

## AGRARIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE, LAND REFORMS ACT AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERALA: AN OVERVIEW

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**Abstract:** One significant aspect of traditional Kerala society was its agrarian socio-economic structure. Several land tenures, including Janmam, Kanam, and Verumpattom, were prevalent in Malabar and were linked to Kerala's agrarian life. This again illustrates Kerala's social stratification. Agrarian relations were formed and shaped similarly to the traditional caste system in the society.

**Key Words:** Agrarian relations, tenants, tenure, Janmi, lease.

### INTRODUCTION

Kerala's agrarian connections were complicated prior to the Land Reforms Act's enactment. The agrarian interactions can be divided into many groups according to the duration of their existence. "According to Kurup (1998), agrarian relations and the tenancy system in Kerala were based on feudal practices and were retained by the colonial government. The rights for fixity of tenure, fair rent and free transfer were denied to the tenants as a colonial policy. Therefore nationalism became an economic nationalism among the peasants for economic freedom".

It is a fact that "agriculture was the main stay of the people of Kerala before 20<sup>th</sup> Century". As per Narayanan (1991) and Kurup (1988), "associated with agriculture, the main land tenures prevailed in north Malabar area were *Janmam*, *Kanam* and *Verumpattom*. The people also were categorized accordingly as *Janmis*, *Kanakkaran* and *Verumpattakkar*. This shaped the agrarian system of north Malabar. The lowest level of the system was adorned by the landless agricultural labourers. In north Malabar, agricultural labourers were mainly from the caste groups like Pulaya and Paraya. The *Janmis* were the owners of the land, but they hadn't cultivated the land. The *Janmis* were mainly from Kshatriya, Nayar and Brahmin castes and rarely Thiyyas and Muslims. Generally, the *Janmi* possesses an infinite area of land and it was not even possible to look after and do cultivation. The *Janmi* leased the land for cultivation to *Kanakkaran* (*Kudiyar*), the holder or supervisor of *Kanam* land. The *Kanakkaran* leased the land from the *Janmi* on payment of an annual rent, termed as *kanapanam*".

"The third main category, internally differentiated, was that of *verumpattakkar*, or tenant (non-owner) cultivator" (Ramachandran, 2001). Mostly "the *Kanakkars* and *verumpattakkar* of north Malabar were Nayars, Thiyyas and Muslims. If the person who owns the land was not a *janmi*, the leasing land for rent was known as *kaivasam panayadaram*. The land in both of the cases should be returned back to the actual owner of the land. *Choondi panayam* was another category in which the land owner would point out the place or field from a distant place and lease out the land for rent. Any person who owns a land can do this and the time period was usually for twelve years. But the land owner can return back it before the time fixed. In the *Janmi*-tenant system, the rights and obligations of the *Janmis* and tenants were governed by the existing norms and practices" (Kurup,1988 and Narayanan,1991).

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

North Malabar mainly includes Kasaragod, Kannur, and Kozhikode districts in Kerala. For the present study the data have been collected from Chirakkal, Pappinisseri, Madayi and Cheruthazham villages of Kannur district in Kerala. The study is based on fieldwork and also secondary materials. Archival materials have been employed in this study. To collect primary data, the key informants

were identified from the older generation. Personal interview, were used as tools for collecting the information and anthropological approach has been employed for studying the agrarian social structure and changes.

## DISCUSSION

“The *janmam* lands in north Malabar were mainly resolute in the hands of the local rulers and chieftains such as Nileswaram Raja, Zamorin of Calicut, the Raja of Nilambur, *Udayamangalath Kizhakke Kovilakam* of Aduthila, *Chirakkal Kovilakam* of Chirakkal and Kottayam Raja. The Nambuthiris of the area also enjoyed high status and owned land properties. The Chirakkal Raja of Chirakkal *Kovilakam* ruled most part of the north Malabar in the past, especially before the advent of the Britishers. Kolathiri was the earlier term used to denote the Chirakkal Rajas” (Thomas, 1995 and Report of Govt. of Madras, 1928) .

“The kingdom of Kolathiri (Kolathunad) was located in the northern part of Kerala. It was one of the chief kingdoms of Kerala which ‘at its zenith extended from the Netravati river in the north to the Korapuzha in the south and from Kudakumala in the east to the Arabian Sea in the west” (Menon, 1967). “Under Chirakkal dynasty there were about 39 temples, and among these *Madayi kavu* is famous and is the family deity of the *Kovilakam*. After the invasion of Tipu and Britishers, Chirakkal dynasty lost their power and became mere *Janmis* of the area. The Seringapattanam treaty of 1792 enabled the Britishers to conquer Malabar including Chirakkal dynasty” (Menon, 1967 and Logan, 1887).

“During the British period, especially in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, *Janmi* system was existed and the people accepted the *janmis* as the owners of the land. The *Janmi* used to pay land revenue for the land owned by him. They are not directly engaged in cultivation but leased the land to tenants on *varam* (rent as kind or paddy) or *pattam* (rent as cash) basis and were called as *pattakkar*” (Kurup, 1988). “According to Buchanan (1870:68-69), the *Janmis* in south Malabar were substantial landlords having vast areas of land under them, while the *Janmis* in north Malabar held comparatively lesser areas”.

“In addition to the usual *varam* and *pattam* (income from the landed property as kind and cash), the tenants- (*kanamdar* and *verumpattakkar*) had to give presents on important festivals like Onam and Vishu as *thirumulkalcha* (presents to the landlord). In return, the *janmi* used to offer presents like *pudava* (cloths) to the tenants at the time of onam and on festive occasions (Namboothirippad, 1981 rpt 1987)”. “In the Pre-British period, the *kanakkaran* emerged as having rights of control over land. His right in the soil was further reinforced by the *tara*, the village organization and the comparative lack of demand for land (Panikkar, 1992:19)”. Till the advent of the English in 1792 the *Kanakkars* after the renewal of *kanam* (tax) to the *janmi* was not evicted from the land. The *janmam* (birth) right of the *janmis* was treated by the early British officials as an absolute ownership on land and the wellbeing of the *Kanakkar* and the actual cultivators were not been taken into account.

Earlier, “the Kshatriyas were rulers, landlords and military men. Their landholdings have been taken over under the Kerala Land Reforms Act. ....After Independence and the abolition of such privileges, they suffered dispossession of lands under the ceiling provisions of the agrarian reforms (Singh, 2002)”. “In 1915 collector Innes estimated that the Zamorin of Calicut was paying a revenue of Rs.1, 20,000, Raja of Chirakkal Rs.40000, Raja of Kuttanad Rs.37325, *Kilakke Kovilakam* Rs.56000 and the Tirumulpad of Nilambur Rs.21000” (in Thomas, 1995).

“William Logan was appointed as a special commissioner in 1881 to enquire into and report on the land tenure system, and of tenant rights in Malabar. William Logan after his enquiry recommended the need for legislation to protect the interests of the peasants and to regulate the relations between the actual cultivators and the *janmis* (Logan, 1951)”. “But the Board of Revenue not accepted the recommendations of Logan and a special commission was appointed to study the matter”. As a result, “the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvement Bill was introduced in the Madras Legislative council in 1886. The objective of the Bill was to grant the tenants the market value for

the improvements they made and thereby to check the rising practice of evictions (G.O.No.509.Rev.Dept (confidential), 6 Feb 1896)". "Though the *Janmis* opposed the Bill, the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvement Act 1886 (Madras Act No. I. of 1887) was passed". "This Act was a turning point in changing the traditional agrarian life of the villages (Kurup, 1988)".

"The different methods adopted to carry out and continue the *kanam* practice in north Malabar include, *Polichezhuthu*, *Melcharth* etc. *Polichezhuthu* was the renewal of the *kanam* lease before the end of 12 years and *Melcharth* (over-lease) was a *kanam* given by the *Janmi* to a third person. This accelerated evictions and not provided any security to the tenants. This resulted in the inappropriate maintenance of *Janmam* lands by the *kudiyans*" (Logan,1887 and Menon,1967). "According to Aiyar (1930), it may be granted before or after the expiry of the prior demise and is usually granted to a stranger who can evict the existing tenant. It is called renewal if granted to the existing tenant. In 1893, Bradley, then Malabar Collector recommended legislation prohibiting *melcharths* and amending certain provisions of the Act (Report of the Govt. of Madras, 1928, Vol.1:15)". "The *melcharth* and eviction continued even in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century but the official approach was not to disturb the *janmis* (G.O.P. No.9 (confidential), Rev. Dept. 2 Jan 1914)".

"According to Kunhikrishnan (1985:100), during the years between 1800 and 1900, the only legislation enacted in respect of Malabar land tenures was the Act of 1887, which provided for compensation for improvements effected by tenants, followed by an amending Act in 1900. Malabar compensation for Tenants Improvement Act 1899 (Madras Act I of 1900) made slight changes in the status of the tenants". "However, the *Janmis* were denying the benefits which were conferred by the Act to the *Kanakkars* (Krishnakumar, 1999)".

"The writings of Namboodirippad (1981, 1988), Radhakrishnan (1989) and Panikkar (1992) noted three main factors which had altered the agrarian relations in Malabar. The first movement was referred as Moplah outrages mainly concentrated in the south Malabar taluks, starting from 1836 to the Malabar rebellion of 1921. The second major current in the movement for agrarian change in Malabar was the organized effort of *kanakkaran* intermediaries to acquire occupancy rights on land over which they had *kanam* rights. During this movement, sections of working tenants were mobilized and have lasted until the Malabar Tenancy Act was passed in 1930 (Ramachandran, 2001)". "In the third phase, the struggles were mostly by the lower Hindu tenantry, especially the vast masses of the lower castes concentrated in north Malabar (Radhakrishnan, 1989)". "Thus, the main political movement in the thirties and forties were against the Britishers as well as landlordism (Kurup, 1988)".

"The peasant movement was stronger in north Malabar... and was based on the small *kanakkaran*, the *verumpattakkaran*, the *kuzhikkanakaran*. This was basically a movement to safeguard the interests of or protect a peasant class from further impoverishment (Gopalankutty, 1985)".

"In the later period of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century a number of changes began to emerge in the agrarian social order of Malabar. During these periods most of the lands were under the custody of *Janmis* (Kurup, 1988)". The studies and works by "Logan (1951 rpt), Kunhikrishnan (1985), Radhakrishnan (1989), Kurup ( 1988, 2000) show the changes that had appeared during these periods, especially commercialization of agriculture, introduction of land revenue system, legal interventions in the elimination of slavery system, and growing demand for land and peasant struggles against landlordism and colonialism. Moreover, all these had directly or indirectly made a blow on the *Janmi* system in Malabar. The peasant riots emerged in different parts of Kerala during 19<sup>th</sup> Century was both anti-feudal and anti-imperialist. The formation of a peasant organisation, termed All Malabar Karshaka Sangham gave a new orientation to the anti-imperialist movement in Malabar and southern parts of south Kanara". "In the words of Kurup (1988: 126), in early revolts like Pazhassi, Kurichiyas and the Mappilas fought against the British during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries had been highly influenced by tradition and religious forces. But the Kayyur revolt in Kasaragod during early 1940's highlights the emergence of a new political ideology among the

peasants and workers”. “According to Radhakrishnan (1989: 92, 97), the progress of the peasant struggles during the years 1935-40 was closely bound up with the emergence of the *Karshaka Sangham* as a strong peasant organisation ... The organised struggles of the peasantry questioning the age-old feudal oppression and exploitation forced the *Janmis* to give up feudal levies, illegal exactions, and also to switch to the use of standardised measures”.

The land reform legislation played a pivotal role in Kerala's agrarian relations. “Land Reform in 1969 is considered as one of the milestones of agrarian transformation in Kerala. In the early twentieth Century, not only the legislations related to *marumakkathayam* but also the land reforms changed the society of Malabar” (Kurup,1988) and Kerala in general. “Franke and Chasin (1994) has highlighted the main aims of this as, a rise levy on the largest owners, to be collected by the Government and redistributed to the poor through the fair price shops, a ceiling on absolute size of land holdings, the abolition of tenancy and the abolition of rents to the landlords”.

Historically, distribution of land was highly unequal in the state across religious and social groups. “...a good portion of wet and dry land was owned by the forward communities consisting of Brahmins, Nairs and Syrian Christians. The backward communities like Ezhavas and Muslims owned relatively small proportion and the disadvantaged sections of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shared only a negligible proportion of the total land. This land ownership pattern has been undergoing changes over a time as a result of the initiation of land reforms, and through demographic pressure, purchase and sale in the land market (Nair and Menon, 2007)”. Due to the Land Reform Act of 1970, this situation had changed widely. “The Land Reforms allowed tenants to become owners of the lands they had cultivated and protected tenants from arbitrary eviction (Kurup, 1988 and Krishnakumar, 1999)”. “According to Kurup (1988), the Act terminated the vestiges of a feudal age in the agrarian relations”.

“Using official data, Radhakrishnan reported that the first set of reforms resulted in the estimated transfer of 19.7 lakh acres of land to 12.7 lakh households under the first scheme, 0.2 lakh acres of homestead land to 2.7 households under the second, and 0.5 lakh acres to 0.9 lakh households under the third (1989:185)”. “These transfers had altered the agrarian society of Kerala, land ownership patterns, and landlordism. Moreover, the transformation of *marumakkathayam* system and the resultant break up of joint family system has significantly contributed to the division and segmentation of lands over time (Kurup, 1988 and Narayanan,1991)”.

As per various temple records, “the *devaswam* properties in north Malabar were associated with Temples. Most of the *Janmis* had owned temples and associated lands”. By using the records of various temples, Narayanan (1991) accounts that, “a major share of the cultivable land in Malabar belonged to the category of *devaswam* and the Madayi *Tiruvarkattukavu* had an extent of 1372 acres and 73 cents of land. This position had continued till the land reforms were introduced”.

As per the informants and trustees of various temples, “the functionaries associated with temple service were from Nambuthiri, Marar and Variar castes. The families engaged in such activities had been given lands by the landlord-Nambuthiris for performing *poojas*, Marar for beating drums and Variar for garland making. Later on, Endowment Board came into existence. Land was the main type of wealth in the agrarian social structure. The practice of imparting land to families was a traditional practice. This was for performing various services in the agrarian and religious spheres. Chirakkal *Thampuran* ruled over Kolathunad was the trustee of so many temples in north Malabar. In order to look after the temple affairs functionaries were appointed by him and imparted land to them. Under this service tenure the possessor’s right was hereditary in nature”.

At the risk of explaining all the service tenures in different temples, the service rendered by different Caste groups in *Kalarivathukkal* Temple of Valapattanam in Kannur District shall be summarized as follows: According to Sini (2011), “Chirakkal *Thampuran* was the *uralan* (trustee) of *Kalarivathukkal* temple. *Karaima* and service rights in the temple were enjoyed by certain families belong to different caste groups. The rights were closely related to the services bestowed on them. In return to this, the service providers or the permanent tenants possessed the lands on permanent

basis, and were transferred by the trustees of the temple. This type of tenure was of permanent in nature compared to other forms of tenure and still continuing. *Kanam* tenure was like a mortgage in which *kanakkaran* or the *Kudiyar* leased land from the *Janmi* on payment of an amount”.

According to the “Report of the special officer of the Malabar Tenancy Committee (1947:24), *kanam* in north Malabar is nothing but mortgage and the *kanamdars* is a mere mortgagee. The nature of *kanam* tenure had changed in different periods especially during the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Earlier there was no provision to evict the tenants before the expiry of the lease. Later on the *kanam* was like a temporary lease in which on return of the *kanapanam* the *Janmi* could evict the *kanakkaran*. The eviction was done publicly by announcing with the beating of *chenda* (drum). The eviction continued till the implementation of Land Reforms Act”. Such types of evictions were banned by the Government of Kerala in 1957.

“In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, *Kanakkars* who subleased the property charged higher rate from their tenants. Thus there was concentration of land in the hands of a few families of *Kanakkars* in Malabar. They became *Janmis* of the lands (Krishnakumar, 1999)”. *Kuzhikanam* tenure was another important tenure prevailed all over Kerala. Like *Kanam*, the lease period was generally for twelve years. For *Kuzhikanam* tenure, the land leased to *Kudiyar* was usually dry lands or *parambu*. The *kudiyars* improves the land under *Kuzhikanam* tenure by cultivating plantain, pepper, coconut tree etc. At the end of the term the land would be given back to the *Janmi* and the *Janmi* pays an amount to the tenants for the developments he had made.

“A simple lease is termed in Malabar *Verumpattom*, a bare lease, that is unaccompanied by an advance; where no term is specified, it ensures for a single year (Report with Appendices of the Malabar Land Tenures Committee, 1887)”. According to the informants, “in north Malabar, the *Verumpattakkars* were mainly Thiyya and Mappila-Muslims. In the *Verumpattom* land, the tenant had no right to cultivate permanently. Actually it was a short term lease in which the tenant holds the land for 2 or 3 years. *Verumpattom* was to take profits from the land for a fixed period and return may be in cash or kind. Another lease termed *Marupattom* was an agreement over land for 12 years and its dealings were done through Land registrar office. The advantage of this lease was that the *Janmi* has to sign on the document for the exchange of land”.

The *Janmi* had leased lands either to *Kanakkaran* or to *Verumpattakkaran*. The *Kanakkaran* was treated as a mere mortgagee and the *Verumpattakkaran*, merely a tenant at will. In addition, slave labour was fruitfully utilised for the production system of Malabar and was a vital part of the agrarian relations in the Malabar region. According to “the Census of 1838, there were 1, 44,371 slaves in Malabar”. The informants opined that *Madayi kavu* was one of the areas where the selling of the slaves was done annually. Logan (1951: ix) has mentioned that “colonial Malabar presented a picture of concentration of land both *janmam* and *kanam* in the hands of a few”.

“The Malabar Tenancy Commission in 1927 recommended a Bill for legislation. Accordingly, Malabar Tenancy Act 1929 was passed. The Act provided for fixity of tenure on cultivating *Verumpattakkars* holding wet lands..... Later Malabar Tenancy Act 1929 was amended and the Amendment Bill was passed into an Act in 1951. The Amending Act gave fixity of tenure to all cultivating *Verumpattomdars* and also to customary *Verumpattomdars*, *Kuzhipattamdars* and *Kanamdars*. Renewal fees were abolished and provided for the simultaneous settlement of fair rents. The 1951 Act was amended in 1954. The objectives of the amendment was to prevent eviction and for safeguarding the interests of the tenants (Krishnakumar, 1999)”. In 1948, Communist party introduced the slogan, “land to the tiller and the strategy of militant mobilization of the peasants for an agrarian revolution (in Kurup, 1988:144)”. Panikkar has opined that “interaction of three factors was common in most of the uprisings during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century- a struggle for possession of land, the entry of a religious element into the struggle, and Government is of support to the landlords” (Panikkar, 1992:69).

“The Kerala stay of Eviction Proceedings Act 1957 was enacted and sections 4 to 7 of the Act stayed the eviction of all types of tenants and *Kudikidappukars* (Krishnakumar, 1999)”. “S.2 (a) of

the Cochin *Verumpattomdar's* Act defines *Kudikidappukaran* as a person who has been permitted to have the use and occupation of a portion of a property for the purpose of erecting a homestead with or without an obligation to pay rent for the use and occupation of the site so given (in Krishnakumar, 1999:15)". The Act of 1961 included "provisions for fixity of tenure, fair rent, the right of purchase, right of *kudikidappu* (hut- dwelling) and land ceiling" (Kurup, 1988). "The Act of 1969 abolished tenancy by enabling tenants to purchase ownership rights over leased-out land and cultivators were given ownership rights over their homestead sites (Kodoth, 2004:359)". However, the Land Reforms Act passed in 1970 on the whole abolished landlordism and control over land in Kerala and the poor sections of the society benefited out of this.

In short, "the social structure and the traditional land holding pattern of the society in Malabar were interrelated. Caste, joint family system and kinship structure form the very base of the social structure. The Brahmins, Rajas and Nayar chieftains detained most of the lands (*janmam*) in Malabar and *kanam* right was occupied by the Nayars. The subgroups of the Nayar, Thiyya and the Muslim were the *Verumpattakkar* and the Pulaya and the Paraya formed the agricultural labourers or agrestic slaves (Kurup, 1988, Narayanan, 1991; Menon, 1967)". In the nineteenth Century, this was the nature of social stratification and agrarian relations in Kerala.

According to the trustees of various temples, "there are still customs and practices that show the continuation of the traditional system and the control and dominance of the *Naduvazhi* or *Janmi* over different caste people, religious institutions like *kavus* and temples. In addition, the patronage of arts and authority to impart honorary titles by the *Janmi* or *Naduvazhi* families show the persistence of the earlier system. So, through a study of the existing practice, the social structure, agrarian relations and tenure of the society can be examined. In short, the Land reforms and the Acts related to inheritance that passed in 1930's helped to change the agrarian relations and the social structure of the area or which acted as catalyst for social change. The transformation had affected the upper strata greatly but it affected least, the lower strata or marginalized sections of the society". Various kinds of tenure systems existed in Kerala and among these; service tenures and *cherujanmam* show its continuance even today. Actually, any tenure system shows or was part of the feudal system. "Narayanan (1991) has explained that lands were granted in consideration of the services performed or to be performed...and under this tenure the holder cannot be dispossessed off as the right was hereditary in nature, but if the granter or of his descendants dies without heirs the land goes to the *Janmakkar* or proprietor. He also explains *karaima* as a perpetual lease which applied to lands transferred by the *uralars* and trustees of temples to those employed in performing certain services. The temple lands held on *karaima* were inseparable from the services and the land was the property of the pagoda and the tenant held it in consideration of his services". All these tenures highlight the land use and distribution patterns existed in the agrarian society of north Malabar.

According to the informants, in the past, "during the reign of *Naduvazhis* some of the communities in a village have observed a special rite, known as *janmam*. The *janmam* right is a hereditary one, i.e., passing from one generation to the next. The *janmam* rite actually restricted on certain family members and inherited by the particular family only. In each village, or *desam* certain members or family members were appointed to observe these rites and others were forbidden to do that within the particular boundary. In Chirakkal, Chirakkal *Thampuran* was considered as the authority, who would impart the rite to different communities residing under his frontier".

Sini (2011) identifies that in Chirakkal dynasty area, different caste groups have their own responsibility even today during the temple festival and also during various occasions of the village. Still the practice is enduring, even though the role and position of *Naduvazhis* were vanished". According to her, earlier, "the *Naduvazhis* were involved in all the matters connected with the *janmam* (specific boundary area of village). They solved the family affairs and issues connected with the *janmam*. Earlier the concept of *desam* (territory) was the prevalent term related to village social structure. In each *desam* there should be one or two families associated with the *janmam*

right. Though the power of the *Naduvazhi* declined, still his involvement in the religious affairs of the village is functioning and retaining as such. There were demarcated boundaries within the *janmam* in which one can perform. For example, a Malayan or Vannan was permitted to perform within his *janmam* area only. But he could have also performed in other areas with the consent of the actual performer in the other area. Actually, the *janmam* is related to specific boundary, the area of which varies from place to place. In fact, the *janmam* area shall be a village or more than two villages. These aspects and observances are still remaining within the village”.

During the later decades of the foreign invasion, the Chirakkal *Kovilakam* dynasty declined as *Naduvazhis*, which was part of the feudal system in Kerala. The British East India Company made its dominant power over this feudalistic structure. As a result, during 19<sup>th</sup> Century, structural changes began to happen in the society of Kerala.

In the Feudal system of Kerala, the uppermost layer was adorned by the *Naduvazhis*. The English East India Company declined their position as mere *Janmis*. In the past “the *Naduvazhis* extended the special titles and honours to various performers and artists. This is termed as *aacharam*” (Kurup, 1988). “During this function, along with the title, a bangle, and a *pattu* (a special cloth) was also offered and there after the person (performer or artist) would be referred to by the particular titles, such as *Peru Malayan*, *Peru Vannan*, *Natyacharya* and Panikker. The title *Peru Malayan* and *Peru Vannan* usually adorned by the excellent performers of *theyyam*, belong to Malayan and Vannan castes respectively. Along with this honorary title, golden bangle and *chooral* (bamboo stick) are also offered to them as symbols of his position. The title Panikker usually imparts to the performer of *theechamundi*, a unique *theyyam* which requires high risk in performing as it performs with fire. At present the villager’s make initiatives to meet all the expenditures in connection with this (Sini, 2011)”.

At present most of the temple activities are organized by committees. This again declined the role of different communities and their involvement. Hence, obviously a change has occurred in the traditional village social structure also. “The production process, agrarian and service relations in Malabar were highly interconnected. Later on various underlying forces such as colonial influence, reform movements and legislatures moulded the society of Malabar into a new direction, which is more or less egalitarian” (Kurup, 1988; Narayanan, 1991).

In addition to this the patronage of arts by the Chirakkal family, one of the *Naduvazhi* or *Janmi* families was essentially the continuation of the traditional system. All these highlight the role and involvement of the traditional *Janmi* system in the cultural, social, economic and religious spheres of the village life. “The changes in land relationships, commercialization of the economy, authority of colonialism, and spread of education provided the foundation for the changes in power and capital accumulation among a few families in north Malabar. The conjunction of family and land laws in the 1930s acted as a catalyst for the transformation of matriliney in Kerala. The spate of land sales escalated rapidly and the household began to undergo a steady process of division. This affected not only the property rights of the individual members but also their residence patterns and thus the very structure of the *taravads*” (Kodoth, 2004; Nair, 2007). As per Arunima (2002), “between the 1930’s and the 1970’s, when the Kerala legislature finally enacted the law abolishing matrilineal inheritance, most landed *taravads* all over the state were in a process of disintegration”.

## CONCLUSION

In Malabar, the changes in agrarian relations began to appear in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the legislative interventions. The legislations had changed the practices and customs which were against the societal requirements. The major change was the shattering of traditional agrarian relations, land oriented authority structure and the role of land in determining the relations among caste groups. The changes happened in the notions of property rights and inheritance pattern changed the traditional social order. The changes in agrarian relations and *marumakkathayam* system of inheritance had created direct ambiance in the formation of social

identity in the later years of 20<sup>th</sup> century. This facilitated the involvement of the father in the day to day affairs of the child and his wife, and patriliney emerged as a system or pattern of the society. The collapse of *taravad* system ensured independent life and nuclear family system. Basically, the transformations in the agrarian relations and there by the egalitarianism of caste groups in the social order, the changes in the notions of gender relations etc., consigned the society of north Malabar in the constructive arena of change and development.

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