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# CONTENTS

I	Introduction	1 - 11
II	Social Location of Women in Kerala	11- 21
III	Women in the Freedom struggle in Malabar	22-176
IV	Preliminary Observations	177-183
V	Documentation	184-185
VI	Bibliography	186-189

## INTRODUCTION

During the year 1983, Smt. Kamalpathy Chathopadhyay in her introduction to her book "Indian Women's battle for freedom, wrote

"There are not many books on the history of the social reform movement in India, but even these few have chosen to completely ignore the role of the women in it. It is as though whatever changes were brought about, were the outcome of men's endeavor alone for social changes are thereby for the amelioration of the women. A grievous injustice has been done to the heroic efforts of countless women who strove against unimaginable deterrents, to serve the cause of their betterment. Women did valiant services not only pushing forward their own progress but acting as levers to help other oppressed section.....

The invisibility of women in social science has been recognised by scholars for a long time. The construction of social history of women is essential today and it should be done with a gender perspective. Deriving women's' social history is not a matter of seeking out unusual women or restricting history to women only. It is the history about women. It is not the life history of the acclaimed. The intention of this social history is to reveal the extent of participation of women in the fight for reforms in life. Social history is an area, which can assist in women's historiography. Social history possesses the implements that help in the study of gendering that takes place

in society; how division in terms of sex come about, the changes that occur in day-to-day life, the family structure, marriage, health, culture and leisure. But it can be said that writing women's social history is still in its infancy.

Men had already established supremacy in the government, tradition, war, property rights, trade, centres of authority, religion and growth of technology. Women had not taken leadership in any of these sections, at least from the time when the stratified societies emerged. Woman, poised in a passive position, were rendered invisible in the writing of history, which concentrated on the centres of power, almost exclusively male. The life of a common man/woman and their contribution to economic-social development has never enjoyed a central position in historical studies.

Studies about social activities discuss the changes brought about in the mental attitudes of women. These studies do not examine the extent to which the changes that have come in the mental attitude of women have influenced social activity. The miserable state of woman as visualised by man is that which appears in history. That the activities carried out by men have brought about changes in women can at best be seen as an appendix. But what makes women partners in the efforts to change is woman's own awareness of her state. It is not that men are 'lifting them up' and leading them. An essential aspect of historiography namely the consideration that partners in a common enterprise have to be given equal status, is very often forgotten. The primary aim of woman's historiography is to establish equality in historical enterprise.

These observations are applicable to the historiography of Kerala also. Although there have been several studies on the National Movement in Kerala, the role of women has taken a back seat in all these studies, with their participation reduced to a few names who played a leading role in some of the major struggles. The problem of how they participated in these struggles, the conditions that encouraged or limited their participation, their careers as political workers and activists in the National Movement have not been given adequate consideration. Even the biographies of woman activists are very few. Even the names of some of the activists who played a significant role in their lifetime are in the danger of being forgotten. Hence there is a dire need to document their work in the National Movement and popular struggles before independence, and analyse their role from a gender perspective.

The tremendous upheavals appearing in different periods of history are not the sole reason for social change. The fact that the oppressed populace is engaged in constant wars with the oppressor's forms the foundation stone of this methodology. The weaker sections do not always wield weapons. They reveal their existence through fruitful rebellions, which are often passive, says the experience of women. Since the "yesterdays" of history are reduced to records stored in the centres like assembly records or birth/death statistics etc. the statistical details needed to create woman's history are not available today. Proofs and records of their areas of activity, their common areas, family systems and such other aspects have not been collected or

compiled. Efforts to find them are also insufficient. There are some women who have forced themselves into social spaces using their identification with the existing centres of power. They have not succeeded in creating a common sphere for women-that is why the majority had to stand outside history.

To conclude, Gender is a structural factor in history. It both determines the systems and intersects with the other structural formations like class, and caste to produce varied articulations of patriarchy. The mode and functions of patriarchy has been changing according to the changing social processes. The process of social change can be understood only if we have a thorough knowledge of the past. The present History-writing treats male as the universal subject of history, and in that process marginalises women as subjects of history. So far, our writings on social reforms tell us that the participation of women in social change is passive, and when the society changes, she also undergoes changes as an inevitable accompaniment. However, local history writing breaks the invisibility that has shrouded women's social action. It is at the local level that women have shown their ability to rebel, and it is at this level that women have created social spaces in which they have played a vital role in the making of society. It has also been seen that, in a particular patriarchal structure, woman's ability to enter the public domain is most effectively carried out at the local level. Thus, we have to locate the rebellions and creation of social space in the history so far at the local level as a component of micro-history.

The present project attempts to document the experiences of women who have participated in the National Movement and the people's struggles in Kerala before independence. The project area covers the District of Malabar, which consists of the present Kannur, Kozhikkode, Waynad, Malappuram and Palakkad Districts. The District of Kasaragod, which falls into the same cultural region, is also included in the study. The period that has been covered is from 1920 to 1950, when the national movement in Kerala reached its highest peak. Though in Kerala, an element of change started from 1900 onwards, it never reached women. Even the impact of reforms like modern education varied from place to place. For e.g. in the area of Travancore it was at a faster pace than in the areas of Malabar and Cochin. The impact of various social movements, such as freedom movement, social reform movement or peasant struggle has not affected every Panchayat evenly. There are panchayats where, upliftment of Harijans, removal of untouchability, foreign cloth boycott, anti-liquor movement, salt satyagraha, along with peasant struggles have taken place, for example, Vaniamkulam of Palghat District. Some other villages have remained passive, such as many villages in Malappuram District, which were yet to recover from the impact of the Malabar rebellion of 1921. Also, the peasant struggles also were changing its course and methods in different areas at different levels. The relevance of local history is in this context.

## **Methodology**

There has been no definable methodology associated with women's history. As long as history attempts to make women visible, it is new information, but not a distinctive methodology. Rather it could be said that by making women visible in the traditional historiography, the historian is serving a compensatory purpose.

The methodology of traditional historiography itself does not facilitate the study of women's spaces in society. Proofs and records of their areas of activity, their common areas, family systems and such other aspects have not been collected or compiled. Efforts to find them are also insufficient. There are a few women who have managed to find themselves in the 'official' documents, but a public sphere in which woman was an equal participant did not emerge-that is why the majority had to stand outside history.

All this means that conventional sources like archival materials, Assembly proceedings, Newspaper report, diaries; family history etc. helps only at a peripheral level. In the patriarchal power structure, even those who gain power and position are silenced. So their voices are not heard. Their role in opinion formation also does not come out in the records. The duty of newspapers then and now has not changed very much and so they also maintain silence regarding the role played by women. The few autobiographies of women have been done with extreme care, without



causing pains or displeasure to husband, father, siblings, and other family members. Due to women's lack of time, workload and the image that society has given them; diary notes made by women never came out. Therefore, woman is invisible in the history writing using traditional methods.

Since the secondary materials are scanty, the possibilities of oral history can be tried in the project. Recently historians who have studied the marginalised people have used oral history as an important source. Oral history is a unique way to learn about the past events and experiences. It is a method that probes memory, evokes emotions and feelings that have long been dormant, and creates a relationship between narrator and interviewer, which is often a very special one.<sup>i</sup> Women's experiences in the movement are entirely different from the experiences of men. Only through oral history the responses that women encounter from society and family members can be elucidated. Women articulate their experiences as well as their worldview from the domestic domain which essentially shapes their world, which can be brought out only through oral history. Oral History enables us to see history, "as a sense of telling it like What it was", or as a direct and unmediated experience, rather than as the abstracted and ordered rendering of objective historical intelligence.<sup>ii</sup> The western historians have tried a possibility of oral history. An oral history of the Great Depression<sup>iii</sup> has been written by taking a massive compilation of more than 150 self-portraits of American lives, centred on the experience of 1930s. (*Hard Times*- written by Stud Terkel)

Likewise, women's attitude towards the II worldwar has been studied by Linda P.Wood, on the basis of the life stories of a number of women who lived and worked in those times. But in India, or in Kerala such an attempt has not been made to bring out the participation of women in any movement.

Oral History is a new sort of document through tape-recorded interview has been divided into three types. Topical, biographical and autobiographical. All the three types are used in this report. It is topical in that the topics of independence movement and social reform movements have been focussed. It is biographical in that many biographies, both written and oral (as told by their immediate relatives), have been used in this text. It is auto-biographical in that many interviews were done by taking the life history of women. The topical interview is mostly akin to the open ended sociological interview; the interviewer focuses in order to get some specific information on a specific topic. It might centre on something which applies to men and women<sup>iv</sup>. In the autobiographical interview the course of the individual interview is somewhat like taking the life history of the individual and from which we have to discover her space in these movements. Topical and biographical can never expose her life history completely. Both these methods reflect the experiences values, attitudes and relationships of the interviewee- the patterns and rhythms of her time and life.

Available secondary data are collected from the Calicut University Library, Calicut, Calicut Central library, Sahrudaya Vayanasala, Calicut, Deshposhini Vayanasala, Appan Thampuram Vayanasala, Trichur, Sree chithra thirunal Library, Trivandrum etc. The development Reports of Peoples' Development Plan are used to identify the women activists. Further autobiographies, biographies, souvenir of the freedom movement events, family records etc. are used. Based on secondary data available the activists are identified with the help of Development Reports (Panchayat wise). The districts of North Malabar, Kasarkode, Kannur, Calicut, Malappuram and Palghat are studied taking the panchayats as variable. Unstructured questionnaire was used to delineate details regarding the participation. Oral history has been tried in getting the details of participation. In the case of the deceased persons, the family members and co-workers are contacted, and delineated the details.

### **Problems in field research**

Study on women is laborious and takes more time. Basically because the evidence is scattered and often problematic. Women are everywhere but nowhere. Their positioning in the movement whether led by men or women (In those days mostly men) were probed, for which a thorough study of the movement itself was conducted. In the case of men-led movements, the experience was that only through males that the women activists could be identified. Another problem faced was that, many of the informants are aged, and have become senile. But still they had good memory of the past and the activities they have participated. They are the bundle of knowledge but it was never realised by anyone that their experience constituted knowledge. Due to old age, 1) repetitions were there, which needed careful listening, and editing. 2) They were becoming tired after 10 minutes talk and had to stop intermittently. After a gap, naturally the link was missing for them as well as for the interviewer. So, multiple visits were needed, which took lions' share of the time. At the same time, it was evident that they wanted a good listener.

Admittedly, the record given is incomplete, and there are many more women, and their experiences, which will have to be brought to light. Experiences of hundreds of women, scattered throughout Malabar, await documentation, which would change our perspective of the nature and character people's movements in Malabar, including the freedom movement. The present collection is intended merely as a demonstration of the enormous possibilities of oral documentation.

## Social Location of Women in Kerala

When we discuss about social location of pre-modern Kerala, matriliney becomes a major area of enquiry. Often there is a tendency to glorify matriliney, thus, the freedom women enjoyed were highlighted. The argument is debatable, however. In a matrilineal household in Kerala the actual economic and political authority lay with the eldest male although the descent was along female line. In a situation of growing militarisation of medieval Kerala society and the stress and strain that each landholding family had to undergo, the masculine authority asserted itself. We can hardly find any woman directly taking part in the political affairs of medieval Kerala, except as regents of the infant princes. The martial exploits of women are mentioned in the Vatakkal paattukal, but we have no way to determine whether this was the universal practice in Kerala. This is interesting in the background that most of the naduvazhis and janmi houses followed matriliney. This pattern repeats itself in all the landholding families. Although it could be conceded that women in a matrilineal household had more liberty, mobility and education, gender equality cannot be considered a feature of the household. The absence of the gender equality should be traced to the political and economic authority-dependency pattern that existed in Kerala, which was in essence

patriarchal. Irrespective of the system of descent, patriarchal structures in society and masculine authority within the family became the index of the gender relations in medieval Kerala. These patriarchal structures were enforced in many forms within the society. The “Sringara Kavyas” of nampudiri Brahmins saw women as a mere sex object; however accomplished she may be in arts and learning. Minimum right of covering the body was even denied to her. . “Pulaya jati” women of southern Kerala had to wear black bead necklace to identify themselves as polluted jati women. <sup>v</sup> Covering the body with a two pieces of clothes was a privilege of the upper caste women. Abbe Dubois noted that even during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “ The custom of leaving all the upper part of the body uncovered as far as the waist was formerly common to both sexes, in the southern parts of India. It is still in the Malabar coast, and in neighbouring provinces<sup>vi</sup>. Woman’s role within the family was mainly reproductive and daily chores were restricted to rearing the children and looking after the household as in any feudal society. Sexual exploitation was an accepted form of exercise in the authority of the lord and legends and stories tell about their sexual exploitation by the janmis.<sup>vii</sup> Andalat mentions Echikanam janmi who wanted Koran maniyani’s wife for sexual use. When Koran Maniyani refused to send her, the janmi sent a number of gundas and destroyed all the pepper in Koranmaniyani’s parambu. The authority and power was manifested through the control of sexuality.

The mobility of women was another area of restriction and control. When the working class had the access to productive process, they were exposed to the public places. But generally the social mobility of the Kerala women were restricted to the pond and temple which was again denied to the brahmin women, since they had these facilities inside their compound. There are separate living spaces for women and men of upper class nair tarawads and nampudiri illams. They were not supposed to come to the portico of the house. Neither their presence to be felt for a visitor at home.<sup>viii</sup> Nampudiri women had the system of primogeniture in marriage by which only the eldest son is allowed to marry in the same community. Others were supposed to marry from outside the community. Since they were the landowning caste, it might have been to protect the land from fragmentation. But as a result of this system, many aged girls had to stay spinsters. There was the system of exchange marriage also through which sometimes men as old as their father had to be wedded to a girl of 20- 25. Polygamy was also prevalent , by which the number of widows were at steady increase. Apart from these marital problems, they were denied English education, or schooling. Peculiar dress codes also created problems among antharjanams.

Education was denied to women of all communities except Nairs and Christians. Upper Caste women had the teacher giving basic lessons at

home like calculating time by seeing shadows, seeing astronomical calendars called panchangams, basic grammar in Malayalam and knowledge of puranic texts. Women of lower castes were denied such formal education also.

Property rights to women were limited to rights of maintenance till marriage among the patrilineal families. Patrilocality was followed and the dowry system was prevalent. In the case of Nair women, they had the freedom for education, mobility etc. They also had much freedom in their own tharavad. The Thirundukuli (when the girls attain puberty) and the thalikettu (even before attaining puberty the ceremony of tying a thali) were decided by the elders at home from that date onwards she is ready to co-habit with a man of same caste or a higher caste. (It was not termed marriage till the special marriage act was passed in 1955) But the person to be co-habited will be decided by the male members in the house. Women had property right but the uncle, the elder brother or the senior most male member in the family, the so-called karanavar, was doing the property transactions on behalf of their women.

Ezhava women were considered to be polluted caste and were denied education in the public schools. Thirundukuli and Pulikudi (ceremony at the time of first pregnancy) were conducted very lavishly and marriages used to take place by spending lakhs of rupees even by selling the

property. Reformists like Sri Narayana guru were against this custom and conscientised the women for education and simple and inexpensive marriage customs. The untouchables were undergoing multiple oppression, affecting their self-prestige, sexuality and existence. They were denied education and even freedom of mobility in public roads. Initially the stir for change started inside the community and through various community organisations they could overcome many issues like the problem of marriage, education and mobility issues, change in dress codes and succession. It is in this background that we are analysing the women issues taken up in the reform movement.

The objective basis of the Brahminical hegemony was appropriation of the land as the means of production. The social reform movement in Kerala was contesting the ideology and practice of brahmanical hegemony by the end of nineteenth century. This can be linked with Nationalism and caste and class struggle . Change in land relations has resulted in the loss of power of the landlords. Commercialisation of economy and the rise of an educated middle class from different sections of people have created tensions within the traditional caste and social ensemble which was manifested in the reform movement. The objectives of the reform movement were both internal and external affecting the public as well as the domestic sphere. However, changes that had occurred in the public



sphere had repercussions in the domestic sphere too, which were interconnected. For example, changes in the land relations and the commercialisation raised the question of property rights, which affected the relationship within the family.<sup>ix</sup> The existing marriage and family relationships were seriously challenged by the newly educated liberal minded individuals from all communities, who initiated debates for years. The major arguments of these groups can be gathered from the newspaper reports, memorandums presented to the British government and the Legislative council debates.<sup>x</sup>

The structural changes affected, all the communities from upper caste Hindus and Christians to the backward communities like Ezhavas. The emerging middle-class critically viewed the traditional institutions and favoured the introduction of values characteristic of the western bourgeois order. This resulted in the reform movement in Kerala during 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main issues were casteism, expensive marriages, obscurantism, social customs and practices, education, temperance etc. The religious practices of Kerala can be divided into two categories namely elite culture and popular culture.<sup>xi</sup> The popular culture was that of subaltern and the elite that of the savarnas.

The practice of untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability militated against dignity. Lower castes were not permitted to enter

schools, Government offices or courts and they were prohibited from entering public road, public places or temple premises. These strict rules prevented social mobility and individuality which created social divisions.

Colonial state brought about spread of school education. The changes in the public administration led to new job opportunities for educated people in bureaucracy and as teachers, lawyers etc. while employment opportunities in the government were mainly for the upper castes, jobs in the public works department and plantation industries were dominated by lower castes as coolies. This differentiation in the living conditions, created by the changes introduced by colonialism, aggravated the tensions between the upper and lower caste groups. At the same time, rise in the standard of living of the upper income groups raised the overall standards of living as shown by the evidence from Kochi.<sup>xii</sup> This altered the perspective of life for the lower caste groups also who sought avenues for upward social mobility.

Changes in the land relations also were significant in this process. The British administration had made the janmis permanent proprietors of land, with the rights of alienation and eviction. However, the land legislation of 1900 reduced the power of the janmis over their tenants. The intermediate peasants were relieved from their dependence and this legislation created small peasant proprietors and tenants with better economic

independence.<sup>xiii</sup> Caste traditions began to weaken by the first decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. With this, entire structure of indignities and exploitation began to crack. The newly educated were again the first to question the caste hierarchy. Untouchability, pollution etc., became big barriers once they became government employees and the newly introduced British legality made the upper castes a mere tax payer, who pays revenue to lower caste official. All these social and economic changes outside the purview of the domesticity created small ripples inside the Tharawad. Marumakkathayam through which the Anantharavakasam or the succession goes to sister's children was questioned, and the husband's role as the genitor of the children for the Tarawad of his wife was not accepted by the educated youngsters. Hence, there was a strong demand to change the succession Act. Along with the succession act, there was an undercurrent of change in morality too. The characterisation of woman as a lover, wife and mother kept her position at home intact, and her space in the public was minimised.

In Kerala the reform movement was the result of the crisis brought about by the changes in social and economic spheres, after the growth of colonialism. The process of social reform movement lasted throughout the later decades of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century before it merged with the national movement. However, it may be pointed out that agenda of social

reform while raising the woman question failed to come to grip with the real issues faced by women. However, the question was raised by a number of educated women during the beginning of twentieth century, which provided the setting for the later participation of women in the social movements.

The emergence of Karshaka sangham and the participation of women in the struggles gave a different outlook for the changed situation. Rise in wages, freedom from evictions, change in the customary practices etc. were the initial demands of the Karshaka Sangham. Added to that the Estate workers, Factory workers raised the demands like minimum wages, working hours to be restricted to 8 hours, and freedom from sexual exploitation, etc. The peasant organisation changed the face of struggle from a passive reformist struggles to more active demanding, revolutionary type of struggles. The fight against the janmi was paused as the fight against Imperialism. The same spirit was used by the nationalists to arm them with slogans of the National movement. Thus in Kerala, the reform movement and the peasant movement were merged to form the national struggle. Women who have participated in the reform movement and peasant struggle joined the national movement, thus giving the national movement secular and multi- class character to it. Later, after 1938, there was a further division by which the peasant women along with

some of the reformists joined the Communist party, and the others stayed with the Congress. Thus, unlike Bengal or Maharashtra, women from all castes and classes joined the national movement. This was made possible with the active participation of women through Mahila sanghams and Mahila samajams at one level and the service organizations and trade Unions at another level, and through peasant struggle through the third level. This is where Kerala stand different in history. This is not only in the state level but also at local level.

The changes that were taking place in the social location of women during the beginning of twentieth century provided the background for the emergence of women as major players in the growing national and people's movements in Kerala from the twenties down to the end of the fourties. It is not surprising that many women participated in the struggles locally and became political activists through their involvement in the local issues whether they be social, economic or overtly political nationalist .The patterns and trajectories of their participation are significant not only in the construction of national movement in Kerala, but also for the patterns of gendering of our society.

# **Participation of women in freedom movement-**

## **preliminary observations**

Kerala society during late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was undergoing structural changes. These changes gave rise to a new set of values, ideas and life-styles, which reflects in the educational system, marriage system and family and property relations. In the whole process, no doubt, both men and women have played important roles. It is in the background of these structural changes that we have to examine the growth of national and people's movements in Kerala.

All the protests during this time had a dual character. In one hand, it questioned the existing systems in the private life, including personal morality, family, customs and rituals. On the other hand, it questioned the public domain, including questions of gender in the public sphere, caste, class and community, as well as the larger questions of freedom and dignity of human beings and nation. The generation that took part in the freedom movement and social reform movement was patriotic, sincere and they felt that the need of the day was freedom of the country from the stranglehold of the British. There was a sort of enthusiasm, which made them move out of their house despite various kinds of restrictions. The caste system was very strongly observed, English education was not imparted to all, feudal landlords were doing their own role in harassing the peasantry. As a whole for the ordinary people a change in the social structure became inevitable.

Kerala is a state, where caste was again divided into sub-castes and there was hierarchy inside the sub-castes and between sub-castes. For eg. Nampudiris were divided into Adyans, Asyans, Samanyans, etc. Likewise, Ambalavasis were nambiars, Variers, Pisharodies, Marars etc. Nair community had gradations from Keeryath Nair, Mooppil

Nair, Veluthedath nair, to Vaniyans. Different caste groups had different perceptions about women and their role in society. But all the caste groups, now forming themselves into communities, were uniform in claiming freedom to the country and women's role in that was emphasised. The articulation of women's roles was in varied levels. These levels were decided by various other factors like education, social mobility, caste mobility, nature of class, family values and occupational differentiation. All these above factors have determined women's participation in the social and freedom struggle.

Women started actively participating in the freedom movement since 1930s, as a part of the general upsurge in national consciousness, as well as the increase in communicative and interactive structures, social mobility and class differentiation. Women were becoming visible in public spaces from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century and this became accelerated as a part of the emergence of large mobilisation of the people as a result of national and class struggles. The social reform process unleashed during the early decades of twentieth century played the most significant role in facilitating the participation of women in these struggles.

80% of the informants in the present study came through Vidyarthi Congress. Their first participation in the social space was as a student. (Swarnakumari Menon, Suseelamma, lakshmikutty Amma, V.K.Thankam, Kallat Priyadatha, Pathiyil Priyadatha, Thadathil Priyadatha, Kamala Nambisan, Yasodha teacher, Devaki Narikkateeri etc. Whereas, Kunjakkamma. Devaki Pattassiar, Devayani, Karthyayani and others belonged to the peasantry and agricultural labourers for whom existence and survival was the main issue. Hence, the trajectories of their participation in the freedom and people's movements were different.

The first groups generally belonged to the upper castes, rich in terms of cultural capital, and even if not wealthy, had the facilities or will to become educated and utilise the opportunities offered by the emerging public sphere. This is shown by the activities of

Devaki Narikkaatteeri, Paththiyil Priyadaththa, Yasoda Teacher, V.K,Thankam, Kamala Nambisan etc. Swarnakumari Amma and Suseelamma were inspired by the fact that they were born into elite, and yet nationalist families which helped them to find their moorings in the national movement. The interesting case is that of Thadaththil Priyadaththa, who was eliminated from modern education because of her political convictions, lost any possibility of gaining public dignity and prestige, and yet remained committed to her ideology. The documentation also reveals that even for women in the elite classes the social and cultural milieu in which they lived and the transitions in their private domain, affect their relations with the public sphere. The most revealing example is that of Devaki Narikkaatteeri, who showed astonishing grit and determination in chalking her path, and yet, due to certain unfortunate developments in her private life, was forced to remain incognito until the end of her remaining life.

The trajectories of those who came from working class backgrounds are different from those of the elite groups. Many of them were uneducated or partially educated, and were forced to eke out a living from their childhood, and began to participate in people's movements as a part of their struggle for survival. A few, like Devayani, were also inspired in their early years by social reform movements like Athmavidyaasangham. Restrictions in their private domain were less significant, although some, like Devaki Pattasyar had to forego their married life in their quest for identity. However, their poverty, lack of mobility and the absence of certain basic tenets of modernity, like features of cultural capital accessible to the elite, meant that their operative space remained confined to the local, and mostly related to questions of survival.

The regions under study had their specific and distinctive features, both in the growth of people's movements and the participation of women in these movements. Kasarkode district witnessed peasant struggles. Most of the women are uneducated and their protest was against the immediate enemy -- Janmi. Each village had different types of protests



against different issues. For eg. In Uduma, a peasant jatha led by Sri Kereleeyan passed through Uduma, during 1939. This resulted in the formation of peasant organisation in this area. From then onwards, the social reform movement also gained momentum. Though Matrilineal system was prevalent in this area, there were a number of anti-woman rituals like child marriage, Pungan Mangalam which was conducted during the first pregnancy of a woman. An average woman of this area used to wed seven to eight times in a life time, because child marriage and widow remarriage were prevalent. The reform took place in all these areas, which started after 1939. Whereas, in the panchayat Kodombaloor, there was only peasant struggle known as “two for ten” protest. (That is from the ten years’ profit , 2 years’ profit had to be given to the janmi.), Women came into the public space through this protest .

At the same time, in the Cheruvathoor panchayat , national movement started by 1921 itself, but the peasant struggles started very late. ie; by 1937-38, with the formation of Kissan Sabha. In most of the peasant struggles it was the savarna or one of the janmis who initiated the protest. The not so well known Thol Viraku Samaram(an all women protest) took place under the leadership of kisan sabha late by 1946, followed by Vilaveduppu samaram in 1948.

In the Madikkai Panchayat, the national movement started by 1937, with the formation of a reading room.

Palghat and Kasargode, and Kannur are agrarian regions. But in Palghat District, the protests were initially organised by community organisations like Yogakshemasabha and SNDP. In this region, women of upper caste and class (of janmi class) have participated in both community organisations and political movements, such as the activities of Congress and Communist parties.

In the district of Kannur, the scenario was different. Women who have participated in the peasant movement also have participated in Ayithochadanam and misra bhojanam (against castism). These were seen as part of freedom struggle proclaimed by Gandhiji and initiated by the undivided Congress party. Gandhiji's visit to various villages have inspired a number of women to participate in the National and people's movements.

In the case of Calicut and Malappuram districts, they are muslim dominated areas, and although community organisations did exist, they concerned themselves with religious and not social issues. In Calicut under the guidance of Vagbhadananda Gurudeva, anti-caste movements have taken place. Athmavidyasambham was the first to organise women on a large scale and articulate the demand for social space and dignity for women. After the growth of national movement, women were organised through Mahilasamajams and the activity of all India organisations alike the all India women's conference.

Thus, we find that the women, whose life and activities have been documented in this study. Do not follow any single pattern or trajectory in their process of participation in the national movement. Women, more than men were bound by the social and cultural milieu in which they lived, and despite their ideological and political convictions the physical and cultural limits of their mobility affected their participation also. This shows that detailed studies will have to be conducted regarding the structuration of the gendered public sphere in Kerala, and studies will have to begin from the micro-regions, such as the villages, where women live and work.

## **Women and Freedom Struggle in Malabar**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Malabar was under Madras presidency, straight under the British Administration. In the case of overall development and education, Travancore and Cochin were far ahead of Malabar area, but in the case of political struggles and political consciousness, it was different. It might be basically because the people of Malabar felt the oppression of British colonialism directly.

As explained in the previous chapter, Malabar also had caste-based, Brahmin centered and upper caste dominated land system. Geographical setting, hierarchical socio-economic structure, the political structure dominated by fragmentation and the localised authority of the Naduvazhis, and the religious attitude of the people were the main factors in determining the land system. But the specific feature of Malabar legal system was that it was based on customary law. This customary law, called by various names like “maryadai “ and ”Acharam” was the basis of the institutions like marriage, family

and inheritance and other social and economic relations, including the relationship between different castes and the relationship between the landlord janmi and the tenants and cultivators. The land holding pattern was according to this customary law, and was based on the rights and privileges over land and other resources, usually called avakasam.

Total change in the customary law introduced by the British naturally affected the janmi-kudiyam relations. The British regarded the Janmis as landowners and taxpaying farmers, which meant that they acquired the right to increase the rent, evict the tenant and reallocate the land on rent to other farmers, subverting the customary relations. The newly introduced British legality created strained relationship between the janmis and the kudiyaans. A large number of Malabar Kudiyaans were Muslims, particularly in South Malabar. The mortgage-cum-lease holders or kanakkudiyaans were generally Nairs, and janmis were mainly Nampudiris and Nairs. The revenue policy of the British and oppression of the cultivators by the Janmis created a number of peasant struggles. Between 1836 and 1900, more than 80 peasant struggles have been recorded from Malabar. These were against the bureaucratic British Officials and janmis. However, the British

administrators regarded the peasant unrest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as 'outrages' committed by 'fanatical' Muslims.

The reasons for the peasant unrest are generally the following:

The pre-modern economy based on village economic structure was shattered by the capitalist economy introduced by the British. But at the same time they never allowed indigenous industry to develop. This resulted in the lowering of the standard of living.

The British brought Kerala under a new land revenue regime. In order to pay the tax the janmi was oppressing kudiyan by evicting the kudiyan, raising the pattam, and leasing it out for more profit. Small peasant also could not withstand the burden of land tax. Logan observes " Janmi was the person who had power in a restricted area. On half of that power he had the right for Paatam for a certain fixed amount. But Commissioners made the janmi the lord of the land. Soon, the janmis with the help of law and order started controlling the rights of the Kudiyan. " This resulted in the unrest. One cannot say that the unrest had an organisational framework. But it was against the landlordism and the imperialism. Land became the private property of the janmi. But the peasants found that whenever a peasant upsurge occurred, the British come to the rescue of the janmis.

This resulted in an anti-janmi as well as anti-British feeling among the peasants.

The situation was gradually becoming complex by the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The rising dissatisfaction of the peasants, the social reformers' plea for education, employment and equal rights gave an organised form to the protest in Malabar. Groups, were emerging , such as the followers of Brahmananda Sivayogi and Athmavidyasamgham founded by Vaghbhatananda, who worked for social change. The kanakkudiyans formed their own organisation, called the Kudiyan samajam. The Malabar marriage Commission called into question the structure of the Matrilineal Taravads by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The social reform agenda set by the reformers like Sri Narayanaguru from Travancore began to have their impact in Malabar also. But all these evolved into a political campaign only with the emergence of Indian National Congress.

The Indian National Congress was started in 1885. There used to be delegates from Kerala for the annual conferences of Indian National Congress from the early days itself. Chettoor Sankaran nair was the president of the 13<sup>th</sup> Indian national Congress annual conference held at Amaravathi. In Kerala the first conference of Indian National Congress was held at Calicut in 1903 under the presidentship of Salem

Vijayaraghavachari. The Congress organisation started after the Bengal partition of 1905, By 1910, the Congress District Committee was formed. But there was very little political work under the district committee then.

Gradually, National Movement gathered momentum in Kerala also. The Home Rule league was formed in 1916 and extensive discussions in the Lucknow Congress held in the same year resulted in the political pact between the Muslim League and the Congress. This helped to form a home rule league in Kerala. In 1916 May, under the presidentship of Smt. Annie Besant a political meeting was held. That was the first meeting of the District Committee of the Congress. In the beginning only the janmis and members of the Royal families used to be the members of the Congress. They used to have high amount of dedication and obligation to the British Government. Naturally, the earlier annual meetings used to confide themselves to certain resolutions, petitions, requests etc, and no direct action.

Added to the miserable conditions that prevailed after the First World War, the Montague-Chemsford reforms of 1919 created a tremor in the minds of the ordinary people in Malabar. Not only were the conditions of the ordinary peasants and labourers worsening, but the space for political action was also dwindling due to the new reforms. This was the background of the Manjeri Conference of 1920. The Manjeri conference witnessed the first confrontation between the landlord delegates and peasant delegates. Sri K.P. Raman Menon introduced a bill on land relations asking for certain rights for tenants which was opposed by the janmis like Mannarkkad Mooppil Nair, K.C. Veerarayan Raja and Sri Udaya Varman Raja .<sup>xiv</sup> The resolution was basically to restrict the rights of the janmis. K.P. Raman Menon 's resolution was passed with majority. In fact, the Manjeri Conference was a milestone in the struggle between the landed aristocracy and the peasants, which affected the political atmosphere in Kerala particularly Malabar. The aggravation of tension resulted in the Malabar Rebellion of 1921.

At the national level Mahatma Gandhi took over the leadership of Congress in 1920. Gandhiji's position that the national movement should adopt the slogan of khilafat got immediate support among the Muslim community. There were separate Khilafat societies and

Congress Committees in all the districts and taluks of Malabar. That year, the All Kerala Conference of the Congress was held in Ottappalam and was presided over by Sri. Prakasam. The non-cooperation movement started in Kerala with this conference. Among the two major resolutions of the conference, one was a call to boycott foreign clothes and the other was for not admitting students in the Government or government -aided schools. There also was a request to the Advocates to leave their courts and join the freedom movement. The non-cooperation movement was powerful among college students when they boycotted classes and joined the movement. Daughter of U.Gopala Menon, Kumari Swarnakumari menon from Calicut was one of those persons who joined the movement. U. Gopalamenon was the person who along with, K. Madhavan, Nair, and P. Moideen Koya etc. broke the prohibition and gave speeches when curfew orders were declared on the arrival of Yakoob Hassan in the year 1921.

During the Malabar Revolt of 1921 the most affected areas were Eranad, Valluvanad and Ponnani. More than 200 amsams were under the control of Muslims<sup>xv</sup>. Thirurangadi, Pookoottur, Malappuram, Manjeri, Perinthalmanna, Pandikkad, Kauruvarakkundu and Tirur areas were affected severely. Direct participation of women in the revolt was, however, very small. There are cases of women who fought with the police and army who raided their houses in search of the rebels. In the area called Valavannur, **Kammath Chithamma** was a woman who faced the British during the riot with a knife in hand. When the British army entered her house, she caught hold of a kitchen knife and stopped the army.<sup>xvi</sup>

The attack of Chowri-Chowra police station by the people induced Gandhiji to withdraw the non-co-operation movement. He decided to



concentrate more on Khadi propagation, eradication of untouchability, and Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhiji was arrested and put in jail for six months. There were protests in Kerala against the arrest of Gandhiji.

During 1923, the second Kerala Provincial Conference was held at Tellichery and was presided over by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. She championed Hindu-Muslim unity and exhorted the Kerala people to love each other's religion.<sup>xvii</sup> The aged mother of Ali brothers, present at the conference, pointed out in an inspiring speech that the attainment of Swaraj, India's birthright was impossible without Hindu-Muslim unity.<sup>xviii</sup> There was also a literary conference in which the importance of the language Malayalam was reiterated and there was inter-dining to fight the untouchability in Malabar.

Gandhiji's proclamation on Swaraj within an year and the firebrand speech of Ali brothers had enthused the youth and students of that time. The feelings of the youth were boiling with the hatred towards imperialism. Historians have observed that the hike in the fees of the school children in Travancore was only an occasion than a cause for the students' strike.

In Kerala the press started working seriously for the cause of the national movement with the emergence of the daily "Mathrubhoomi".

This daily played its role in propagating and reaching people the spirit of freedom movement.

The Vaikom Satyagraha which took place in 1924 was another milestone. Although the role of women was hardly visible in the Satyagraha, it apparently evoked enthusiasm among the women who came to know about it.

It was at the same time that the peasants, in particular the kanakkudiyans, began to organise themselves demanding their rights. The main demands of the peasants were to get permanent tenancy right in the land, the eviction to be stopped, the right to sell their property etc. Mannath Krishnan Nair, K.P. Raman Menon, Sri. G. Sankaran nair, M.M. Kunjurama Menon etc were leading the struggle.<sup>xix</sup> The peasant movement and the freedom movement were proceeding together. The leaders of the both movements had mutual understanding of the happenings also. Gradually the janmis who were against the Congress started joining Congress and opposed British and their Imperialism.

But at the same time, some of the peasant conference proclaimed to protest against the oppression of janmis. The writings on the Russian Revolution of 1917, might have influenced. Mr.Prabhakaran Thampan when he called Mannath Krishnan nair's resolution for the rights of the

tenants as a 'Bolshevik resolution'. There was an undercurrent of socialism in the writings that appeared in journals and dailies. The educated youngsters were exposed to the world realities which shaped their values and interests in life.

During this time so many local struggles were taking place. The impact of Vaikom satyagraha was felt in more or less the entire Malabar area, especially in Valluvanad. In the Vaniamkulam panchayat, in Ottappalam Block, in a place called Manisseeri Vadakoottu, a group of men from the Kappoor house entered the Paralasseri temple pond and took bath despite protest from the savarnas and the conservatives. The Congress movement started with Vaikom Satyagraha in this area. The area of Vaniamkulam has a good number of people belonging to the Ezhuthassan caste who were considered to be untouchables. The protest came from them first. Later the Ezhuthachans polluted the Thrikkangode temple also as a protest. Mr. Ananthan nair who was one of the leaders of the peasant movement gave leadership to this. (Later he joined the left movement) He had influenced many people in this area to join the National Movement and peasant struggle<sup>xx</sup>.

## **Devaki Pattasyar**

*Late Smt. Devaki Pattasyar was involved in various struggles conducted by the Karshaka Sangham. Though she was well-known only from 1940s onwards, she was there to organise women and bring them under politics from 1935 onwards. She was influenced*

*by Ananthan Nair, who was a social worker and a Gandhian turned into a Communist. In fact Devaki Pattassyar was a helper in Ananthan Nair's house. It was he who brought her to the politics and society. She was not interested to become popular. Her work was always a "behind the screen" work. Hence she confined her work to the Koonathara panchayat. She was more a party activist spreading the ideas of the party politics to people.*

*Her service to society was in two ways. Devaki Pattasyar had studied upto 8<sup>th</sup> class and was trying to mobilise women through her service to them. Filling up their application for rationcards, bank pass book, taking the sick to the hospital, etc she was doing voluntarily and made herself popular among the public. This made the mobilisation of women for the charkka classes very easy for her.*

*She got married to a relative of her at any early age, but could not continue or adjust with his ideas, and she came back to her mother after a year. She had come out of her own, because she was a different person, in her background. She was interested in reading and all that, and had opinions, and the husband and his mother could not agree with her points of view. She left that house and*

*stayed with her own parents. She never married again. After coming back she had worked in a ration shop, later she worked in a small bank, (local bank called chitfund.) where she was working as a cashie, and made her livelihood. She was quite independent that way.*

*But during this time, she had become a political activist, and participated in every possible way. She had formed a charkka class, where Hindi was taught and also spinning and weaving were taught. Later these charkka classes became Mahila Sanghams. She had also campaigned for Khadhi and participated in Misra Bhojanam and temple entry movement. Misra Bhojanam was creating all sorts of problems to women basically because all caste people used to be in cooking, serving and eating. Women themselves saw this in two different ways. The untouchables and low caste women were feeling guilty of eating with the savarnas whereas savarna women felt that they are obliging the untouchables by coming down to them and treating them as equals. After Misra Bhojanam Devaki pattasyar was always telling about her guilt, says her sister, who provided the information.*

*She had also mobilised women to participate in the Aryanpavu Temple entry. Very few women have participated in the temple entry movement in those days. And she was one of the leaders. She was an active participant of Karshaka Sangham and Communist party. She had participated in party classes, conducted by the communist party. Though none of her work is seen or felt, she was the only one woman under whom the women of Koonathara and basically Vaniamkulam were looking forward to. She had helped communists when the party was banned, and its workers went underground. Comrade Ramanunni and others used to be with them during the underground period.*

*There was a pattini Jatha during the year 1937, from Kerala to Madras under the leadership of A.K.G. During 1937 she has organised women to welcome the pattini jatha at Koonathara. Participating in the jatha itself was a change, because women never used to participate in any jatha in those days.*

*In her later years, Pattasyar was afflicted by cancer. Her sister says even after Radiotherapy she had participated in election campaigns. She died in 1994 January 24<sup>th</sup>.*

*(Based on the Interview with her sister)*

**Smt. Thirumaala** of Kozhikode District also participated in temple entry. She belonged to Areekkulam panchayat of Pandalayani Block. <sup>xxi</sup>

The role played by the Media during this period is quite remarkable. Educated housewives were exposed to this temple entry and vaikom satyagraha through the daily 'Mathrubhoomi. During 1924, a daily called "Al-Ameen" also was published under the editorship of Mohammad Abdul Rahiman. This helped to spread the message of freedom struggle among Muslims.

Temple Entry movement was taking place almost in all parts of Malabar. During 1924, temple entry movements were taking place in Kadampur Temple, Lakkidi, Ottappalam, and Puthukkode temple, Tharur, Alathoor, (under the leadership of SNDP movement). But the temple entry movement which started in 1924 ended only by 1948. In Kizhakkanchery the temple entry took place in 1946.

During 1925, the Kerala Provincial Congress committee was held at Calicut. By 1927, The authorities were quite suspicious of anybody dressed in Khadhi and imprisoned many innocent people.



The third provincial congress committee held in Calicut during 1927 passed several resolutions including ending of animal sacrifice. The impact of this also was felt in the remote places of Malabar. Nearly eight years after the resolution, there was a movement against animal sacrifice in the temple premises (Muthassyar Kavu, Pattambi, Palghat District) headed by Smt. C.R. Devakiamma.

### **C.R. Devaki Amma**

*Smt. C.R. Devaki Amma belonged to Paruthur Panchayat, of Palghat District. She is the sister of C.R. Balakrishnan Nambiar, who was leading the freedom movement in the panchayat. Smt. Devakiamma was the leader of the Desiya mahila Sangham. Under her leadership, the Desiya Mahila sangham had campaigned against ritually accepted slaughter of goats and hen. They had also declared that they were going to stop the slaughter of animals for the sake of God during the mandala time. That year there was a big gathering of men and women for the function in the temple. Expecting a riot, the police protection was arranged under the leadership of Shornur circle Inspector. Women were not supposed to reach near the Balikkal(the stone where the slaughter takes place) Deseeya Mahila Sangham had planned to make a chain of women around the stone and stop the*

*slaughtering. The Velichappad (the holy man who does the slaughter) came with red eyes, with sickle in hand jumping with godly power with the tinkering sound of the hip bells. The women around got scared of him and ran away. But Devaki amma stood where she was standing and told the Velichappad*

*“eh, man, you get more blessings if you slaughter those who can speak. Poor animals they cannot even shout or say no to you. Also, you will get better blessings if you do manslaughter.” By telling this, she kept her own neck in the Balikkal, she told the Velichappad “ come-on. Slaughter me first, later you can kill the animals, first my head...come on” The velichappad put down the sickle. After that incident, no animal slaughter has taken place in that area.*

*Devakiamma has participated in Salt Satyagraha, along with her brother C.R. Balakrishnan Nambiar. She was put in prison for 1½ years for this. She was kept in the Vellore Central Jail for participation in the salt satyagraha, and was transferred to Kannore jail for civil disobedience for 2 years.*

*After coming back from jail, she has worked among women to propagate khadhi, and Hindi, and organised women for the rest of her life. She died in the year 1996, in her 92<sup>nd</sup> year.*

*(Based on Interview with the family members and also vikasana Rekha.)*

During 1928, Simon commission was passed and there was a huge meeting to boycott the Simon Commission in Kerala also. The Malabar conference was held at Townhall, Calicut, and Dr. Annie Besant was the person who organised it. The meeting passed resolutions stating that citizens of India and particularly people of Kerala has nothing to do with the Simon Commission and should organise demonstrations , meetings and hartal on the date of their arrival in India. This was a highly hopeful sign of the political awakening of the Malabar people. An All India Khadhi and Swadeshi Exhibition also was held adjunct to the conference. Meetings and conferences were held Throughout Malabar to boycott the Commission and the headquarters was Calicut. The secretary of the committee was Mr. P.K. Kunhisankara Menon of the Calicut Bar and Sri. Manjeri Rama

Iyer, Sri. K. MadhavanNair, P. Ramunni Menon, U. Gopala Menon P.Achuthan and K. Madhava Menon did much propaganda in this connection making arrangements for public demonstrations. “And on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1928 the day the Simon Commission landed in Bombay, a highly successful hartal was observed in every nook and corner of Malabar, as in other parts of India. Students abstained from attending the class, lawyers did not turn up at the courts, shops were closed Black flags fluttered every where. At various public meetings resolutions were passed protesting against the Simon Commission ‘s visit.”<sup>xxii</sup>

The Kerala provincial conference was held at Payyanur during the May 1928, in which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru participated. Besides the political conference, there were also Malayalam Literary conference, North Malabar Nair conference, Social Reform conference, Kerala Araya conference and an exhibition of Khadhi and swadeshi products also took place in the premises on the same day.<sup>xxiii</sup> Payyannur conference created a new life in the minds of the people of all walks of life because one of the resolutions of the Payyannur conference was a demand for the protection for the interests of tenants. The

landlords who were present opposed it, but was passed with majority. Together with that, the All India Railway strike also was announced in this background.

In fact, by 1920 itself in All India level there was an all India Trade Union Congress functioning. After the non-cooperation movement, some communist groups also were formed. On the one hand, there was a rising consciousness among the tenants regarding their rights on the land and on the other hand, there emerged an organised working class group who wanted “Poorna Swaraj” for India were cultivated inside the Congress party itself. Though the British Government was trying to stop these movements, both the peasants as well as workers were slowly getting organised under their own banner. The 1928 Railway strike evoked a sort of brotherhood feeling among all the workers in India including the small scale traders which resulted in the formation of labour movement in Kerala. The 1928 Railway strike was the first organised strike in Kerala. U. Gopala Menon, Kuroor Nampudiripad, and K.P.Gopalan, helped the strike to be a success.

The same year, Ernakulam witnessed a Kudiyan sammelan as well as a Indian National Congress states political conference.

Both took place adjacently. This conference passed a resolution to start an All Kerala Kissan Sabha to fight for the rights of Kudiyan.

After the declaration of “Complete Freedom to India” (Poorna Swaraj) at the Lahore Congress, the freedom struggle gathered momentum. 1929 was an year of total poverty and destitution- the foremost economic crisis since the first World War. The Economic depression brought down the prices of the cash crops but at the same time , neither the pattam nor the tax were decreased. This resulted in a great problem for the peasants. The small farmers became poor peasants since they could not pay the tax, their land was confiscated. Hunger and poverty affected the common man and woman. The peasant classes were getting dissatisfied with the janmis as well as the British Government. There was a great effort to organise them under a single banner.

The wellknown salt satyagraha started in the year 1930. The news of the letter of Gandhiji to the Viceroy and the demand to reduce the salt tax reached Malabar also. Gandhiji stated in his letter “This non-violence will be expressed through civil disobedience , for the moment confined to the inmates of the

satyagraha Ashram , but ultimately designed to cover all those who choose to join the movement with its obvious limitations. The response of the Viceroy was quite disappointing. Disappointed by this, Gandhiji declared civil Disobedience. He said “ Let me distinguish between the call of 1920 and the present call. The call of 1920 was a call for preparation and today it is a call for engaging in a final conflict”

The Kerala Provincial congress committee met at Badagara in North Malabar on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1930 and declared civil disobedience movement. An unprecedented number of volunteers men, women and children young and old were mobilised from all parts of Kerala. As a part of civil disobedience, Sardar Vallabhai patel, J.M.Sen etc.were arrested. Smt. T.C. KochukuttyAmma, of Cochin Educational Service exhorted her sisters in Kerala through an article in Mathrubhoomi to react to this and join the freedom struggle.

The salt Satyagraha in Kerala started from Payyannur. Satyagrahis reached payyannur from Calicut and other parts of Kerala. K. Kelappan was the leader. Sri. T.R. Krishna Swami, K. Madhavan Nair, T.V. Sundaraier, P. Achuthan, Kondattil Raman Menon, K.A. Keraleeyan etc. were in the jatha. They sang the

the famous patriotic song “Varika Varika Sahajare”. That was a time in Kerala that many poets, including Vallathol Narayanamenon, Vidwan P.Kelu nair, bodheswaran and AmsiNarayana Pillai started writing patriotic songs,. The Jatha that started from Calicut reached Payyannur via Balussery, Puthuppadi, Perambra, Purameri, Chombal. Thalassery, Kalliassery, Taliparambu to Payyannur. In all these local areas there were groups arranged to receive them with garland and money and encouraged them. There was a propaganda meeting at Akathethara, near Palghat when Mr. K.P. Kesava Menon’s sister presented the Satyagrahis with a gold ring. At Kannambra, Balangadharan, son of Sri. Velu nair, removed his chain from the neck and made a gift of it to the satagraha movement. The brahmin community at Pudukkode received them with music but a few orthodox members opposed the entry of non-brahmins in the agraharam whereupon the brahmin members of the party refused, in protest, to take any food in the village. They went via Thiruvilvamala, Lakkidi, Ottappalam and Shornur and by then the strength had increased to 33 in number.<sup>xxiv</sup> That was a great event . When the jatha reached Pariyaram, nar payyannur, women led by Mrs. Gracy



Aron showered flowers and rice on them. Smt Yasodha, Smt. Kaumudi etc. were in that group.

The salt satyagraha took place in many local areas also. For eg; Kunjimangalam and Thrikkarippur were the two major areas where salt satuyagraha took place in a smaller level. Very few women like C.R.Devaki amma only could participate in the Salt Satyagraha at Payyannoor, But a number of women participated in the local satyagrahas.

**M.K. Paru** *of Eramam, Kannoor district is still alive and she is 94 years old. She has participated in Salt Satyagraha. They went to Payyannur by walk and collected sea water and brought it home and made salt and protested. The following women also participated with her.*

**Kunjakkam**

**Puthiya Vanianveetil Paatiamma**

**Edadi paru**

**Kunjathi**

**Edavana Virandhi**

**Koyeeran Chappila**

**Poyiran Narayani**

*She has participated in Misra Bhojanam. She still remembers it. Others even after a year used to mock at her telling, "Oh! You cooked the food prepared and served by Panayan Virundhan, Vannan Pokkan and Nadhiyuan Pokkan isn't it? All those who have participated in the Misra bhojanam were ostracized from the community.*

*(based on Interview and also from Vikasana Rekha)*

In Calicut, the satyagrahis had to bear lath charge and beatings. Muhammad Abdul Rahiman, P. Krishnapillai, and R.V.Sharma and Madhavan nair were beaten up and arrested.

In Malabar, the salt satyagrahas, foreign cloth boycott and anti-liquor movement took place at the same time and more than 500 were arrested. The Civil Disobedience movement gathered momentum very fast and lot of people participated and courted arrest. Women, students, children and aged all were in the movement doing something against the british which they could. Balabharatha sangham were formed by children, Yuvak sanghams were made by the youth, Students started Kerala Vidhyarthi sangh. The role played by students were remarkable. they not only participated in the movement, conducted jatha and propaganda etc. but also published

notices against the Governments' action and for Swaraj. This publication was called "Congress Bulletin".

After Salt Satyagraha, a committee consisted of Smt. T. Narayani Amma, Mrs. U. Gopalamenon, Smt. K.E. Sarada and Mrs. Margaret pavamani was formed to propagate Khadhi work in Calicut. Its members and ladies soon organised a number of classes in spinning, carried on house-to house propaganda and distributed charkka and cotton among a large number of people throughout Malabar. Smt. Devaki Narikkatteeri is one of the persons who went to Wardha to learn Hindi and Spinning. There were three women from Kerala.

### **Smt. Devaki Narikkatteeri**

*I was born in the year 1912 at Palghat District. I belong to Erayur Illam, Koppam. I had 2 sisters and 4 brothers. I never had any school education, because in those days, female education was not a custom among Nampudiris. I was taught letters through an Asan(teacher) at home, and was able to read Ramayanam and Mahabharatham. I was also taught basic mathematics at home, and to calculate days with the help of an astrological calendar. I started wearing mundu only at the age of 10. Till then I was wearing only a konakam. Once girls have attained puberty, they are not supposed to go out.*

*My childhood was that of an ordinary girl. Nothing special to talk about, nothing special happens in the childhood of a Nampudiri girl. After food, we wander through the parambu, picking mangoes, etc. We had nothing more to do. Because we were not sent to school or play outside. The asan used to come in the morning and taught us 56 letters. Boys were taught to write, but not girls. Instead girls were taught slogas and ashtakams. We were asked to read Devimahatmyam, and recite it byheart. Then at the age of 10, my father used to teach us to read Ramayanaam, Bhagawatham etc.seeing the letters. That was basically to learn the language, clarity, pronunciation, grammer etc.*

*Before marriage I have read a novel Calcuttayile Rahasiyangal ("The secrets of Calcutta) that was the first book I read by myself. This had helped me later to read the pamphlets printed by Unninampudiri.*

*After I attained puberty, I did not move out of the house till marriage. We observed all vratas. I was God fearing. We were taught nedikkal. We were asked to read Ramayana etc. so naturally we were getting tuned to god belief, and learn to confine*

*ourselves to home. We were made to do these rituals, in order to get a good husband.*

*I was 17 when I got married to Sri. Vamanan Narikkatteeri. He was an active Yogakshema Sabha worker. Narikkateeri illom was very progressive in those days, and all his family members were in the movement. His elder brother Sri. Parameswaran Nampudirippad had acted in the drama "Adukkalayilninnu Arangathekky, of V.T. Bhattathirippad. So, naturally I had support from family members, in every sense.*

*My marriage to Vamanan Narikkatterri was a parivedanam. Vamanan Narikkateeri was the third son to their parents, who is not supposed to conduct Veli, but sambhandham was allowed. So naturally we were made outcastes. When the vaidikan (priest) was invited for Veli, he said, "I do not know the rituals for a third son's Veli" and refused to conduct the same.*

*We were sent out of the house because we got married as parivedanam. We were not allowed in the other illams. Nobody accepted us. We had entry only to the progressives' house, because*

*we removed ghosha. Even if I go to my illam I was not allowed to touch anybody. I should not touch the well or pond. I am not supposed to serve food or touch any utensils at home or persons including my own mother. No community person used to attend our family function like marriage, death etc. We were also neglected in their functions. I still remember when my father died, I was not allowed to see my father's body or share my grief with my mother. I stood outside the entrance and my mother came to the gate to see me and we shared grief. Even then I was not allowed to touch her or hold her in my arms.*

*After veli, we had shifted to Trichur. The movement was strong there, and my husband was involved in the movement and in its newspaper, Yogakshemam. I also joined him in the movement. The first step was to wear a blouse and saree. Then slowly I started going to temple and outside home without any thunakkari(escort). Stitched my ear, and started living like a woman of any other caste. I had to bear quite a lot of harassment from both men and women in the community because I have joined the movement, changed my appearance.*

*I never felt guilty of being an outcast, because that was the time of change. I started attending meetings removing the Ghosha , wearing saree and blouse. I have also participated in misra bhojanam and ayithochadanam where I met Gandhiji.*

*In Arya Pallam's house, there were no customary practices, because they were also ostracised. So we went and stayed there, and joined Balika sadanam, and started working in the congress party. When I started my political and social work, I felt that I am not educated enough to give a speech or address an audience. I felt that if I am little more educated I can do better and be more assertive hence, I decided to study and passed the pradhamic from Trichur. This Hindi learning had helped me later to go and stay in the Gandhi Ashram at Wardha. We attended the misrabhojanam from Trichur. The activists used to take us to other illams as models, to show to the women that women can be like this also.*

*Apart from the yogakshemam work, Vamanan and Parameswaran were running a hotel at Trichur. I had to face lot of opposition for staying with my husband. But I was free and was able to live like a human being. I had no karanavar to be scared of. All those who*

*stayed with us were the progressives, who wanted a change. Mrs. Pandam, Mrs. O.M.C, Mrs.C.M.C were with us then. Narippatta Chomathiri's son. Sankaranarayanan Naripatta also was a yogakshema sabha activist, he also removed the ghosha of both his wives and their ears were stitched. But in those days, women were scared to wear saree and blouse during daytime. They wore it at night for a month or so, and gain confidence to wear it during daytime, because ostracism is a big harassment. Not only your relatives, the whole community distances you from their day to day affairs and rituals.*

*After two or three years, we had to decide on our life because his business was not good. His brother died. We brought his younger brother, but still we could not survive there for long. The Yogakshema work was slackened then.(1939-40) We were struggling to live. There was no income, we had no property, because neither my family not his family were ready to give our share. Partition was not allowed then. There was fight going on for the Alohari Bhagam Bill. (Individual property right). Going*



*back home was still open to us, provided we do prayaschitham. But we were not ready to do it.*

*We were searching for a way out. When I went to meet one of my friends, one Kalyani kutty amma, I met Kuttan nair. Kuttan Nair and his brother, Krishnan nair, were well known gandhians of that day. Kuttan Nair mentioned about an ashram run by sri. Jamunalal bajaj at Wardha. The Stipend is Rs. 20/-. It is meant for elderly women. There were also women who have come to do congress work and did not know what to do. He also said that I will be of a big help to them if I guide them. When he mentioned further education and congress work, I agreed. I went to Wardha, with Kuttan nair. I stayed there for 5years. When I went for the first time, daughter of Arya pallam, Devaki Varier was with me. The slogan of the Ashram was that of self-reliance. We prepared our own food. We used to weave our own dress. We were taught weaving.*

*When I came for a vacation, I took Neeli Mangalassu. Her husband asked her to come back and do prayaschitha, but she did not come back. He got m arried again. She is no more. She lived in*

*Wardha for a long time. She came once and tried to start a weaving centre. But nobody gave any financial help. She could not continue and she went back. She became a sanyasin and died some two years back.*

***Life at Wardha:-*** *We were 36 women, two in one room. We had good facility. There were two other women from Trivandrum District and Kottayam District.*

*Morning at 4.30 there is a prayer. Milk, sugar and wheat powder will be mixed and a glass of that drink will be given to us. It used to be filling. Classes used to start from eight in the morning. Ordinary school syllabus upto 5<sup>th</sup> st was taught, because we had girls who were really illiterates Classes would continue until lunch. After lunch, between 20' clock and 30' clock we will have class, and then weaving, till evening. This we were allowed to do from our room. Whatever dress one wants, one should spin, and go to the sevagram nearby. There one can get shawl or cloth or whatever one wants. I learnt knitting also. In the evening, we wash our clothes. The medium of education was Hindi. Mathematics, science and social studies were taught. This teaching*

*was there for a year. There was no examination as such. Evenings, Gandhiji used to go for a walk. We also used to go with him.*

*We all went for pilgrimage to Haridwar, Kedarnath etc. We were 6 women . We had a European woman, who was a guide to us. She died on the way, and we had to bring her back, cremate her and continue our trip.*

*In those days, women, travelling alone was not a problem for women. Hence we never felt anything unusual about it. In fact, I took initiative. We went by walk, and stayed in Sathrams(Motels) stay there at night, and used to cook something, eat and sleep. In the morning we continued our travel. From Devaprayaga, Madam died. Devaprayaga is a small town. So we four somehow, cremated her, in a sanyasi ashram , and continued our trip. Then we were not scared to go by train. Lot of pilgrims used to be there. So there was no fear, Or rather I never felt scared. We reached Gangotri and took bath in the hot spring. We felt sad that Madam had left us, but nothing more than that. We reached Nainital, and came back.*

*From Wardha, I went to Delhi, because there was no point in coming back to Kerala. There you know we stayed in the Harijan colony and worked for two years. In the villages, we could not work because of the language. There was not much work.*

*So I came back to Kerala. And then Communist party (By then, it had separated itself from the Congress) asked me to work in Deshabhimani, to do the editing, and proof reading from there. There I lived in the commune (there was a commune) Mrs. Dev, Mrs. Kaplinghat etc. were there. Work at Deshabhimnai improved my political awareness. I was not very fluent in reading Malayalam. This work at Deshabhimani helped me to improve my Malayalam.*

*By then, Yogakshemasabha, was rejuvenating, (1944-45). So again I came back to Trichur. The impact of widow remarriage was subsiding slowly. Still, seeing them or work with them were denied. Pandam, V.T. Kurumoor, E.M.S. etc. used to come home and discuss with my husband. It was decided to read out unninampudiri and yogaksemam to the wives of activists and teach English. My husband used to teach me english. So also, E.M.S. It*

*was a part of the movement. My husband also used to read those things to me. Then I thought” what he tells is correct. I am not supposed to sit at home. I have to do something to uplift women and self”*

*By then, a few of the antharjanams, were getting educated, but still there was not much of a change in their attitude. The community never allowed them to come out of the shackles of home. Women could not participate in anything. Starting an antharjanansamajam itself was very difficult. Going to illams and organise them was difficult. When we go to illam to talk to antharjanams, they never come out. Some of them even shut the door on our face. Some go inside when they see us. Though they never attend Yogakshema Sabha, we tried to mobilise them under antharjana samajam.*

*I cannot say that we could succeed fully. But still, with whatever mobilisation we could do, we had some reading rooms, There were antharjana samajams in more or less all upasabhas.*

*Then, there was another trend in the community. The increase in dowry amount made the parents in doldrums, and they were ready to give girls in marriage to Embranthiris. Later, Embranthiris(nampudiris from north Kanara) offered Rs. 500/- to-5000/-and take them with them. Parents also were ready to send them to Sirsi and Sidhippur. Antharjanaan samajam fought against this, and demanded women education and self employment instead of marriage. For this purpose a Work centre was started in Lakkidi, and I visited that once. I could not work with it, because Vamanan Narikkateeri was ill and also I had a very small child. When women start anything there will be rumours about it. But women should have confidence to face that. Their duty is to make people aware of its aims and programmes, what is their outlook, and why they have decided to adopt such an outlook etc. Otherwise it will die. No doubt, it will be criticised. Thozhil Kendram also was being criticised. But they could continue for 3 to 4 years. Embroidery, spinning and weaving etc were taught there.*

*The whole change among antharjanams was very much positive. The changes were legal, but not individual. They became like ordinary women.*

*By then, Vamanan had stomach ailment. We stayed in a rented house near the hospital and with the help of some progressives, treated him. He was bedridden for 4-5 years. By then I was pregnant and had a boy child. When the child was 3 years, my husband died. I had no way to live, to pull on. I had no place to live. Then Sri. Olappamanna came forward to help me.*

*In fact, that was a second life for me. The life I was leading had to be changed. They were quite progressive but very much communal. He was god fearing, and very much humane. I could bring up my child with his help, and also he saw that he got a job. My son is in a bank now. I cannot forget Sri. Olappamanna and my stay there in my life.*

*When he died, I had to go with Olappamanna. I had to stop my work, but still I had no other choice but to sit at home and make a livelihood. Politicassly I have become inactive, but physically only*

*I could not work. What I have inculcated, internalised during my political life, cannot leave me, you know. Till today, I have lived and made justice to it. Even today I read Deshabhimani, and I am aware of the political happenings, and politically I am up to date.*

*After his death, I could not participate politically in any other organisation, but continued to be progressive and with the left. I am a person who have attended the study classes held by the Communist party. I lived throughout my life as a Communist. I have brought up my children also in the same path, and satisfied with that. I feel there is quite a lot to be done in the society, but my time is over.*

She was a person who was bothered about the problems of women till her death. During the stay with her, a casual comment was made that Nampudiri women are going back to the old days, with more ritualistic and other sort of lives. The immediate reaction was that, "What we did for the society will go waste? Oh! No !, will Kerala become another Talibaan?" It is in your hands now, It is you people who have to try hard to make it straight. Our time is over.

She died in July 2000. Still she lives in the hearts of women of Kerala.



The members of the Kerala Yuvak Sangh under Mr. E.C. Kunhikannan nambiar conducted vigorous campaign in North Malabar. Also, in Malabar the volunteers of the satyagraha carrying tri-colour flags went in processions to picket the liquor shops at Payyannur. “ Two volunteers were posted before each shop to carry on the picketing. The volunteers were insulted and threatened by the owners of some of the shops as well as the excise officials. The 8<sup>th</sup> June was observed all over Malabar, as All-Kerala Salt Satyagraha day when large masses broke the law. Many volunteers were arrested in Telichery, Badagara, payyannor, Tikkoti etc. and were put in jail for long periods like six or eight months. After the arrests every Sunday was declared as Salt Satyagraha day and the salt law was broken in many places and the volunteers were in full swing.

Govt. of India declared the All India Congress Committee as an unlawful body. Swaraj Bhavan at Allahabad was sealed by the police. Arrests were continuing in different parts of Kerala throughout.

The students have vigorously participated in demonstrations and khadhi propaganda. The students of native school, (Now Ganpat School) Malabar Christian college school, Zamorins College, and Himayathul Muslim school Calicut , came out of their institution and,met under a banyan tree near the Zamorin's college and warned

the Government of the consequences of their repressive policy. The students of the Chalappuram Girls' School, then a Middle school went out in procession, led by the leaders of the Calicut Women's Swadeshi League. <sup>xxv</sup> Women thus slowly entered the political arena though they did not break the law yet. By 1930, July Kerala Provincial Congress Committee was reconstituted and Mr. T. Hassan Koya was elected as the President and Smt. M. Karthyayani Amma was co-opted in the same body.

The arrest of Sardar Vallabhai Patel at Bombay caused much excitement in Malabar. The Congress working committee declared the day of arrest as hartal and the leaders of the Swadeshi League and Mahila Sangha of Calicut observed the day as a hartal day. The Volunteers were headed by Mrs. A.V. Kuttimalu Amma, Smt., E. Narayanikutty Amma, Mrs. U. Gopalamenon, and Messrs. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair and Manjeri Subramanian who personally appealed to the owners of shops and business houses to close for the day. All the shops including the petrol bunks were closed. Hundreds of children under fourteen went round the town, shouting slogans in front of the town police station where upon the police caned some of them. <sup>xxvi</sup> Again the arrest of Pandit Nehru created severe unrest among people

in the movement and in protest they refused to celebrate Deepavali. A Dark Deepavali was celebrated by the Gujaratis of Calicut city.

The Verkot House, Tali was the centre of action for women of Calicut. Protesting against the cruel treatment of the satyagrahis of Bombay, Women gathered at Verkot house and planned a procession in the morning in the Calicut city. But by then, the District Magistrate gave notices under section 144 Cr. P. by which no procession or meetings were allowed. to Mrs. AV.Kuttimalu Amma, Mis.. M. Karthyayani Amma, Mrs. K. Madhavan nair, Mis.. K.E. Sarada, Smt. T. Narayani amma, Smt. P.G. Narayani Amma, Miss. E. Narayanikutty Amma, Mrs. T.V. Sundara iyer and Mrs. Gracy Aaron and two or three men . But early in the morning they gathered in the Verkot house and conducted the procession, singing songs dressed in spotless khadhi . Mrs. Narayani Amma and her elderly mother and other elderly women were present blessed the young girls to defy the law and court arrest. The ladies when stepped out, were stopped by the Sub-divisional magistrate, but they were determined to march forward. “The Inspector tried to snatch away the tri-colour flag from the hands of Jayalakshmi the spirited daughter of Mr. T.V. Sundaram Iyer. But the fearless girl looking steadily at the Inspector and said “I will not part with this” The Inspector tried his hand on others also but every one

remained stiff. Full-throated and spirited shouts of jais reverberated in the air. <sup>xxvii</sup> Orders were then given to the police for the arrest of the women. The arrested women were M. Karthyayani amma, Smt. E. Narayanikutty Amma, Mrs. Gracy Aron, Smt. Kunhikkavu amma, Smt. T. Ammukutty Amma, and the school girl Jayalakshmi and among the thunderous cries among the thousands assembled to witness the scene. On reaching the jail Jayalakshmi was let off since she was a minor. <sup>xxviii</sup> This was the first time that women courted arrest in Kerala in the cause of freedom movement. Smt. Swarnakumari menon also was one among the girls protested and arrested. Smt. Swarnakumari Menon is the daughter of Sri. U. Gopala Menon.

## **Smt. Swarnakumari Menon**

*“It was during the home rule movement that Gandhiji first came to Kerala. It was during this time that the earlier arrests took place here. My father, late Sri. U Gopalamenon, and Sri.K. Madhavan nair were the first to court arrest. There was no violence during the Home rule movement. I was studying in school during this time. I got*

*attracted to politics through my father. I enquired why father was arrested and all that. My mother also was engaged in mobilising women through womens' meetings. Both myself and my sister got interested and started working from the school days onwards. We wanted the freedom of India that was the only slogan, and that was the need of the time. Nehruji came here in 1928. He stayed with us for two days. We could not give much comfort but still he was quite happy. Gandhiji also had come. What a personality!. He is the person based on his ideals. He is like a lamp that has lit. His wife, Oh what a wonderful woman! After bath, she comes and sits in front of us and tells us "Please dry my hair, girls. "We all join-compete with each other to do that. She arranges the dining table, comes ready to eat, joins us to light the lamp in the evening, cut vegetables etc.*

*See, there is a whole difference between today's politics and the politics of my time. "Freedom to Bharath" was the only aim . That was the thought of day and night. Even*

*during sleep, we used to shout slogans. There was no personal interest like becoming a Minister, or get hold of power. There was no power politics. Politics had only one meaning and that was “get rid of British”and attain “Swaraj”.*

*See, I may be wrong. But still if you see the activists’ details, most of the activists were from the matrilineal households. We were accepted. We had better freedom. We were not controlled by our husbands. Of course, father/uncle/brother used to restrict our mobility but when they themselves are in the movement, they have only encouraged us, never discouraged us. However small the Tarawad was, we get a part of it. In those days if one gets a girl child she is privileged. Now only the time has changed. Today as soon as you marry, you are suppressed. Whether she goes to Germany or Burma whenever you feel you are unsafe or insecure you can come back. Nobody ever asked why you came back here? Of course, I accept, girls are better educated, free to travel etc. that is also there.*

*There was a Brahmin girl called Jayalakshmi. Her father was very active in Congress. See, all of us had somebody active in politics from the tarawad or house. That was the passport for us to enter. We were together. We had a Balika Bharatha Sangham. Jaya lakshmi was very active in it. We were all girls aged 10-14 years. There was a programme called "Prabhatha Bheri" Early morning we used to walk through the streets taking a flag in hand and go in procession singing songs. We were some ten to fifteen girls. We sing Pora..Pora naalil naalil ..... and Jhanda Oonja Rahe hamara..... etc. and walk through the road in the early morning. Each day we were given some specific area. Say for example, Chalapuram. We cover all the streets of Chalappuram till afternoon. We also work for the "Harijan" fund. Carrying a small box in hand we collect money. People accepted all these very well. My father was arrested then. All people were with us. There was no other leader other than Gandhiji . No violence or terror at all. What we wanted was only freedom. That was the first and*

*the only demand. As students our work was basically through the Balika Bharath Sangham. In fact, Indira Priyadarshinin started this at Delhi. It was in 1930. Apart from students women also participated in abundance. Kunjikkavamma, Lakshmikuttyamma etc. were the leaders here.*

*There was a house which was a centre for this activity known as Verkot House. There was one Narayanai Amma who used to fix the route and direct us. We all meet here in the morning, and the flag and route etc. will be read. We collect the songs and flag and leave. By afternoon, we meet again at this house and disperse off. Jayalakshmi and her sister Kamalam also used to be with us throughout.*

*Other than Verkot Narayani Amma, there was Kunjikkavamma, Mrs. Prabhu, Lakshmikuttyamma, etc. who were all very active and keen on getting freedom. Mrs. Prabhu has stayed with us. There used to be review at night regarding the Prabhathabheri. There are days when we sit throughout night discuss and write what happened during*



*the day. We give one copy to the press in the morning. A sincere Bala Bharath Sangh-activist comes and takes the writings from our hand and distributes to houses. But one day a van came and arrested all of us. They did not say anything. But took all of us; but left us within minutes. We followed non-violence throughout. There was no shouting, beatings, killing. There was absolutely no violence.*

*Guruvayoor referendum was one of the milestones in the Temple entry movement in Kerala. Temple Entry was a movement then. In order to fight the British we have to stand together as Indians. Whereas, we had hundreds of castes and subcastes and religion of different types and all sorts of anomalies were connected to it. Opening the Guruvayoor temple to the public was the demand. A referendum was conducted in Guruvayoor. I have participated in the Guruvayoor referendum. We stayed outside the temple. It was an opinion collection. We gave our opinion. There were lot of women along with us. Only after referendum that Guruvayoor was open to the public.*

*Every Hindu can enter now. Earlier not all Hindus were allowed. Kasthubha Gandhi came during the time of referendum. Kasthubha Amma stayed in our house. Even now when I think about her, I feel so elated. She was very fond of our customs etc. When we light the lamp during evening, and recite slokams she used to come and sit with us. She was so fond of Kerala. She had never acted a leader. She joins with us in cutting vegetables, help us in serving, and used to come along with us when we go for Khadi propaganda. That was a time. Now you cannot see such people in the national level. Guruvayoor temple was a small temple then. Only savarnas could enter the temple then. But still non-Hindus are not supposed to enter it seems. But it has to be changed. Where is the change of religion for Gods? Only we make the difference. When we go for Ghosha yatra or Prabhatha Bheri, we keep metres of khadher clothes in our shoulders, and propagate it. We also sell them. Despite rain or scorching sun, we stand in front of the shops, khadi in our shoulders. Some buy because small girls of reputed houses*

*are selling it, they are forced to buy out of sympathy or respect or reverence. We used to feel proud standing like that. It is not our private earning. We sell this for the country. That was deep in our heart. But now... who needs khadi? How many families are depending on this you know? Everybody wants foreign clothes now. nylon came first, and then polyester etc. Nobody uses cotton even. There was a time when we burn all the foreign clothes. That scene- the scene of rising fire in the Calicut beach still stays live in my eyes. We all went to the beach in a procession. All of us carry foreign cloth with us. After the bhashan on self-reliance, one by one we all threw our foreign clothes in the fire. That still stands in my mind. Time has changed, so also values.*

*A small box with a slit in the middle will be kept in hand of us, and we go to people and ask for money. There was no question of dignity or anything . Everybody knows that it is for the Harijan fund. We tell them also. Please donate for the harijan fund and extend our box they keep*

*money. They all want freedom to our country. Even officials never say no. Donating Rs.5/-. Was something great. No Rs.100/-, note you can see. Even I have seen a hundred rupee note in those days. We collect money.*

*All of us, in fact entered politics. Myself and my sister and brother were there in the politics. Then my mother used to do weaving and spinning. My mother was with the Mahila Samajam. She was very happy working with women and children. We were working on the Thakkli. Under the Khadi Board, there used to be competitions. What we do was, to take cotton and make threads, and hand it over to Khadi bhavan. They weave us whatever we want. A Thorthu Mundu(Towel) or Melmundu( Upper cloth). That was a part of self-reliance movement. Through this, what Gandhiji dreamed is the financial independence and self-reliance for women.*

*Here also I have to tell about the generation gap, I think. The school campus politics then was non-violent. Teachers also were aware that we are going for the jatha and*

*picketing, and become absentees. We had the backing of our parents. Moreover, there was an aim to our politics. Now.... Education itself is commercialised. A small child is carrying tonnes of books. And pays through her nose various types of fees which their parents cannot afford. But still they go for it. For what they feel as better education. Are they getting it? How many of them have heard of Mahathma Gandhi or Swami Vivekananda? They lack patriotism. See, children used to call me for flaghoisting in our flat. I am very particular that august 15<sup>th</sup> is memorable and it has to be celebrated. I do the flag hoisting every year. This year they said. "No, auntie! We are not celebrating. We have Cricket test." I literally cried. Where is patriotism? Do they realise that India is free and lot of people have suffered for it?*

*There is a big difference between politics in the school now and the politics of the 40s. We students were very active. Young blood you know. We believed in the ideology. Still I remember, when Motilal Nehru died, we all took leave as a part of mourning. I was studying in a Mission School.*

*When I went to the class next day the Head Mistress asked why I was absent the day before. I said that yesterday was hartal due to the death of Motilal Nehru. She got wild and said that “ Don’t you know that hartal is not permitted in India , now? You will be dismissed from the school. Unless you apologise.” I came and told my father that the Head Master said like this. He asked me whether I am ready to apologise, and I said “No”. He soothed me by telling that “you are correct. There is no need to apologise. If they are not ready to take you back, we can look for some other school.” No political education used to be given in school. But there were some good schools where the Head Master himself participated in politics.*

*The newspapers were also giving us lot of information not like today. Media now they are only sensationalizing the news. The newspaper reading is like reading a novel. No International news is given in Malayalam papers. I depend on English newspaper to get the news. The controversy of Pakistan cricket players etc. is in the front page. Which in*

*fact induces religious feelings. We parted as friends. Not as enemies. We have not seen them as enemies. Even now we cannot see our brothers as enemies. How friendly we were when they were telling goodbye. It was only like a Tarawad breaking up Nothing more than that. The time has changed.*  
*(Sigh)*

### ***The All India Women's Conference***

*The All India Women's Conference started in 1926. This is a Kerala chapter. We were a handful of women. V. Parukuttyamma was there, and also Santha Balakrishnan. Now we have a school at Ramanattukara where we teach the dropouts and failed S.S.L.C. students. And also a tailoring class. It is not a political association. I go there only once in a month. I am still active and try to do whatever I can do to the people. Because we are taught like that. Our first preference was our country, society, family and the self. It is not the reverse as it is today. When I look back, I feel that whatever I have done was fruitful, but still much more is there to do.*

The accused did not take part in the trial proceedings which were held after two days. After evidence for the prosecution was tendered by the Inspector of Police, the Magistrate sentenced them all except Smt. Kartyayani Amma to undergo imprisonment till the rising of the court. “The trial of educated ladies of high social status naturally attracted a crowd on 18 November to the vicinity of the Magistrate’s court though the police had tried to make the time and place of the trial a secret from the public. The ladies were produced before Mr. C.J. Paul, Additional district magistrate, Calicut sitting in the Stationary Sub-Magistrate’s court, vigilantly guarded by a strong police force. Smt. Kartyayani amma, Smt. Narayanikutty amma, and Mrs. Aaron were charged under sections 145 and 188 Cr. P. C., and Smt. Kumhikavu Amma and Ammukutty amma, under section 145 Cr. P.C., . the Magistrate asked Smt. Kartyayani amma to give security for good behaviour. On refusal she was sentenced to two month’s simple imprisonment. In pronouncing judgement, the Magistrate remarked that “ this was the first time women in Malabar join the political movement” and hoped that they would not do so again. Smt. Kartyayani amma alone was taken to jail.”<sup>xxix</sup>



The next day most of the schoolgirls observed as hartal days and abstained from their school. The students of govt. school of Commerce, Calicut were foremost in organising the strike. Not a single student attended classes in the Municipal girl's School at Chalappuram. All the girls, led by Jayalakshmi, went out in a procession and rounded the compound of the special sub-jail where the arrested ladies had been kept. Another procession of boys was taken out by the members of the Bala Bharat Sangh. The students of the Zamorins College, Malabar Christian College Ganapat High School, Himayatullah Muslim Highschool and the government School of commerce participated in it. But the same time picketing of the shops was continuing in one side. In the Kannur district the picketing was headed by Desa Seva Sangh. In many villages like Kalliasseri, Pappinisseri, Kannapuram and Cherukunnu section 144 was passed. Every day several volunteers were arrested under the vagrants Acts for picketing shops. Satyagrahis were whipped for boycotting the foreign liquor shops, arrests were taking place quite widespread.

1931 January 31 was observed as flag day. On that day the dictators were all arrested. One of the dictators Mr. T. Raghava

Kurup, who got arrested, nominated Mrs. Gracy Aaron as Dictator. She took prior intimation to the government about her plan. She had also conducted a procession to the Calicut beach, accompanied by Smt. P. Devaki amma. Mrs. L.S. prabhu, Mrs. Ganesh Pai, Smt. Vedavathi Ammal, and two men volunteers , Mr. Kumaran nair and Mr, T.K. Ayyappan Pillai. She hoisted the tri-colour flag as the vrowd sang the flag song in chorus. There was also a bonfire of foreign cloth on their return from the beach. All the ladies and the men volunteers were arrested by the police. Calicut observed a partial hartal on that day. This was the second occasion that the ladies were arrested in Malabar. Thre accused were charged under section 151 of I.P.C. Mrs. Gracy Aron and the two men volunteers did not take any part in the trial proceedings but the other ladies made a statement demanding maximum punishment for themselves. All of them were awarded six months rigorous imprisonment and asked to give security for good behaviour for six months after release from jail. <sup>xxx</sup> The ladies were taken to the Presidency jail for women at Vellore Mrs. Ganesh had a child with her.<sup>xxx</sup>

Likewise when Mr. L.S. prabhu, the dictator when he was arrested, nominated Mrs. Easwari Ammal, wife of T.R. Krishnaswamy Iyer as his successor. Mrs. Easwari ammal and Smt. K. Kunhilakshmiamma were arrested for breaking the salt law. Smt. K. Kunhilakshmi amma was the sixth dictator, and she along with other prominent leaders like margaret Pavamani, Messers. K.V. Suryanarayana Iyer, , P. Achuthan, Abdul Rahman, K.M. Nair, Vallabhadas Purushotham, K.Madhavan Nair and Dr. A. Chandu appealed to government to celebrate Motilal day . All the villages were observing Motilal day in Malabar by fasting, silent processions and complete hartal. Both Smt. Kunhilakshmiamma and Smt. Sanjivi Bai, were the first women in Malabar to participate in picketing. They went to Big Bazaar, Calicut holding tri-colour flag high and posted themselves before a piece-goods shop. They continued this picketing for two days. And on the third they were arrested. Both of them were teachers. Kunjulakshmiamma was a teacher in Cochin Government and Sanjivi Amma in Malabar Board. Both resigned their job in order to join the satyagraha Movement. The ladies were remanded in jail for a fortnight, and after trial, were kept in jail for six months. <sup>xxxii</sup> When arrested Kunjulakshmi amma nominated Mrs. Margaret pavamani as the

next dictator. Meanwhile arrests and convictions were taking place in all over Palghat, Calicut areas.

Under the auspices of Balika Sangh and Bala Bharat Sangh a large procession of boys and girls led by Miss. Jayalakshmi and Miss. P.G. Swarna kumari went along the imparts roads of Calicut on 25<sup>th</sup> February singing national songs and plying on taklis. In response to the call of Mrs. Pavamani shops, streets amnd residential houses in all important places in Malabar were decorated with tri-colour flags. Very active house to house campaign was conducted by the yuvak sangh and Desa Sevika Sangh, headed by Mr. E. C. Kunhikrishnan nambiar, Smt. Kartyayani amma and Smt. Matilda Kallan.

Calicut beach witnessed a huge meeting organised by Bala Bharat Sangh, the balika Sangh, the mahila Sangh and students league. It was a mammoth meeting where T. prakasam who had been released from the central Jail the previous day congratulated Kerala on the role played by her in a crucial movement like that. Very many spoke on the occasion. One of the speeches was that of Smt. Kartyayani amma. Later Mrs. Pavamoni was nominated in the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee where Kartyayani amma also was a member.

In fact, after the Salt Satyagraha educated women started entering the freedom movement without any hesitation ready to court arrest, go to jail, take to procession etc. the main arena of work was foreign cloth shop picketing. In Palghat the work was organised by Mrs. T.R. Krishnaswamy Iyer, Mrs. R.V. Sarma, Miss. Matilda Kallan, Smt. C.R. Devaki Amma and M.K.Janaki Amma along with some volunteers. They picketed the leading wholesale and retail shops in the town and spread the message of Gandhiji in the remote villages of the Taluk as well. Calicut, the biggest commercial centre gave a lead to the movement. Smt. Kamala Devi Chathopadhyaya with the help of the volunteers, Mrs. U. Gopala menon, Mrs. A. V. Kuttimalu Amma, Mrs. D.B. Sita Bai, Smt. T. Ammukutty Amma, Mrs. K. Madhavan Nair, C. Kunhikkavu amma, Smt. T. Parukuttyamma, Smt. K.P. Lakshmikutty amma, and a few girls picketed the shops and the men volunteers helped to avoid traffic obstruction and maintain orderliness in the streets.<sup>xxxiii</sup> In the Tellichery area, Margaret pavamani with the help of Kamalavathi. P.M., Sambhavi amma, Sumathi Bai, and Chandramati picketed the shops while in Cannanore, Mrs. M. Narayanan, Mrs. Madhava Pai, who had a child in her arms, Mrs. Bhandarkar, Smts. M.K. Kausalya, M.K. Yasodha, M.K.

Vani M. Rudrani, S. Chandrikabai, N. Madhavi and N. Revati and a few girls picketed the major shops. The entrance of these middle and upper middle class educated women in political field roused and encouraged women in the Cochin and Travancore area too. Women activists from Calicut went to Cochin and organised picketing at Trichur. Picketing was organised in Ambalapuzha and Trivandrum also. At the same time the liquor shops were picketed by the men volunteers.

Picketing the foreign cloth shop and courting arrest of the educated aristocratic women of Kerala was a historic event. Women from all walks of life, started pouring into the political field. Nothing restrained them in entering the field. The Rashtriya Stree Sabha was formed in Cannanore with Mrs. P. Madhavi Pai, as President and Smt. O.K. Madhavi Amma and Mrs. M. Narayanan as Secretaries. The committee included thirty-five women. The object of the body was to organise classes in spinning, popularise Hindi, and conduct propaganda for prohibition and Swadeshi; those who could were also asked to picket foreign cloth shop. In this background, there held a women's conference at Badagara through the Political Conference was the main centre of the attraction. Smt.

Padmavathi Asher inaugurated the conference and she was given a guard of honour by the smartly uniformed volunteers of the Balika Bharat Sangh . Smt. Dakshayani Kettilamma was the chairman of the Reception Committee. The major resolutions were all Hindus, irrespective of their castes should have free access to all Hindu places and demanded the recognition of the equal rights of women consistent with their number in all administrative institutions. It was also decided to organise Kerala Mahila Desa Sevika Sangh taking the example of the Calicut branch.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The resolution also stated that such Sangh should help to carry out nationalist work and serve the cause of women in the country and to set up night school and handicraft training centres for providing employment and education for poor women.

Along with the Women conference, a student conference also took place which passed resolutions like, organising kisans and labourers in factories for which purpose a committee was appointed consisting of Margaret Pavamani, Mr. U. Gopalamenon, Mr. K.A. Damodara Menon and Mr. MuhammadAbdul Rahiman. Mr. Nariman of Bombay presided over the Students conference and also the Hindi Prachar

conference. Mr. T. prakasam presided over the Kerala Political Sufferer's Conference which passed two major resolutions like helping the wagon tragedy victims household and the history of satyagraha movement which would help to introduce the men and women satyagrahis to the public. Also passed a resolution by which it stated the discrimination of classes of political prisoners. <sup>xxxv</sup> A conference of the Tiyya youth took place at Badagara who pledged their support to the movement. The Hindi Prachar conference, the student conference, the tiyya conference etc. helped to strengthen the national movement in a great extent. Also, various new issues, like untouchability, Temple entry etc. were receiving attention. The women leaders of Calicut had decided to organise an All Kerala Women's league with headquarters at Calicut for National reconstruction.

Meanwhile the Gandhi-Irwin pact was breaking down. When Gandhiji left for London to attend the Round Table Conference, the Government here was taking measures to handle the congress workers, arrest of the congress workers and putting down the national movement here. This led to a total dissatisfaction with the British Government which was further intensified by Madras Government's resettlement of land taxes. It was raised to



18.75per cent. <sup>xxxvi</sup> This dissatisfaction was slowly piling up resulting in the formation of Kissan Sabha in 1935.

Lalitha prabhu, wife of Mr. L.S. Prabhu was nominated as the next dictator. By the end of 1933 she also was arrested along with two other women volunteers were arrested for picketting the foreign cloth shop at Tellichery.

The sixth Kerala Provincial conference next year was held at Calicut, The District Superintendent of Police malabar, Samuel Aaron inaugurated the conference and six resolutions were passed. One of the resolutions was on Guruvayoor Satyagraha on untouchability. Then a procession started from Chalappuram tank, where a similar meeting and resolutions were passed under the presidentship of Mrs. Gracy Aaron, and later the procession proceeded to Tali temple. Then only the Police came to know about the developments and arrested Mr. and Mrs. Aaron.

Government banned the North Malabar 'District Conference . But still it was held in the early morning 5.45a.m. and more then 200 were arrested that day. Women also met that day and there were arrests in that conference too. More 102 were arrestd and Smt. Kamaladevi was imprisoned for six months.

## **Guruvayoor Satyagraha:**

Kerala Provincial Congress held at 1931 decided to observe 18<sup>th</sup> October as All Kerala Temple Entry day with programmes like processions, prayers, collections funds and meetings. The avarna and savarna volunteer posted at each gate, chanted sanskrit slogans and tried to enter the temple; each batch of volunteers stood at the post continuously for three hours. The satyagraha day was celebrated in almost every place in Kerala and also in cities like Madras, Bombay, Colombo, Calcutta and Delhi. Mr. T. Subramanian Thirumumpu was the captain of the Guruvayoor Satyagraha campaign was arrested at Guruvayoor and a boy of 12 who participated in the satyagraha was beaten up by a person. Again P. Krishnapillai, A.K. Gopalan etc. were beaten up black and blue which diverted the satyagraha to a violent one.

Guruvayoor satyagraha was a mile stone in the history of fight against untouchability in Kerala. Both Nambuthiri Youth league and Yogakshemasabha passed resolution supporting the satyagraha and entry for all Hindus including Adi Dravidas. Soon many private temples owned by savarnas and upper caste groups were declared open to the public including

untouchables.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Sri. K. Kelappan started the fast on the day Gandhiji started the fast at Yervada jail. It lasted for a very long time. Letters were sent from every part of India to Zamorin requesting him to open the guruvayoor temple for the avarnas. Very many memorials also reached Samorins on the same cause. Birla wrote to him "I have heard with much distress about Mr. kelappan's fast. In view of the new development I strongly implore you to throw open guruvayoor to all depressed brethren and give a lead in South India" <sup>xxxviii</sup>Kelappan got physically day by day and that resulting in the lull of congress activities in malabar. An All Kerala Savarna conference was held at Guruvayoor temple and a large number of men and women from every part of Kerala attended the conference through well organised jathas from all parts of kerala. It was also decided that savarna volunteers both men and women should fast within guruvayoor temple till Zamorin change his mind. On Oct. 1932 a batch of 24 savarna volunteers started the fast within the temple and soon the number rose to 50. Kelappan's fast lasted for two months. Repeated requests and letters from Gandhiji made him stop his fasting, by 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1932. Though the temple-entry satyagraha was stopped temporarily, anti-untouchability

campaign was announced with much vigour and enthusiasm. By November with the joint decision of Gandhiji and Kelappaji, a referendum was conducted at Ponnani taluk to ascertain the wishes of the adult savarnas Hindus. U. Gopala menon was the President of anti-untouchability committee. The referendum was attended by many women and men (Swarnakumariamamma was one of the persons who participated in the same) Long before the temple entry was thought about in Madras presidency, Travancore started the movement. Later it was spread to Cochin too. However, by 1934 there was a big wave throughout Kerala on anti-untouchability movement which was raised as a slogan for an independent India.

When the Civil disobedience movement was suspended, the activists diverted their attention to fields other than political. The economic depression, the sudden fall in the prices and the enhanced levy of land revenue created a favourable atmosphere for the organisation of the peasants and workers in Malabar. At a meeting held at Calicut, it was decided to conduct the meeting of the Kerala Karshaka Sangham. This was to raise the tenants' problem to the Government and also to organise them under the banner of freedom movement. At the same time, in

the national level the Swarajya party was revived, but a group of the early activists kept themselves away from it. M.R. Masani at the conference held at Ranchi reiterated that the peasants and labourers should be organised and thus enabled to participate in the fight not only against British Imperialism, but also Indian Capitalism. Later in 1934, after the conference, those congressmen who were interested in socialism met together in the town Hall, Calicut under the presidentship of K.Kelappan. It was named Kerala Congress Socialist party. E.M.S Nampoothirippad, during his long stay in the Vellore jail chanced to meet Bengal prisoners and developed certain revolutionary ideas which made him accept this.<sup>xxxix</sup> All the members in the Congress socialist party were congressmen. The objective was to organise peasants and workers in a socialist principles.

The Railway strike of 1928 was the first move to start the workers movement in Kerala. Also the movement helped the civil disobedience quite a lot by participating in various struggles. During the 1931 the workers of the commonwealth spinning Mill underwent a strike which resulted in the formation of North Malabar workers Union. The first anniversary of the same was celebrated in Malabar presided over by Sri. U. Gopala Menon. A resolution was passed that all the workers should compulsorily wear khadhi. Like wise there was another strike by 1933 by the workers of Trichur. The labour organisation became very active after the civil disobedience movement. There was a demand to cut short the working hours to 54 hours which was faced by the capitalists by cutting short the ½ days's wages from

the labourers. Protesting against this, there was a strike in Farook during 1935. The workers of Thiruvannur Mills, also underwent strike demanding the cancellation of the suspension of Manari Appu., and increasing the wages upto 10% for the contract workers etc. Sri. K. Kelappan was very active in this strike and within 15 days the demands were accepted, and there was a hike in the wages. Farook tile workers union under went strike for the same reason during 1935., like wise the Aron company workers, more than 850 of them also were in strike. This scenario was not only confined to Malabar alone but spread to Amballur, Trichur, Palluruthi, Alleppey etc. Places where the coir factory Unions were strong the strike was a big success, and the organisation also was possible. Alleppey was one such places, where men and women participated in the strike. This 1935 strike was an encouraging one for many freedom fighters and political activists to come up in the political field.

### **K. Devayani**

*Devayani spent her childhood in Paravur Kannitta, in Alleppey. She had studied in the Kudipallikkootam, (indigenous school before the British School) and later joined the 4<sup>th</sup> standard in Karinjeera school, Punnapra, where her brother in law was staying. She had to part with her parents for education at the age of 11 itself. Her brother was a coir factory worker, and was active in Atmavidya Sangham and Alappuzha Coir workers union. From 8<sup>th</sup> standard onwards she had to shift to the B.E.M. School, Punnapra, Alappuzha District.*

*She started getting interested in the works of Atmavidyasangham. Atmavidya sangham was the organisation against casteism and superstitions headed by Vaghbhadananda. So, after 9<sup>th</sup> std., she started formulating women's' wing for the Atmavidya Sangham. Within a week's time she had formed a women's wing. The first meeting was presided over by Muthukulam Parvathiamma. Gomathi Dev (wife of Kesava Dev) gave a speech on casteism etc. Very soon she was made the secretary of Atmavidya Sangham, women's wing. She was attracted by Asan's poems. In the childhood and adolescent years, she had made byheart all his poems, like Chandala Bikshuki, Duravastha, Karuna, Veenappovu etc. Her first work was to recite these poems among women and create an anti-caste feeling among women. She was not good at Public speech, because she was just 15 years old then. For public speech she was very much influenced by Vaghbhadananda. She wanted to speak like him, but could not. Later, he used to write speeches for her*

*and she read it in the public meetings, and thus she learnt to give public speech.*

*By 1934, there was a general strike by the coir workers union. But cannot make it a success because of the diwan rule and the capitalists were controlling the workers, by firing and looting. But this resulted in another union. Knowing that the union is not strong enough to paralyse the coir industry, the union people had decided to expand the union work to all sides of Alappuzha, for which women were organised under the banner of Ambalappuzha Kayaru Piri Union. Devayani was made the secretary. She was just 15 years old then. That was her first political work. But this union did not last long, because all the coir workers were also peasants. When the peasantry was facing severe problems during 1934, these women kept the demands of the coir workers in the back seat.*

*The peasant women of Kalarkot were exploited to the maximum. They start their work in the paddy-field from morning 6”o clock to evening 6 ‘o clock. Even for having*



*food they were not allowed to straighten their back. They were getting only 5 annas (one anna is 6paise). One fine day women refused to enter the paddy field. They went to all the paddy-fields and stopped the workers, working just for 5 annas without rest. Police had to intervene and their wages were raised to 6 annas and 30 minutes rest in the afternoon. So those women who were with the coir workers union were the peasants also. Their attention was diverted to the peasant struggle, hence the union has not worked out effectively. But this political work through which she had formed a union created a sort of confidence in her, and she wanted to spend her life usefully for the working women.*

*Slowly she started her political lessons. P. Krishnapillai was her teacher in giving her political lessons. She was asked to form Mahila sanghams all over the area with the help of Mrs. Thankamma Krishnapillai. They called meetings of women in front of their own hutment. They first go to 5-6 hutment and ask those women to come out and gather in front of one hutment, and talk to them regarding*

*an organisation and against casteism and driving British who control their janmi who exploits them. Both of them could make a base for mahila sangham in all the villages.*

*She met A.V. Kunjambu during her political work. It was in 1942 when he was in underground that they met and decided to get married. The marriage took place in a party class conducted by A.K.Gopalanclad in an ordinary old torn clothes both of them exchanged the garland, and immediately he left since police was searching for him. She then shifted to the commune in Calicut district.*

***Life in the commune.*** *The commune was in Puthiyara, Calicut. During daytime, they went to the neighbourhood and organised men and women. E.M.S., Arya Antharjanam, Unniraja, K.P.G., M.S.Nampudiri, Devadas, C.M. Kunjiraman Nair, ICP. Mrs. ICP., Arya Pallam, Priyadatha, O.M. Anujan, Arumukhan, T.C. Krishnapillai, Thankamma, P.R. Nambiar etc were in the*

*commune. P. Bhaskaran and Chandran were students and they were also staying in the commune.*

*When she was staying in the commune she was pregnant. The headquarters of the party was in Bombay, then. And she had decided to go to Bombay, but on way from Arkonam, she had severe bleeding and had to come back to Calicut, and from calicut, she had the first abortion. She went home to her mother at Alleppey. A.V. was still in underground and she had no idea where he was. He left in the year 1943 after marriage and in 1946, she received a letter telling that he is alive, running from place to place. In the same year he came and took her to his place, Karivellur. He had no relatives but only comrades and friends. They gave them a place to stay and she had started working for the Beedi workers. She had also organised women in the "Nelleduppu samaram . It was a peasant uprising against the Nileswaram Koviklakam. Post war poverty was prevalent in all the villages in Kerala, and there was no food to eat, but tons of grains were stored in the kovilakams and*

*in janmi's pathayappura. The peasantry had decided to seize it and distribute to the poor peasants. This resulted in firing and many peasants were killed. In this protest women also faced the janmis and MSPs with knife and sickle in their hand. They marched to the place called Kuniyan in Karivellor. This was led by Devayani. That protest was faced by the police in firing. Many including A.V, Kunjambu were severely injured, and they were taken to the hospital but she continued her work among the peasants. The police searched her, and she was pregnant then. She had to stay in a cow shed in a remote area. The police was beating up everybody who gave her shelter; hence they were scared to give her an asylum.*

*She had to be in the hiding place for some days. She was not able to get even water to quench her thirst. Because her hiding place was on top of a mountain where there was no human beings around. All the day time she used to be there and during nighttime, Mandan Narayanan 's sister, Kalyani used to come and take her to her house. When*

*Kalyani or Narayanan came to feed the cow, they used to bring water for her and she says in her biography:-*

*“The only life open to me was through the hole in the ola(coconut leaf) in the cow shed. Through that, I could see Kalyani coming to me like a black spot. One day, I was so thirsty, that I could not even raise my voice to ask for water to Narayanan. But he understood. He immediately plucked to tender coconuts and broke it with a stone and gave me. Also, he milched the cow and poured the milk by breaking the pot in which he has brought the cow’s food and gave me. I was 8 months pregnant then. Sitting in the cowshed all alone was giving me lot of physical as well as mental strain. I had no idea where A.V. was. Later, staying at night in any house had become a big problem since police force started raping women at night, since all the menfolk in the Karivellor village were either kept in jail or in underground, women were manhandled by the police and the goondas. So women also left the village in groups, and I left to one*

*comrade Yasodha teacher's house for my delivery. Thus my "ajmathavaasam" (hide out) ended.<sup>xl</sup>*

*After delivery, we had decided to build a house of our own. Since he was detailed from the jail I was getting an allowance of Rs.20/- The way the house was built was a co-operative work. One comrade Karayapalli Kunhikannan did a house to house campaign and arranged for coconut trees. Thotton Chindettan took the responsibility of the basement and flooring ( cost of the brick was Rs.5/- for 100) Pulookkal Govindan brought two windows which he arranged from a dilapidated house. The frame for the door was sent by Pavvor Kunjambu and Unnayadan Narayanan nair. Sivarama Pai donated a Jathi tree. Others donated coconut leaves, Bamboo, coir etc. and they started building the house. But by then, A.V. was again arrested on false allegation. She could hardly stay in her own house. The police was driving her mad during day and night. With the child, she was struggling to make a living. People in Karivellor could not help her, since they were scared of the police raid and*

*beatings. There was one Paatiyamma who was living near her house, who had 4 daughters. She was starving practically with the child. Paatiyamma taught her peasant work, and Devayani started going for that leaving the child at home with the daughters of Paatiyamma. But that also was stopped by the Police , and she had to go back to her parents. For nearly three years A.V. was in jail, and he came back when the party and party work was accepted.*

*From her place also she has worked for organising women for the Punnappra Vayalar movement. After coming back to Karivelloor after 4 years gap, she started working in the Mahila sanghams till her death, she was active in the political as well as social fields. She is survived by 4 boys and two girls. All the children are with the progressive movement in one way or another. She could bring up their children with progressive political ideology. She died in the year1991.*

*(based on interview with her son, Sri. Karivellor Murali and also from her autobiography)*

Under the leadership of Maniben Kara, there was a meeting of the trade unions in Calicut , and after that the labourers were quite active in demanding their rights.

Like wise, the peasants also were organised under the Kudiyan movement. The peasants were dissatisfied with the land act of 1930 which helped only the Kanakkudiyans and not the real peasant. By 1934, the peasant movement also got strengthened and demanded an amendment of the 1930 Act. In almost all the taluks peasant meetings and conferences were held and their problems were discussed. In this endeavour also the Congress Socialist party had taken initiative.

Teachers who were appointed in the management schools were treated like slaves of the Managers. Their salary was an issue, Fixation was an issue and the managers had ensured that there was no security for their jobs. The teachers also started raising their issue through an organisation Aided Elementary School Teachers' Organisation. The role of women in the teacher's movement was very remarkable. Teachers like Yasodha teacher, Lakshmi Kutty teacher were at the forefront to organise teachers and demand their rights. The other teachers looked down upon them but still with the political awareness they gained through their exposure to the political field, they managed to mobilise women teachers and formed an Organisation.

### **Smt. Lakshmi Kutty Amma**

*Lakshmi Kutty teacher belonged to Pattambi. Adventure was the basic character for Lakshmi Kutty Amma. While she was studying in the school, Mahatmaji visited Pattambi. And there was strict order from the head master that no student should go and attend the meeting, basically because the Head*



*Master was a pro-British person. But Lakshmikutty all alone went to see Mahatmaji and waited and listened to his speech at full length, and came back all alone She was asked to stay outside the classroom for a week for this act. But she stood outside the class and listened to the class and wrote the examination and passed with high marks. She says about this*

*“Mahatmaji came to pattambi, I went all alone. When inspection came, I was slightly scared, but there was no problem. Then I was a Congress worker. Cherukad was a congress volunteer during Gandhiji’s visit. We were playmates from childhood onwards. He is my uncle’s son. When he saw me at the ground where gandhiji gave the speech, he looked at me. “Oh. Fine” was the message. His respect reflected in his face. He has always encouraged me. Even after marriage participating in the movement was not a hindrance.”*

*She was a good orator from the childhood onwards. Because of this, the other students accepted her with great respect and*

*fear. Very selectively only students used to talk to her. At the same time she was able to bring other girls to her ideas. She had joined the school as a teacher in the age of 18. Her contribution was basically to develop teachers' movement. The first protest was against the existing Gurujanasamajam. The management and their basic idea of corruption were opposed. Teachers were not getting their salary properly. Whenever they get grant, they used to get Rs. 12/- or 14/-. Even when she started organising women very few women dared to work late at night. She remembered the names of Anamangad Ponmadi Devaki and Thrikkadeeri Dakshayani. She could organise few women to participate in the Pattini Jatha conducted by A.K.G. also. All her early works were concentrated in Vallapuzha. They go to each and every house and collect a handful of rice, or cash.*

*While studying in the training college itself, she was bringing out a manuscript magazine. She was trying to mobilise harijans through this magazine. After school hours, she used to take her small child and go to the harijan colony*

*and read out the magazines and teach them letters and talk to them about the open and subtle enemies of India. She used to tell them who is Gandhiji and what is Gramaswaraj. Till 8' o clock, she used to teach them and spend time with them. Being a good listener, she could tackle their family problems as well as personal problems, which she made Asan , an entry point to politics. She says “ they had a feeling that we are with them, and they are not alone, and we are all the same”. She had participated in Misra bhojanam and also took the harijans along with her for misra bhojanam.*

*Her husband, a well-known revolutionary literary person, with the pen-name “Cherukad” was by her side in all her ventures giving her support. In fact, both of them were feeling that the support is mutual. Lakshmikutty teacher was a big strength for him to work so also he was strength for her to work. She also had to suffer quite a lot when her husband was in underground. The house was surrounded by police day and night, for four days. At last, he had to surrender, otherwise the police would have taken*

*Lakshmikutty Amma with their child who was just 6 months old, under custody. Because of all these activities, she was given punishment transfer to Perinthalmanna. She got retired from there. She can be called the backbone of the present teachers' movement. The slogan then was*

*“Teaching is service to the Nation. And Service to the Nation is the goal of life”.*

*And all the teachers have accepted that fact. She used to talk to the parents of the children her students and create a change. She says, “ I could manage the household as well as the movement together. We could bring up 5-6 children and gave them our ideology. They are all in the movement now, in one way or another. But always I used to feel that a good time is ahead, while working. Even today. Poverty has declined to a certain extent. Because of our protest, teachers are in good position. They have no serious problem now.*

*She was known as the firebrand of the teachers' movement.*

*She was in the forefront of all the protests both small and big*

*for the rights of the teachers. She had not stopped with that but worked for the harijans and also participated in Ayithochadanam and Misrabhojanam.*

*She died in the year 2001. Till her death she had contacts with the teachers movement and women's' movement. She had worked with great sincerity and dedication. She was not satisfied with the present teacher's movement and women's participation there. She said " We teachers when we shout slogans and raise our fists we never had gold bangles in our hand. Now it is filled with bangles... that makes all the difference"*

Lakshmikutty teacher belonged to an upper caste who got education and also married to a person who was also an activist in both politics and teachers movement. It was easy for her to come out and organise women. She had the initiative and interest in doing so.

Yasodha teacher belonged to Ezhava community who were already depressed and denied education. She came to the political arena of her own. And through teachers' movement how she was able to

formulate a woman's perspective to the whole communist movement in Kerala is really remarkable.

### **Yasodha Teacher**

*Yasodha teacher belongs to Chirakkal Taluk, Cannanore District. Her father was Payyanadan Govindan, near Dharmadam. Her mother is Janaki. Her mother's father was a police officer. They followed matrilineal system. Her mother had 9 brothers. Regarding her education, she says*

*"During British regime, North Malabar belonged to Madras Presidency. 26 districts were under Madras Presidency. We were in Chirakkal taluk. The percentage, Britishers have given for the education in North Malabar was 8% for boys and girls together, whereas, Cochin and Travancore which were princely states had 40% on education. Total development was more in Cochin and Travancore. Girls were not sent to school in our area. But in our family, some of us were educated, so we were allowed to go to school. Otherwise, girls were not sent to school. Our master was the uncle of KPR Gopalan. I was the only girl student in my*

*class. Girls were admitted till class 6<sup>th</sup>. But no girl was there in the school except me. When Gandhiji came to Payyanur for Salt Satyagraha, we all knew the news. During the leisure time, all of us came out of the class and shouted Gandhiji ke jai.... I was the only girl in the school. The master came running and four or five students were caught. 36 beatings were given to each. According to the penal code, a child should not be beaten more than 12 beatings. So he slapped them for three days. That first day they were given 12 beatings, the next day 12 beatings and the third day 12. Then I thought, Why should he get angry for shouting Gandhiji ke jai. I did not know why...But somehow I escaped, because I was a girl.*

*There was severe shortage of teachers, especially lady teachers in those days. When I joined first as a teacher, I was 15 years old. (1931) After Higher elementary school, ie 8<sup>th</sup> standard. They took me. It was a house. The school was in a house. The thekke muri(room in the south corner) was converted into a school. I looked at the students. Till the*

*previous day I also was a student, playing with them. Now they are sitting in front of me. I felt slightly embarrassed. The next day was the inspection. An Anglo-Indian was the inspectress. 1931 July 23<sup>rd</sup> they took me to the school and the headmaster asked me to put "X" in all the dates from June 1<sup>st</sup> onwards. I did not know what it was. I did also. I did not know teaching. I had no training. I taught the students as my teacher taught me. An untrained assistant was with me. First I taught 3<sup>rd</sup> standard. Within 2-3 months I was asked to teach the whole 3<sup>rd</sup> std, and left me to 2<sup>nd</sup> std for another 6 months. Within 6 months time, the whole of 3<sup>rd</sup> std and 2<sup>nd</sup> std were taken. Students were also very interested in learning. It was a great strain. And within one year, they have to reach 5<sup>th</sup> std. That was the type of education then.*

*Later, I joined for B.Ed. All of us were trainees after taking TTC. The other girls, were Rukmini and Meenakshi of the Nayanar's family. There were demands to start Girls schools in both Kalliassery Panchayat and Pappinissery Panchayat.*



*Kalliassery Adhikari work was with the E.K.Nayanar's family and that of Pappinissery was with us. The demand was for a school in Mangad and Kalliaseri. The demand was for girls school. But there was shortage of lady teachers. Only lady teachers were appointed in those days in girl's school.*

*Taking up the profession of teaching was not accepted by the society. Lady teachers were branded as prostitutes. Teachers were unnecessarily being commented. The youth sitting in the culvert used to call the teachers "commodity (charakk)" because she is out in the street, not inside the house. Without a lady teacher, no recognition was possible for the school also. Just one teacher was needed. Then some people came to our house and asked my mother, and she refused to send me as teacher. Then my teacher and one of my uncles came to my house and pleaded to my mother, and my mother agreed only on one condition. If any substitute teacher comes, I have to stop going. I knew the shortage of lady teacher, and there was no other lady teacher available to*

*come and join. So I went for training. I used to walk 3 miles everyday and attend the training college. One year I stayed in my father's house, and the next year I joined the hostel.*

*During that time, my uncles decided to give me in marriage. They started buying clothes and all such things for the marriage. The boy was an MSP. Hawildar hailing from Calicut and not a matrilineal. I did not like the case. In our case, the boy's party should come to the girl's side. I refused to get married, telling them the time has not come yet. My relatives did not allow this. When this Hawildar came to my school, I told him that I am too young to get married, and at present that is not in my agenda. Though my relatives did not know of this, he at last agreed.*

*I continued teaching and started my political work in Congress party. After student days, I had freedom to join the Congress. I started organising women for the congress party through Mahila samajams. Because women never come and join if we say it is a political organisation. So we*

*used the name of the mahila samajams. Mahila samajam in those days means, giving employment to women, first of all make them feel that, financial independence is essential for women, for which charkka was used, the thread would come from Payyannur.*

*The idea of mahila samajams was not bad for us too. There were mahila samajams and mahila sanghams. Mahila samajams were formed first. Later when the congress has split, the left wing started mahila sanghams.*

*We started a Mahila Sangham in Pappinisseri during 1937. One Kannothe Madhaviamma, M.V. Meenakshi Amma and myself were the first organisers. There was a Kerala Mahila samajam started in Kannur. Communist Party was organized in Kerala from 1939 December. The basic unit of C.P.I. used to be cell, on top of which was branch, then farka, and local committee. After that we were all in cells. Then we started the mahila sanghams in all the cells and farkas. In Bullock-cart we brought cotton. We have distributed cotton to all women. That time Samuel Aron, and Gracy Aron etc.*

were with us. We made her the chairperson, It was a tactic, we made Gracy Aron the Patron of the sangham. Since she is the mill owner, she could provide some machinery for these women, we thought. But they propagated against sangham that it is that of communist party and not to join the sangham. Our membership was ½ Anna. But that of mahila samajam was 2 annas. It was kept for voting. We got more membership and formed the farka mahila sangham. We get cotton from Payyanur and wove it and returned the finished cloth to be sold in Payyannur. The basic idea was self-reliance. But we gave classes to the sangham workers, and taught them letters apart from financial independence. We were also getting involved in their family affairs and stood for one another. We knew each person personally. We told them about Gandhiji and need for freedom of the country. I started attending party classes and became a good party comrade.

I was the reporter of Deshabhimani. Since I have written against the British government, about Gandhiji's self

*reliance, Police was searching for me. They came to seize the article I had written. I kept that article under the bed. They did not get the article but they got me. They beat me like anything. Calling me Swa-Le. Swa-le ( in malayalam, Swantham Lekhakan/lekhika) They dragged me along the road. On the way they were shouting at me telling, “ you are a girl, why can't you get married and settle in life, why running after party and politics? Etc etc... But after some time I fainted. They slapped me even after I fainted. Somebody told me this, I did not know it then. They tortured me because I have worked for the charkka, and for Gandhiji. They pushed me and left me in the paddy field. I was lying there throughout night without consciousness.*

*Next day my mother took me from the field. My mother also shouted at me, for my political work, but gave me first aid. My back was completely swollen with beatings. Next day I went to school. On the way when I met a policeman I told him.” I am a person who walks through the road during daytime, you need not arrest me at night. You can very well*

*arrest me during daytime.” H.M. was quite considerate, and asked me to lie down, and asked me to sign and not to take classes. Then only I realised that the injuries are really very serious. After this, I went to Comrade Gopalettan who was a local committee secretary, to know what position I should take. When we were talking from his room, during daytime, the MSP came again with goondas. Parassini kadavu temple nercha is very famous. A lot of women used to come, and all of them wear lot of ornaments. These goondas used to snatch the ornaments from women and share them among themselves from the upper side of the temple. They looted everything. In fact, they came for that, but the MSP got the assistance of them too. Gopalettan was beaten up so also me. Rayarappan nair was the S.P. Swale Swale, etc they said and beat me up again. Rayarappan came and pushed me inside a room and said “ can’t you see that you are beaten up? Why can’t you go inside? Why bearing all these beatings being a woman?” He was so good. After that I went underground. Ananthan Nambiar and*

*Kanthalot (my husband) and others were already in underground. I was in a teacher's house. Chandroth also was there. We went by a small canoe at night, and reached the teacher's house. They said that I should go to Calicut. I changed the sari and wore a small mundu and dhoti and Kunjambu master took me to Chalode, by walk. I went and posted a letter to my mother and went straight to Deshabhimani Office. I went to E.M.S.'s sister's house. I stayed there for some days. E.M.S and myself were there for someday. Then E.M.S and myself were kept in a family car and were sent to the house of M.R.Bhattathirippad at Shornur. Kunjambu went to Edapally. That same day, there was a police station firing at Edappally. Then in order to show me to a Doctor at Cheruthuruthy, (from Kottakkal I was given medicines) I was taken to Dr. V.R. Nayanar. On our way back, Police was there. I could not come back and I was taken to (Paththiyil) Priyadatha's house and from there to Arya pallam's house. I was running from place to place without any aim or stability. But we had a confidence that*

*Socialism will solve all the problem and we worked for it, for that great day to come.*

*After the U.G. time is over, I again started my Samajam work. It was in 1942 that the first Kerala mahila Samajam has started with Bhavaniamma, Devayani and myself from Calicut. Most of them were coir workers. M.V. Meenakshiamma and myself used to go house to house. We go by walk to all the houses. A 10 days camp was conducted. Kochukutty amma and Mrs. George etc came for the meeting. That was in fact a confederation of all the Mahila Sanghms in Kerala. We could work more effectively and organise work in an all India level. During 1943, Mrs. Devaki Narikkateeri and myself have participated in the All India Women's' conference at Hind, Hyderabad. K.V Sarada, Ganapathy school, was representing the Congress party, and we two the Communist party. Kamala Devi Chathopadhyay, Mrs. Gandhi, Puran Mehta, Sarala, Renu Chakravarthy, Perin Beyroot, Kalpana Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Kalpana Joshi etc have participated. I could manage in*



*English and Devaki Narikkatterri was good at Hindi. We had good discussion, and we really fought for freedom. From Delhi, Narikkateeri fell sick. She was pregnant after 17 years of marriage, but had an abortion, and I did not know what to do, because I was not even married then. She was taken to the hospital. So after 10 days meetings, we had to stay there for a month. This conference has given us a new exposure of the political divisions and the stand each party takes, regarding women's issues as well as the freedom.*

*We protested against the assassination of Soya. Soya is the person who was hanged to death. Soya is not a Kerala name. Only after such participation we had names like that. Soya, Kamala, Sarojini, Rosa. Likewise, Stalin, Lenin, Bhagat etc. were such names, which we have got through such political interventions.*

*Misra bhojanam took place in my uncle's house under Aramban Gopalan's leadership, it took place in my uncle's house. Harijans jatha used to come and have food. They were not allowed inside the house. I was a teacher then.*

*They keep the meals in the veranda. None of the relatives or neighbours came to attend. Not only that they all blamed us for having food with untouchables. Only we were there.*

*I was active in the teachers' movement. Teacher's movement started in 1935 in Kerala. T.C. Narayanan Nambiar, V. Ramunni, P.R. Nambiar etc were the leaders of the Malabar Teachers' Union in Kerala. (1935). We have participated in all sorts of protests for the rights of the teachers. Teachers were not supposed to participate in politics, especially anything against British government. But all of us were political activists. During 1939, 198 certificates of teachers were dismissed. 2 women only were there. We were ready to be taken provided the teacher apologises. But I did not apologise.*

*My marriage took place only in 1952. The comrades suggested Kanthalot Kunjambu to me. I knew him already. He used to be in Aaron's company. He is rich. He is of my age. So I told that he is rich and of my age, I cannot marry, I said. Keraleeyan went and told his mother also. At last they*

*said, that the decision has been given to the party. Thus I got married in the year 1952. That was a communist marriage, and the meeting was presided over by Com. Rayarappan. During that time, both Suseela Gopalan and Devayani got married. Both these marriages also were communist marriages.*

*Marriage has not affected my political work. Rather I could work with more freedom, because I was licensed. We are still comrades. We had maintained the comradeship in our personal life also. Not like the husband and wife of today. We share everything, both political and personal.*

*During the split of the left front, we stood with CPI , and continue to be with CPI. Kandalot became Minister of forestry during 1977.*

*I got retired in the year 1976. I still continue my political work. I am now a member of the State Mahila Sangham., Also in the District charter of the Sangham. . I am also an office bearer of the Pappinisseri mahila Sangham. We run a*

*Garment society at Azhikkode, till last year, I was the president. I am now 85, but still the girls there, want my support. I help them whenever I get time. But new people should come is't it? Now that I am sick, and cannot travel. There is lot of things yet to be done. I am not satisfied with my work. Could we reach anywhere? In certain areas, yes, we have achieved. But what about the position of women in the society, now? Something is wrong somewhere.*

*(Based on Personal interview)*

By including the movement among people of various class and castes and also gender, the Socialists got more acceptance inside Congress party. Slowly the Congress in Kerala was in the hands of the Socialists. After the Shornur conference 1934, the division became very strong. The 1935 conference passed another resolution demanding Kerala to be given the status of a complete state. Another resolution was to include workers and peasants in the political front and also indicated the danger of a War. In the resolution itself the difference between the left and the right wings were quite evident.

By 1936 under the leadership of A.K.Gopalan a “Pattini Jatha “ was conducted from Cannanore to Madras by walk. This was meant to be a conscientising programme about the rising unemployment and hunger as a result of the war. In this jatha A.K.G. was supported by the Karshaka Sangham. This Jatha helped the Karshaka Sangham to mobilise more men and women and could reach in every nook and corner of North Malbar. In fact, after this jatha, there was a resurrection to the Karshaka Sangham which is seen in both individual and organised protests of peasants.this also helped women to form Mahila Sanghams and work for political awareness of women as wellgiving the message of self reliance.

By 1935, Women of all classes including nampudiris and Ambalavasis were in the public space either through peasant struggles or through Congress Socialist party, Congress Party, and freedom movement. The educated women of upper caste and class were quite active in the local youth clubs and Mahila sanghams and samajams. They came forward propagating Misra Bhojanam and Ayithochadanam by publishing magazines and pamphlets.

***Manorama Thampuratti*** of Kottakkal , Malappuram was an active member of the youth wing called “Navajeevan Yuvajanasangham in the year 1936. P.V. Krishna Varier, P.

*Sankara Varier, Pulikkal Sooppikuttykukka, C.R. Varier etc. were the leaders of the samgham. The main work of the sangham was conscientisation for Ayithochadanam and against anacharams. From the Kovilakam, progressive journals like "Amrithabhashini", "Bala Chandrika" were published by the Thampurati. This journal contained the message of freedom struggle and socialism. She along with a small group of women including Vallikkad Kamalakshi, Madhavikutty Varasyar, Amminikutty Teacher, V.P. Kalyani etc. formed a Mahila group through which they propagated Gandhian ideals and Khadhi. They used to meet every evening at the Kovilakam and organise their work. They had also started some income generating programs for women in order make them attend the meeting. The sangham survived even after independence.*

*(Based on Vikasana Rekha)*

While women of upper caste and class were fighting for the common cause there were also fights from the downtrodden against the upper caste. The Kovilakams were considered to be the domain of the savarnas and they were more or less ruling the area around the Kovilakams. When the rights were realised by the downtrodden, they

also raised their voices against such domination. And such women are still remembered through songs or folk songs even now in Kerala. The case of Kathia is such a one.

## **Kathia of Chaaliyar Panchayat, Malappuram District.**

*The Myladi kovilakam was situated at the banks of the Chaliyar river. It was becoming narrower in the area around Myladi. Both men and women of the common class used to take bath from here. The dirt and the herbals used for the bath etc. used to make hindrance to the Thampurattis. There used to be a continuous tension prevailed between the Myladi people and the Kovilakam due to this. In this fight, the Myladi people were asked not to use the riverbanks being untouchables and Muslims. This became slightly communal in character. Kathia was representing the dalits and led the protests to get back the riverbanks, which is a common property. Atlast, Myladi people won and Kathia was known as Adhikari Kathia and there were songs written appreciating her mobilising women and led the movement against the Kovilakams.*

(Based on Vikasana Rekha and also interview with Ammini Teacher)

The fearless fights by Dalit women was possible only with the widespread mobilisation of the Karshaka Sangham. The peasants were made to understand their right in the land. This helped them and gave them courage to question their own landlords to a certain extent. There were local level protests like this in more or less all the areas with the backing of Kissan sabha from 1936-1946. In North Malabar the Karshaka Sangham was quite active and led many struggles.

The well-known **Thol Viraku Samaram** is such a protest. More than 100 women participated in that protest. This was also one of the women led struggles, led by **Karthyayani Amma** (Mrs. Thirumumbu) of Cheemeni Estate. Peasant women of the Cheemeni estate was using fuel and fodder from the estate area. The estate was that of Subramanyan Thirumumbu, an activist of the left wing. When the land was sold to one John Kotukkapally, the new landlord refused to give the fuel and fodder to women of that area. Since women were using it for such a long time, and they felt that it is their right to get fuel and fodder from the place they work, they protested. For support, they immediately contacted the Karshaka Sangham, and planned for an organised protest. This was led by Karthyayani, the wife of



Subramanyan Thirumumpu. Thirumumpu immediately wrote a marching song and more than 100 women were organised and they marched to the estate singing the song..... there were arrests and harassment by the Police but women refused to abide by the Police and marched forward and regained the right for fuel and fodder. This was an epoch-making struggle in the history of Kerala. Other women participated in the protest were, **Smt. Lakshmi, Smt. Karthyayani amma, Chettichi Paru** etc. (Based on personal Interview)

Palghat is another area where the peasant movement was active. Women who were denied their rights were not silenced as earlier. They had the backing of an organisation and through Mahila sanghams they themselves were organised to a certain extent. This unity helped to question the janmi in many places.

**Kannuthalla** belonged to Parali of Palghat district. She also was an active member of the kissan sabha. Her individual protest also was against eviction. When a death took place in a janmi's house, Kannuthalla paid a condolence visit. As per the custom, she brought with her a big ash gourd with her to be given to the janmi. But janmi not only refused to accept it, but also threw it down. She took the broken ash gourd, and mobilised some women and men peasants along with her, and marched to Palghat, where A.K.G. was presiding a meeting, and presented the ash gourd to A.K.Gopalan. She was with the kissan sabha for a long time, and mobilised women for various peasant struggles.

More or less in all the Panchayat with the help of some member male or female in the freedom movement women were trying to break the earlier bond and tried to come out.

**Nadakkal Narayani Amma** of Maniyur Panchayat, in the Thodannur block. She is the wife of Nellacheri Ramar Kurup. Her husband who went to Wardha and worked under Gandhiji for a long time influenced her. She started charkka classes, and organised women under the banner of Mahila Samajams and taught them spinning and self-reliance. Later, these mahila samajam women have participated in Madyavarjanam(anti-liquor movement), Ayithochadanam (untouchability)etc. She was known as the firebrand of Thodannur block.

**Karichiriyedathi, C.Pandal**

**M.K. Narayani, and P. Madhavi** *These four women belonged to Anthur Panchayat of Thalipparambu Block, Kannur. They have participated in all the peasant struggles in Kannur District and also participated in Misra bhojanam and harijanodharanam. They were the first group who started women's organisation in the panchayat. They made good contacts with the neighbours and mobilised women and conducted dramas and other cultural programmes on themes like untouchability, casteism and tenant problems. They also gave importance to women's financial independence and started Mahila samajams later. At the time of Cholera, during 1946, the women's group organised under these four women went house to house service and helped the Panchayat health workers. Under the leadership of this group there was a night school functioning in Anthur during 1945. Through the night school they mobilised women for freedom struggle.*

*(based on Vikasana Rekha)*

In the National Level the Quit India Movement was creating a new life in the activity. Students both girls and boys were engaged in the one and the only slogan. "Poorna Swaraj" and "drive out the British" Those who organised women through Mahila samajam started spreading the idea of Self-reliance through Khadhi and

spinning. Many charkka classes were started. Both men and women were ready to court arrest in the quit India Movement.

### **Anakkara Vadakkath Suseelaamma**

*My name in the jail was P. Suseela. Perumbilavil Suseela.*

*Perumbilavil tharawad is no more now. Only we say we belong to this tarawad. My sister Sarojini also was in politics and she was adamant in keeping my father's initials.*

*And she called herself G. Sarojini. My father was G. Gopala Menon. So when I came to the picture, I also was known as G. Suseela. I am now 80 years old. Only circumstances made me come back to this place. I would have been a teacher or in service otherwise.*

*During the Quit India movement I left college and went to jail and after coming back I came to Kerala. Many people came back, basically it was a part of Gandhian ideal - Coming back and serve the village. My father was a Gandhian and all of us wear Khadhi, even now. I was brought up in that tradition. Many congress people used to visit our house.*

*My childhood... I was born and brought up from this house , Anakkara Vadakkath . There is a school nearby. My father and mother were looking after the house. It so happened that my father lost his father who built this house, when he was studying for intermediate. So all the other brothers were studying for law, two were for B.A.L.T. None of them could come but my father came back and stayed with my mother, and looked after the property. So all the children were brought up here. During holidays, all the brothers and sisters of my father would come here, and their children also used to come and it was a happy affair, and there was such affection and love between all the members of the family. I don't remember even a single member of the family talking harshly to another. There is a school here only upto 4<sup>th</sup> std. Next village, Kumaranallur had a high school. I have two sisters and one brother. I went to the Kumaranallur school and did quite well in the exams, that is why I could join the College in the Womens' Christian College, Madras. My Cheriamma (aunt), Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan was in*

*Madras. She wanted me to do higher studies. My elder sister stopped her studies early. She also studied in Madras. After B.A. I joined for B.Ed. in Lady Willington Training college. In those days, the teachers were all foreigners. I learnt Mathematics. I did B.A. in Mathematics with Physics and chemistry. I was brought up in that tradition. Many congress people used to visit our house. I stayed with her for some time, till she went to Delhi, since she became an M.P. then I went to the hostel. So she also has influenced me a lot. She was with the Congress. When I went to the jail, during Quit India movement and she was taken as a detainee along with Kuttimaluamma and Kamala Devi Chathopadhaya. All that was an experience.*

*That was January end. We had study holidays. Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan was a strong Congress activist. There was a womens' meeting going on in her house. They were discussing about picketting the Secretariat. That was my first exposure to politics. I never thought of joining politics at all. Just like that they proposed that girls of my age also*

*should participate and I volunteered to go myself. That was an impulsive move. We picketed the Secretariat. All students from the college were there. Lot of students came to view the picketing. There were police all over the place. It was heavily crowded. That day only four of us were arrested. Two boys and two girls. One Miss. Padma Rao from Queen Marys' college was with me. Her uncle is an official in the secretariat. We got arrested. Next day only they brought us to the court. Her uncle and others told her to apologize but she refused. She refused because she had courted arrest out of her own interest. But her relatives forced her to get her signature in the apology letter. She broke down terribly. Later she was called Ms. Apology in the college, but still..... That was a great experience of torture like doing something which you don't want to do. I was thinking.... I compared her with me. When I told my Cheriamma(aunt) that I would go, Cheriamma asked me if my people at Vadakkath would say anything against. Then I*

*said that they would only be happy in my participation in politics. Because that was my background.*

*In the jail, I am not supposed to get letters, but my Cheriamma, Ammu Swaminathan can receive, because she was a detainee. So I used to know the family details through her. That privilege was extended only to me. Three months we were in jail. We were taken to the jail by a sub-inspector in his own car. He told us "Please girls, you don't shout slogans from the car. You can do it after reaching the jail. People around will watch and notice. so please...." It was in a tone of request. It was in 1943.*

*We never felt any problem in the Womens' jail. But the men's jail..... was different. My husband was in Alipore jail. (Then we were not married, but later he told me about it) Their superintendent was a British, who used to beat up men. But women's prison was comparatively better. Policemen were behaving well with the girls and also to students. But I heard that in Andhra, the police were very*



*cruel to students. There was no womens' Police then, you know. There were four girls, including myself in the prison.*

*There was one Gopal Reddy's daughter, Sakuntala Reddy and Anasuya Reddy from Andhra. We studied together in Queen Marys' college.. There was a girl from Trivandrum. Her father was an editor of Indian Express. A christian name. She was a student of Politics in Womens' college. We had quite an interesting time. In the night each one was locked up in the cell. We never waited for the evening. Sleeping alone in a room was quite new. All of us were small girls you know. Somehow we managed. Sakuntala Reddy was only 17 years only. She was really scared. An earthern pot kept at the corner of the room served the purpose of the toilet. With all this we had a nice time in the jail. We really enjoyed it. Since we were all young, we wanted to play something in the evening. We told the warden that we want to play something, you know, we were given Tennikoit and we played very happily. (laughs)*

*In the Quit India movement itself, processions were creating problems in some areas. In Bombay a train was burnt. Gandhiji felt very sad about that. He said “ I never thought that such an incident will take place, I regret and I take the responsibility of the cruelty” and he had decided to fast till death. He announced it also. People felt very sad. That was the first time that students started joining the Quit India movement in abundance. Students started participating in the movement for the first time after the chowri-chowra incident.*

*After coming back from jail, we started mobilising women and form Mahila Samajams. We used to tell the neighbourhood girls that it is a good economic resource, and were persuading girls to do spinning. We, that is the local people collected money, and bought charkas for poor girls. There was a flood, during that time. As a part of relief fund, Congress has distributed charkkas to all. They learnt spinning. When we started the mahila samajam, we also asked for some fund, and started the spinning classes. For*

*Gandhijayanthi, Independence day etc. we conducted processions, flag hoisting etc. These things nobody would have seen such things in this village. We started them for the first time. There was a reading room connected with the school. The reading room has got a big courtyard, where we girls would gather and sing "Pora...pora.. Nalil...nalil.. etc....We taught them the song and there was considerable enthusiasm among the girls of that age. We could create that, of course and it was well received. We also used to go for prabhata Bheri. In fact, women were not given opportunity to sing and participate in meetings. Our maid-servant Kamala used to come along with me. She used to inform others, "You should come and listen to amma's speech. Some of them used to come. Women did come out of their house. There was a change, no doubt.*

*By then Kuttimalu Amma also came and I used to go along with her. We have travelled in most of the parts of Malabar. Payyanur, Kannur, Badagara etc. That was the time that I travelled in the Malabar area. We were invited to many*

*places to give speeches and we used to go. We were concentrating in Malabar. Payyanoor was the place of khadi weaving, and we sponsored many girls to that centre. We made very few visits to Travancore. The whole movement was different in Travancore, with the Diwan rule etc. We could not digest those things in those days., you know....*

*Kamala Devi Chathopadhyay was a good friend of my aunt. And she used to come and take classes. We were quite a number of youngsters. She used to teach us politics. She used to tell us “when you go back you should go and work in the villages” and she was a great social worker. Ironically she came back to Kerala and visited the Mahila samajams formulated by us, and addressed the members. She was very happy because what she asked us to do we did. What she asked us, we could do. I worked there for 4-5 years. Then the first elections came. Sri. Moideen kutty sahib was the nominee from here. I worked very hard. I was around 23-24 then. In those days young girls to travel and work with men was a task, but still with all the enthusiasm I never felt*

*that I was a woman. Only sometime, when we go to village, and work for some specific cause they used to ask, "How does your family allow you to go around like this?" Fortunately my parents were broad minded, they used to tell us, "We have full faith in you". So, for me also that used to be a pointer. I suppose I owe my father a lot. He gave us all this liberty, mother too. But mother ...she was a little nervous, when I go out, because in those days, travelling was a big risk. In order to go to Calicut, you have to catch 6 'o clock train for which I have to walk all the way to Kuttipuram for which I have to start at 4'o clock. No bus, nothing. But there was a mappila worker here. He used to come with me with a lantern to the station. I used to go alone. My father and mother were really supporting me. Later, there was one old man called Poduval. He was belonged to Payyannur, and was directed by the Congress committee to work in the spinning classes. He was of great help because whenever I travelled I used to take him with me. There was somebody to take care of me. He was really so much involved in the*

*freedom movement by teaching the students telling them about Gandhiji, etc. Such a selfless work he was doing. There were so many people like him. teaching students about Gandhiji, etc. He was doing they were doing such a service.*

*When we attained freedom I was in Madras. It was a happy event. That night we had a celebration programme. I was, and is with the congress. I won't say that whatever Congress does is good. But Congress is in my blood. But all party people used to come here. In this house, we accept both Congress party and Communist party. Because we have activists in both. Captain Lakshmi is my aunt's (Ammu Swaminathan) daughter.*

*After coming back from Madras, I got married to a person who has participated in the movement, namely T.V. Kunhikrishnan from Badakara. We call him T.V. He used to be a journalist. We were in Madras for some time. I was active then also. My aunt was there, and I had affiliation with the Congress party there. Even after having children, I used to attend the congress meeting. I have two children,*

*and I could not go anywhere. It is fate that I had to part with my husband. He went to Delhi. He got married again. We are still good friends.*

*I was in Vadakara when the assassination of Gandhiji took place. I was in my husband's house. We were taken aback. Next day there was a meeting at Beach. We went to the beach and recited a sloka from Geetha.*

*When I look back, I feel I would like to thank God for giving a different types of situations to face and come out of it with better understanding of the world. In my personal life, we had a family split. Still... I feel thankful that we left as friends. Even now he rings me up. He is running a publication in Delhi, called Somayya Publication. I am quite proud of the past. But we could not fulfill the ideals we had about Swaraj, self reliance etc. We are not going through the path we wanted to go. That is quite disheartening. Welfare society, Gramaswarj etc. Nehru took initiative. He took a central path. But then nobody could maintain it. The idea of decentralisation is good, so also the present peoples' plan*

*is good, but how far it can keep away from individual interests, one has to wait and see.*

*(Based on personal Interview)*

Many girls from the school reached the political field during this time. During the civil disobedience also we can find lots of girls from school coming out to the political front. But that continued till 1950s. School girls with the background of Congress socialist or Congress members in the house showed more courage than ordinary girls. They were not bothered or scared of the police or arrest. Thadathil Priyadatha was such a girl. She is a Nampudiri by birth, but her parents were quite active in the Yogakshema Sabha as well as congress Socialist party in the local area. She belongs to pattambi but got married in Areekkode near manjeri.

### **Thadathil Priyadatha**

*I have studied from Trichur Nambudiri Vidyalyayam till the III forum. Later we came here, to Palghat. We were taught whatever was taught in the normal school. I have participated in the Vidhyarthi Congress. Student federation members were from all classes. The communist Party was*



*banned then. The secretary was detained from the class for attending a communist party meeting. Communists were harassed for nothing. My brother was studying in the same school. He went to see this secretary. His name is Uzhhuthra Varier. For attending the meeting he was suspended. Since my brother went to see him, he also was suspended and later dismissed. Then there was a meeting on this. Murali teacher (the younger daughter of Arya Pallam) and myself were studying in the same class. Student Federation is a student organisation of the Communist Party. So, my brother also was suspended. Next day, it was displayed in the notice board. Both of them were dismissed also. The daughter of Arya Pallam, Murali and myself were in the same class in the same school. I told her that “ see, both of them were dismissed just because both of them have participated in the meeting. This is ridiculous. Uzhuthra Warier and my brother were called to the office and the Head Master questioned them. A master need not do all these. Let us protest? “ But we had had no idea how to do it, at last I*

*said “ let us take leave after the attendance is being called, and walk out of the classroom. That will be our protest.” She agreed. The teacher came and took attendance. After that I got up and handed over the leave letter. She also came out. The master asked, “Why couldn’t you do it before the attendance is being taken? (But it won’t be protest). Then both of us shouted slogans “Inquilab Zindabad, those who are dismissed have to be taken back” Both of us shouted and there was a big hush bush in the school. Hearing our slogans all the masters came to our class. Both of us were thrown out of the classroom, literally. Next day the headmaster informed that if we apologize for what we did, she will be taken back, other wise we also will be suspended.” My father was not ready. Murali apologised and she was taken back. I was not allowed to enter the class. I went to the class as usual, but the students said that Priyadatta should not enter the class. I did not mind, because I have already given the leave letter. So I sat there myself. Then the master came and said “no. You are not supposed to sit here,*

*you are suspended” I went home, and the party people discussed with father. S.S.L.C. exam was nearing. But I was not ready to go back. Everyday I go to school and stand in front of the gate. I was feeling bad about that. But still I was doing it. The exams were nearing, and it was March 25<sup>th</sup>. I have not done any thing wrong. My father has not asked for apology. Then the party people discussed the matter. There is a K.G. Master in Amayur. Then they asked me to go for Indefinite fast. Notice was printed, and was distributed in the neighbourhood. I was asked to go to Pallam’s house. Because transportation from my house as a problem. I was asked to stand in front of the gate, and distributed the notice to the students. Some of them I kept under my skirt. Exams have started. I just stood there. After some time, they reported to the police, and two or three people came in a police van. Then they asked me you standing here, come and sit inside the van” I refused to get into the van. Then they forced me inside. I had no body with me. But still I was not scared. I was not scared because*

*police was a common factor in our house. They took me to the station. They offered tea for me. I refused. Then subinspector came and offered, again I refused. There is a rule that the fasting person should take something. Then the S.O. Said “ why you little girl? Have something. We also have sisters and mother and others. Why starving? Please” I was really angry with them. Because for no reason they have taken me under custody. They spread a blanket for me, and I sat. After one hour, again they pleaded, and atlast, I agreed to take food. I took tea and plantain. Party people were watching me. Then they said, come and enter the van. I was taken to the jail at Ottappalam. I was not scared at all. I was taken at 5'o clock in the evening. But they gave me food from the veranda not with other criminals in the jail. May be because they might have thought that I am a girl or a small girl student. Constables were all there in the veranda. I did not like the food. I have heard of the jail foods. My father was jailed for 1 ½ years and he used to tell how it is. It was the same and I did not like it. I was nibbling with the*

*food, and at last took the plate to wash. Then they asked me to take the urine bowl (kalam). I have read Cherukad's novel. He has mentioned about the jail in which they make the inmates carry the urine bowl. I remembered that. I said that I don't want, but they insisted. I took the bowl with two fingers. Because one doesn't know how all have used it and whether it was washed or not, etc. I took it and went inside the cell. My cell was right in front of the constables. The case against me was that of Manhandling. When the exams are going on, I trespass the school which was a violation of section- 144. Something and all were written on the wall of my jail cell. Those who have stayed in that cell have written some comments before they left. Now I feel, I could have written something there. I could not sleep. I was lying there simply. Hearing some footsteps, they shout, "Who goes there?" and walks up and down with their shoes. So, I could not sleep. I stayed awake till morning. When I went to the jail these two were let out. ie. My brother and Uzhuthra warier were released. I heard the constable asking somebody*

*to bring tea and some snacks for me. After some time, one warden came to see the women criminals. I brushed the teeth and did daily chores, and again sat there. After giving me tea they locked me in. Then they gave kanji. But before I left I filled some kanji with water in the bowl given to me for urinating. That much I was angry. I had in my mind then. "let this be with them, for them..." That full day I was there, and the next day I was let out. Neither my brother nor myself were allowed to study further. Both my brother and myself were dismissed.*

*Next term, I joined another school. But I had a misconduct certificate.*

*I was confident that the party was with me. It was not their work, but made us work with them. None of the aphans(father's brothers) liked it.*

*After a long time, I went for an annual day in the same school. They all received me with great warmth.*

*I also have worked during the Underground time. I have helped lot of them by bringing things, books etc. Later, during the government of C.Achutha Menon again students had protested. That was regarding a reform in the timing of the school. In that also I have participated. But I was not a student then.*

*Even now I go for meetings, and programmes. We have a Mahila samajam and I work in it. Also, I am with the AIDWA.*

*(based on Personal Interview)*

Nampudiris were the last to accept english education and women education in Kerala. The first women school called Balika sadanam started only by 1935. Nampudiri women started attending the public school only after 1938. The reactionary forces in the community were against women education. They had to conduct a “Yachana Yatra” in order to convince them. Many Nampudiri women participated in this. Later these women have started attending the political meetings and thus contributed to the freedom struggle. But their first entry was

through the community organisation called Antharjana Samajam.

**Kanjoor Gouri Antharjanam** is 77 years old. She stays with her son Vasudevan at Pattambi at her ancestral house. She did not get any formal education. But had studied in Neeli Mangalassu's school, after marriage. The school was in Kottayam, and her husband, who was a progressive, persuaded her to attend the school. Her second child was just 6 months when she went to Kottayam. The school was not only for young girls but also for aged women. Apart from letters, they were taught some handicrafts like weaving, mat weaving etc. Some how she managed to be there for 6 months, and later she came back. The idea was economic independence for women. It was during 1948-49.

She has participated in the yachana yatra for starting a Thozhil Kendram at Lakkidi, conducted by the Antharjana Samajam. She was accompanied by Arya Pallam, Pallam, Kanjoor Kali Antharjanam etc. They went to illams and asked to donate either in cash or things like rice, coconut etc. and talked to them regarding the need for women education and women s' financial



*independence. It was also a propaganda for the Antharjanasamajam. Antharjanams cooperated because they were really suffering due to the Adhivedanam(marrying more than one Antharjanams) These women promised a structural reform through education. Later, Antharjana Samajam participated in freedom struggle.*

*Conducting meetings, and mobilising women was a great task in those days. Antharjanams were not allowed to participate in political meetings. Karanavar never accepts or agrees women going out. There was a meeting at Cherukara and all women in that area participated and the meeting ended by 8.30 at night.*

*They had to take great risk not only on the road but also at home. One of the girls who attended this meeting was from an orthodox family. When she came back, her aphan hiding behind the main entrance with a big wooden stick(Ulakka) beat her in the head and she fell down immediately. She died of head injuries after a week. Both Gowri Antharjanam and Kaali antharjanam were blamed for her death, not the aphan. All these things created great risk in their mobilising women.*

*During late 40s, V.T. Bhattathirippad started a centre called Uthbudha Keralam. Those who are ostracised from the community for various reasons were the inmates of Utbudha Keralam. Kummini Nampudiri, for eg. had participated in Salt satyagraha and was ostracised. Mozhikunnam Brahmadathan Namputhirippad also participated in salt satyagraha. His share in the property at the time of partition was not given to him. So, those who are homeless and thrown out of their tarawad were staying together in that place. It was more or less like a commune. That Uthbudha Keralam was in Kanjoor Gowri Antharjanam's land, and they have given place free of cost for such an endeavor and cooperated.*

*She has two boys and two girls and all of them are staying in Palghat district. All the four are politically active even now.*

*(Based on personal Interview)*

**2. Kanjoor Kali Antharjanam** is 90 years old. She also had participated in the Yachana Yatra along with Arya pallam and Gowri antharjanam. She never received any formal education. She

*was in the first group of women who came forward to stitch back their ears. (Kathu Murikkuka) She was the first to do that. She was 24 years and her veli was over by then, and she had two children by then. Gosha Bhahishkaranm and Kathu Murikkal took place together. Karanavars were opposed all these progressive acts, and they were not even allowed to touch their own children due to ostracism and the harassment was very severe. She had also participated in Misra Bhojanam, Ayithochadanam etc. Misrabhojanam took place in Thottupuram. More or less all caste women were there.*

*“I think Mrs. Ayyappan also participated. My participation was only locally centred. I had very small children, so my work was centered only in Pattambi. I have seen the original Adukkala Drama, in which V.T. had acted. Antharjana Samajam was trying their level best to organise women. We had to go house to house campaign by walk. I have seen Gandhiji when he came to Thrithala, carrying Kasthurba’s photograph we all went in the jatha. We used to do political work along with our husbands.*

*I have not given big speeches, but what we used to do is to read the speeches written for us. I have also participated in the MRB's marriage. I have participated in the Karalmanna Sammelanam, and also have participated in the annual meetings of Yogakshema sabha. Wherever we went, we all go together. We were given lot of courage and encouragement by our husbands, and there was no problem with the children, because they were being taken care of by our parents, or some elders in the household."*

*But all the negative impact of these activities was reflecting in the household and community.*

*"During pregnancy, I had to suffer a lot. Since the whole household was ostracised, nobody was allowed to enter the house to assist in the delivery, so my mother had to act as the doctor and nurse all alone. Even close relatives refused to give her a helping hand. No servants, no cook and she had to attend to me also. Perhaps first time among nampudiris that all the servants were Cherumakkal (untouchables) in our house. All the servants were cherumakkal, and only one nair woman was ready to attend to me,*

*still the elders used to frighten her, and also if they attend to her, they lose their jati identity.*

*She stays in Kodumunda, Pattambi with her elder son and family.*

*Though she is old her memories give her lot of strength.*

*(Based on personal interview)*

When women of the savarna community started attending schools, they did not stop with the education alone, but started attending the political meetings also. In the case of nampudiri women, most of them joined the left movement and worked with the Party, attended party classes, came forward to marry intercaste and interreligion and even change the antharjanam to a woman. Once they got education, their next step was to get employment. With the help of the Charkka and spinning classes, they started centres for women employment, called Thozhil Kendram. Smt. Pathiyil Priyadatha is not only known as the first teacher of the community but there are other credits to her as she participated in a drama called “Thozhil Kendram” and also worked in the “Thozhil Kendram” and also participated in “Paaliyam Satyagraham.” She was in the social movement from 1935 onwards, but entered politics only by 1940.

### **Pathiyil Priyadatha**

*P. Priyadatha was born in the year 1918. She is the daughter of the brother of M.R.Bhattathirippad. When school education was denied to Antharjanams , she protested and went to school. Since she belongs to aristocratic Nampudiri*

*community, she was not allowed to mingle with other caste girls. In the primary years she had to go to school with a loin cloth alone, because any dress will pollute her was the belief. Only when she attained puberty, she was allowed to wear mundu. She was staying in her Aphan's house and was studying till 7<sup>th</sup> standard. When M.R.B. got married to Nangema, who was a widow, the whole family were made outcastes, and she was not allowed to stay in that house. So, she had to stay in Vanneri, i.e. her father's house and go all the way to Kunnamkulam and attend her high school classes. By 1936, Vidyarthini sadanam (for Nampudiri girls only) was started, but Priyadatha was not allowed to attend the school because she attained puberty and also the warden was a male member. Later, the warden was changed, Smt. Chandramathiamma was appointed as the warden, and Priyadatha could join the school and continue her studies. Just because she had attended school after attaining puberty, she and her family were banned in attending any community functions. The whole community*

*announced their non-co-operation. When the male members were learning English through tuition from home, she also got a chance to study. She passed her S.S.L.C. She had the credit of the first antharjanam who passed S.S.L.C. from the community. Till 1940 she had to sit idle. Due to financial difficulties she could not continue her college education. Also, the nearest college was the Maharajas College of Ernakulam.*

*She got married to Nethran Bhattathirippad who was an active member of the Nampudiri Yuvajana Sangham in the year 1940. It was a traditional marriage, but none of the relatives attended the marriage because they participated in the widow remarriage of M.R.B. In the same year, she joined as a teacher in a school at Cherpu C.N.N. High school. Again she was the first teacher in the community.*

*But she had to suffer quite a lot just because she was employed and stays away from home. She was denied a place to stay and work. She was ousted both from her house as well as her husband's house. The school was near the house*

*of Nethran master's father's third wife. She went with all the bag and baggage to stay there, but they refused to allow her inside the gate. The wrong she did was to go to school and learn English and work outside as a teacher along with the other caste women and men. But she was determined to face all these. She went alone and stayed in the sadanam at Trichur and continued her job. This ostracisation continued till 1956.*

*She was quite active in the Nampudiri Reform Movement. She had formed antharjana Samajam and mobilised women to propagate education, liberate themselves from the traditional rituals and the other social taboos. She was very active with Arya pallam, Parvathi Nenmeni mangalam and Parvathi Manezhi, and participated in the Ghosha Bhahishkaranam (removal of purdah).*

*She had mobilised women through Antharjanasamajam and propagated the value of education. For this, they conducted a yachana yatra. In this programme, a group of volunteers, 4-5 antharjanams go door to door to all the illams with an*



*empty gunny bag and collected money and materials for the balika sadanam, and promoted women education. Priyadatha led the yachana Yatra in the Palghat and Trichur area.*

*When the Nampudiri Reform movement split, she joined the left wing, and took leave from the school and worked in the Communist party. She had attended all the party classes . She was perhaps the only one antharjanam to attend the party classes then. By 1948, slowly antharjanams started attending public school and the next move was financial self-sufficiency. After the well-known Ongallur discourse of E.M.S.Nampudirippad, Antharjana samajam planned workcentres for antharjanams. They organised a few women and started a Work centre at Lakkidi, Palghat District. Embroidery, Charkka classes, spinning and weaving, stitching etc. were taught there.*

*This centre had another significance. 1948 was the time when reforms in education, family and marriage had taken place in the nampudiri Community. As a part of sajatheeya*

*vivaham(marrying within the community) girls were given in marriage, but by then the problem was that of dowry. Very poor nampudiri families could not give enough dowry to give to their daughters. Hence they were giving these daughters to Sirsi and Sidhippur Brahmins (known as Embrantiris) for which they were given money as bride price. So, for Rs. 800 and Rs.1000 these girls were being sent to Sirsi and Sidhippur against their will. Antharjanasamajam protested against this and formed this work centre, which acted as a rescue home for these girls. Priyadatha was the key person in the centre and Nethran Master was the warden of that centre.*

*This centre worked as the fulcrum of the movement later. This centre organised a theatre group, which acted as a catalyst for change. The not so well-known drama , written, directed and enacted by women by name “To the Work Centre” was the contribution of this centre. In this drama, Priyadatha acted as male advocate. Some 20 years back the women’s’ roles were done by male members, in the well-*

*known drama "Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekku", Contrary to that, in this drama, the male roles were done by the females. She not only acted in that drama but also organised women to view the same. This was played in 9 different centres.*

*It was from this centre that the great Paaliyam Satyagraham activists were selected. Priyadatha narrates*

*"We all gathered in the Work Centre the previous day. Every week we meet otherwise. And arranged for the picketing. Arya pallam, Myself, E.S. Saraswathi, PriyadathaKallat came forward to participate. That was the first time an antharjanam was joining hands with girls of other caste, and participated in protests. The Paaliyam road was banned for Avarnas. They were not allowed to walk through the road. There was picketing to open the road for the avarnas. A number of women and men participated. We three Antharjanams were there. I went there and shouted slogans and courted arrest. The police beatings were terrible. With cane, they beat us black and blue. For more*

*than 15 minutes they slashed us. (Showed the marks in her back) . Then we were taken to the police van. Next Kallat Priyadatha and another girl came forward and picketed and they were also beaten and taken to the police van. Each one of us was with some other caste woman. That is still a blackmark on us. Now I am 79, and even now, people and relatives mention that.”*

*After the Paaliyam satyagraham I worked in the Communist party by taking leave from the school. She had worked in Govt. School, Kodakara, Poonkunnam, Ayyanthole etc. and got retired in the year 1976. She has no children. She and Sri. Nethran Master stay with her cousins at Vellinezhi, Palghat.*

By 1940, women were ready to work together despite their class or caste attitude. The women of the left movement despite their caste hierarchy were ready to work for the peasants and workers. Most important is that when they were in the forefront for the temple entry movement and fought for the eradication of untouchability. Another brave move was

through mixed marriages, which really questioned the caste hierarchy as well as the women's position in the institutions like marriage and family. Mixed marriage unlike mixed dining created great change in the attitude of both savarna towards avarna and vice versa. That was seen as a cultural change for both the man and woman and the family that emerged from such a union was considered highly secular. During 1930s a Nampudiri Brahmin girl being wedded to an ezhava man is conceivable, both to the Nampudiri community as well as the Ezhava community. Kallat Krishnan was a Communist who married Priyadatha who belonged to a progressive Nampudiri family.

### **Kallat Priyadatha**

*Kallat Priyadatha is now 72 years old. She belongs to Chalavara, Palghat. She belongs to a revolutionary family, called Ittiamparambath Mana. She is the sister of ICP Nambudiri, who was a worker of the Communist Party. She studied upto 4<sup>th</sup> standard from Shornaur, but since there was no high school in their area, she came to Calicut and studied upto E.S.L.C. during which she stayed in the commune in Calicut. She was active from*

*the Student days onwards. She used to participate in jathas and on one occasion (she doesn't remember) the whole class had decided to boycott the school and she was one among them. Other students went home, but she joined the jatha along with her brother and other men. She was dismissed from the school, but she managed pass the examinations. Later she joined the co-operative training course and joined a bank.*

*Though she has not worked in the freedom struggle as such, she had formed Mahila samajams and mobilised women in the Mahila samajam. Before that she was active in Antharjana Samajam. She had participated in the yachana yatra conducted for the establishment of "Thozhil Kendram" at Lakkidi. She explained about it in the following words: -*

*"We were 4-5 girls. The area given to us were Tirur. We took a bag and went to all the illams nearby and begged for things and money. Some of the cooperated and some of them did not. We have collected quite a good amount of money and started the Thozhil kendram".*

*While studying in the school she had acted in a drama written by Sardar Chandroth, who was an atheist of that day. She had acted as a girl student. Kallat also had acted in that drama. But they had no plan of marriage because she was just 17 years old then. Kallat Krishnan was a CPI activist. During the underground time, he was with them. She met him from this place. After a few years, they got married. Though the family was very progressive she could not get the permission of her mother. Her brother, ICP and others participated in the marriage.*

*Kallat Priyadatha had participated in the Paaliyam Satyagraham along with Pathiyil Priyadatha and others. The Paliyam road was prohibited to the untouchables and there was a remarkable picketing during 1948 in this area. It was in this satyagraham, that all caste women in Kerala have joined hands and participated. Priyadatha was beaten up by the police severely, and was put in jail for two days. Even now she has the marks in her body. After the picketing, there was lathi charge, and she was accompanied by one Jyothi, a non-savarna girl for picketing.*

*After this, she was asked to give speeches on this samaram in various places. She went to most of the harijan colonies to give speech and spread the message of anti-casteism. She is an antharjanam by birth, and she was finding it difficult to have food from outside, because the cultural diversity among different communities in Kerala was so great, that it basically reflected in food habits. In one of the places, she was asked to have food from a big leaf in which rice was served in a heap and lots of women were eating from the same leaf. She was taken aback. Because she was not used to it. Then she told the organisers to bring rice in a separate leaf. She says, “ Though we all have started our social and political work, we could not come out of certain barriers like food habits, dressing etc. I could not imagine having food from the leaf. Really I was terribly embarrassed”.*

*She had become a good orator after the Paaliyam Satyagraham. After marriage, she could not continue her political work, because his was a joint family and she had to take hold of the family burdens. She has two daughters, whom she had brought up with her ideology. She stays in Calicut along with her daughter.*



The Quit India Movement during 1940 once again brought students to the forefront. Kamala Nambisan and Smt. V.K. Thankam are from same family where the father of these girls were very active in the freedom movement. . She was earlier attracted by Gandhiji, and stayed with him in the Wardha Ashramam from where she came to know about Mr. Nambisan and married him. After marriage, Kamala Nambisan could not come out of the shells of the household and participate more effectively.

### **Mrs. Kamala Nambisan**

*She is the daughter of Mulankunnathukavu Vellalathu Kalyani amma and Padinjare Pisharathu Raman Pisharodi. Born in the year 1917 she learnt Hindi after her schooling. She has organised women through Mahila Samajams and participated in independence movement. She was a full time social activist. She was the founding member of All Kochi National Mahila Samajam, and the organising secretary of the same for a long time. She was in the leadership of Indian National Congress and Kochi Praja Mandalam. Her acquaintance with Kamalpathy Chathopadhyay made her reach Sevagram of Gandhiji and she got training in political and social work. She got married to Mr. K.N. Nambisan whom she met from Sevagram in the year 1946. ie when she was 29 years old. After the death of Gandhiji, she came back to Palghat and settled there in Mayanoor and continued her development*

*work among women. She has also worked as the working member of Kasthurbha memorial. She has worked hard to build the Congress party along with Kelappaji. After the split in Congress, she joined with Congress(s). She has served as the president of the Women's' wing of Congress(s) till her death. She died in the year 1996 in her 79<sup>th</sup> year. She has three sons and a daughter.*

### ***Her life at Sevagramam***

*Kamalapathy Chathopadhyaya was the president of the All India Women's' Conference. She visited Kerala to guide and advice the works done by the Kerala charter. She wanted four or five women to study and work in the Sevagram at Wardha. Kamala nambisan was one among them. During 1944 she reached Sevagram. She was in the first batch that reached Wardha from Kerala. They were four girls and one boy. They stayed in the hostel provided by the Ashram. The very first day itself after the evening prayer, they went to the hutment of Bappuji and did pranam before him.*

*Since she was very conversant with Hindi, she could discuss with him lot of things regarding the development of women and freedom of the nation through women mobilisation. This impressed Gandhiji quite a lot and he took special care about her.*

*After a few months, she was bedridden from there, and since she was following naturopathy, she refused to see a doctor or take any medicines. Mrs. Susheela Nayyar went to see her, she told her about her medication and it seems she had conveyed this to Bappuji. Next day without any notice, Bappuji went to her room and asked her to take medicine. She obeyed him and recovered fast. From then onwards, everyday Bappuji used to go to her room on his way to evening walk*

*She met Mr. Nambisan from there. They got married in the year 1946. The marriage was a political marriage of that time. Simple. Both of them were clad in khadhi on the wedding day also Mrs.& Mr. Kuroor Unninampudirippad, Mrs. & Mr. Ikkanda varier, Mrs. & Mr., Kuttan nair, Mrs.*

*& Mr. C.R. Iyyunni. etc. attended the marriage. They exchanged Khadhi garland, exchanged the ring. Sri. Kelappan and Smt. Susheela gave brief talk on the freedom. They never printed any invitation for the marriage. After marriage, they sent everybody a card telling that “we have got married and are entering the society for better work together”*

*They organised many spinning centres for women which later worked as education centres. She delivered as girl child in the year 1948 from Trichur. It was during the postnatal period that they heard the pathetic demise of Gandhiji. Then they have decided that they would fulfill the dream of Grama swaraj of Gandhiji and came back to their own village.*

*They came to Mayannur. The very next day itself they started their work. The first step was to call all the villagers and brief them regarding their plan. The classes started the next week itself. Hindi classes, Personal hygiene and environmental bhajans etc. were the major work. They also organised fine arts programmes and with that fund, we*

*bought charkka and started the charkka classes. More than 20 students participated initially. Then they campaigned house to house to propogate Khadhi. After Gandhi's demise, Vinobhaji decided to start an All India Seva sangham. We also have participated the same meeting at Wardha. There it was decided to conduct annual meetings of the Sangham in different states. The first meeting was in from Rajasthan. We went there and asked for some fund for our centre at Mayannur. Mr. Rajan babu sent 1000 Rs. to the centre. By then, Mr. Sundarayyar donated 1 acre of land of the centre. We built some shed and other facilities and started the Ashram and our work. We had a soap unit under khadhi commission and all that also got some help from the All India Seva Sangam etc. This centre still works in Mayannur. Slowly this centre developed and we had contacts with association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development, Federation of organisations working for Children in India, Catholic Charities of India, New Delhi. Aware on want campaign against Worldly poverty, London.*

*Kamala Nambisan was made a working member of the FOWEI. They could make the centre an Industrial centre which stood on self-reliance. Later during 1982, this centre was merged with Khadhi Village industries Association . Kamala Nambisan died in the year 1996.*

*V.K. Thankam*

*V.K. Thankam is now 77years old. She has studied in various places, since her father was a subinspector. She was born in Mulankunnathukavu. She has passed 10<sup>th</sup> std. Her father was Rama Pisharodi, and mother Kalyani amma. She entered politics during her school days. She participated in the 1942 movement, as a student leader. Those who have participated in the strike were dismissed from the school. I.N. Menon was the education director then. They all went with a petition to meet him, but he called the police, and there was lathicharge. This took place from Trichur. They were two girls and all others were boys. She went to ask why the other students were dismissed. All her family members were active Congress workers and both men and*

women were political minded. Hence she got the chance to intervene. The great tyrant, called Pappadi was the inspector. He beat all of them, and the gate was closed. He was very keen on beating up the children, ruthlessly. He has beaten up all the students. A classmate of Thankam, Kalyani also was beaten, and she fell down, when Thankam went to resist the beating, Thankam was also beaten up black and blue. There was one C.M. Poduval, who was the student leader. Poduval and Thankam were arrested. She was kept in sub-jail for a day and was taken to Viyyoor Central jail, and she was kept there for 8 days. Her father was retired by then, he used to give them lot of strength, that is why she could do so much, she remembered.

She says life in jail was good. 144 political prisoners were there when she was taken into custody. There was a woman warden and they were kept in a single room. The woman warden was quite good and understanding. She used to help her get food from outside from house. She was also good enough to bring her all the news of events happening outside

*the jail. Letters and information were kept under the food or under the leaf, so that Thankam used to know the matters outside. She says she never got scared, even when she was arrested and put in the cell alone. She was the only woman prisoner in the whole peovince. No others were arrested. When she came back after 8 days she was received with lot of warmth, in which women also participated.*

*After two years, she got married. She was married to a Railway employee in Tamilnadu. So he could not participate in any movement. But he never restricted my work. Since it was not Kerala, she could not work further. So, she was not active anymore...she came back only during 1969. Then she started a Mahila Samajam. It is running even now.*

*She has three children. Elder son is in Bombay. He is in Mahindra & Mahindra. Daughter is also in Bombay. She is a housewife. The last one is in gulf. None of her children are in politics. She says "There was only one party then. Now that congress people are dividing and dividing. I have entered from 1942 onwards. I feel lonely because there is*



*nothing now. I read a lot. I feel that joint families are good. But now the time has changed. Nobody has time for anything. G. Susheela was the secretary and I was the president in the Kerala mahila Samajam.”*

*She stays with her children at Mayannur, Palghat District. Her sister, Smt. V.K. Saraswathi also stays near her.*

By 1940s, the peasant movement was very strong. They realised their right in the land. The unforeseen eviction and the new tax rates resulted in the rising unrest among the peasants. Moreover, when the Congress Socialist party got strengthened, they encouraged the peasants to actively participate in the public sphere, and their fight against the enemies were seen as the contribution to the freedom struggle. In Kerala, they were following the ideals and objectives of the All India Kisan Sabha. The object of the Kisan movement was to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and the achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and workers and all other exploited classes. The main task of the kisan movement was the organisation of peasants to fight for their immediate political and economic demands in order to prepare

them for their emancipation from every form of exploitation. The Kisan movement stood for the achievement of ultimate economic and political power for the producing masses, through it actively participated in the national struggle for winning complete independence.<sup>xli</sup>

Though the All India Kissan movement started in 1936, Malabar Karshaka Sangham was formed in Karivellur in the year 1934 itself. Besides the stipulated rent, many illegal exactions were realised by the landlords from their tenants. There were also many feudal levies extorted by them such as vegetables on festive occasions. In many deeds, such levies in favour of the landlord were mentioned separately in addition to the rent payable by the tenant. <sup>xlii</sup> So, naturally the peasants were dissatisfied with both the Government as well as the landlord. They also learnt through experience that they have to fight against the landlord as well as the British Government.

But still the protests were local specific. Kasaarkkode being a forest area, protests like Thol Virakau Samaram were taking place, while, Karivelloor and Mayyil were witnessing still another type of protest. The participation of women was seen in all the protests, whether they were against the janmi or against the Government.

## **P.K. Kunjakkamma**

*P.K. Kunjakkamma was born in the year 1881, at Periyanian Kannothe house, Velloor, near Payyannur, Kannur District.*

*She was the brave woman who stood with the peasant movement, along with Karshaka Sangham. During the year 1942-43, Kunjakkamma became the Communist party member.*

*She was a relative of the Kandakkai Adhikari (headman of the village) This Adhikari was very much against the peasants and was harassing them to the extreme.*

*The Kandakkai Pullupari (grass picking) samaram is one of the epic struggles in the history of peasant movement in Kerala. This took place in the year 1946. In the north Malabar, the trade union movement started by 1934 and during 1935, the peasantry united and formed the Karshaka Sangham. Kandakkai, Kayaralam, and Mayyil were the*

*centres of peasant movement in the North Malabar. This area not only contributed to the peasant's rights but for the national movement too. The Kandakkai Adhikari was the janmi of that area and he was harassing his kudiyans and verumpattakkar by forcefully evicting them. It was possible when the peasants were not organised, but by 1945-46, both men and women were organised under Karshaka Sangham. When he found that he couldn't exploit the peasants he got angry and had filed a false case against the peasantry that they tried to cut the grass for building their hutment. M.S.P. and police came to these areas and beat up the peasants. They not only beat them up but also spoiled all the household utensils from the house of the peasants. The men were not able to get out of their house, due to the fear of oppression. That time, under the leadership of Kunjakkamma, a jatha of women was organized. They marched to the janmi's house. They carried the broken vessels and household articles and dumped them in the frontyard of the Adhikari. She was beaten up left and right,*

*and a case was filed against her too. The adhikari got angry at this protest and filed a case against Kunjakkamma and other 15 men for house breaking and the police arrested them. This protest was a milestone in the history of Malabar peasant struggle. She was arrested in the month of February 1947 from home and she was not even allowed to take with her another pair of dress<sup>xliii</sup> and she was jailed till April 5<sup>th</sup>. Within this time she had to suffer to the maximum from the jail. She had no house to stay at; hence she was staying with various comrades houses. But she made use of this stay and organised women in that area. Her caliber and the ability to influence other women resulted in a collective action of the peasant women. With her backing women were ready to do harvest even when the MSP came with a big gun to shoot all the women. Uniformly they said" You can kill us, but still this is the land where we shed our sweat, we will reap the harvest. You can do whatever you want"<sup>xliv</sup> Then the MSP and the police had no other go but to leave the place. The strength was given by Kunjakkama. In the first assembly*

*elections, she went along with A.K.Gopalan. and talked to all women and shared her experiences and gained confidence of them. She was with the peasant women through out her life. She died in the 1961 at Velloor in her 72<sup>nd</sup> year.*

Like wise, in the area of Malappuram District, specifically in the Nilambur panchayat, women's participation in peasant movement was very significant. The work of the Kissan Sabha was not only confined to the peasants but also spread to the Estate workers. Satyakumar Estate workers strike, Koothali Estate Strike, and the Kerala Estate Strike were taking place during 1939-46 period. Most of the participatns were not from the lowest class of peasants but from the middle peasant class women. Though some members in their household were encouraging them, they collected themselves in groups and formed various other sanghams and worked to mobilise women.

**Kunnath Lakshmiamma** of Amarambalam Panchayat, Nilambur, Malappuram had participated in the peasant struggle very actively. After the II World War Karshaka Sangham had started their demand for wasteland. From 1941 January to the end of 1942, this lasted. Peasant marches took place during this period

*through Satyakumar Estate, singing songs of revolution. Kunnath Lakshmiamma not only participated in the struggle but also mobilised women in this struggle.*

1. **Kunnath Devakiamma** of Amarambalam panchayat also participated in the above said struggle.

2. **Athavanatt Unichiri** also had participated in the above struggle and mobilised women from her area known as Athavanad.

### 3. **Vadakkumpattu Madhaviamma**

By 1947, more or less all the pesantry both agricultural and estate workers were mobilised and organised under the Karshaka Sangham and fought against the landlords and imperialist forces.

There are still more and more struggles, and women who participated in them were larger in number, but unfortunately many of their names have been forgotten or not recorded anywhere so that further investigations are necessary in this crucial area.

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- <sup>i</sup> Linda P. Wood: Introduction; *What did you do in the War, grandma?*
- <sup>ii</sup> Sherna Gluck “What is so special about women?” Oral History. An interdisciplinary anthology. Edtd. David Dunway and Willa K. Baun, altamira Press. American Association for state and local history book series 1996.
- <sup>iii</sup> Linda P. Wood. What did you do in the War, Grandma?
- <sup>iv</sup> Judy Yung, “A Bowlful of tears . Chinese women immigrants on angel Island. FRONTIERS-2 (Summer 1977) pp.552-55
- <sup>v</sup> C. Abhimanyu Ayyankali., Kerala state cultural publication p.142
- <sup>vi</sup> Abbe Dubois Hindu Manners, Customs and ceremonies. London Oxford University Press p.341
- <sup>vii</sup> Legend of the Panchavankatu Neeli and most of the Yakshi myths are examples.
- <sup>viii</sup> Kanippayyor sankaran Nampudirippad Ente Smaranakal
- <sup>ix</sup> K.N. panicker, Against lord and the State., Religion and peasant uprising in Malabar. 1836-1921 New Delhi., Oxford University press 1989 p. 28-30
- <sup>x</sup> Madras Native Newspapers- kerala Sanchari, Kerala Mitram 11<sup>th</sup> March 1882 – Kerala Patrika Oct 1886 and 12<sup>th</sup> April 1890.
- <sup>xi</sup> P. Chandramohan Rise of social reform movement ; perspectives in Kerala History.
- <sup>xii</sup> Cochin Census Report –1891 p.144
- <sup>xiii</sup> T.C. Varghese Agrarian change and Economic Consequences . Bombay 1970.

## End Notes

- <sup>xiv</sup> K. Damodaran and C. Narayana Pillai. Keralthinte Swathanthra Samaram. P.19.
- <sup>xv</sup> Conrad Wood; The Moplah Rebellion and its genesis. Peoples Publishing House. 1987.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Vikasana Rekha. Vol 121; Thanur block Valavannur panchayat.
- <sup>xvii</sup> P.K.K.Menon the History of freedom struggle in Kerala –The Regional Records Survey Committee Kerala State. Trivandrum 1972. P.113
- <sup>xviii</sup> Ibid.p.113
- <sup>xix</sup> K. Damodaran and Narayana Pillai. P.33
- <sup>xx</sup> Vikasana Rekha Vol.100 Ottappalam Block-Vaniamkulam Panchayat
- <sup>xxi</sup> Vikasana Rekha Vol.132 Pandalayini Block. Areekulam panchayat.
- <sup>xxii</sup> P.K.K. Menon p. 143
- <sup>xxiii</sup> ibid. fn. 6 p145
- <sup>xxiv</sup> ibid. fn.12 in the page185
- <sup>xxv</sup> P.K.K.Menon page no. 205 foot note No. .30.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> ibid.p.205 foot note no. 34.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> ibid. P.216 foot note No. 3.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Ibidp. 216 foot note. No. 4.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Ibid. p.216. foot note No. 5.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Ibid. p. 220
- <sup>xxxi</sup> ibid. p.220 fn. No. 14
- <sup>xxxii</sup> ibid. p.222
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> ibid. p. 226.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> At Calicut, during 1931, at Verkot house, a sangh was formed, with Mrs. Pavamani, as the President, Smt. Kunhikkavu Amma, as Vice president, Smt. A.V. Kuttimalu amma as Treasurer and Smt. P.M. kamalavathi and Smt. K. Kunhilakshmi ama as secretaries.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Ibid. p. 234. Fn. 21.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> The Gomathi. Trichur., dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1932.cited in P.K.K.Menon.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Mr. P.S. Warrior founder and Proprietor of the Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal declared the viswabharan Temple privately owned by him open to all Hindus including depressed classes.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> P.K.K.Menon. p.272 foot note No. 8.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> E.M.S. Nampudirippad. Atmakatha.
- <sup>xl</sup> K. Devayani “Chorayum Kannerum nananga vazhikal”. Chintha Publishers.
- <sup>xli</sup> E.M.S. nampudirippad. “Peasants and Plan” in AIKS Silver Jubilee souvenir. Op.cit.p.53.



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<sup>xlii</sup> K.K.N.Kurup. The Kayyur Riot. Sandhya Publications. Calicut 1978.p.112.

<sup>xliii</sup> Deshabhimani. 22.2.1947. in the heading Arrest Cheithu

<sup>xliv</sup> Deshabhimani 1.5.1947. "kandakkaiyil thokkinu Nere maaru katti Streekal vila Koyyunnu.