

Christians and Nation Building in Modern India: With Special Reference to Kerala¹

Dr. Joshy Mathew

[Dr. Joshy Mathew is Asst. Professor in History, Pazhassiraja College, Pulpally, Wayanad, Kerala. He serves as the Member of the Board of Studies in History, University of Calicut. He completed his Ph. D. from Kannur University and published his thesis namely *Tradition, Migration and Transformation-Agrarian Migration to Wayanad A Socio-Historical Perspective 1928-2000* in 2011. His recent book entitled *Education in Colonial and Post-Colonial Malabar(1920-2006): A Socio- Economic Study* was published in 2016. He has contributed articles to several national and international journals. He has completed research projects of University Grants Commission (UGC), Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), and Kerala State Higher Education Council. His research interest includes History of Indian Christianity, Tribal Society, Ecology and Education. He can be contacted at Mob. 09447263877; joshymathewprc@gmail.com - Editor]

Abstract

The Christian community in India has not been an isolated community. Not only has it shared the general Indian socio-cultural heritage and ethos, but also contributed greatly for nation building in every field. However, the contributions and role played by the Christians in the field of Indian nation building has not received much attention in the mainstream history of India. This paper focuses on the contribution of Kerala's Christians to nation building through their engagement in social uplift, educational development, economic enrichment, freedom movement, and so on. In the formation and early activities of the Indian National Congress and in the various stages of the national movement for freedom, the role of Christians was remarkable. In the anti-colonial agitations of Kerala, especially in Travancore, no other section of the society contributed as much as the Syrian Christians. The introduction of modern English education and the inclusion of low caste people in schools and colleges for education brought revolutionary changes in the caste-ridden Indian society. Christians were the pioneers of printing in India. Large scale printing activities led to improvement of literacy and development of regional languages. Many Christian journalists strengthened the national movement through their writings in journals and newspapers. Indian society is greatly indebted to Christian missionaries for introducing modern health care system through

dispensaries and hospitals. Overall, though the Christian community is a miniscule community, its contribution to nation building has been substantial.

Keywords: Kerala Christians, Nation building, Missionaries, Education, Health Care, Journalism, Freedom Movement

1. Introduction

The contribution of Christians to India's nation building has not received much attention in the mainstream academic circles. Indian society is multicultural and is shaped by the efforts of many of its constituent communities. Beginning with the oldest Christian community in India, the Syrian Christians of Kerala, who trace their origin to the very dawn of the Christian era before Christianity entered much of Europe,² the different Christian communities, particularly the missionaries imbibed the spirit of nation building and enriched the life, economy and culture of the nation. The impact of Christian activities is more conspicuous as European missionaries came to work in India since early sixteenth century. They have made substantial contribution to Indian languages, modern printing, geographical survey, astronomy, modern education, modern health care, Christian literature, and upliftment of the marginalized sections of Indian society. Besides, the Indian Christian community was actively involved in the national freedom movement in India. This paper is limited to only a certain areas of their contribution to national building with special focus on Kerala Christians in the modern period. But a cursory overview of the theme pertaining to the ancient and medieval periods is given in the next two sections.

2. Christian Contribution in Ancient and Early Medieval Periods

During the ancient and medieval periods, Christianity existed only in Kerala. According to the tradition of the St. Thomas Christians in Kerala, the Apostle of Jesus Christ St. Thomas, came to Kodungaloor, in Kerala in 52 AD to disseminate the message of the Gospel in India.³ Though some scholars have expressed doubt about the first century tradition of the St. Thomas Christians, it is beyond doubt that from the fourth century, the spiritual and ecclesiastical care of St. Thomas Christians was undertaken by the missionaries from Sassanid Persia. The archaeological remnants obtained in the form of sixth century Pahlavi inscribed crosses from many parts of India attest to the presence of a commercial group of Pahlavi speaking Christian settlers in many parts of India.⁴

The signal contribution of the migrant Christians and the native St. Thomas Christians was in the realm of trade and commerce during this period and later in cultivation, and other modern pursuits in education, health care, etc. Scholars have highlighted the contribution of the Syrian Christians in the political economy of Kerala.⁵ As the Christian community had enjoyed high position in the Kerala society, it had a strong clout in the public domain. They generally engaged in three sections of occupation viz., internal and external trade, spice cultivation and military service. The Christian traders engaged in commercial activities with the Persian Gulf and had a strong merchant guild in Kerala, called *Manigramam*. The Christians enjoyed the monopoly of pepper and other spice trade in Kerala. As a part of their trade activities a large number of *Angadies* (markets) were established around churches for collecting cargo of spices. Besides trade, they engaged in the cultivation of spices in the internal parts of central Kerala. It is believed that by the sixth and seventh centuries they cleared large tracts of forests and started spice cultivation in the upland zones. A sixteenth century Portuguese document says the "All pepper was in the hands of St. Thomas Christians and that majority of the pepper that went to Portugal was sold by them."⁶ Spice cultivation provided a strong financial base and social status to the Syrian Christians. Besides, they had a strong military tradition in medieval Kerala: they fought for the rulers of many native principalities. Like the Hindu Nairs, the Christian *panikkars* had established many *kalaris* (martial training centres) in the Christian settlements for martial arts and fencing.⁷ The Christians formed a prominent section in the fighting force under many local rulers. For instance, the king of Vadakkenkur and the Raja of Kochi had large battalions of Christian soldiers. These rulers offered Christian soldiers to the Portuguese for their foreign conquests also.⁸ The Syrian Christians were appointed in many high administrative positions under the local rulers in the medieval period. For instance, Poonjar Raja appointed a Syrian Christian as his minister in the seventeenth century, according to the Portuguese text *Jornada*. The Raja of Thekkumkur had a Christian minister, Kallarakkal Tharakan, and Thachil Thariathu was the minister of the Mangattu Kaimals of Alengadu.⁹ Overall, the commercial and military activities of the Christians, during this period, made them a distinctive community in Kerala, and were strong points in nation building.

3. Christian Contribution in the Pre-modern Period

One of the important channels of early modernity to India was the preaching and activities of Christian missionaries from Europe. After the advent of the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama in 1498, Christian missionaries from Western Europe introduced certain elements of European

awakening and the spirit of European renaissance to India. The Portuguese colonial administrative system of the Church called *Padroado Real* (Royal Patronage) and later the Vatican-managed system, *Propaganda Fide* (Propagation of Faith) facilitated the promotion of early modernity in India.¹⁰ The European missionaries came first to Kerala under the leadership of the Portuguese in 1500 AD. Missionary societies such as Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, Carmelites, etc., established houses, churches, schools, orphanages, hospitals, and so on, which created a new channel of modern development in Kerala society. Their signal contribution to enrichment of Malayalam, the local language, through writing of grammars and dictionaries, and creating a rich Christian literature is well appreciated. It is beyond the scope of this paper to give even a brief description of the impact of Christianity on the various aspects of Kerala society during this period. In the coming sections we shall focus on certain areas of nation building in the modern period, the period pertaining to this paper.

4. Christian Participation in the National Freedom Movement in Kerala

Just as their counterparts elsewhere in India,¹¹ Christians were prominent in the national movement for freedom in Kerala as well. Though the British government had tried to wean the Christians away from the national movement, they failed to yield desired results in Kerala. People in the Princely States of Travancore and Cochin in south and central Kerala and in the British-ruled Malabar (North Kerala) actively participated in the agitations against the policies of the British. Since the beginning of the political movement of Travancore, starting with the Malayalee Memorial of 1891, the Christians actively participated in the national movement. Malayalee Memorial was a representation given to the Maharaja of Travancore signed by 10028 people demanding more job opportunities for the educated youths of Travancore in place of undue preference given to Tamil Brahmins. The Christian, Nair and Ezhava communities were at the forefront of the Memorial. The Christian leaders like Nidhirikkal Manikathanar and Cyriac Nidhirikkal mobilized the Christians to demand more job opportunities for Christians in Travancore.

Annie Mascarene (1902-1963) was one of the early women freedom fighters of Travancore and a prominent leader of Travancore State Congress (TSC).¹² The political career of Anne Mascarene started with her joining in the Struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore.¹³ She participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement in Travancore along with Pattom Thanu Pillai. She became a headache to the British. When she became the member of the Working Committee of the TSC, the British arrested her and

imprisoned her for treason. Another prominent Syrian Christian leader of the TSC was Accamma Cherian (1909-1982), who led a legendary fight against the autocratic rule of the Diwan of Travancore, Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyer. When the Diwan banned the TSC and arrested its leaders, Accamma Cherian took the leadership of TSC. She led a massive rally of the people in Travancore in 1938, demanding revoking the ban of TSC, releasing of political prisoners and expelling Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyer from the post of Diwanship. Around 20000 people attended the rally starting from Thampanoor to Kowadiar Palace of the Travancore King Sri Chithira Tirunal Balarama Varma. Though the British Police Commander ordered to fire upon the people, they had to withdraw from firing when the Christian leader Accamma Cherian courageously said "I am the leader, shoot me first, before shooting others." She was also arrested and imprisoned by the British. Another Christian leader Rosamma Punnoose, sister of Accamma Cherian, was also a freedom fighter of Travancore.

Among the early freedom fighters of Travancore T. M. Varghese was a unique figure. He was an important leader of the Abstention Movement started in Travancore in 1932. He very strongly criticized the oppressive policies of the Diwan of Travancore, when he was the president of TSC. Christian leaders like E. J. John, N.V. Joseph and T. M. Varghese actively participated in the Nivarthana Agitation in Travancore. In Kochi, since the Electricity Agitation of 1936 the Christian community was in the mainstream of the national movement. Trissur was the centre of nationalist agitations of the Christian community of Kochi Kingdom.¹⁴ The leaders and people of Kochi very strongly supported the popular agitations of Travancore.

The Christians of British Malabar also participated in the freedom movement. Mr. Samuel Aaron, Mrs. Gracy Aaron and Mrs. Margret Pavamoni participated in the freedom movement at various levels. As a token of recognition of the role of the Christian community in the national movement in Malabar, Prof. C. J. Varkey of the Madras Legislature was included in the Cabinet of C. Rajagopalachari.¹⁵

At the national level, George Joseph was a leading figure in Indian National Congress. He was a close associate of national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari and Sardar Vallabhai Patel. His good relationship with Annie Besant attracted him to Home Rule Movement in 1916 and later he became a member of Home Rule League in Madurai.¹⁶ He took a leading role in *Vaikom Satyagraha* (Agitation for the right of the low caste people to have access to temples) in Kerala in 1924. He attended the All India Congress Meeting at Madras and

organized, along with Kamaraj Nadar, boycott of Simon Commission in Madurai. Later in 1937 he was elected as a congress member to the Central Legislative Assembly.

5. Missionary Contribution to Education

The most significant contribution to nation building is in the field of modern education which ushered in modernity in Kerala. Christian missionaries of various nationalities of Western Europe established European school system in India in the early 16th century. The Jesuit missionaries were the pioneers of modern education in India. In 1510, the Portuguese introduced European School system in Cochin. The Franciscans set up education centres in Cochin in 1518 near their monasteries. St. Paul's College of Cochin and similar institutions in other places were in European styles run by the Jesuits. These were established both for religious and secular learning and included subjects like logic, law, mathematics, language, philosophy, etc.

In the 19th century, the credit of spreading western education in Kerala largely goes to the Protestant missionaries in Travancore and Cochin and British-ruled Malabar. The two mission societies working in southern Kerala, the London Mission Society (LMS) and the Church Mission Society (CMS) and the Basel Evangelical Mission (BEM)¹⁷ in Malabar promoted western education and ideas among the people especially the low castes.¹⁸ The first LMS missionary in Travancore was a German Lutheran W. T. Ringeltaube, who started his work in Trivandrum and Nagarcoil region in 1806. Irrespective of caste and race he founded many schools where free secular education was given to poor children. In the beginning he found it very difficult to get students in his school but by 1815 he had 188 boys in his school. The missionaries did not receive enough support from the English East India Company in Travancore for their activities.¹⁹ Charles Mead, another LMS missionary worked in Travancore for more than half a century for the educational progress of the poor people. He had started a Boarding Girls School in Nagarcoil in 1820 and provided training in reading, writing, stitching, embroidery and mathematics.

Table- 1: Educational Institutions of LMS in Travancore 1866

Institutions	Boys	Girls	Total
Nagarcoil Seminary	147	-	147
Boarding Schools	64	200	264
Anglo-Vernacular Day Schools	352	-	352
Village Schools	5425	1290	6715
Night Schools	358	17	375
Total	6346	1507	7853

Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1936*, p.86.

Since 1816, the CMS missionaries started their work in Kerala under the patronage Col. John Munro, Resident and Diwan of Travancore. The first CMS missionary, Thomas Norton reached Kochi in 1816 and established a school at Alappuzha. Later he established 11 schools in Alappuzha with 301 boys and 57 girls. His wife Mrs. Norton established a Boarding School for Girls in Alappuzha. Benjamin Baily, Joseph Fenn and Henry Backer of CMS had contributed much to the educational, social and cultural development of Kottayam. The wives of most of these missionaries set up schools for girls in Kottayam for the promotion of female education. Under the leadership of Col. John Munro, Resident and Diwan of the King of Travancore, the CMS College was established in 1813 with the liberal support of the Maharani of Travancore, Gowri Lakshmi Bai.²⁰ In Cochin, the first school was started at Mattancherry in 1818 by the English missionary J. Dawson. Under the influence of Diwan Col. Munro, the Maharani of Travancore, Gowri Parvathi Bai introduced free and compulsory school education and forced the parents of the children to send their wards to school. An English High School in Cochin was started in 1845.

The St. Joseph's Boy's School at Calicut was probably the first missionary educational institution in Malabar. It was established in 1793 by Fr. Gabriel Gonsalves, a Catholic missionary, under the Diocese of Cranganore.²¹ This school has become a part of Kerala history as it has produced many outstanding luminaries from Malabar. In the 19th century, Protestant missionaries took great interest in the spreading the message of Jesus Christ. As noted earlier, the German BEM was the pioneer in missionary activities in Malabar region.²² Initially, the BEM met with some

restrictions as the East India Company did not permit non-British missions to work in British occupied territories. The British lifted this restriction with the introduction of the Charter Act of 1833 and permitted non-British missionary societies in British colonies. So three missionaries, John Christopher Lehner, Christian Lenhard Greiner and Samuel Hebach of BEM Society were sent to India for missionary activities. They landed at Calicut on 21 August 1834. In Malabar region the BEM opened the first English school at Kallai in Calicut in 1848.

The Basel Mission's work had spread in several parts of Malabar especially in Tellicherry, Calicut and Palakkad. The Basel Mission German School at Tellicherry was renamed as Basel Evangelical Mission Parsi School as a mark of respect to Kaikose Ruderasha, a Parsi philanthropist who donated money for the development of the school. Another school was established at Palakkad known as Basel Evangelical Mission School in 1858. It was started as an English School by the Basel missionary Rev. J. Strobel. To attract more local students it was converted into an Anglo-vernacular School in 1860. Later it was upgraded to Middle School in 1864 and finally it became a High School in 1905.

As for government responsibility for education, until 1830's the Travancore Government had almost no interest in the education of ordinary people. Education was normally imparted through indigenous schools under village school masters called *Asans* (teachers). According to an estimate of 1865-66, the government schools in Travancore had only 1067 pupils, while the LMS had 8081 and the CMS 2209 pupils.²³ The first English school was opened in 1834 under the guidance of CMS missionary John Roberts.²⁴ The King invited Roberts to start an English School in the capital. Along with this institution the Travancore Government established several District English Schools supervised by J. Roberts. Later in 1855, the Maharaja appointed Charles Mead as the Superintendent of Education in Travancore and under him efforts were made to revive District Schools in Travancore. In short, the Travancore Government depended on missionaries for the educational development of the State.

Though Catholic missionaries had founded educational institutions, these were few and only very privileged members had access to modern education. When the Protestant missionaries launched many educational institutions, Catholics generally kept away from these, for fear of imbibing Protestant ideas. The Catholics, especially Syrian Catholics, were very slow in establishing English schools and promoting education in Kerala till the last decades of the nineteenth century.²⁵ They made significant progress in

establishing schools only after 1880's. The introduction of liberal system of grant-in-aid for the first time in 1868-69 gave a substantial boost to private enterprise in education. Roman Catholic schools receiving grant-in-aid during 1895 was only 49 but in the same period 468 Protestant schools were receiving grant-in aid from the government.²⁶ However, by early 20th century, the Catholic Church had a larger share of Christian schools (1157) than the Protestant (779) or Orthodox Churches (272) as can be noted in Table-2. Also, by the end of the nineteenth century native Christians managed more educational institutions than foreign missionaries in Kerala.

Table-2: Distribution of Christian-Run Schools (Protestant and Catholic) in Kerala 1908

Denomination	No. of Schools
London Missionary Society	393
Church Missionary Society	296
Church of England Zenana Mission	16
Salvation Army	74
Archdiocese of Verapoly	130
Archdiocese of Quilon	147
Archdiocese of Cochin	92
The Vicariat Apostolic of Chengannassery	424
The Vicariat Apostolic of Ernakulam	178
The Vicariat Apostolic of Trichur	186
Malankara Jacobite Syrian Church	175
Malanakara Marthoma Syrian Church	97
Grand Total	2198

Source: E. T. Mathew, "Growth of Literacy in Kerala", *EPW* 34, 39(1999), p. 2816

6. Missionaries and Malayalam

The first attempt of the foreign missionaries was to learn the local languages and even master them. They studied the vernacular languages mainly to spread the message of the Christ to the natives. Their first step in this direction was the preparation of elementary grammar in tune with Latin,

Portuguese and English Grammar.²⁷ The credit of preparing the first Malayalam grammar book is given to Carmelite Missionary of Verapoly near Cochin, Bishop Angelo Francis, first Vicar Apostolic of the Vicariate of Verapoly who compiled *Grammatica Lingua Vulgaris Malabaricae* (Grammar for Conversational Language in Malabar) between 1700 and 1712. Another grammar work of Bishop Angelo was *Grammatica Malabarico Latino* (Malayalam Latin Grammar) published in the same period.²⁸

The next Vicar Apostolic of Verapoly, Bishop John Baptist Muledi prepared *Grammatica Malabarica Portuguesa* (Malayalam Portuguese Grammar). In this work Malayalam is written in Latin script with meaning given in Latin and Syriac. Fr. Stephen of Verapoly wrote two grammar works *Prima Lingua Malabarica Grnathoniche* and *Lingua Malabarica Rudimenta*. The early works of Carmelite missionaries aside, the contribution to Malayalam language and Christian literature by Earnesto Hanxladen (1681-1732) (popularly known as Arnos Pathiri) as well as Herman Gundart (1814-1893) are outstanding examples of nation building. The foreign missionaries aside, there are a number of Indian Christians who enriched Malayalam literature in general and created Christian literature in particular.

7. Missionary Contribution to Health Care

It should be noted that modern healthcare and western medicinal practices were introduced in India during the Portuguese period. The Portuguese established hospitals at Goa, Cochin, Cannanore, Diu, Daman and Vasai. They appointed physicians and surgeons from Europe and brought modern medicine for the people of India. The Portuguese charitable institution called *Misericordia* (House of Mercy) managed the early centres of medical care in India. Later, when the Jesuits arrived in Goa, the management of these institutions was given to them. When the number of patients increased more hospitals were set up in Goa namely the Royal Hospital, Hospital of All Saints and Hospital of St. Lazarus.²⁹ Contagious diseases like leprosy and sexual diseases were specially treated in these hospitals.

Many Christian missionaries promoted indigenous medical practices and identified medicinal properties of various plants and herbs in India. The Portuguese missionaries D. John Caesarius and Carmelite Mathaeus helped the Dutch Governor van Rheede to compile the *Hortus Malabaricus* (1678-1703), a rich compendium of herbal plants in Malabar. Many modern medical institutions of India were earlier established by the missionaries. Ida

Sophia Scudder, daughter of American missionary parents in India established a small dispensary in Vellore, near Madras in 1900 which became the famous Medical College of Vellore.³⁰ The Christian community has also set up a few medical colleges in various parts of India.

In Kerala also, modern medicine was first introduced by missionaries, who set up dispensaries and hospitals alongside their mission centres. These institutions catered to the public in general and the poor in particular. Today, the health care system is well developed in Kerala, much credit for which should be given to the Christian community, which runs a very large number of health care institutions such as dispensaries, hospitals, medical colleges, etc., throughout the state.

8. Christian Contribution to Social Reforms in Kerala

The missionaries realized the need of social reforms in Kerala when they understood the oppressive caste system. The low caste sections of the people like Parayas, Pulayas and Ezhavas suffered severe social discrimination for centuries, in Kerala. Slavery, *Uzhiyam* (forced labour), caste restrictions (restrictions on the use of breast-cloth), untouchability and so on were some of worst social evils that existed in Kerala. Though the Travancore Government abolished slavery by the Act V of 1843, the complete emancipation of slavery was finally achieved in 1855 due to the continuous pressure of the Christian missionaries. Later the missionaries agitated against the practice of *Uzhiyam* or forced labour. It was performed in temples on Sundays and for the high caste landlords. Though lower caste Christians were exempted from *Uzhiyam*, a strong agitation took place in Travancore under CMS missionaries led by Joseph Peet in 1851, due to which *Uzhiyam* was finally abolished in 1859.

The famous social action undertaken by the missionaries in south Travancore was the fight to get the right of Dalit women to cover the upper part of their bodies, which was denied to them by the upper caste Hindus. The LMS missionaries took up this issue and tried to get this social evil abolished by the Government. Under the leadership of Charles Mead the Channar (Shanar) women of Travancore began the agitation for the right to wear upper jacket (hence called *Melmundukalapam*). The leadership and pressure of several Christian missionaries finally led to the abolition of this social evil in 1859.

9. Contribution to Journalism and National Movement in Kerala

The beginning of modern printing in India was started by Jesuit missionaries in Goa in 1556. Both religious and secular works were printed

and the printing press played a major role in the dissemination of new ideas and knowledge among the people. The first printing press in Kerala was also established by the Jesuits in 1578 at Quilon and later at Ambalagakad from where Christian literature was printed in indigenous Malayalam and Tamil scripts. In the 19th century, the well-known CMS missionary, Benjamin Baily, established a press at Kottayam in 1821. Later in Malabar, Herman Gundert of Basel Evangelical Mission set up a press in 1845 at Ellikunnu near Thalassery. The printing press established by Carmelite missionary Kuriakose Elias Chavara at Mannanam also played a vital role in Kerala's renaissance.

The first monthly newspaper in Malayalam, *Rajyasamacharam* (Country News) was established by Dr. Herman Gundert in 1847 at Thalassery in Kerala. In the same year he published another journal from Tellicherry called *Paschimodayam* (Rise of the West).³¹ Among the Syrian Christians, the most important contribution in the field of journalism was the establishment of the newspaper *Nazrani Deepika* (Light of Nazrani Christians) in 1887 by Nidhirikkal Manikathanar (1842-1904). The beginning of the widely circulated, popular Malayalam news paper of today, the *Malayala Manorama*, in 1888 by Kandathil Varghese Mappila is a glorious chapter in native journalism in India. This newspaper encouraged political and freedom movements in Travancore and also encouraged social upliftment of the downtrodden. The national leader George Joseph was a noted journalist also. He started his career as a journalist by editing the journal *South Indian Mail* in 1912. Later at the invitation of national political leader Motilal Nehru, the father of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, he edited *The Independent* in Allahabad in 1920, but was arrested and imprisoned by the British for sedition. Eventually when freed, he became the acting editor of Gandhi's *Young India* in 1923.

Another great Syrian Christian journalist in India was Pothen Joseph from Travancore. *The Hindustan Times*, *The Indian Express* and *The Deccan Herald* became prominent newspapers when Pothen Joseph was the editor of these newspapers during different tenures. Through his daily column namely, 'Over a Cup of Tea' he strongly criticised the oppressive policies of the government and strengthened the national movement. When he was the editor of *The Indian Express*, he vehemently criticized Sir. C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar, the Minister of Travancore, for his anti-people activities.³²

Ittuppu Mampilli also established a printing press at Kochi and started an English journal, *Malabar Herald* in 1905.³³ He criticized the corruption and negligence of the British officers in administration through his writings in *Malabar Herald* which became a threat to the British officers. Through this journal he completely supported the struggle of Travancore State Congress. The British tried to suppress this journal and Ittupu had to pay a fine of Rs. 6000 in a case filed against this news paper. The criticism against Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyer and the printing of anti-government literature eventually led to the ban of *Malabar Herald*. He was the first journalist who established an English journal in Kerala.

10. Conclusion

Though the Christian community in Kerala is a minority community its legacy in nation building is great and unique. It is a well established fact that since the early decades of the sixteenth century Christian communities began to greatly influence the culture and tradition of Kerala and India. Even though the colonial powers were also Christians, the Indian Christians in India never supported the colonial designs, but rather actively participated in the national movement. The Indian National Congress was deeply indebted to the early Christian leaders of the Congress. In the field of education no other agency has contributed as much as the Christians. So also, in social reforms and upliftment of the low castes the Christian community contributed a major share. In health care, education and in bringing awareness and national awakening through journalism, the Christians have done yeoman service to the nation. A field of signal contribution is military service: Christian participation in the defense services is above the proportion of its population, a fact which is not highlighted. Notwithstanding the unique contribution of the Christian community in India's nation building, there are some scholars with vested interests who tend to downplay the role of Christians. But the facts speak for themselves.

Endnotes and References

- ¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented in a National seminar on *Nation and Nationalism: Contemporary Perspective*, at C. K. G. College, Perambra, Calicut, December, 2015.
- ² Joseph Tharamangalam, "Whose Swadeshi? Contending Nationalisms among Indian Christians," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 32 (2) (2004): 232.
- ³ There are divergent schools of thought either confirming the arrival of St. Thomas in India or denying it. On the former group, see A. M. Mundadan, *Sixteenth Century Traditions of St. Thomas Christians*, Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 1970) 6. On the latter group, see John Ochanchuruth *Adiverukal (Deep Roots-Malayalam)* (Aluva: Kerala Region Latin Catholic Council 2014), 33-41.
- ⁴ Pahlavi was an archaic Persian script used by the merchants from Persia.
- ⁵ See discussion in Mathew Kurian, "Syrian Christians and the Political Economy of Kerala: A Historical Perspective", *Indian Church History Review* XXVIII (2) (Dec 1994): 89-104.
- ⁶ Antonio Da Silva Rego, ed., 'Documentacao para a Historia das Missoes do Padroado Portugues do Oriente', vol. I & II, (1948); vol. IX, & XI, (1956).
- ⁷ Manganath Kalarikkal Panikkar, Paravoor Panikkar, Thalavadi Valliyezhathu Panikkar, Kandamangalath Panikkar, Kothamangalathu Panikkar, Kalluppara Adagathu Panikkar, Kadamattom Punnamarathu Panikkar, Mullappally Kochukuzhi Panikkar and so on were the early Christian Panikkar of central Travancore.
- ⁸ Pius Malekandathil, "Indian Christians and Nation Building-An Overview," in *Silent Waves: Contribution of the Catholic Church to Nation Building*, eds. John Chathanatt and Jaya Peter (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2012), 21.
- ⁹ Thachil Thariath was the father of Thachil Mathu Tharakan, who was a famous Travancore merchant of the eighteenth century.
- ¹⁰ Under Padroado Real or Royal Patronage the papacy had granted Portugal the right to control ecclesiastical appointments in all her overseas territories.
- ¹¹ The theme Christian participation in the national freedom movement at the all-India level needs a separate study. It may be noted that the Bengal Christian Association founded in 1878 was the first movement for freedom in which Christians participated. The president of this organization was Krishna Mohan Banerji. Kali Charan Banerji was an active member of this association. Later, parallel to *Brahmasamaj*, *Calcutta Christu Samaj* was founded in 1887 by K. C. Banerji and C. Shome. Besides, many regional organizations of Christians were established in British India to support the freedom movement and to address the social and economic problems of the local Christians. The National Church of Madras (1886) founded by an Indian medical doctor S. Pazhani Andy, Lucknow Christian Association (1892) and Poona Christian Association were the early associations of the Christians in India.
The Christian community had greatly involved in the working of Indian National Congress since its inception. Bengali Christian, W. C. Banerjee presided over the founding of Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885. The presidents of the INC sessions from 1888 to 1900 were all Christians: George Yule, William Verder Bern, P. Anand Charlu and Henry Cotton. Pandita Ramabhai (1858-1992) was a leading women Christian social reformer in India who attended the 1889 INC session and strongly demanded women's right to participate in national politics. Upadhyaya Brahmadev was one of the early national leaders in Bengal to demand complete independence for India.
- Another prominent Indian Christian leader K. T. Paul took part in the Second Round Table Conference in London in 1931. Indian Christian leaders like K. C. Banerji and C.G. Nath from Lahore and Peter Paul Pillai from Madras played a decisive role in the deliberations of the early sessions of the congress. Indian Christian delegates like Madhu Sunder Das of Orissa and R. S. N. Subramanya made lasting impact on the democratic processes of India. In 1930, All India Christian Council, executive body of the All India Council of Indian Christians adopted a resolution declaring the solidarity of Christians with the thrust of the national movement. Goa Congress Committee founded in 1928 by Tristao de Braganca Cunha was a leading political entity worked for the liberation of Goa from the Portuguese rule. Joseph Baptista from Bombay, the contemporary of Bal Gangadhar Tilak was a great advocate of nationalism and supporter the works of Tilak.
- ¹² Travancore State Congress was formed in 1938.
- ¹³ The South Indian Princely States Peoples Conference held at Thiruvananthapuram in 1929 demanded the introduction of Responsible Governments in the Princely States. The representatives of the Princely States like Hyderabad, Pudukkottai, Mysore, Kochi and Travancore participated in the meeting.
- ¹⁴ A Sreedhara Menon, *Kerala and Freedom Struggle* (Kottayam: D.C. Books, 1997), 126.
¹⁵ *Ibid*, 127.
- ¹⁶ George Gheverghese Joseph, *The Life and Times of a Kerala Christian Nationalist* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2003), 84-85.
- ¹⁷ This German Missionary Society became Basel Evangelical Mission Society on 25th Sep. 1815 in Switzerland.
- ¹⁸ The London Mission Society (LMS) was established in 1795 by various Christian groups like Congregationalists, the Presbyterians and the Methodists. The Evangelists formed Church Mission Society under Church of England in 1799.
- ¹⁹ Koji Kawashima, *Missionaries and a Hindu State: Travancore 1858-1936* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 55-60.
- ²⁰ Babu Cherian, *Towards Modernity: The Story of the First College in India* (New Delhi: Media House, 2014), 13.
- ²¹ Later in 1892 Monsignor Michael Antony set up the St. Joseph's Girl's High School in Calicut. He was the Bishop of Mangalore.
- ²² The Basel Mission did a wonderful work in providing industrial training to the natives. They also set up industrial units which employed hundreds of natives.
- ²³ Kawashima, op.cit, 84
- ²⁴ This school was established under the initiative of Swathi Tirunal, Maharaja of Travancore. Later this school was taken over by the Government and became His Highness the Maharaja's Free School.
- ²⁵ The contribution of Catholic missionaries to the educational development of Travancore and Cochin in the nineteenth century was minimal. Many views have been expressed for this slow growth. According to one view Catholic missionaries were Italians, Spaniards and non-English nationalities who found great difficulty in English Education. Another view is that Portuguese Jesuits and Italian Carmelites did not have any interest in English Education because they considered English language itself was symbolic of the Anglican rebellion against Roman Catholic supremacy in Europe: E. T. Mathew, "Growth of Literacy in Kerala: State Intervention, Missionary Initiatives and Social Movements", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34 (39) (1999): 2815.

- ²⁶ There were only twenty two schools under Roman Catholic management in 1890 in Kerala. Robin Jeffery, *The Decline of Nair Dominance* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1994), 112-113.
- ²⁷ Primus Perincherry, "Carmelite Missionaries- Pioneers in Malayalam Grammar", in *Kerala Spectrum: Aspects of Cultural Inheritance*, ed. Charles Dias (Cochin: The Indo-Portuguese Cultural Institute, 2006), 264.
- ²⁸ The manuscripts of both of these works are now kept in Cardinal Borgio Archives in Vatican Library.
- ²⁹ Malekandathil, *op.cit.*, 23
- ³⁰ Ida Sophia Scudder was born in Trivandrum in 1870. She renovated this dispensary into a 40 bed hospital in 1902 and thereafter it saw tremendous growth.
- ³¹ Albrecht Frenz, "Herman Gundert in Malabar", in *Kerala Spectrum: Aspects of Cultural Inheritance*, ed. Charles Dias (Cochin: The Indo-Portuguese Cultural Institute, 2006), 389.
- ³² Pothan Joseph vehemently criticised the closure of Malayala Manorama and liquidation of National Quilon Bank. See T. J. S George, *Pothan Joseph's India: A Biography* (New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House, 1992), 132-133.
- ³³ He was born in Njarakkal in 1881 and acquired English education and started his career as a journalist in Kochi.

The American Evangelical Lutheran Mission and Social Change among the Mālas in Colonial Coastal Andhra, India: 1850-1950

Santha Jetty-Varikoti

[Mrs. Santha Jetty-Varikoti, did her M.A and M. Phil in History from the University of Hyderabad with First class. Twice recipient of UGC Fellowship she completed her Ph. D at the Department of History and Culture, Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi. With immense interest in the study of various mission societies which worked in Coastal Andhra, and their impact on the Dalits during the 19th and 20th centuries. She is currently furthering her research in the USA. She can be contacted at <santim2002@gmail.com>]

[In this article the author gives a complete description on the work of the American Evangelical Lutheran Mission among the Malas (Dalits) in Coastal Andhra during the period, 1850-1950. The Mālas were traditionally considered 'outcastes' and were deprived of social, religious, economic and educational resources in the caste-based Hindu society. The missionaries not only evangelized them but also mediated substantial social change among them. She asserts that Christianity was perceived as a 'social religion' and Christian missionaries, as 'social reform agents' thanks to the socio-economic advancement achieved by the beneficiaries of the Mission-Malas in particular, and non-convert Malas and caste people, in general. She concludes that the birth of a new social consciousness among the Christian Mālas of Colonial Andhra could be attributed to the missionaries who preached the values of the Gospel and ideas of equality, justice and progress.— Editor]

1. Introduction

From the second half of the 19th century through the middle of the 20th century in India, various Protestant missionary societies acted as 'agents of change' where they were engaged in activities such as gospel preaching, spread of education, promotion of health and creating avenues for the economic upliftment of the native Christian converts, especially of the Depressed Castes (Dalits).¹ The work of the Christian missionaries seems to have been an 'alternative method of social change' among the Dalits. In this article, the history and work of the American Evangelical Lutheran Mission