

Impact of the Achievements of Christian Missionaries in Travancore

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Abstract: The Christian Missionaries travelled to different parts of the world to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and did social services for the emancipation of the poor. But, when the Missionaries came to Travancore they turned first to become social reformers rather than Gospel preachers. They were astonished to notice the social evils prevalent in Travancore. This made them to change their mind and they attempted to reform the society first and to propagate their Christian religion next. Rev. William Tobias Ringletaube was the first European Missionary of the London Missionary Society who came to Travancore and landed at Mylaudy in 1806 and founded the London Mission Churches. He was surprised to find out that the Travancore society was filled with caste, colour and superstitious beliefs. He also realized that popular education was elaborately necessary to remove these social evils. After Ringletaube, Rev. Charles Mead from England, came to Travancore and continued the works left by Ringletaube. He spent more than half a century of his life (1817-1873) for educational development in Travancore. He established a number of educational institutions including schools for girls. He is regarded as the pioneer of female education in Travancore.

Index Terms - Travancore, LMS, Sircar, Caste, Reform, Slavery, Social Evils, Rebellion, Kuppayam.

Introduction

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a real and widespread desire for reform was rampant in the hearts of the unprivileged classes of Travancore. Those who converted to Christianity the majority were the Nadars. Their improvement in wealth and education demanded equality with the privileged classes like the Brahmins, Nairs and Vellalas. The Christian Missionaries of the London Missionary Society who came to Travancore found it profitable to work among the Nadar community while women in other countries where Christianity spread, wore gowns which extended from neck to the head, the type of depressing by the Nadar women gave them dissatisfaction. They were quick to notice that nearly seventy five percent of the upper half of the body of those women was left uncovered [1].

The movement for social uplift was symbolized in the Nadar's attempt to vest themselves with the attributes of higher status, and their efforts in the beginning of the early nineteenth century, soon gave rise to the breast-cloth controversy. The women of the Nadars, like the lowest castes were forbidden to cover their breasts. The manner of dress prescribed for them consisted of a single cloth of coarse texture, to be worn by men and women alike, not lower than the knee and not higher than the waist. This style of dress was of course incompatible with the modesty and decorum of Christian women, many of whom had received a good education and were taught to appear decent in public.

The traditional society of Travancore was highly caste-ridden. The Brahmins, Nairs and Vellalas considered themselves as high-caste Hindus and dominated in all political, social and cultural aspects of the society. Their life was luxurious and enjoyed privileges and concessions. But they suppressed the low-class people like Nadars, Pulayas, Parayas, the maximum and even denied their basic human rights. It is also noted that the women were denied even the right to cover their own body with cloth [2].

The Brahmins were held in great respect in the society. Having influence in politics, religion and administration; they led a very happy life. Their women also enjoyed certain special privileges included the right to cover the upper part of their body. On some special occasions, the Nair women used the upper-cloth when they went out, but they exposed their breasts in the presence of the royal family members or persons of high ranks. But, the people below the Nair community had to suffer several disabilities. Their women were compelled to keep the upper- part of their bodies bare as a token of submission. Violation of this act was considered a grave offence and liable for severe punishment. In Travancore, several low-caste women were punished severely for the simple act of covering the upper-part of their body. As an instance, a women by name Yesudial of Vilavancode Taluk went to the market at Kaliyakavilai for purchasing vegetables and other commodities with the upper-part of the body covered with cloth. On seeing this, Palamadan Chetty, Pandaram Andipillay and Mallenpillai belonging to the upper-class got very angry and she was beaten to death by them and forced to rid off her upper-cloth. In an another incident, a women by name Neethiyadial went to attend the festival at Velathorai in Kunnathur with her upper-cloth. On seeing her the Manalikara, Sairamanakaran and several others of the upper- class people got very angry and joined together, abused her with filthy words and compelled her to remove the upper-cloth [3].

It is really surprising to note that even upper-class women also did not like the low-class women to cover the upper-part of their body in front of them. They even behaved worst than men in performing this injustice. For instance, when the Attingal Rani went to attend a festival in the temple, a woman of a lower-caste appeared in front of her with her body covered with cloth. On seeing her, the Rani got very angry and ordered to cut off her breast at the movement itself. Thus, this peculiar ugly situation existed in

Travancore from time-immemorial which proved the amount of inequality and social suppression imposed on the people belonging to lower-classes by the high-caste people.

Though this social evil seemed to have existed from very ancient time, none found it an injustice done to a particular sect and continued un-noticed till the beginning of 17th Century A.D. During the Mugal rule in North India, one of their commanders by name Mukilan invaded this region and established his authority. He noticed this worst social evil in the southern portion of Travancore. Therefore, he took decisions to eliminate this evil from the society. He ordered that women of his territory should cover their bodies when they were going out from their houses. Soon after the enactment of this Act, women belonging to low-class began to cover their upper-part with dress as they liked. But, this change disapproved soon after his death and the people were forced by the upper-class to follow the old barbarous ways.

In 1836, Vaikunda Swamigal, a man of progressive social outlook of the Nadar community of South Travancore founded an organization called *Samatva Samajam* (Society for the Establishment of Equality) in order to fight for the removal of the grievances of the low-class people. He severely condemned and criticized the orthodox customs and caste rules of the time. He advised his followers not only to cover their body; but also to wear a turban on their heads as a mark of their superiority. His teachings created an awareness among the oppressed people. As a result, people got awakened and tried to organize themselves to fight for their rights (Upper-Cloth Rebellion), otherwise called Breast Cloth Agitation took place because of the teachings of Vaikunda Swamigal. The teachings of Vaikunda Swamigal in the cause of equality was one of the primary causes for the Upper Cloth Rebellion. Thus, he became one among the social revolutionaries in South Travancore [4].

The liberal ideas of the Christian Mission and the teachings of Vaikunda Swamigal enlightened the people of South Travancore and made them to abandon their age-old customs and manners. The condition that the low-class women had the only right to wear a jacket called *kuppayam*; but some of the Christian women in addition to the jacket, started wearing an additional cloth or scarf over the shoulder called the upper-cloth as worn by the women of high-class. These actions of the Nadar Christian women were resented by the caste-Hindus. This dispute eventually led to the series of riots in Travancore.

The Upper-Cloth Revolt first started in the area around Thuckalay and Eraniel in Kalkulam Taluk in the beginning of May 1822 A.D in the Padmanabhapuram Division. As these places were dominated by rich Nairs, they tore to pieces the blouse worn by Christian women. Mohamedans joined them saying, that blouse was their religious dress and attacked them. Even Catholics joined them. Once, while a service was being conducted in Kothanarvilai Church near Colachel, some Sudras went there and asked for subscription towards a Hindu festival. When it was refused, they took some Christians before an enquirer tied them to a tree and beat them. To collect toddy from Palmyrah trees, they were asked to pay tax. When this was taken before a court of law by the Missionaries, it was declared that no tax need be paid for collecting toddy and that Christians women could wear dress in conformity with their religion. The low-class women especially the Nadar women started to wear upper-cloth, whenever they went to public places like markets. The high-caste people especially Nairs were irritated to see them, got angry, and stripped off their jackets and upper-clothes. There were lot of instances of ill-treatment and outrages in this area. Rev. Charles Mead made complaints of these outrage to the Padmanabhapuram Court. At the same time to confuse the situation, with false facts, the upper-class people made a petition in the court against the Nadars, charging them that they did not pay the today rent. Therefore, Charles Mead appealed to the Resident describing the illegal Acts and Proceedings of the irritated Nairs at the dress of the Christian women. So the Resident Col. Newell ordered for an immediate inquiry to be made into the matter [5].

By the order of Resident, the Padmanabhapuram Court reviewed the case and asked Rev. Mead for a report. Rev. Mead reported that the Nadar and such other caste women who have embraced Christianity ought to wear an upper-cloth for the sake of decency when they go to Church, the fairs, markets and similar places which is agreeable to Christianity. According to Rev. Mead's Report, the Court decreed in favour of the Christians.

Followed by the Padmanabhapuram Court Decree of 1823, the Christian women of Attoor also began to wear upper-cloth. But, similar to the event that happened at Kalkulam, they were brutally beaten, and stripped off their jackets and upper clothes by the caste-Hindus. On 23rd December 1828, large number of Nairs assembled at Atoor, and armed with deadly weapons such as guns, swords, cleavers, heavy sticks with the intention of seizing the Christians and taking them to Padmanabhapuram. Their treatments towards the Christians were very cruel. For instance, the revolters heavily attacked the leader Vedamonickam of Pambadikonam and buried him. Not only that they took Vedamonickam, Anbian Vellay, the School Master and several other Christians as captives, they tied them up and gave the end of ropes to the trunks of elephants which held them marched in front and rear. The poor helpless Christians were thus paraded and taken to the Tanna Officer at Thuckalai where they were put in iron fetters both in hands and legs [6].

The riot had spread from Atoor to Vilavancode, a town in the Padmanabhapuram Division where the Nairs formed a quarter of the population. They became furious over the spreading of Christianity and the reform movement of the Missionaries in their areas. Therefore, the Nairs look strong decision to put a stop to the progress of Christianity and wearing of upper-clothes by Christian women. They beat Mallan Pillai of Kanchiracode and stripped the jackets of Savariyal, Gnanappu and Anna. It became a regular practice for them to join together at the market places to assault the Nair women. These disturbances went on for weeks. Captain Sibbald had given immediate instructions to arrest all the ring leaders of the disturbance. Captain Sibbald with the help of Rev. Mead went to many places and succeeded in discovering different types of deadly weapons in the houses of the powerful Nair leaders.

The two taluks, namely Thoivalai and Agastheeswaram of South Travancore were dominated by Vellalas. They attacked the Christians of Thittuvilai, a town in Thoivalai taluk. Similar incidents took place in many parts of Nanchilnad and the agitation

continued for many months. Therefore, Rev. Charles Mead and Rev. Mault sent petitions frequently to the Resident Col. Munro to protect the Christians from the outrages of the Vellalas. The Dewan Venkata Rao was advised by the Resident Col. Morrison to hasten to the south at once and to travel through the affected areas in order to take immediate steps for preserving peace and order. Accordingly, the Dewan visited the places and held his Court at Padmanabhapuram for conducting regular investigations. A number of women came to meet the Dewan at Padmanabhapuram to present their complaints, under the leadership of Ashton, a missionary. But the sepoys did not permit the women even to pass the gateway of the Court with their bosom covered. They were given heavy blows by the sepoys and their clothes were publicly torn off.

The enquiry was also not favourable to the Christians. After a few enquiries the Dewan sanctioned additional troops to suppress the rebellion under the command of Captain Dally. The Dewan advised that "all to live at peace together, maintaining the ancient custom without change and promising that a Proclamation with regard to the use of the upper-cloth would be issued." Based on this promise a Royal Proclamation was issued [7].

The Travancore Rani, Gouri Parvati Bai (1815-1829) issued a Royal Proclamation on 3rd February 1829. It prevented the Nadar women from wearing upper-clothes. The Proclamation states as it is not reasonable on the part of Shanar women to wear cloths over their breasts, such custom being prohibited, they are required to abstain in future from covering the upper-part of their body. It made it clear that the Decree of the Padmanabhapuram Court of 1823 was not an order, but only a Court Decree. This Proclamation also mentioned that Christian women had only the right to wear *kupayam* as Mahammedan females did. The Decree of the Court obtained by Rev. Mead in 1823 according to the Government gave freedom to Christians to wear only *kupayam* and not upper-cloth became invalid.

The appointment of Christian Missionaries as Judges in the Courts of Travancore greatly helped the external success of the missionary cause. The appointment gave them some political importance in the country. Certain civil rights which were not hitherto conceded to the Christians were secured. Having attained influence and power as Judge, Rev. Mead protected the interests of the Christian community, who suffered in many ways, and stood as their champion. Oppression and tyranny were rigorously put down. He tried to secure for the Christian the privileges enjoyed by their Hindu neighbours. He began the practice of appointing Christians of unprivileged classes in offices. As a preliminary step he appointed Mr. Packianadhan, one of his influential Christians, as the Chief Magisterial Officer and raised him in the eyes of other. He also made Rev. Mead's appointment as Civil Judge, Nagercoil Court. He accorded him the paraphernalia of a Tahsildar, which was in all respects a blessing to the poor and downtrodden people of South Travancore and it aroused the jealousy of the caste- Hindus [8].

The tide of popular favour now flowed upon the Missionaries. The kindness of the Missionaries and their readiness to help them in distress and oppress attracted multitudes, who were accustomed to contempt and violence from the caste-Hindus.

Before the introduction of Protestant Christianity in South Travancore, the women, excluding women of the Brahmins, were prohibited from covering their bosoms. The Nadars and other unprivileged classes who were advanced in education considered this an insult. So also, their brothers and sisters in Tinnevely wore long clothes. The introduction of Christianity and their conversion raised their social standard and the women began to cover their bosoms. The Missionaries advocated their cause and proclamations were issued to that effect, in the days of Munro. "I am happy to say," he wrote, "that people of every caste, even the Brahmins, flock to me for advice. I have now free access amongst them and have great reason to believe that much good, will be done".

From the early period of the establishment of the Protestant Church, the missionaries were very much interested to start a mission station at Trivandrum, the capital. But the influence of the Brahmins on the Rajah prevented it. However, John Cox in 1838 succeeded in starting a mission station at Trivandrum when General Frazer was Resident. The attention of the Trivandrum Mission was directed towards the Pulayas, the lowest of social status, who were slaves. Schools were started to educate them and enlighten them. Steps were taken to liberate them from slavery. The work of the Mission progressed rapidly. This made the privileged classes of Trivandrum, who were interested in maintaining slavery, angry and jealous [9].

Generally, Travancore was a most caste-ridden part of Southern India. The lady Missionaries who arrived in Travancore trained the teachers to preach equality of castes in their schools. But the anti-caste preaching in the schools made their parents to feel that their children would be refined by mixing with low-caste children. But the lady Missionaries never yielded to the locals attitude. They knew the importance of education as a powerful instrument of evangelization and so both the Christian Mission Society and S.P.G. gave equal importance to the women education. In the Mission schools children were admitted regardless of caste or creed. These Missionaries never yielded to the local's attitude. This was a revolutionary change, which cut right across the old concept of Dharma on women education. Most far-reaching consequence of the Christian labour, during this time was the work carried on by the Church of England Zenana Lady Missionaries among the women folk. Education made the women conscious of their rights and privileges. For the first time in the history of Travancore, the low-caste Hindus began to dress decently, use public roads, wells and break the established customs and practices to their advantage. Sati and Devadasi system were completely removed from the soil. John Thomas of Managnapuram recorded in his diary on 14 December 1851, "Today I say for the first time a native wife walking fairly by the side of the husband. The missionaries taught the people to give up child marriage and to introduce remarriage of widows. In 1864, the first Indian Christian Marriage Act was passed fixing the minimum age for marriage as sixteen for men and thirteen for women. It was strictly followed by the Missionaries who were working in the educational institutions of Travancore. Through the education activities of the missionaries, and the educational proclamations of the Maharaja Utram Thirunal, the women got more and more job opportunities in Mission Schools as well as government offices". Thus, the reign of Maharaja Utram Thirunal witnessed a consistent policy to place education within the reach of all not failing to take accounts of the economics and social condition of the backward communities. The attitude was not made to suffer in order to

enlarge the base. The Maharaja really reared the magnificent for the advancement of higher education among the subject. Those foundations were well and truly laid in a manner, which was adequate to impart strength and durability a system of public education of a high order in Travancore [10].

About two decades after this Proclamation, the people lived peacefully. But the abolition of slavery in 1855, further aggravated the situation. The landed gentry wanted to restore their social superiority and domination over the lower-classes. They wanted to push back the awakened women of the unprivileged classes into the ancient social custom and compelled them to adopt old styles of dress. Several quarrels and disturbances took place between the two parties in the markets and other public places. For instance, on 8 October, 1858, a Christian woman was given blows in the public market at Neyyattinkarai and her jacket was torn to pieces. This case was proved in the Police Court at Neyyattinkarai. But, the offender was let off with a mere fine, which prompted him commit several such crimes further.

On November 1858, after the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, Queen Victoria issued a Proclamation. On November 1858, The Proclamation says, 'We do strictly charge and enjoin in all those who may be in authority under us they abstain from all interference with religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure'. The Proclamation resulted in series of violence. The Nairs interpreted the Proclamation as favourable to their caste customs. The Nadars thought that the Proclamation had permitted them to infringe the existing rules. Thus, the Proclamation of 1858, allowed the women to wear upper-clothes like that of the high-castes. But, the Nairs were firmly against this attitude [11].

Troubles broke out in Arumanur, a small village in the Neyyattinkarai Taluk, five miles south of the town. A woman went to the public market with decent dress in November 1858. This was not liked by a Government servant Kumara Pillay, the Superintendent at Puvar. He assaulted the woman and stripped off her jacket. The torn jacket was hung on the tree. Though he was tried and convicted for that assault, he was allowed to escape with slight punishment. Dewan T. Madava Rao managed the situation with his characteristic energy and thoroughness. Deputy Peishkar Shungoony Menon also helped him very much.

But, another revolt broke out on 25th December 1858 in the Neyyoor District. The rebels beat a number of Christians including Nadar women who were wearing upper-cloth. On knowing this, the Dewan personally inspected the affected areas and observed that the conflicting sentiments prevailed between the Nadars and the caste-Hindus. To put a stop to the collision between the two groups, the Dewan issued a Proclamation on 27th December 1858 as a precautionary measure.

The Dewan issued this Proclamation under the direction of Maharaja Uttram Tirunal Marthandavarma (1847-1860). The Proclamation says, "that the existing rules and usages should be respected and if any class of people desired a change, they should represent the case to the *Sircar* and await its decision, and no account should be taken of breaches of peace be caused." It warned the Nadars that severe punishment would be given if they violated the established customs and practices. This Proclamation served to add fuel to the existing fire, and forced the people to rigorously fight for their rights. As a result, so many revolts broke out in the entire region of Travancore [12].

The outbreak at Parasalai, Neyyoor, Nagercoil, Kottar, Kumarapalayam, Alagappapuram and Aramboly was the most severe after the issue of the Proclamation of 27th December 1858. The Nairs and Vellalas joined together and stripped the jackets of Nadar women and they were severely beaten by them. About 200 Nairs and Vellalas of Thazhakudy entered the houses of poor Christians with sticks and knives, stripped the jackets of women and tore off their clothes and assaulted them severely, and causing injuries. The violence was not one sided. A large mob of Nadars under the leadership of Chinna Nadar marched to Kottar and forcibly took away tobacco and money from Manikkavasagam, Subramonian and other rich merchants and attempted to pull down the shops of the caste-Hindus. When Shungoony Menon reported the Kottar riot to the Dewan and asked for a detachment of Sepoys to arrest him, orders were given immediately. Accordingly, a detachment of the Nair Brigade consisting of hundreds of men was sent to Nanchilnad. The troops were moved where mischief was apprehended. Police force was strengthened in the places where disturbances and struggle started.

In Neyyoor, the revolt burst out with the inhuman behaviour of the police Sergeant of Eraniel. He and his caste-Hindu followers beat many men and women and took a number of Nadar to prison. This act of violence in Neyyoor District continued for a number of days.

The revolt spread to almost all parts of South Travancore by 10th January, 1859 and there was severe persecution of the lower orders. A number of caste Hindus joined together and with the assistance of the police tied up a number of Nadars including Christians, who were pursuing their ordinary avocations in the Monday Market near Neyyoor. The captives were presented before the Eraniel Tana Naick and false charges were made against them that they had 'come in crowds' and stolen articles from the Chetties. The caste Hindus stripped the jackets of women and abused them. After this they marched to a nearby village, Vadakkaukara and damaged the houses of Christian people and beat some of them. On the night of the same day the chapel there (Vadakkaukara) was burnt down by a mob of caste Hindus. The Hindus of Midalam and their leaders threatened to burn down the large chapels of the Mission at Devijdu and other Christian centres [13].

On 11th January 1859, two women when on their way to Aralummudu Market, near Neyyattinkara, in the Trivandrum District, were assaulted by *Sircar* peons. The women were taken before the Tana Naick of Neyyattinkara, who violently stripped the jacket of one of them and hung it on a tree. In the same week the wife of one of the Readers in the Church of Rev. John Cox, a Missionary of the LMS, Trivandrum, was assaulted by a Mahomedan and her jacket violently removed and hung upon a tree 'with loud shouts of threats.'

The lawless and uncontrolled mobs actually ruled the markets, roads and villages. On the 15th and 19th of January 1859, a mob of caste-Hindus, to the number of about 400, armed with bludgeons, dagger and knives visited the markets of Arumanuta, Puttankadaan Tirupuram all in the Neyyatinkara Taluk, Trivandrum District, and assaulted the Christian Nadars. They tried to set fire to the chapels of these places, but failed because of the vigilance of the Christians.

When the revolt reached its highest point the Nadars of all places received new spirit and enthusiasm. At Agasteeswaram, the strong hold of the Nadars in South Travancore, they collected together and decided to raise men and money. They proposed combined and systematic resistance to the governmental authority and solicited the Nadars of Tinnevely to come and help them in this great venture. The Nadars of Tinnevely gathered together with a view to enter Travancore to join the Nadars of Travancore and to plunder the villages of caste Hindus. The Nadars of all places irrespective of their territories combine together to resist the outrages of the caste-Hindus in Travancore [14].

When the British Government came to know about the revolt for the right of women to cover their bosoms with jackets and upper-clothes, an order was issued by T. Pycroft, Chief Secretary, dated 27th January 1859, instructing General Cullen to be careful to give no countenance to the idea that the British Government of which he is the representative, recognizes any exclusive distinctions, or the right of any set of men to prevent others from following in all matters of social or domestic life, such course as they may see fit, provided it be not repugnant to public decency and morals." The Resident was also reminded of his duty "to impress these views on His Highness the Rajah and to point out to him such prohibitions and those contained in the Circular Order of May 1814, or in the Proclamation of 3rd February 1829 are unsuited to the present age, and unworthy of an enlightened Prince.

The Resident, when the revolt became widespread, suspected the proceedings of the Government of Travancore. He wrote to the Dewan when he received several letters from the Missionaries relating to the outrages committed by caste Hindus. The Dewan wrote his report on 12th February 1859 regarding the origin, development and suppression of the revolt and was forwarded to the Government. The Madras Government requested General Cullen to inform it of the steps he had taken in furtherance of the instructions conveyed to him on the 27th January 1859, "you will without further delay yield obedience to the repeated order which have been conveyed to you, and report in detail what you have done in consequence of the resolutions of this Government communicated to you on the 27th January and on the 14th March last, and what the Maharaja has done in consequence."

By this time, the Missionaries of the LMS of South Travancore having received no response from the Government to their petition dated 7th February 1859, referred the matter to the investigation and decision of the Madras Government. On 28th March 1859, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras T. Pycroft, called for a reply from the Resident of Travancore. The reply being not satisfactory, the whole matter was communicated to Lord Stanley, the Secretary of State for India and to the Supreme Government. Sir Charles Trevelyan, the Governor of Madras was ordered by Lord Stanley to institute a prompt inquiry. He studied the whole matter which was a complicated one because, "the differences on religious principles and caste habits are mixed up with social and pecuniary interests. The Shanars on becoming Christians claim privileges, which partly, if not entirely, free from many of the duties which their state of serfdom, if not slavery, previously entailed upon them; and on these advantages accruing to the Christian converts, the heathen Shanars evidently aspire to the enjoyment of the same changes, though without concession. The Sudras, on the other hand, look with great jealousy on these changes, not only on account of their placing those whom they consider a degraded race, in a better social position, but also because they themselves became losers by the emancipation, to some extent, of their serfs or slaves from some of their duties."

The Governor Charles Trevelyan and his Council members after inquiring into the matter found just cause to interfere on behalf of the defenseless and suffering women of South Travancore. He wrote a letter in strong terms to the Resident of Travancore on 6th May 1859 in which he voiced his feelings: "The recent proceedings in reference to certain females of the Shanar class which have attracted so much attention, both in England and India, require no comment from me. I have seldom met with a case in which only truth and justice but every feeling of our common humanity are so entirely on one side. The whole civilized world would cry shame upon us if we did not make a firm stand on such an occasion. If anything could make this line of conduct more incumbent on us it would be the extraordinary fact that persecution of a singularly personal and indelicate kind is attempted to be justified by Royal Proclamation, the special object of which was to assure to her Majesty's Indian subject liberty of thought and action, so long as they did not interfere with the just rights of others. I should fail in respect to her Majesty if I attempted to describe the feelings with which she must regard the use made against her own sex of the promises of protection so graciously accorded by her. It will be your duty to impress these views on His Highness the Rajah, and so point out to him that such prohibition as those conveyed in the Circular Order of May 1814 or in the Proclamation of the 3rd February 1829 are unsuited to the present age and unworthy of an enlightened Prince [15].

The Dewan consulted the matters with the Raja, who was in favour of the abolition of all the rules prohibiting the wearing of clothes. The Dewan wrote to the Resident on the 17th May 1859 thus: "His Highness now proposes to abolish all rules prohibiting the covering of upper parts of the persons of Shanar women and to grant them perfect liberty to meet the requirements of decency any way they deem proper, with the simple restriction that they do not imitate the same mode of dress that appertains to the higher-castes."

The modifications suggested in the existing rules regarding dress were happily approved of by the Resident. He wrote: "The modifications which you have suggested in the existing rules in regard to dress for the Shanar females, and which you state have also received approval of His Highness the Rajah, appear to me to be quite satisfactory, and fully to meet the views of the Madras Government." As per the request of the Resident the Government of Madras accepted the concession. This Concession, "Trevelyan, the Madras Governor recorded must I thank, be accepted as a practical earnest on the part of the Rajah of the desire to

put an end to the barbarous and indecent restrictions previously existing upon the dress of the Shanar women, but we cannot pronounce a final opinion until we see the working of the new regulation." Accordingly a proclamation was issued by the Rajah of Travancore on 26th July 1959: "There is no objection to Shanar women either putting on a jacket like the Christian Shanar women, or to Shanar women of all creeds dressing in coarse cloth, (*Kattissila*) and tying round with it as the Mukkuvattikal (low-caste fisherwomen) do, or to cover their bosoms in any manner whatever, but not like women of high castes."

The Royal Proclamation empowered the Nadar women to enjoy the right to cover the upper-part of the body. But, the women of other castes such as Ezhavas and Dalits were denied the right to wear upper-cloth. The Missionaries observed that it would lead to serious disturbances and complications in future. So the Missionaries requested the Governor in Council to take the affair of Travancore into serious consideration and in order to carry out the needful reforms, to institute a strict inquiry or adopt such measure as may be deemed most suitable. Trevelyan, the Governor of Madras directed the new Resident F.N. Maltby to adopt a decisive course to remove the existing restrictions on the females of Travancore. The LMS also petitioned to Sir Charles Wood, the Secretary of State for India, under the Crown of return to remove the restrictions enlisted in the Proclamations. After analyzing the petition Charles Wood wrote a letter to the Governor, pointing out that it was not the entire removal of all restrictions, leaving the women to dress as they think would fit them and satisfy the Government both here and at home.

Insisted by Sir Charles Wood and Charles Trevelyan, F.N. Maltby represented the matter to the Raja of Travancore, Ayilyam Tirunal Maharaja (1860-1884). F.N. Maltby also expressed the desire of the females. Forced from all sides, the Raja issued a Proclamation in 1865 that the women of Ezhavas and all other caste had the right to cover the upper-part of their body. As a result of this Proclamation all classes of people have the right to move in the streets, properly attired. This is considered as a further step towards achieving social equality in Travancore. Thus, because of the continuous struggle by the people of Travancore against the denial of their basic rights they achieved success [16].

The riot regarding sari over shoulder came to an end and after extending for about fifty five years (1810-1865). But, the forces behind it met with failure in their aim. This Proclamation 1810 issued by Col. Munro, the then Resident and Dewan and the subsequent Proclamations of the next fifty-five years. Moreover, this Proclamation of His Highness Uthiram Thirunal Maharaja was endorsed by the Secretary of the Indian Government in his letter as "as you think that it gives you satisfaction, it is good that you accept it". This makes it clear that the Proclamation was made only after consultation between the Government officials and the Missionaries. Further, we can easily guess what benefits they expected to appear, as mentioned in the letter of the Secretary of the Indian Government. That is the missionaries hoped that the Christian women could be compelled to remove the sari over shoulder. If this Hindu Nadar women refused to remove the sari over shoulder they would be severely beaten and put in prison by the government officials with the help of the high-caste people. They would approach the Missionaries just as it had happened during the previous half a century. With the recommendation of the missionaries these prisoners could be released, baptized and added on to the Christian fold was the benefit they expected. Another benefit was that no damage would happen to either Christian or non-Christians. Further it was a false hope that the entire Nadar community could be brought under Christianity if the Missionaries, the Government officials and the high caste goondas stood united and strove.

There are reasons for Rev. Jacob to mention in his book "The History of the London Mission," the following: (1) The demand that the Nadar women should remove the sari over the shoulder, (2) The Proclamation of His Highness Uthiram Thirunal and (3) the letter of the Secretary to the Indian Government. Rev. Jacob mentioned along with these, the injustices of the government, and the terrorism of the high cast people, the two ideas would be contrary to each other and the missionaries would have been found guilty [17].

The Missionaries advised that the Christian women should not wear sari over the shoulder. But, the Christian women did not come forward to be segregated by his national stream in a land where women from high-caste to low- castes like Mukkuvas and Harijans were wearing saris over shoulder. They said that like before they might discard the blouse, but would never remove the sari over shoulder for they considered it a shame. The Missionaries could not think of any other solution. They knew fully well that if they followed the advice of the Resident Cullen, to prevent women, who wore sari over shoulder from entering into churches, they would have to close down all their establishments.

Everybody strove to establish that it was the Resident Cullen who was solely responsible for the unbearable torture of the Nadars and the destruction by fire of the mission establishments in the 3rd sari over shoulder riot and make him the scapegoat. On hearing this, Resident Cullen honorably resigned his job.

Normally, the Nadars were not afraid of these advertisements. They expected another big riot regarding the sari over shoulder. In case such a riot erupted, they anticipated the English troops to come and quell it and take over the Travancore Maharaja's rule, and bring the State under their direct rule, just as they did with the Nawab of Arcot, Raja of Tanjore and other Zamindars. Only then they would be free from the unjust officials and high caste Hindus they thought.

The officials and the high-caste Hindu also felt the same. They even feared that the British would rule the State with the help of the Nadars who were bring gained by the Missionaries. Hence, they did not want to create any riot [18].

Dewan Madava Rao maneuvered according to circumstances during the third riot, impressed upon the Government officials and high-caste Hindus about the danger that would befall the Travancore State if another not was to rise up. His advice had its divisions. The power managers and the Missionaries praised him. As a result Her Majesty Queen Victoria, the Empress of India conferred on Dewan Madhava Rao, the grand title C.S.E. for this ability in ruling the State. He was known a Sir, T. Madhava Rao. He retired in 1872 with a pension of Rs. 1000/- per month which no other Dewan or Dakawu enjoyed then. He was sent by the

Indian Government as Dewan to other States like Indoor, Baroda etc., which struggled from maladministration. Moreover, the public made a bronze statue of him and fixed it opposite to the Secretariat in Travancore.

But in my younger days, I have heard from my father the innumerable Nadars in those days were cursing the Dewan with tears in their eyes for the atrocities he had done through his officials, when he rose to the high pedestal of Dewanship, by governing the subjects differently according to their castes. I still remember what my father narrated to me somewhere about 1970, amidst tears streaming down for the atrocities the Dewan had committed, the general public collected money, made a bronze statue of him and create it at a public place so that the sun and rain might eternally torment him and birds of air drop their castings on his head. The main reason why my father said so was that a youngster from his family was imprisoned and tortured till he vomited blood and died at last [19].

The riot regarding the sari over shoulder evoked considerable thought among the leaders of Nairs who were also known as Sudras. They began to feel that their women have in the upper part of the body bare, was a sign of uncivilization. Six years after the Proclamation that the Nadar women should not wear sari over shoulder, that is in 1865, during the reign of His Highness Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja, the Nair leaders had the following Proclamation announced officially.

The custom of the Nair women removing their top dress before high officials or while going to temple of place shall not continue here after, as we do not consider it proper they shall wear the top dress while going to temples and other places. Government officials shall not restrict this in any manner.

It was the Government rule that women should remove even the scanty top dress they had, when they saw people of high castes. Before the idols in temples Brahmins women of the highest caste should be bare above the hip.

The Government Proclamation as well as the earnest wish of the Brahmins did not come into force immediately. Days passed on. The hesitancy to give up their traditional custom was not the only reason. Nambudiri Brahmins and those of the royal family considered it as disgrace when Nair women covered the upper-part of their body before them. Even about the middle of this 20th Century, after India attained independence, the Nair women servants in the Cochin Maharaja's palace had to fight for and achieve their rights by offering Satyagraha against the royal orders that they should leave bare the upper half of their body. This news came in the newspapers. If any of those who led the riot in those days stressed that Nadar women should not like high caste women wear sari over shoulder, there was not one to say, "why don't the high cast Nair women wear sari over shoulder"

Even those who wrote after India became independent, regarding this riot have not mentioned that Nair women had the upper half of their body bare. Dr. S.S. Hector, in his article presented at the South Indian Congress, 1980 gloats by mentioning. "Even against many restrictions, the Nadar women began dressing like Nair women and finally the Maharaja permitted the Nadar women to wear decent dress like the Nair women and issued order to the effect."

It was the goal of the Missionaries to change the dress, habit and customs of the Nadar Christians and bring them in line with the other Christians in the world. They thought that it would not be difficult for them to change the dress of the Nadar Christian, as they had successfully changed into gown the dress of the converts to Christianity from uncivilized blood-thirsty races in Nagaland in Northeast, Indian Negroes in South Africa and other in Philippines and East Indian Islands. When the Nadar Christian women objected to this, as a first step they tried to make them wear blouse instead of the sari over shoulder. It was their intention to gradually stitch together the blouse and the petticoat below. But the Nadar Christian women refused stoutly to remove the sari when the riot regarding wearing sari over shoulder fizzled out. Hence the intention of the missionaries ended with failure [20].

Though the Nair women had no dress over the upper half of their body, they thought of consulting the Missionaries and allowing the Nadar Christian women to wear blouse instead of the sari. If so they could put in a claim before the British, who were demanding the land that those Nadar Christians were not Tamilians, but Malayalees akin to Anglo Indians. Syrian Christian women and Catholic women of mixed castes in the Malayalam area wore only blouse and dhoti as their dress. They were known as Anglo Indians. Though there were many orders that Nadar women would not be permitted to wear sari over shoulder, they were unable to remove it. Their aims were defeated.

Christian Missionaries came to Pandiyanad even by the end of the eighteenth century. It was the devout opinion of the Nadars of South Travancore that only after the Missionaries came to Pandiyanad, the East India Company conquered the country from the previous ruler and established a good rule. So on seeing the missionaries, they anticipated that their land would be released from the tyrannical rule. But quite contrary to their expectation, they had to fight for the retention of the sari over shoulder. Their earnest desire that the part of the land would come under the direct rule of the British after dismissing the existing rule did not fructify. Moreover, as they did not follow the Christian civilization, when many were beaten to death after vomiting blood or imprisoned suffering untold misery. Nearly after a century the earnest desire of the Nadars fructified. That is when the linguistic reorganization of States came into being in the Indian Republic, the taluks Thovalai, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode were annexed to the Tamil Nadu on 1st November 1956. Both Hindu and Christian Nadars fought shoulder to shoulder just as they did in the riot regarding sari over shoulder. Brahmin, Vellalas and other Castes of Tamilians joined together in fighting against the Travancore-Cochin Government [21].

The upper-cloth rebellion was a great landmark in the social, political history of Travancore. For the first time in the history of Travancore one of the major suppressed communities, the Nadars fought bitterly and earnestly and succeeded after shedding sweat and blood in winning their rights and privileges to dress decently. Although certain restrictions were included in the Proclamation granting the women right to cover their bosom, the Nadar women took their own liberty at their risk to dress decently and freely moved about in the streets and markets, ignoring the prejudices of the privileged classes.

Thus, the LMS Missionaries from the very beginning of their work came into direct contact with the lower sections of the society in Travancore. The lower-castes who had been subjected to various traditional social laws, which imposed many restrictions, looked to the Missionaries for their material and spiritual emancipation. Therefore, the Missionaries involved in the life of the people in various ways and their involvement created much disruption in the society, but a large number of suppressed people found a possibility to break the chains, which had bound them for centuries. The work of the Missionaries, however, was one of the factors, which created a new awareness among the people to struggle for their betterment in Travancore [22].

Conclusion

The analysis of the social inequalities and political crisis in Travancore during the nineteenth and twentieth century presented in the preceding pages, reveals that the society did not lag behind in adopting the reform measures. Such reforms were on a par with the reform introduced at all India level. The activities of the alien British administration supported by the local reforms and institutions in this regard were applicable to the entire Indian Sub-continent including Travancore. The social inequalities and political crisis in Travancore, as such was instrumental in suppressing the traditional practices like Slavery (1893), Arrival of Christian Missionaries in Travancore, Agitation against Dewan Krishna Rao (1842-1857), impact of the Christian Missionaries in Travancore spearheaded by the Nadar community in the second half of the nineteenth Century reached its successful culmination during the forties of the twentieth century. The social reform activities which began with the dawn of the nineteenth century got itself integrated into a movement.

Thus social reforms did not take deep roots in the conservative society till the middle of the nineteenth century. Class and caste disparities continued to delay social progress. The distinction between the moneyed and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the upper and depressed classes were a few of the major hurdles which hindered progress. The concept of social reform which began in the nineteenth century underlined the great reformist movement that came into being in the twentieth century. It has gained fresh momentum by the inclusion of many significant areas like education and uplift of the women's organizations of the depressed classes and the formation of Unions. The social reform concept has ushered in a multi-faceted society which became receptive to progressive ideas and new challenges.

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