it.[132]

There is a telling photograph from the annual publication of the B.E.M.P. High School, Thalassery, from 1941, featuring the two boys who came third in the fancy dress competition. The boys, one of them dressed as a native and the other as a female Red Cross nurse, are shown with banners asking 'Help Britain Win the War' and to buy Defence Loans[133] in order to Make India Strong[134].

Talking of published pictures during the times of World Wars, *Mitavadi* carried, in 1916, a photograph of a group of *Thiyya* girls who staged

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converted into a weekly, then a daily and again as a magazine till October, 1938, when it finally went out of publication.

130 Moyyarath Sankaran, *Op.cit*., p. 86.

131 K. R Achutan, *Op.cit*., p.141.

132 *Ibid*., p. 142.

133 Indian Defence Loans were introduced in 1940.

134 See Appendix.

a play at Mahe to collect fund for the First World War.[135] In the same issue, there is a write-up praising lavishly a British I.C.S. officer Sydney Gordon Roberts, along with his full-page photograph. About Roberts, who was the District Magistrate of Malabar, *Mitavadi* wrote that "he put into practice strictly the lofty principles of the British administration…His mastery of Tamil could rival a pundit…He could do several things at the same time…His examinations of cases at session courts were elaborate and complete and if someone was found guilty, he would give severe punishment…He effected several positive changes in the legal system of Malabar…It was during his tenure that new courts were set up at Thalassery and Vatakara…Employing such great minds to rule India is extremely beneficial for the country."[136]

Such admiration for the foreign administrator was not limited to *Mitavadi* alone. There are glowing tributes paid to British officials by P.K. Govindan in his book, *ICS Collectors of Malabar: Jottings from Memory.* Govindan, who began his career as a clerk at the Malabar Collectorate in 1932, wrote: "Canolly canal, Logan's Manual, Malabar Gazetteer, the Teak plantation in Nilambur are monumental personal contributions of ICS men who were Collectors of Malabar. These did not fall strictly within their administrative duties. In administration they gave their best and brought to bear in the discharge of their duties, a judicious approach and strict financial propriety."[137]

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[135] *Mitavadi*, February, 1916, Kozhikode, p.1.
[136] *Mitavadi*, February, 1916, Kozhikode, p. 30.
[137] P.K. Govindan, *ICS Collectors of Malabar: Jottings from Memory*, Kozhikode, 1998, p. 15.

In a 1909 issue of *Janmi*, which claimed to be the only magazine in Malayalam for landlords, we could see Governor General Earl Canning being an extremely kind man who had reduced the land tax in 1860.[138]

Deepam, in an editorial in a 1930 issue, praised the British government profusely for its education policies. The magazine, quoting the report of the Education Director of the Madras State for 1928-29, wrote: "It was worth noting that the government did all it could in encouraging education. The government was not averse to starting new schools or extending grants to schools. The government policy of promoting basic education is laudable. The government's approval to start a school in regions where there are 500 or more residents led to the opening of 687 new schools.

> "…There is an increase in the number of girls' schools and girl students. It was because of the government's decision to allow a girls' school for regions with residents of more than 2000 that 500 new schools could be opened; among them 62 are only for Muslim girls. New secondary schools have been started in various places. For this we are indebted to the government, the district and local boards. The government also needs to be complimented on promoting collegiate education. It may be remembered that it was last year that Annamalai University was set up. The number of college students, both male and female, has increased. The policy that paved the way for the setting up of colleges for specific professions is also laudable."

[138] *Janmi*, Book 2, Vol. 11, 1909, p. 256.

Deepam also took note of the government's concern for the underprivileged sections of the society, and said: "The government is helping the lower castes greatly. Separate schools have been opened for them. The government's policy in this matter should be praised. The Education Director has said that the district and local boards have incurred a loss of Rs. 2 lakhs because of the concession allowed by the government to the lower castes in their education fees. We are extremely happy to hear that. We are in fact surprised that the loss is only this much, given the government's policy favouring the education of the lower castes."[139]

The praise from *Deepam* for government's benevolent policy on education is significant because there was criticism that the poor from lower castes had faced extreme difficulties in pursuing learning. Murkot Kumaran's novel *Vasumathi,* which is a fair portrayal of *Thiyyas* at the time, has a reference to the issue. He writes that the novel's hero Damodaran could not pursue higher education despite being talented and intelligent because he could not afford it and there was no help from the community.[140]

An incident involving Kunhiraman,[141] a *Tahsilda*r, also proves there was support for the British from different quarters. When the *Tahsildar*'s son came home wearing Khadi, he burnt the shirt, which was a symbol of a fight against the British.

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139 *Deepam*, Vol. 1, No. 7, Kochi, 1930, p. 254.

140 Murkot Kumaran, *Vasumathi,* (published by Mrs. N. Kumaran Asan), Thonnakkal, reprint, 1945, p. 35.

141 Interview with A.V. Sreenivasan on 18-12-2013.
His grandfather (Kunhiraman Tahasildar) burned Khadi clothes of his son Ramakrishnan, who was a congress supporter, who came to house wearing Khadi cloths.

Another example of unflinching loyalty to the British is C.V. Gopalan Munsif, who was a most sincere British Government servant, according to Murkot Kumaran. Murkot paid a glowing tribute to him in the published speech by Gopalan on Sree Narayana Guru. Gopalan had known Guru personally for 24 years.[142] Guru had stayed at his house in Thalassery and he therefore changed the name of his house to Narayanavialasam. He never took bribe and went strictly by the British rules.[143]

We could find even more examples to prove the loyalty of *Thiyyas* to the British. In a memorial submitted by Sankunni, the Principal of Victoria College, Palakkad, he confirmed the loyalty to the British Raj and seemed grateful to the British.

The memorial says: "We enjoy the blessings of peace and order, which could not be exaggerated. We are a community greatly handicapped in the race for progress on account of the social position which the so-called high caste Hindus assigned to us. But under the benign British government we enjoy peace and liberty, which enable us to make headway against the disabilities heaped on us."[144]

The bitterness that *Thiyyas* felt against atrocities from the higher castes could be seen elsewhere too. A poem titled *Anacharamarddanam* was published by M. Choyi Master at Vatakara in 1931 and it exhorts *Thiyyas* to wake up and fight against injustices and inequalities. The poem, of which

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142 Guru Prasad Swamikal(pub.), *Sree Narayana Guru Swamikal (Oru Prasangam)* (Mal.), 1934, Thalassery, p. 13.

143 Interview with A.V.Sreenivasan.

144 18th tour of H.E. the Right Hons, The Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras, Malabar and Coimbatore on October 14th to 25th, 1917,KRA.

2,000 copies were printed in the first edition, is mainly about the right of a *Thiyya* to shave oneself. The author wonders why only *Thiyyas* among all Hindus are barred from shaving.[145]

In an editorial in *Deepam* in 1930, a strange incident is mentioned to highlight the plight of a man belonging to lower caste. An elderly *Thiyya* was sent a notice by the temple authorities for walking along a road, alleging that he had `polluted' it.[146] The interesting fact is that he had been using the same road for years, but he was not charged then because he was a government servant. As soon as he retired, he was charged. Those who pressed the charges obviously feared him. Quoting L.D. Swamikkannu Pillai, the second president of the Madras Legislative Council, *Deepam* argues that self-governance should enter India only through the door that saw the exit of the caste system.

We could find several articles in praise of the British rule in magazines published at the time, such as the one by Raosaheb A. Gopalan in *Bharathadeepam,* in which he compares the rue of the British to that of the Indian kings who reigned earlier.[147] In *Bhargava Kshethram*, a book of Kerala history prescribed for the S.S.L.C. Examination, I.R. Panicker also praises the British for the just way they punished the crime, regardless of caste, unlike in the past[148].

The feeling that being ruled by a casteless British rule would be better than putting up with the atrocities from higher castes was not limited to those underprivileged in Kerala. B.R. Ambedkar had also believed that the issue of

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145 M.Choyi Master(pub.), *Anacharamarddanam*, Vatakara, 1931, p. 4.
146 *Deepam*, Vol. 1, No. 9, Thalassery, 1930, p. 335.
147 *Bharathadeepam,* Book 1, Vol. 9, p. 270.
148 I.R. Panicker, *Bhargava Kshethram*, Palakkad, 1928, p. 88.

untouchability was as paramount --or even more than – that of the National movement. He said at the Legislative Council of Bombay in 1939: "Whenever there has been a conflict between my personal interests and the interests of the country as a whole, I have always placed the claim of the country above my personal claims...But I will also leave no doubt in the minds of the people in this country that I have another loyalty to which I am bound with and which I can never forsake. That loyalty is the community of Untouchables, in which I am born, to which I belong, and which I hope I shall never desert. And I say this to the house as strongly as I possibly can that whenever there is a conflict of interest between country and Untouchables so far as I am concerned Untouchables' interests will take precedence over the interests of the country." [149]

The British implemented certain rules for government servants which ensured their loyalty towards the rulers. Some officials supported foreign rule in the hope that they would get promotion and other benefits. Take the case of Chandu Nair and Kurumbranatil Krishna Kurup, two Sub-Inspectors who acted with force against the Payyannur Satyagraha. Chandu Nair had caused damage at Samuel Aaron's weaving unit a Kulappuram; he had also beaten up the workers there. Aaron filed a case against him, and won, as the Government refused even a lawyer for its own employee.[150]

Colonial bureaucracy was fashioned in such a style that they brought in discipline and punctuality. The government servants were barred from

[149] Christophe Jaffrelot, *Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability: Analyzing and Fighting Caste*, England, 2005, p. 94.
[150] Moyyarath Sankaran, *Op.cit.,* p. 179.

wearing *Khadi*. The wearing of Indian dress in public functions by employees of the East India Company had been banned officially in 1830.[151]

On certain occasions, a dress code was implemented. For instance, there was this rule that the civil officers of government attending ceremonial functions during the day time should, in the absence of special instructions, wear morning coats.[152] Photographs available from the period prove that native officers thus had adopted the Western style of dressing.

It was not at all uncommon to find natives attired in European clothes even when they were not on duty. K.P. Kesava Menon writes about C. Krishnan's appearance in *Vivekodayam.* Krishhnan used to wear white trousers and black coats, he writes.[153]

There is an allegation that, as in the case of other parts of colonial India, in North Malabar too certain sections in the newly formed middle class kept away from the National Movement. The dominant classes, foreign and indigenous, had neither the will nor the initiative to bring about any coherent social transformation.

Under the colonial regime in North Malabar, backward castes like *Thiyyas* made progress and improved their economic condition and there existed many *Thiyya Janmies*.[154] But they didn't do anything to improve the living condition of other socially and economically backward *Thiyyas*. On the

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[151] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, United States, 2000, p. 12.
[152] B. No. 22, Sl. No. 15, Revenue Records (Malabar Collectorate), 1916-20.
[153] *Vivekodayam,* C. Krishnan Birth Centenary Supplement, Thiruvananthapuram, 1967, p. 9.
[154] Moyyarath Sankaran, *Op. cit*., p. 36.

other hand, much like *Nairs* and other higher castes, they exploited the labour of such people.

Moyyarath Sankaran in his autobiography alleges that prominent *Thiyya* leader Murkot Kumaran tried to strengthen his position by making different castes clash with one another.[155] Samuel Aaron in his autobiography mentions a strike against the Chandan group, which he said could be termed as the beginning of the National Movement in Kannur. Rao Saheb Chantan[156] was the Municipal Chairman at Kannur at the time and he was one of the most prominent supporters of the British rule, though he was extremely popular and was a thorough gentleman.

In North Malabar, the predominant positions in the leadership of the Indian National Congress were occupied by upper castes. Civil Disobedience Movement in Malabar was characterised by the participation mainly of upper castes, particularly *Nairs*. The majority of the participants at the Salt Satyagraha in Payyanur were *Nairs* and *Namboodiris,* most of whom came from the dominant families in the region.[157] Communities like *Thiyyas* and *Muslims* mostly stayed away from the freedom movement. Only one *Mappila* was with Kelappan's march on foot from Calicut to Payyannur, where the Salt Satyagraha was to be inaugurated.[158]

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155 *Ibid*., p. 80.

156 He was a prominent *Thiyya* and a retired Deputy Collector. British government conferred him the title 'Rao Sahib'. In 1934 he was the president of the Chirakkal Taluk *Thiyya* Association, See B.No.2, Sl.No.81, Public(1934)Department, KRA.

157 Moyyarath Sankaran, *Op.cit*., pp.160-167.

158 Dilip M. Menon, *Becoming 'Hindu' and 'Muslim': Identity and conflict in Malabar*, CDS, Working paper, No.255, p.16.

It was only after 1927 that urban centres in North Malabar like Kannur became active in the National Movement.[159] Before that, if somebody from the region wanted to take part in the movement, they had to leave home and go far. Malabar Gopalan (P.C. Gopalan) was one such individual inspired by India's freedom movement. In 1942 he went to Chittoor in Andhra to be part of the movement.[160]

Newspapers and magazines representing lower castes were against the Congress. *Mitavadi* considered the British as friends of lower castes, hailed the progress made by them under British rule and warned the people that a Congress regime would be a return to the age of unbridled caste oppression. For them, the liberation from centuries-old social oppression was of more concern than liberation from the British rule.

Even after making continuous efforts to subordinate the colonised, the majority of Indians realised the importance of getting political freedom. In North Malabar, among the newly emerged social class, a product of colonial rule, some of them actively participated in the freedom movement. The newly acquired social status and economic freedom enabled them to fight against colonialism. There were many people who benefitted from colonialism but later turned against it. Kinathi Narayanan, at whose house Jawaharlal Nehru stayed, Potheri Madhavan Vakkil, Potheri Damodaran, and Samuel Aaron were all active Congress supporters. K.P. Gopalan, a *Thiyya* Congressman,

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159 Samuel Aaron, *Op.cit*., p.114.

160 Interview with P.C. Balakrishnan on 16.03.2008 at Kannur. He was the younger Brother of P.C. Gopalan. P.C. Balakrishnan was a freedom fighter and also took part in Goa Liberation Struggle.
Also see Chirakkal Taluk, *Vikasana Rekha*, 1996.

tried to weaken caste issues by boycotting those who held caste prejudices and encouraged inter dining among members of different castes.

Cultural dimensions of colonialism were so inextricably woven into its economic structures that the totality of colonialism could not be addressed without a full understanding of the cultural process. Cultures were the sites of both colonial oppression and anti-colonial resistance.

The oppressed person or subaltern always has two histories or consciousnesses, one that is enslaved by and complicit with the colonial master and another which is attuned to his/her own lived reality and life and therefore capable of developing into resistance.[161]

The changing socio-economic structure, Western education, the constant circulation of goods, people and ideas between Britain and India created a common social and cultural space. Colonial actions became successful in, to a certain extent, establishing a cultural hegemony over the colonised.

To maintain cultural hegemony, the coloniser had to justify their role by proving the superiority of their culture and the backwardness of the native's culture. It partially became successful in destroying or rejecting certain indigenous cultural practices and, to a certain extent, made intrusions in to it. In the words of K.N. Panikkar "the cultural changes that colonialism tried to bring about were premised on the inferiority of the indigenous culture,

[161] Paul Gillen and Devleena Ghosh, *Op.cit*., p. 135.

which -- as a part of the process of hegemonisation -- was either marginalised or destroyed.[162]

We could see how Western education and colonial bureaucracy created a group of people who were influenced by the Western culture and became loyal followers of the British in North Malabar. These people believed that only through the British rule their interests would get protected. As the coloniser expected, the Western-educated middle class in North Malabar not only worked as the collaborator but functioned as the actual carriers and disseminators of colonial culture. Many of them came within the charmed circle of colonial culture.

These people were moved by the progressive character of colonialism, but were ignorant about the socio-economic and cultural consequences. Natives were willing to be part of the British culture and to support the monarchy in England. In July in 1910 at Kannur, it was resolved at a public meeting that a Town Hall be erected to commemorate the reign of King Edward VII.[163]

Colonial cultural interventions resulted in a departure from the traditional pattern of life, at least to those directly exposed to the influence of the colonial social and cultural engineering.[164]

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[162] K.N. Panikkar, *Colonialism, Culture and Resistance*, New Delhi, 2007, p. 22.
[163] B. No. 114, Sl. No. 22, Department of Revenue files, 1912, Kozhikode Regional Archives.
[164] *Ibid*., p. 27.

Colonial legacies

In Kannur and Thalassery these changes were more visible. There are still remnants of the cultural invasion at Thalassery, such as wooden floors in large houses, which used to the ball room where the British danced, Belgium-glass windows and Lancashire steel.

In the colonial culture, identification with the aggressor bound the rulers and the ruled in an unbreakable dyadic relationship. The ruler and the ruled are interdependent.

The British saw Indians as crypto-barbarians who needed to further civilize themselves. They saw the British rule as an agent of progress and as a mission. Many Indians, in turn, saw their salvation in becoming more like the British, in friendship or in enmity.[165]

Some of the Indians who had lived in Europe were impressed by the ideals of the people in that continent. Dr. P. Natarajan, son of Dr. Palpu, in an interview, spoke highly of the unity that the Westerners showed. "Here we work for the benefit of the individual, whereas the Westerners work for the entire society and that is why they are succeeding," he said in an interview[166].

According to Sanjay Joshi, modernity was a contradictory conception. It brought with it new anxieties, about self, health, sexuality, family, work and social order; it was fractured by traditional values and by economic realities.[167] Any idea of modernity has to be understood within the historical

[165] Ashis Nandy, *Op. cit.*, p.7.
[166] *Dharmaprabha*, Book 1, Issue 2, Thalassery, 1933, p. 42.
[167] Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a middle class in Colonial North India*, New Delhi, 2001.

and cultural context of its rendition keeping in mind the already given constraints of the operation of global capital and its requirements. It is in the colonies that the effects of colonial modernity are felt while the contours of idea may be European.[168]

Colonial modernity represented a compromise both with metropolitan modernity as well as indigenous tradition.[169] The waves of colonial modernity were visible in the colonies through different ways. Colonial conquest underlined the weakness of the traditional order and the need for reform and regeneration of its institutions.[170] An alternative was not entirely found in the Western model presented by colonial rule.

While traditional culture appeared inadequate to meet the challenge posed by the West, colonial hegemonisation tended to destroy the tradition itself.[171] The relationship between indigenous cultural tradition and intellectual transformation in colonial India was mediated by the process of acculturation, occurring through the active intervention of state institutions, voluntary organisations and religious orders.

The areas in which colonial cultural enterprise met with immediate response were religion, language and education.[172] Modernity brought freedoms from poverty, from caste hierarchy, from agricultural manual labour. It is also a fact that modernity forged and articulated from the mid 19th

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168 Dilip M. Menon, *Religion and Colonial Modernity-Rethinking belief and identity* in *E.P.W*., April 27, 2002, p. 1662.
169 *Ibid.*
170 K.N. Panikkar, *Culture and Ideology -- Contradictions in intellectual Transformation of Colonial Society in India*, in *E.P.W*, December 5, 1987, p. 2115.
171 *Ibid.*
172 *Ibid*., p. 2118.

century onwards, in a dialogue between local ideas of justice and equality and European derived notions of modernity and reform. In other words, modern practices are 'neither Western imports' nor 'traditional' but arise instead through engagements between local and external universalist ideals.[173]

In North Malabar, European contact brought certain changes or new practices into the life of the natives. It impacted the socio-cultural life of the people.

Colonialism brought an end to matrilineal system that was practised by some backward castes like *Thiyyas*. People, the Government servants for instance, began to migrate to distant places.

It is interesting to note that even before the promulgation of an Act for Division of joint family properties, the *Thiyya* elite in Malabar had introduced the single family system.

In Malabar, the New Year was celebrated on January 1, while in Travancore and Cochin they celebrated according to the Malayalam calendar. Old-timers recall even Hindus making the sign of cross, sometimes even in the temple premises.[174]

Colonialism also brought in new tastes, as changes were witnessed in the food habits of the natives. Food eaten by the coloniser in each colony

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[173] Caroline Osella and Filippo Osella, *Once upon a Time in the West? Narrating modernity in Kerala, South India* in K .N. Ganesh (ed.) *Culture and modernity-Historical Explorations,* Calicut University Press, Malappuram, 2004, p. 69.

[174] Interview with A.V. Sreenivasan, Thalassery.

made geographical leaps to other colonies, and in the process, post-colonial societies adopted and adapted to 'colonial foods'.[175]

There were arguments that certain types of food became markers in distinguishing the coloniser from the colonised. And this school of thought contends that British colonisers consumed only British type of food on order to differentiate themselves from the colonised.

But scholars like Cecilia Leong-Salobir are of the opinion that colonial food habits evolved over time and were not a deliberate act of imposing imperialistic designs but involved a process of combining local and European ingredients and dishes through the efforts of the indigenous servants.[176] She argues in her book that a distinct colonial cuisine emerged as a result of negotiation and collaboration between the colonial rule produced a new food culture in the colonies which was a combination of the food practices of the British and local people.[177]

The Coloniser had always complained that Indian domestic servants as filthy, dishonest, undisciplined and unintelligent.

But contrary to the colonial notion that servants from lower caste were dirty and untrustworthy, in North Malabar the majority of the servants in the European households were from *Thiyyas*, who were considered to have hygienic habits, despite belonging to a backward caste.

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[175] Cecilia Leong-Salaobir, *Food Culture in Colonial Asia: A Taste of Empire*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011, p.14.
[176] *Ibid*., p.12.
[177] *Ibid.*

The domestic servants were entrusted with food preparation, a service that is intimate, vital and essential to health and wellbeing. The new food habits of the coloniser and the colonised developed largely through the reliance of the colonisers on their domestic servants for food preparation.[178]

The British impact on the native's food habit was obvious in North Malabar. The local people learnt many new things about cooking from the British, who employed several people, mostly *Thiyyas* as butlers, servants and cooks. Being important European urban centres, Kannur and Thalassery were home to a large number of Europeans, who had to depend on their domestic servants to get Western food.

These servants entered the coloniser's kitchen and learnt Western recipes, which they tried at home too. So the servants, the cooks and the butlers played a significant role in colonising the food habits of the native, which could be construed as an act of passive collaboration.

A new food culture was thus introduced to Malayalis. It was at Thalassery the first bakery in Kerala was started, by Mampally Bapu. Members of Mampally, a *Thiyya* family, had been associated with the British as butlers.

Europeans preferred baked items. So many natives were trained in baking. Mampally Bapu, who started a biscuit company (Mampally Royal Biscuit Factory) in 1880, attracted foreigners with his sweet products. He studied the taste of cake from bakers from England and made biscuits and bread with the help of his neighbours.

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[178] *Ibid*., p. 12.

December 20, 1883, is an important date in the history of bakery industry of India. It was on that day that a British planter at Anjarakkandy Cinnamon Estate, Murdoch Brown came to Royal biscuits with a cake in his hand and asked Bapu to make one like that. Apart from learning the major ingredients in making cake from Brown, Bapu just smelt it and guessed its composition and ingredients. Thus was India's first cake baked.

Sweets from the Mampally bakery were sent to Egypt and to the troops during First World War.[179] From Thalassery, the bakery industry spread to other parts of Kerala. The Mampally family itself branched out in to places like Kozhikode, where Mampally Gopalan, son of Mampally Bapu started Modern Bakery, Kochi and Thiruvananthapuram in extreme south.

Relatives of Mampally Gopalan, M.P. Karunakaran and Kanari started the Cochin bakery at Kochi. In the 1940's, Kanari went to Thiruvananthapuram and founded Santha Bakery.

In 1910, Nakkadi Achuthan started the first bakery at Kannur, Malabar Bakery. This bakery was set up primarily to provide bread, biscuits and cakes to British troops who were stationed at Kannur.[180]

It is interesting to note that the Mampally family produced several fine cricketers, including P.M. Raghavan, who was the first ever captain of a Kerala (Cochin-Travancore) in the Ranji Trophy (India's premier domestic

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[179] *Thalassery: Sarada Krishna Iyer Memorial Fine Arts Society Smaranika, Thalassery*, 2001, pp. 92-93.

[180] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
Also see *Yoganadam Masika.*

tournament). Cricket, by the way is one of the three `C's Thalassery is famous for. Cakes and circus are the others.

During the colonial era, even the colonised considered following Western food habits combined with traditional tastes as a symbol of colonial modernity. We find in F. Fawcett's book *Nayars of Malabar* that even the Namboodiris, the most traditional amongst the different communities of Malabar, succumbed to these changes. He writes that 'as the old order changeth giving place to new...the celebration of a *sambandham* ceremony at Calicut where there was cake and wine for the guests, and a ring for the bride![181]

K.R. Achutan, in his biography of C. Krishnan, writes that Krishnan liked the European lifestyle and food habits. Krishnan had preferred cutlet for lunch.[182]

There was Western influence in clothing too, especially among those who were English-educated. The practice of wearing European clothes had already spread across the country, among "educated, native gentlemen accustomed to European habits."[183]

Photographs from the period show many men wearing Western-style coats and trousers. Interestingly, you could also see the curious sights of the

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[181] F. Fawcett, *Nayars of Malabar*, Vol.III, New Delhi, 2004, reprint, p. 238.
[182] K.R. Achuthan, *Op .cit*., p. 64.
[183] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, United States, 1996, p. 134.

East meeting the West, with men wearing coat along with a *dhoti*, like Murkot Kumaran used to do, whenever he went on his evening walk[184].

Since colonialism also brought in cosmopolitanism, educated women from *Thiyya* and Muslim communities began to wear sarees. The *Thiyya* women, in fact, were the first to wear sarees in Malabar; they had copied the practice from Parsi women.[185]

The introduction of cricket to India could be considered a part of the colonial cultural transformation. The development of cricket in all countries has been shaped by historical events. The game is closely related with the history of colonialism.

In the Commonwealth countries -- the former British colonies -- cricket is by and large a legacy of the British imperialism. It is at once a memento of and a tribute to the colonial rule.

In England, where modern cricket was born, it was seen as more than a game. "It was invested with a special moral worth. Cricket discourses stressed that it was permeated by a spirit of sportsmanship and fair play which expressed English character and extended to other areas of life."[186] In fact, the idiom "It's not cricket" means "It's not fair or right."

Cricket was introduced to various parts of the globe through the British colonialism. Wherever they established the British imperialism, they started cricket.

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[184] Murkot Kunhappa, *Op. cit*. p. 126.
[185] *Ibid.*, pp. 258-259.
[186] Habibul Haque Khondker, *Cricket, Colonialism, Culture and Cosmopolitanism,* National University of Singapore, 2008.

In the British colonies in the 19th century, cricket was used to reinforce juxtapositions between White colonial settlers and the indigenous population or those subjected to the British rule.

The imperial-minded elite tried to promote the game as a way of identifying with the British Empire. Originally the game of cricket was exported to all of Britain's colonies for one very specific reason, as a way to reinforce a hegemonic cultural order in the face of emancipation of the relative slave populations.

Cricket was effectively a tool of colonialism, much more than just a sport for sport's sake. Cricket and everything it stood for came to be used as a mechanism to distinguish between a civilised 'we' and an unworthy or uncivilised 'them'.[187] As the game evolved, it became more open and was about spreading these civilised values to those considered uncivilised.

In India, it was introduced by the English East India Company in the first half of the 18th century. In the early period, it remained as an elite game played only by Europeans and princes and it was the Parsi community which was the first to play Cricket in India.

The Parsis "were the bridge community between Indian and English cultural tastes". The Parsis originally emigrated from Central Iran over ten centuries ago and over time fully integrated into Indian society.

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[187] Article by Marcus Clark. Edited by Antony Lowe. Additional Research by Helen Midgley. February 2, 2011. *Not Quite Cricket? – Cricket's Relationship with British Colonialism*, University of Sheffield.

In 1668, the East India Trading Company leased the seven islands of Bombay from Charles II and found it the ideal setting for their first port in the sub-content. The Parsis followed in the pursuit of increased working opportunities and soon began to occupy posts of trust in relation to Government and the public sector. The British schools provided the new Parsi youth that accompanied and emerged from this work force with the means to literacy and to become familiar with the quirks of the British establishment. These qualities allowed the Parsi to represent themselves as being similar to the British, who considered other Indians as ignorant, passive, irrational and outwardly submissive. [188]

So, the common man was kept out of the game. Over time, more communities took to the game and gradually it became the very symbol of colonial modernity. Cricket in some sense played a role in both creating a sense of community and in time a larger sense of solidarity across castes and classes. "Cricket was seen as an ideal way to socialize natives (who were perceived as lazy, enervated, and effete) into new modes of intergroup conduct and new standards of public behaviour."[189]

The colonial masters thought that the colonised people could not play, but were worried when people living in colonies not only began to play but at times even beat them at their own game.

The colonial incorporation of India into the Western capitalist economic system was a long historical process. The British, in some parts of

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[188] *Ibid.*

[189] Arjun Appaduari, "*Playing with Modernity: The Decolonization of Indian cricket*" in *Modernity at Large.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 93.

India created *Zamindars*, a land-holding, revenue collecting class; in others, it strengthened the existing landed gentry and the traditional rulers. All in all, a leisurely class was created as a by-product of colonial requirements that patronized cricket.

The leisurely class of the past and the retinues of the royalty had their traditional pastimes of chess, dancing girls, music and other cultural activities. They also grew a new interest: cricket.

As in some cases where the British rulers sought to imitate the local kings and princes, the local elite in turn were equally desperate to imitate their English masters in others. But over the years, cricket did not remain an exclusive preserve of the elite. Thalassery becomes relevant in this context.

It is said that it was at Thalassery that the common man first played cricket. During the early years of British colonialism, Thalassery began to emerge as an important trading centre of the English East India Company.

As was mentioned earlier, the traditional economy was ruined under the colonial rule and it was gradually transformed in to a colonial economy. Many areas where agriculture and other village industries flourished lost its importance and new urban centres emerged under the colonial rule.

The growth in transport facilities and the socio-economic changes occurred during this period gave momentum to urban migration. In North Malabar, the process of commercialisation of agriculture and the subsequent changes triggered off trade in commodities and many traders and merchants migrated to urban centres.

The rapid increase in external and internal trading activities and Thalassery's strategic location as a coastal place attracted many traders and merchants to this region. It was also a significant military station.

It was for the benefit of the British soldiers garrisoned at the Thalassery Fort that Lord Arthur Wellesley introduced cricket in the 18th century; it marked the beginning of the sport in Kerala.

In Mumbai and Kolkata, it was only the Englishman and in other places Maharajas that played cricket. In India, Seamen of the East India company are reported to have played cricket at Cambay in 1721.That was perhaps the first appearance of cricket in the country. But no Indians had joined in the game.

In 1792, the Cricket Club of Calcutta was formed and still no Indian is reported to have played Cricket.[190] In 1792, Malabar came under the rule of Madras presidency and the military control of the province was placed under the Madras government which appointed Colonel Arthur Wellesley as the commander of the British forces in Malabar and Canara as well as in Mysore.[191] The Englishmen of Thalassery took peons, dhobis and fisher folk to play cricket with them.

Wellesley, later Duke of Wellington and the hero of Waterloo, introduced cricket to Thalassery sometime during the last decade of the 18th century.[192] A match between an Indian team led by K. Srikkanth and a Sri

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[190] Murkot Ramunny, *Cricket in Tellicherry* in *Thalasserry: Sarada Krishna Iyer Memorial Fine Arts Society Smaranika*, 2001, p. 140.
[191] William Logan, *Op.cit*., p. 527.
[192] *Ibid*.

Lankan side under the captaincy of Arjuna Ranatunga was played at Thalssery on March 31, 2002 to mark the 200th anniversary of cricket in the town. [193]

In *The Hindu* on that day, Murkot Ramunny is quoted as saying, "Apart from these circumstantial evidences, the players of my generation have heard from our fathers how cricket was being played here long ago and their fathers had played along with the Englishmen."

Ramunny also speaks about watching the great English batsman Colin Cowdrey playing with the bat as a five-year-old. "His father had led a team of planters from Coorg and it was a local who did the bowling to the little Cowdrey." Also in the report is the reference to locals playing cricket with considerable skills. He and P. Moosa, another cricketer from Thalassery, talk about talented cricketers, such as Assan, who played with the British. According to Moosa, "Hassan was like Viv Richards (famous West Indies cricketer). So ruthlessly aggressive he was."

Ramunny, in another report, appeared in *India Today*, says: "Many native cricketers proved so much better than their English opponents that they used to be taken along wherever the regiment was transferred."[194]

It has been reported that an exhibition match was conducted at Thalassery to raise funds during the First World War in 1917.[195] Wherever the

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[193] *The Hindu*, March 31, 2002.
[194] *India Today*, May 20, 2002.
[195] *Thalasserry: Sarada Krishna Iyer Memorial Fine Arts Society Smaranika*, 2001, p. 119.

British established imperialism, they started the game of cricket for passing time. Gradually wherever they made their settlement there they founded cricket clubs. Wellesley used to play cricket with his colleagues at the Thalassery ground.

Thalaserry was the centre of British administrative activities and a large number of British administrative officials, merchants and traders and planters settled here. It was from here the district courts of Malabar, Neelagiri, Coimbatore and South Canara functioned. Europeans and Britishers from other neighbouring districts used to visit Thalaserry during the months of December and January to enjoy sunbath. These visits led to cricket matches between local residents and English teams.

History has recorded that the Tellicherry Cricket Club was formed in 1860. A news item dated 1890 in Malayala Manorama newspaper had a reference about a cricket match between Tellicherry and Cannanore which was held at Cannanore. Murkot Kumaran, who took part in that match, said that the team had walked to Cannanore, which was more than 20 km away, to play that match and returned on foot late at night.[196]

Teams from places such as Mangalore, Kudagu and Coimbatore played at Thalassery. In fact, a team led by Maharajkumar of Vizianagram played a game in 1930.[197]

The planters from various towns also brought foreign players. Scorecards of cricket matches from the time tell us that there were matches between Europeans and Indians as well as ones between local clubs. A cricket

[196] *Ibid*
[197] *India* Today, May 20, 2002.

scoring book from 1923 has also recorded matches played by a team of *Thiyyas*.

There were several cricket families at Thalassery, such as Idathil, Acharath, Mampally, Pazhaya Parambath and Murkot. Thalassery and Kannur have contributed several cricketers for Kerala over the years. From an article written by Murkot Kumaran in 1936, we could understand how much cricket meant to the people of his generation. He wrote that cricket was an ideal sport for young students, as someone who was serious about cricket would be selfless and would try to help others always. "A good cricketer would become a good citizen, a patriot."[198]

Thalassery would not have earned its name in cricket if the British hadn't settled down there. We have already seen how the British taught Thalasery to bake cake. We could also see significant British connections in Thalassery's tryst with circus, too.

Keeleri Kunhikkannan, widely regarded as the father of Indian circus, was first attracted to this art form by watching a show of the touring European Bioscope Company at Thalassery.[199] Keeleri, working at a company dealing with wholesale trading of hill products, was fascinated by an iron-ball act and weightlifting. He began practising the iron-ball act. Keeleri also had such a big reputation as a wrestler that a White man once insisted on a bout with him, though the latter might have regretted it later, after losing.

More importantly, it was from the British that Keeleri that he learnt the first steps of circus. The Over Burry, deputy collector at Thalassery, had

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[198] Murkot Kumaran, *Vidyarthikalude Vinoda Kalikal*, in *Viswabhanu*, Kozhikode, 1936, p. 158.

[199] Sreedharan Champad, *An Album of Indian Big Tops: (History of Indian Circus)*, United States, 2013, p. 44.

brought some British men who were experts in gymnastics items such as horizontal bar, parallel bar and Roman Rings as well as equestrian. These men used to conduct shows at Thalassery and Keeleri desperately wanted to learn those tricks, so much so that he joined the British Volunteer Corps. During the three months he spent at the camp, he learnt various gymnastics items.[200] He went on to become so much expertise in circus that "there would be no circus company anywhere on earth without at least one disciple of Keeleri."[201]

White Way Circus, started by Keeleri, and Great Oriental Circus, established by K.K. Achuthan, were among the leading companies of India and both were based at Thalassery. The circus companies went to flourish for several years. Achuthan's grandson Jitesh Sundaram has memories about the golden days of Great Oriental Circus. "I have seen my grandfather carrying huge boxes filled by currency notes after each shows," he said.[202]

Interestingly, Keeleri was also an excellent cricketer. His bowling was so good that the British included him in their main team.[203]

It may not be way off the mark to say that the coloniser and the colonised lived fairly comfortably together at Kannur and Thalassery. The colonised made significant advances socially, mainly through education. And culturally, too, they made quite a few gains, like cricket, cakes and circus. Thalassery and Kannur were never the same again.

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200 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

201 Nettur P. Damodaran, who was a student of Keeleri Kunhikkannan when he taught at B.E.M.P. School, B.E.M.P. School Magazine, 1940, p. 6.

202 Interview with Jitesh Sundaram, a well known Ghazal singer, at his residence in Thalassery on 10-12-2014.

203 Sreedharan Champad, *Op.cit.*, p. 44.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

It is not difficult to find remnants of the colonial rule at Thalassery and Kannur even today, nearly seven decades after the British left the country. Such has been the impact of colonialism.

The two neighbouring towns Thalassery and Kannur in particular and North Malabar in general underwent a transformation, socially, economically and culturally, during the last phase of colonialism. The region, like the rest of the country, suffered during the British rule. The direct administration of the British ruined Malabar's traditional agriculture, handicrafts as well as the traditional social structure. Their land tenure policies did not help, either. The traditional economy of Malabar also suffered and that had to make way for the colonial economy. There was not enough development in Malabar, which remained a backward region. But, not all the changes that happened because of the British rule were negative.

As Bipan Chandra points out, colonialism brought many changes and some of them were positive and these changes came within and as part of the colonial paradigm. We could see the dual character of British rule in Malabar too. The biggest positive change was the introduction of Western education, which altered the social landscape of North Malabar drastically, with lower castes, such as *Thiyyas*, making stunning progress, even overtaking the higher castes.

The British had introduced English education not to improve the lot of the Indians; it was, rather, to further their own interest, to meet the demand of educated natives to help in their administration, for instance. It was in egalitarian and not universal. Still, we have to take into the account the view set forth by some British men like John Bruce Norton, Advocate General and the Member of the Legislative Council, Presidency of Madras, who believed that it was the duty of the British to enlighten the people whom they ruled. If the enlightenment of the native was detrimental to the cause of the British, they should be able to bear the consequence too. Such lofty ideas held by the coloniser might look contradictory when looked from a broad point of view.

But, we could find contradictions in the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Not everyone wanted the British rule to end in India. The act of collaboration, passive and active, was one interesting aspect I came across during the course of my research for this thesis.

We know how men like B.R. Ambedkar opposed the National Movement spearheaded by the Indian National Congress because of caste atrocities. Ambedkar believed that there was no point in self rule if the Untouchables continued to be oppressed and subjected to gross injustices. He went so far as to say that he was committed first to his community; the nation came only after that.

Across North Malabar, among the lower castes, we could find similar sentiments. Prominent personalities like C. Krishnan, who edited and published *Mitavadi*, argued against fighting for freedom from the British at the expense of the freedom the foreigner the coloniser gave to lower castes

like *Thiyyas*. Lower castes had suffered a lot in Malabar, as well as in Cochin and Travancore, before the arrival of the British. When Dr. Palpu, an *Ezhava*, asked the Travancore Raja for permission to practise medicine, he was offered a patch of land with coconut trees so that he could tap toddy. Such caste based snobbish attitude existed in Malabar too. This is seen in a case.

One *Nair* had filed a case against a Muslim because he wasn't addressed as *Nair* in a letter. The British judge found no merit in the case, which he dismissed. This attitude of the British towards caste was the main reason why their rule found supporters.

A majority of *Thiyyas*, the largest community in North Malabar, were among those supporters and they benefited largely from their association with the British. Unlike backward castes in other parts of the country, *Thiyyas* of Malabar were almost like aristocrats. They were wealthy, well-educated and well-placed in government services and other jobs. They prospered because they were enterprising and they had no qualm to work for the British, unlike upper castes such as *Nairs,* even as servants and butlers. Higher castes were deterred by their conventions and superstitions. Some of them, including journalist C.H. Kunhappa, believed that it was a mistake to stick to such social conventions and that the *Nairs* lost out in businesses and other ventures because of that.

Like *Thiyyas,*a section of the Muslims too decided to associate with the British in trade and other activities and they too moved up the social ladder. *Thiyyas* and Muslims were part of the new middle class in North Malabar,

usurping the place of the higher castes. There was no longer much prestige in merely being a landlord.

In many other parts of India, people belonged to higher castes formed majority of the middle class and those benefited from foreign rule were mainly upper castes. These elite sections in the society distanced from their own people. Here it is noteworthy to mention the fact that the Indian National Congress in its early years only represented a handful of upper middle class who had on the whole prospered under British rule and wanted no sudden change in the political system which might endanger their positions and interests. They had close relation with the British government and the big landlords. The educated Indians developed a new way of life which was imitative because it accepted the superiority of an alien culture, but it was also hostile because it incorporated a rejection. In fact, the two rejections were ambivalent; rejection of the foreign domination who is nevertheless to be imitated and surpassed by his own standards, and rejection of ancestral ways which are seen as obstacles to progress and yet also cherished as marks of identity.[1]

Thiyyas were quick to realise the importance of education and responded warmly to the introduction of Western education in schools and colleges started by the foreigners. It could be argued that if the British hadn't introduced Western education, it would have remained inaccessible for the lower castes for decades and delayed their upward social mobility.

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[1] Pavan K. Varma,*The Great Indian Middle class,* Penguine Books, New Delhi, 1998, p. 6.

There are many shining examples of *Thiyyas* doing exceptionally well in studies, such as E.K. Janaki Ammal, who became one of India's greatest scientists, Principal Sankunni and several members of the *Murkot* family. Talking about education, the contributions of Basel Mission, especially missionaries like Dr. Hermann Gundert, need to be highlighted.

Basel Mission also set the tone for the industrialisation in North Malabar. They started ventures like textile factories in various places. Their motive was of course to further their missionary work. They came here to convert people into Christianity and they had a lot of success too. Religious conversion is one of the themes of this thesis.

Many in the lower castes, such as *Thiyyas*, believed that they would be better off if they left Hinduism, which had oppressive caste rules. Writers and social reformers, like Potheri Kunhambu, believed that lower castes should leave Hinduism. His novel, *Saraswatheevijayam*, dealt with the issue of conversion and the importance of education. The novel, one of the earliest in Malayalam, has been discussed at length in this thesis, as it mirrors the social reality of the period chosen for the study.

As a way out of caste-based oppressions, some members of the newly-emerged the *Thiyya* middle class propounded conversion, either to Christianity or Budhism. This became an issue for debate among them, as is clear from their memoires and biographies. It was seen as a means to progress for *Thiyyas*. It is interesting to note that caste reform was not seen as a way out. However, tradition was too strong to be cast away, and the number of people who converted to Christianity or Budhism remained limited. The debate, though, served to highlight the issue of caste suppression.

Another important aspect this work focussed was on how colonialism impacted culture. The British influence on the culture of North Malabar, especially Thalassery and Kannur, which had become major European centres as they had set up their base in large numbers, was phenomenal. This could be seen in the use of English words in daily conversations by common people and in clothes. I focussed on a colonial game, cricket, for this study. Thalassery and Kannur have produced several outstanding players and the interest in cricket continues as intense. Unlike in many parts of India, this is a just a continuation of the passion, and not a post-1983 obsession, following India winning the cricket Word Cup.

Another impact is the change in food habits. Baking, learned by *Thiyyas* out of their association with the Europeans, gave them entrepreneurial opportunities, too. Bakeries were started by them and bakery items like biscuits, cakes and bread, entered non-*Thiyya* households, as well. In marked contrast, this was a much later development in Travancore, where bakeries could not be found even in the 1950's.

The British may have done all this for their own good, primarily, but the fact is that the native, especially the underprivileged one, also benefited.

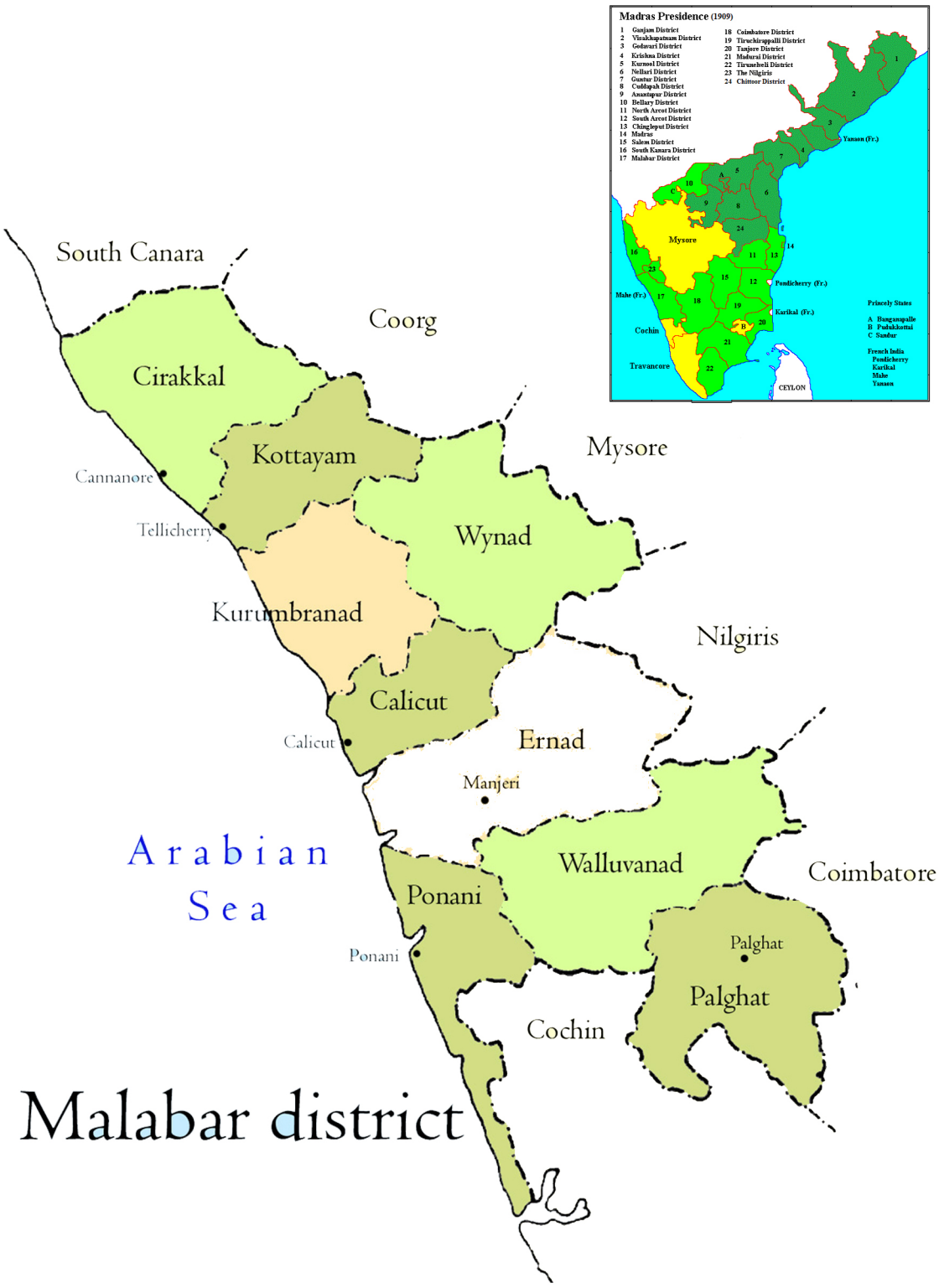
To conclude, one could argue that the changes the British colonisers brought intentionally or otherwise affected all aspects of life. Under colonialism, North Malabar underwent a drastic socio-economic and cultural transformation. The dual character of the British rule became visible in the last phase of colonialism more than ever before.

GLOSSARY

Aasari	:	Carpenter
Abkari	:	Toddy contractor
Adhikari	:	Village headman or superior officer
Amsoms	:	Lowest administrative units (part of a *taluk*)
Avarnas	:	Untouchables
Brahmins	:	The highest caste among Hindus
Chaliya	:	Traditional weaving community or caste
Cheruma	:	One of the untouchable castes (mainly agricultural serfs*)*
Chogon	:	Equivalent to *Thiyya* caste
Desom	:	Administrative unit, part of a *Taluk*
Dhobies	:	Washer men
Dhoti	:	Unstitched cloth used by Indian men
Diwan	:	A high ranking administrative official
Ezhava	:	A backward caste in South Kerala
Ezhuthupalli	:	Native vernacular school in Malabar
Firka	:	Revenue circle
Gurukkals	:	Teachers in traditional schools
Jamedar	:	A lower rank in the military
Janmi	:	Landlord
Jatha	:	Procession
Jenmom land	:	An absolute proprietary right which also is hereditary
Kammalan	:	A caste of goldsmiths
Kanakka	:	One who held land on *Kanam* tenure
Kanam	:	A system of land tenure under which the tenant holds land by paying a fixed sum to the Janmi for a specified period, and having the dual characteristics of lease and mortgage
Karan	:	A tenant who did farming work.
Karyasthan	:	A head servant or manager of a rich house
Kilippattu	:	A style of poetry in Malayalam

Kulikanam	:	Land tenure system
Kusavan	:	Potter
Manipravalam	:	Literary style that was a mix of Sanskrit and Malayalam or Tamil
Mappila	:	Malabar Muslims
Marmakkathayam	:	Matrilineal form of inheritance
Mukkuva	:	A caste or group comprising fishermen
Mulla	:	A teacher in a Muslim religious school
Nair	:	A high caste
Nalukettu	:	A big ancestral house owned generally by higher caste Hindus
Nambiar	:	A sub-caste of Nair
Namboodiri	:	A Malayali Brahmin
Nattezhuthupalli	:	Native vernacular schools existed in Malabar
Nayadis	:	A backward caste
Oathupalli	:	Religious school of Muslim students
Paraya	:	An untouchable caste
Pattom	:	Rent on land
Pulaya	:	An untouchable caste
Sambandham	:	A loose and often temporary alliance between a Namboodiri male and a Nair woman or between a Nair male and a Nair woman
Smarthavicharam	:	Ritualistic trial of a Namboodiri woman for conjugal adultery
Subedar	:	A lower rank in military
Sudras	:	The lowest of the four broad ranks in the Hindu society
Tahsil	:	The largest administrative unit inside a district
Taluk	:	A revenue subdivision of a district, consisting of numerous villages
Thamburan	:	Ruler
Tharavadus	:	Ancestral house
Thattan	:	Goldsmith
Thiyyas	:	A prominent backward caste in Malabar
Thullal	:	A performing art

Vaidyan	:	Traditional Physician
Vannan	:	Oil presser
Vellavaka	:	Used to refer to children born out of liaisons between native women and Europeans.
Verumpattom	:	Simple lease, mostly held by tenants at will
Vettuvan	:	A lower caste


Madras Presidence (1909)
1 Ganjam District
2 Vizakhapatnam District
3 Godavari District
4 Krishna District
5 Kurnool District
6 Nellari District
7 Guntur District
8 Cuddapah District
9 Anantapur District
10 Bellary District
11 North Arcot District
12 South Arcot District
13 Chingleput District
14 Madras
15 Salem District
16 South Kanara District
17 Malabar District
18 Coimbatore District
19 Tiruchirappalli District
20 Tanjore District
21 Madurai District
22 Tirunelveli District
23 The Nilgiris
24 Chittoor District
Yanaon (Fr.)
Mysore
Pondicherry (Fr.)
Karikal (Fr.)
Mahe (Fr.)
Cochin
Travancore
CEYLON
Princely States
A Banganapalle
B Pudukkottai
C Sandur
French India
Pondicherry
Karikal
Mahe
Yanaon
South Canara
Coorg
Cirakkal
Kottayam
Mysore
Cannanore
Tellicherry
Wynad
Kurumbranad
Nilgiris
Calicut
Calicut
Ernad
Manjeri
Arabian Sea
Walluvanad
Coimbatore
Ponani
Ponani
Palghat
Palghat
Cochin
Malabar district

MATCH BETWEEN [illegible]

INNINGS.

	BATSMAN.	SC[ORE]
1	K. M. Madhavan	[illegible]
2	C. Gopalan	[illegible]
3	S. K. Varadan	[illegible]
4	K. P. [illegible]	1.1
5	K. P. Madhavan	1.4.1
6	[illegible]	2.4.6.1.4
7	[illegible]	2.4.1.1
8	[illegible] ch	1.1
9	[illegible]	0
10	C. [illegible]	0
11	[illegible]	1
BYES		[illegible]
LEG BYES		
WIDE BALLS		
NO BALLS		

RUNS AT THE FALL OF EACH WICKET	1 FOR	54	2 FOR	[illegible]	3 FOR	88	4 FOR	89

ANAL[YSIS]

	BOWLER.	RUNS FOR EACH OVER. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
2	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]								
3	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	M	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]		
4*	[illegible]	[illegible]	M	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	M	[illegible]	M	[illegible]				
5														
6														
7														
8														

*Accomplished Ha[t-trick]

MATCH BETWEEN Indians AND Europeans.

1st INNINGS. of the Indians DATE.

	BATSMAN.	SCORE.	HOW OUT.	BOWLER.	TOTAL
1	Wathavan K.M	4.4.4	Bowled	Naylor	12
2	Vincent.	1.1.4.1.4.1	Bowled	Naylor	12
3	Karadan E K	2.2.	Caught (naylor)	Clarke	4
4	Sailor	1.3.4.4.	Caught (Fletcher)	Clarke	12
5	Gopalan C	4.4.1.	Caught (naylor)	Naylor	9
6	G Lubeck S.P	4.1.1.1.4.1.4.3.1.4.4.1	Caught (Sullivan)	Bayzand	29
7	Mathavamenon	4	Caught (Fletcher	Naylor	4
8	Krishnan	1.4.1	Caught (Lance)	Sullivan	6
9	Eko	0.	Bowled	Sullivan	0
10	Ramdass	1.1.4.1.3.1.1	Not out		12
11	Williams F.S	2.2	Bowled	Sullivan	4
	BYES	2.2.			4
	LEG BYES				
	WIDE BALLS				
	NO BALLS				
				TOTAL	108

RUNS AT THE FALL OF EACH WICKET	1 FOR	2 FOR	3 FOR	4 FOR	5 FOR	6 FOR	7 FOR	8 FOR	9 FOR	10 FOR
	18	27	32	49	49	58	79	79	103	108

ANALYSIS OF BOWLING.

	BOWLER.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	OVERS.	MAIDEN OVERS.	RUNS.	WICKETS.	WIDE BALLS.	NO BALLS.	BALLS BOWLED.	AVERAGE RUNS PER WICKET.
1	Naylor	·4·	4·w·	M	··4	M	··4	M	4-1 c	··4												9	3	29	4		~~54~~	54	7.25
2	Rev. Clarke	1·4	·1·	2·	·1 1	4	1·4	·4·	114													8	0	40	2		~~48~~	48	20
3	Sullivan	·1·1·	·10 w	·4	·3·	·1 w																4.4	0	14	3		~~26~~	26	4.6
4	Bayzand	·43	·4·	311 ·41	1·2																	4	0	21	1		~~24~~	24	21
5																													
6																													
7																													
8																													

Tournament. [illegible]

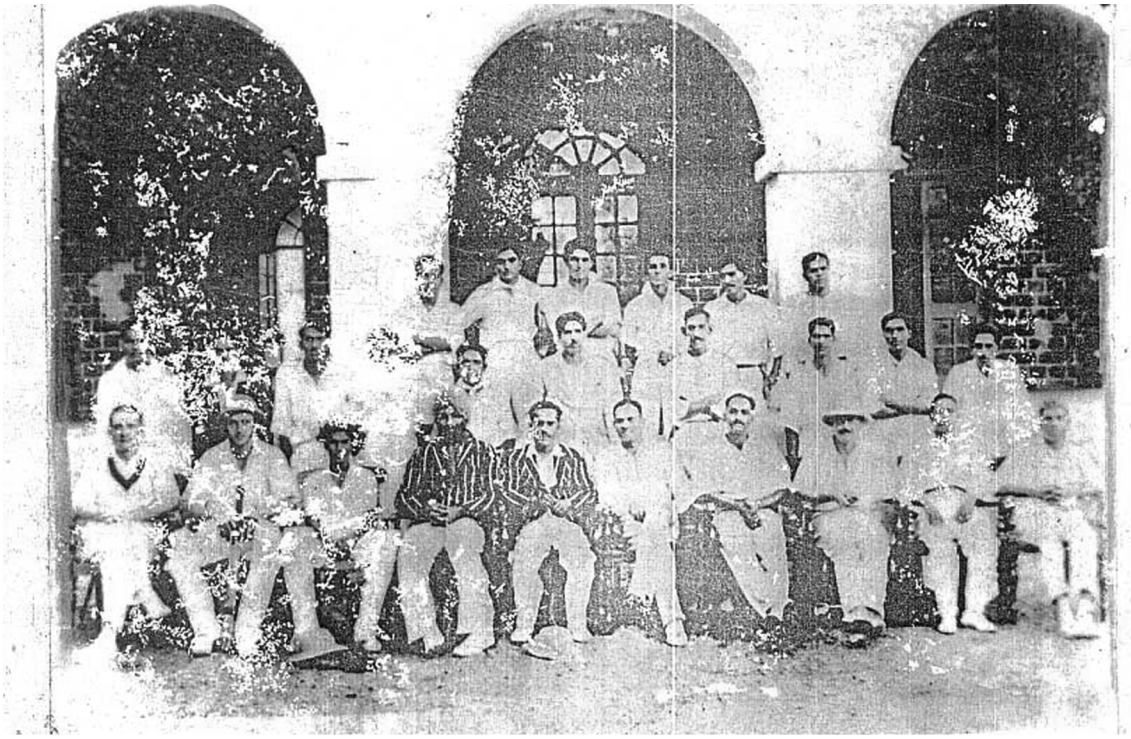
MATCH BETWEEN The Precious Team

	INNINGS.	
	BATSMAN.	**SCORE.**
1	T. Achuthan	1
2	C.O.T. Bavotty Raju	4.1.1.1
3	Frank Rozario	0
4	[illegible]	1.3.1.1
5	[illegible]	1
6	[illegible]	1.2.1
7	[illegible]	1.1
8	[illegible]	2.1.1.1.4.1.1
9	[illegible]	0
10	[illegible]	4.4
11	[illegible]	0
	BYES	2.1.1.1.1.1
	LEG BYES	
	WIDE BALLS	
	NO BALLS	

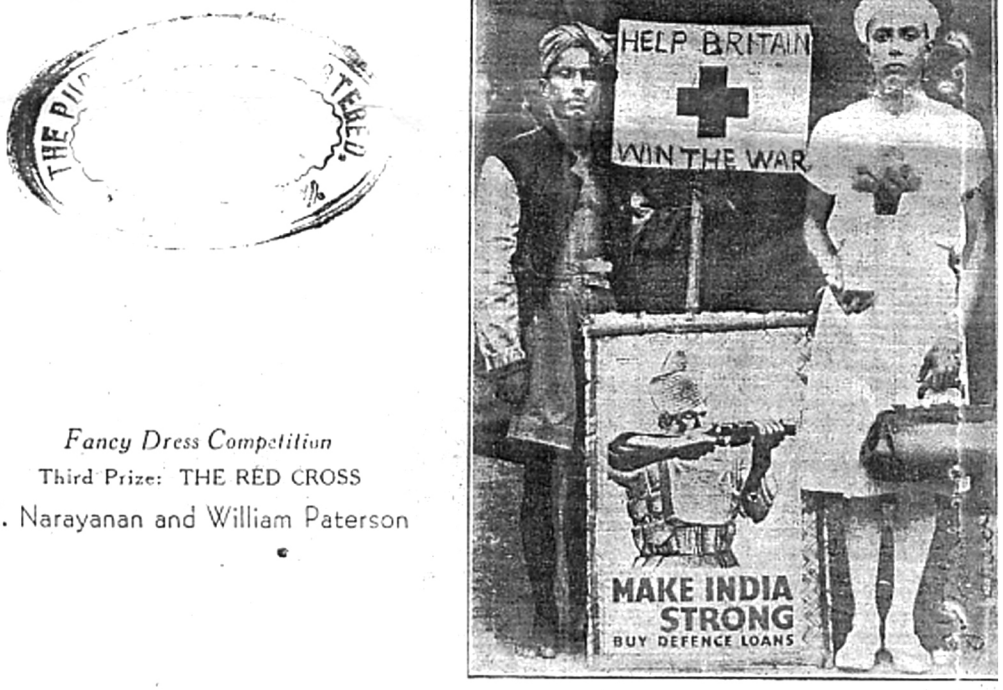
RUNS AT THE FALL OF EACH WICKET	1 FOR	6	2 FOR	6	3 FOR	[illegible]	4 FOR	[illegible]

A[illegible]

	BOWLER.	RUNS FOR EACH OVER 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	Elson	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]									
2	Pachu Raju	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]							
3	Kitti	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]										
4														
5														
6														
7														
8														

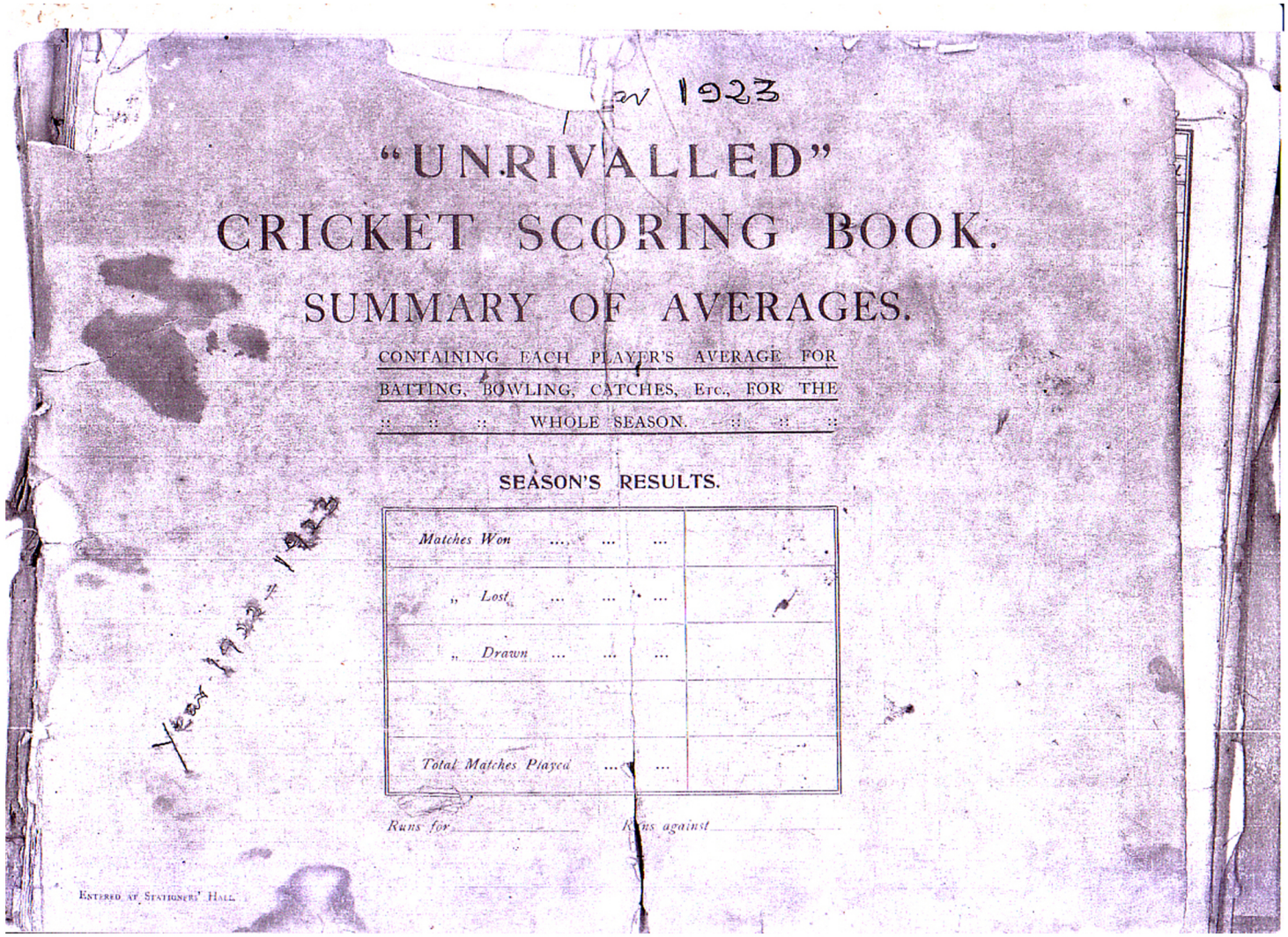


Photograph of the Cricket teams of Europeans and Old Malabar, 1930

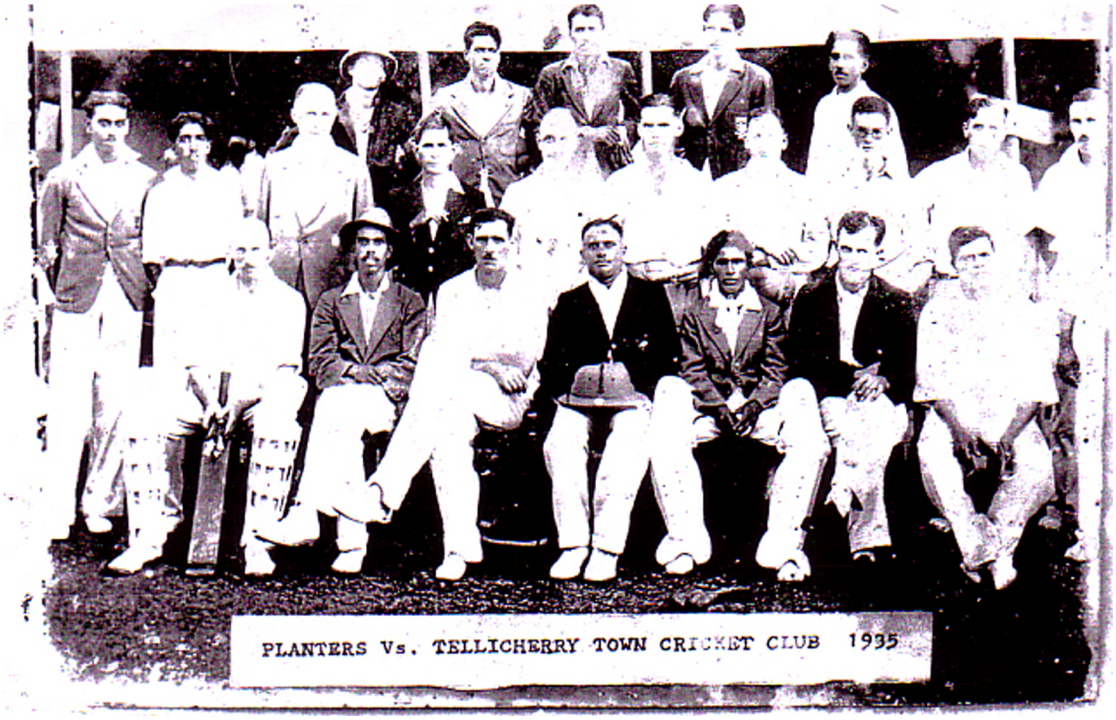


Fancy Dress Competition
Third Prize: THE RED CROSS
K. Narayanan and William Paterson

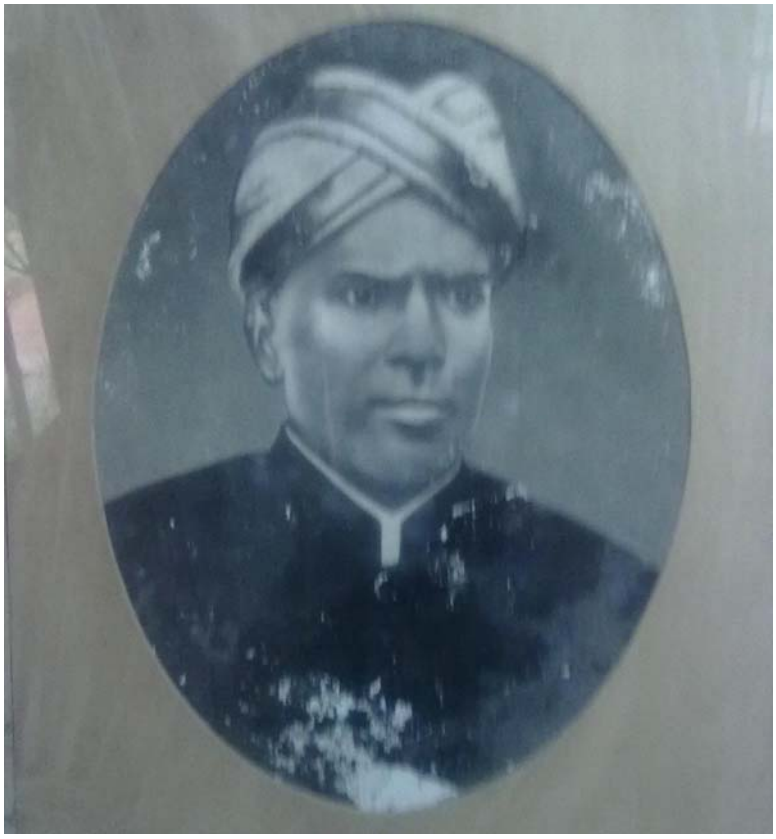
This photograph from the BEMP Highschool Annual Magazine (1941) indicates the support for the colonial rule.



Cricket scoring Book, imported from England, of matches playes at Thalassery



Planters Vs. Tellicheri Town Cricket Club 1935



Potheri Kunhambu
Photo of a framed picture of Potheri Kunhambu at his house.

Potheri Kunhambu's house
He wrote *Saraswatheevijayam* while living in this house.

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Sumitri Samuel (83) on 17-10-2010 at Pappinissery, Kannur.

Kunhiraman, a former worker at Aaron Spinning and Weaving Mills, on 17-10-2010 at Pappinissery, Kannur.

A.V. Sreenivasan on 18-12-2013 at his residence at Thalassery.

K.K. Marar on 22-12-2013 at his residence at Thalassery.

Vijayaraghavan (83) and Pankajam (81), grandchildren of Potheri Kunhambu, on 22-12-2013 at Potheri House, Mele Chovva, Kannur.

Vidya Ajith, relative of Potheri Kunhambu, on 22-12-2013 at Kannur.

Heera Krishnan on 22-12-2013 at her residence at Kannur. She is the great-granddaughter of Potheri Kunhambu.

Col. C.K. Krishnan on 22-12-2013 at Kannur.

Prasanna Kesavan on 23-12-2013 at her residence, 'Murkot' at Thalassery. She is the granddaughter of Murkot Kumaran.

Madhavi Murkot on 23-12-2013 at 'Murkot', Thalassery.

A.V. Sreenivasan on 29-3-2013 at his residence at Thalassery.

Jitesh Sundaram, a well known Ghazal singer, on 10-12-2013 at his residence in Thalassery.

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