

English Education in a Colony: Responses from Malabar

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Abstract

It is interesting to read the response of the people to the educational reforms introduced by the British in Malabar, a part of Madras Presidency. The western system of education became a reality in Malabar with the joint effort of the British government, Christian Missionaries, native states and social organizations. Malabar, a region occupied by heterogeneous cultural elements had a knowledge system catering to the requirements of contemporary society even before the arrival of the British. At the same time it showed no hesitation to accept the colonial cultural products which in turn affected the life styles and practices of the people.

The response of a society to an external stimulus is determined by the basic needs of that society and the challenges it has to overcome. In the case of Malabar, western education served as an external stimulus capable for breaking the age old traditional practices and customs. Each community of this region had their own way of subsistence in which the upper castes dominated modes of production. In north Malabar, property relations, internal politics and economic conditions and education policy appear to have been less hospitable to institutional form educational development. Property relations were so structured as to maintain the bulk of the population in abject poverty and were incapable for educational development. Ideological foundation for the social exploitation of lower castes by the upper castes was provided by Brahmanical settlement in this area¹. Social status and economic competence of the individual was still determined by his position in the caste hierarchy. In this peculiar social condition, the freedom of individual, especially who belongs to the lower strata of the society was highly limited and there was no chance for an immediate escape from this structure. Based on these conditions prevailed in Malabar, this paper tries to enquire into the dynamics of native response towards western education.

Native power structure and Indigenous education

The introduction of western education in north Malabar existed along with the continuation of the indigenous pattern of learning and schooling. It could be seen that, Malabar had a well developed system of indigenous education at the beginning of the 19th century. Malabar in comparison with

Travancore and Cochin remained in a better position as far as the number of educational institutions per unit of population was concerned². Excepting for the category of primary producers and menial servants, most of the people had accessibility to the use of writing based on alphabets or signs or symbols³. Education in the traditional society of Malabar was devised in tune with the existing social and economic needs of the region. Its power structure, judicial system and land relations were locally developed one. The economic relations were limited to local level and it was not based on the concept of competition, but was subsistence one. Each community had acquired their knowledge, formally or informally, just to fulfill their social obligations. Contemporary society hardly required universal accessibility to all kinds of cultural skills and knowledge forms, since skills and knowledge were functionally specific and function hereditary as well as caste oriented. So the production and transmission of each forms of knowledge was a task normally confined to the caste concerned⁴. Caste and customary oriented education practiced by Malabar society was helpful for the survival of traditional occupations.

In pre British Malabar and during the earlier phases of British rule, literary education was generally the monopoly of upper castes, although in some area of discipline, middle and low castes also had access to it. Educational facilities were existed in almost in every village. The higher castes of Hinduism, like the Nambutiris and the Nairs, had well developed institutional arrangement for educating their children, particularly their sons; the Nambutiris had their *Illams*, the rich Nairs and the temple classes had their family tutors⁵. In Malabar, two features of the education deserve special importance. One that was generalized education and other was that of specialized one. Reading, writing, arithmetic and calandarical knowledge was considered part of general education⁶. Education in the primary level was sufficient to run the day to day activities of Naduvazhi households. After completing elementary education, children could go for specialized higher education. The studies were decided by their parental occupation of *Jati* and were normally in the form of apprenticeship. Higher studies were almost entirely vocational that included martial arts, performing arts, medicine, crafts, artisan work, and astrology and Vedic studies.

Nataraja Guru has shared his educational experience in the following words: “Malabar, where humans flourished and multiplied more easily on rice, fish and coconut, presented a different picture to me about the age of three or four. I began to attend a vernacular school with my sister, it was a one teacher affair, in a palm leaf shed, where twenty or thirty of us wrote letters in the sand with index finger and said them loud so as to fix them firmly in the mind both by impression as well as

expression. I had my first lessons written for me on a palm leaf with an iron needle to search for a (stylus). We were allowed during intervals to search for a special herb with which to make the needle scratches visible by rubbing the juice with charcoal on the palm leaves.”⁷This statement indicates the nature of knowledge production and dissemination in the region of Malabar.

The low caste people were not concerned about receiving formal education as they were not the part of the administrative system. They were formed the agrestic slaves attached to the land and were transferred and sold with it. Both financial and social disabilities were the major obstacles in the progress of education among the back ward classes. Though the back ward communities were outside the purview of the official knowledge system, they had access to certain area of knowledge which was well connected with day today activities of Malabar life. Certain backward classes like *Ganakas* and *Ezhavas* had their own arrangements and were educationally advanced than the other low castes. Murkoth Kunhappa remarked that, the Malaya community of north Malabar had attained 100 % literacy. They had to recite the devotional songs from Ramayana and Mahabharata to use it in the ritual art forms like *Nizhal kuthu*⁸.

The *Avarna* and *Dalit* groups of north Malabar region have acquired some knowledge in the field of medicine. In the initial period of implementing western medical care, people of Malabar rarely approached hospitals and never resorted to modern facilities of treatment during pregnancy and delivery. There were certain experienced groups of women in Malabar to attend delivery. They were in high demand and had authoritative role as midwives in Malabar villages. A letter from Tellichery Municipal Chairman to Madras government indicates the colonial process of making unskilled Malayi (lower caste woman) to a trained midwife in attending delivery.⁹ Certain literary professions such as medicine (Ayurvedha) and astrology were also open to castes other than Brahmins. This was practiced by individuals by virtue of inheritance from father to son. There were well known families throughout Malabar known as *vaidyan* who practiced medicine and *Visha Chikitsa* as private practitioners, with no support from the government. Native *Vaidyan* knows the plants and herbs himself, knows where they are to be had, collected them, and makes the medicine himself either in his own house or in his patient. C.H. Kunhappa has provided a list of lower caste scholars and Ayurvedic Physicians in Malabar. Bapputy Gurukkal, Anandan Gurukkal, Kanaran Vaidyan and Chirukandan Vaidyan were well known Sanskrit scholars and Ayurvedic physicians of north Malabar. They were taught by upper caste teachers like Kuttiappa Nambiar¹⁰.

Along with medicine, certain occupations such as cultivation, trade and commerce were open to many castes. The trading castes learnt accounting and book keeping. Knowledge in this field was passed on in the line of descent from one generation to another, whether matrilineal or patrilineal. Besides this, there was a big body of students who had their education through traditional Muslim *Madrasas*, *Qoran* schools (othupallis), *dars* and private tuition at home. Qoran schools were attached to mosques and maintained out of mosque funds. In *othupallis*, Mappila children were given education based on Qoranic principles. *Dars* were the educational centres where provided a specialised form of religious learning. *Madrasa*'s were the institution for higher learning. The curriculum included Arabic, grammar, Qoran, rhetorics, astronomy, philosophy, arithmetic ,geometry, medicine, logic, history , hadith and fiqh (Arabic:Juriprudence).¹¹

In Transition

The establishment of the British rule in Malabar was not a mere political transfer of power. With the coming of the British, a new system which was born and brought up in a distant land was transplanted to Kerala. The entire socio economic structure of the region underwent crucial changes by this period. Cultural and intellectual practices, traditions and customs which the people of Malabar practiced till the beginning of the 18th century underwent drastic changes with the introduction of new power structure, cultural forms and language. A linguistically based identity began to take shape in Kerala. The modern education, printing press, newspapers, western practices etc. became new power symbols of the region¹². Arunima argues that 'modern' education and 'standard Malayalam' based print culture were the sources of the 'modern' Malayalam identity formation.¹³ Capitalist mode of production, property relations, Anglo Saxon judiciary and the development of English as a supporting language all created fundamental changes. New Police and Military were formed. Naduvazhis and the *koymas* lost their prominence. Nambutiri, Naduvazhis and Nairs lost their supremacy in the administration and now became ordinary citizens of the British. They were replaced by British Governors, Collectors, Supervisors, Cutcheris, Police, and Military. In the field of education, public works and health, drastic changes were introduced. English declared that their service preference would be given to those who have English education. The Madras Government's report for Public Instruction for the year 1858-59 stated its intention in the following words: "our only hope of really purifying and raising native mind is to substituted English language for the numerous languages and dialects which are spoke in India, to which end it is proposed that English should be adopted as the language of all official business and that it should take the place of vernacular in our courts and

cutcheries, and as the layer of instruction in schools".¹⁴ Now English emerged as the new command language and power centre fitted with the needs of the new state. Dissociating the various social segment from the traditional systems, the new relations brought into existence specialist groups of separate hierarchies. Numerous people including teachers, clerks, constables, soldiers, technicians, labourers and so on were made part of new hierarchies under the general rules and surveillance of the colonial administration¹⁵.

Remarkable changes were occurred in the judicial system of the region. In the case of Malabar, there was the absence of a written authority for a proper understanding of the customary laws of the region. Now with the establishment of the British rule, the customary laws of the region were subject to transformation and put under effective legal frame work. Legal transaction took place in the courts directed by Anglo Saxon jurisprudence and legal documents were made in English. Murkoth Kunhappa has noted this change in the following words: under English East India Company there were many officials like Churya Raman Tahasildar who did not know English. But during the time of Churya Kunhappa, the son of RamanTahsildar (1870's) English was necessary to argue in the courts. It was a time of transition of court language from Malayalam to English¹⁶. With the complete control of the commercial activities by the British, English became the commercial language. The indigenous banking and commercial firms also began to use English as their means of communication. The establishment of Allopathic hospitals and the increasing use of western calandarical system for transaction meant the indigenous medicine and calandarical knowledge also began to be replaced. Establishment of roads, railways, postal, telegraph and irrigation networks required a knowledge system beyond the capabilities of indigenous education.

There were also jobs which involve specialized knowledge as typing, stenography, maintaining of accounts etc. With the establishment of printing press, number of news papers and magazines were appeared in Malabar. The news papers like West Coast Spectator demanded professionals with Knowledge in English. With the changed situation, it was very difficult to stick on traditional pattern of education and employment. For the high caste people it was practically impossible to maintain pollution rules in modern occupational contexts.

Responses from communities

In the beginning, English education was concentrated only to a select few and its relevance was not felt by the population as much. The social transformation was a slow process among various communities of Malabar. In the initial stage of Colonialism, the upper caste people of Malabar were

not sympathetic to English education. Nambutiris who were the privileged section in the Malabar considered English education an anathema, due to their false notions of aristocracy and social rank.¹⁷. British official reports characterized the Nambutiris, ‘a section which is famous for its aloofness from the world and its adherence to the old order of things, are largely engaged in priestly duties and temple service’¹⁸. In the Pre British society, they were the back bone of administrative system and were contemptuous of the ‘upstarts’ who dominated the new British dominated social order¹⁹. When English education was open to all, they treated it as a *Mlecha bashha*.

Due to their disinclination towards English education, Nambutiris presence in the government service was not so hopeful. The imperial census of 1871 suggests that, total population of Brahmins in Malabar was 22188 and out of which only 169 were in the government service with a total percentage of 0.7²⁰. Some of the missionary reports indicate the difficulties they had in the field of education because of the stiff opposition from the upper castes. Their reports stated that, many of the higher caste people in north Malabar were afraid of the school. One of the reports said: “Nambutiris who possess, so staple and firsthand knowledge of religion, naturally resent being instructed by us.”²¹ It provided various illustrations regarding the attitude taken by the average Hindu family towards a member who intended to accept Christianity and western education. The low caste people who were attracted to the Christian fold had to face stiff opposition from the local janmi or land lord. They feared the loss of supremacy in the society if the lower castes had the English education. Mr. Weisman of Chombala made repeated attempts to induce land lords to allow converts to remain in their rented houses and compounds²². But their pleas were often turned down by the land lords. Though Nair *kanam* tenants had a positive attitude towards English education, in some parts of north Malabar, the Nair weavers had exhibited their dislike towards the new form of education and the activities of Christian missionaries.²³

Even in the beginning of the twentieth century, there were many numbers of people in the higher community who were cherishing the memory of old educational practices. It is interesting to read some of the dissenting notes on English education which were appeared in contemporary journals and news papers. One of the articles in Kerala Kesari said: ‘Old type of education has created a large group of eminent personalities like Kalidasa, Patanjali and Harischandra. In the *Gurukula* system there was enough room for the improvement of the mental and moral status of the students. There were strict restrictions in *Gurukula* schools. Now the pupils are opting *pallikootams* in place of *Gurukulams*. There is no *brahmacharya*. The time schedule in the modern schools that is between 10 and 4 is not

conducive for climatic condition of the countries like India. Students are now seeing dramas, cinemas and engaging in other entertainments. It will diminish the status of education.’²⁴

Mappilas of Malabar also have nursed some apprehensions towards English education. The British administrative reports in the 19th century show that, *Mappilas* were apathetic towards the western education from the very beginning²⁵. The percentage of attendance of Muslim students in schools belongs to north Malabar region indicates their initial attitude towards western system of education. In 1854, even after the implementation of Charles Wood Despatch, there was only two Muslims in the provincial school at Calicut where the number of students belong to Hindu community were 108.²⁶ In Tellicherry School, the ratio between Hindu and Muslim students was 87:9.²⁷ According to the British report on public instruction for 1857- 1858, the number of Muslim students in Quilandy Taluk School was one and there was not a single *Mappila* student in Badagara School.²⁸ During this period, in the German Mission Anglo vernacular school in Tellicherry, there was one Muslim student where as the number of Hindus was 88 and 13 others²⁹. The imperial census of 1871, indicate that, out of total Muslim population of 274320, there were only 39 Muslims in schools with total percentage of 0.01.³⁰ It recorded that, ‘the *Mappilas* have yet shown very little desire for education’. In 1911, only 486 *Mappilas* were literate in English compared to 5895 Nairs and 2897 *Tiyyas*.³¹

The Muslim community in Malabar had certain local issues to develop hatred towards the British. British revenue policy and their prolonged hostility to the Muslim community in Malabar resulted in a series of uprisings in the region. As Prema Kurien observed, ‘development of the *Mappilas* as a separate ethnic group (in contrast to being a sub-group within the Hindu society) with a distinct identity and culture began with their migration to the interior. The departure of their Arabian mentors, the loss of their income and occupation, their exodus to the interior, and the struggle to re-establish themselves were experiences that served to weld the group together’³². Several cases of *Mappila* agitation against the missionaries were reported from Malabar. For instance, when the missionaries started preaching at Panur, a crowd of *Mappilas* raised tumults, pecked stones at them and forced to stop preaching and some of them challenged them to a controversy.³³ *Kerala Patrika* reported that, some *Musaliars* in Kannur town prohibited the *Mappila* boys from studying English for the reason that studying English was ‘injurious’.³⁴

In the late 19th century, the literacy rate of *Mappila* girls all over British India was low compared to that of the Hindu girls as well as Muslim boys. In the Madras Presidency, the Madras district had the highest proportion of educated females followed by the Nilgiris and Malabar in 1891. However, the

percentage of illiterate Mappila girls was 98.85%.³⁵ The Matrilineal system of north Malabar and the mixed family system that prevailed in important Muslim centers like Calicut and Ponnani stood as a barrier to the education of Mappila girls. Education of the girls was considered to be a prohibited area where faithful Muslims should not enter. It was unthinkable of sending a girl up to matriculation and still more unthinkable for her to step in to the college³⁶. Moidu Moulavi once lamented: 'Education of Muslim girls ended with the study of Qoran. Then they never come back from the darkness of their Tharavadu.'³⁷ A short story named *Asakula* appeared in *Mathrubumi* weekly can read thus: Ayisha, a small girl coming from conservative Muslim family in Malabar, completed her 4th standard and came out with flying colours. When she approached her *Bapa* (father) for higher English education, he said. "Now your formal education is over. English is the language of *narakatile ahilukar* (those who are in the hell). I will recommend you to *Moyiliar* (religious teacher) to study *Pathu kittab* (religious scripture)."³⁸ The practice of early marriages and the system of the husband visiting the wife at the house (the *veetu puthiyapla* system) which is really a variant of the *sambandam* system has resulted in almost total absence of education among Mappila women³⁹. However, some of the rich Muslim families in north Malabar like, Keyi family, Maliekkal family and Arakkal family have sent their girls to English schools and took modern ideas.

In the initial phase of British intervention there was no native agency in Malabar to undertake educational activities. The British educational reports of contemporary period suggest that, in the Malabar district, little or nothing had been done by the natives in the promotion of education. The reluctance of the British to interfere in the social life of their colonies and the passive attitude of the native elites in establishing educational institutions resulted in the late development of educational institutions in north Malabar region. For instance, in 1855, total number of pupils in government schools was 109 that composed of less than one percent of total population⁴⁰. Till the year 1857, there was only one Anglo Vernacular School supported by the government. By 1858, in Malabar, there had been 7 government schools, 4 established by the missionaries but none was by the natives.⁴¹ After the introduction of Grants in Aid system there were organized attempts to introduce educational institutions both vernacular and English. At Alavil near Kannur a primary school was established in the year 1856. When the Government of Madras was reluctant to engage in the field of education, the missionary schools helped the low caste people of north Malabar region to take new form of education. Although propagation of gospel was the primary objective of the mission, the BEM educational institutions both primary and secondary, attracted the native children towards education from all sections of society. Illiterate and ignorant natives found these institutions to their children, a way for

attaining high positions. Murkoth Kumaran said: 'at Thalassery there were two schools, one run by the government and other by the Mission. Since the admission in the government school was limited to a minority, the Mission School was a solace to the low caste pupils'.⁴² Though the British were ready to support number of vernacular primary schools and private English medium high schools in north Malabar region by giving grants in aid, there was no rush for vernacular schools. British Education Report of 1856 has made a reference about the reluctance of native people towards vernacular education. It said: 'there is a belief that knowledge of the English language, however imperfect is the surest passport to official employment, so that there was great difficulty in attracting students to vernacular schools'⁴³. Even after the implementation of Grants in Aid system, the educational condition of Malabar was not in a hopeful position. As per the official version, the literacy rate in Malabar in the year 1856-57 was only 20% for males and 4% for females⁴⁴.

The increasing opportunity in government service and the fast growing economy created high demand for English since 1860's. As Jack Goody stated, the number of pupil seeking English education increased year by year and the struggle for lucrative positions grew ever more arduous. The sudden growth of students in the English schools in the north Malabar region indicates the increasing demand for English. In order to cater the needs of new aspirants, English language was introduced even in the village schools. The net work of Anglo vernacular schools outlined in the Wood's Dispatch has brought education now within the reach of the inferior castes and that produced a mild social revolution among the village population. During the year 1862, the number of pupils in the Anglo vernacular at Tellicherry rose from 101 to 543 and the percentage of daily attendance increased from 83 to 87. The numeral strength of students continuously increased from 1858 to 1859 which was primarily due to the opening of new schools. At the same time the attendance at the old schools were increased and in some instances even doubled. When the Calicut Provincial School was inspected in August 1863, it had 324 pupils, arranged in 6 classes. The inspector reported that, student's performance was satisfactory and it offers new hope for opening new educational institutions in the Malabar region⁴⁵. The two Taluk Schools in Malabar, Badagara and Quilandy also conveyed satisfactory character. During 1864, the Taluk schools at Quilandy, Badagara and Kasargod had the student strength of 36, 66 and 36 respectively. The Cannanore Normal School contained 33 students⁴⁶.

During 1860's educational facilities were extended to hilly areas of Malabar which were untouched by educational activities in the pre British period. An Anglo Vernacular school was opened towards the commencement of 1863-64 at Mananthody as suggested by Malabar Collector.

The last decades of the 19th century noted the steady development of Malabar as a centre of learning with the establishment of educational institutions even in the remotest villages. In the year 1889-90, the Malabar district was credited with the largest increase in pupils attending English middle schools⁴⁷. The 1891 Census indicates that, Malabar had the total population of 2652565 in which 77033 had their school education⁴⁸. In 1892, the numbers of educational institutions were increased to 1650 with a total strength of 77523 scholars. The government observed with great pleasure that, a progress made by education in 1889-89 was very much larger than in any of the years immediately preceding. In 1896, there were 76695 boys in the primary classes. Total number of girls in the primary classes was 2978. There were 166 scholars in Arts and Science colleges all over Malabar. Apart from this, there were considerable number of scholars in the Presidency city of Madras and other important towns. For instance in 1897, from Malabar, there were 51 scholars in Madras Presidency College and 40 in Madras Christian College⁴⁹. Commenting on the educational development in Malabar, the *Janmi* magazine said: 'during the last 20 years literacy has increased considerably. Earlier the literates were 7% but now it is 10%. If the literate women were 8 per thousand now it is increased to 30 per thousand. In the case of women education, Malabar tops all other districts in the Presidency'. It is also mentioned in the report that 'many of the schools out of the present 13 High Schools and 46 Lower Secondary Schools were started during the last 20 years'⁵⁰

1901 census credited with Malabar as best educated district in the Madras Presidency along with Tanjaor and Tinnelly⁵¹. The changed attitude of higher castes for education and the increased grants given by government for elementary education had been responsible for a great increase in the number of schools and scholars. With the expansion of British bureaucracy, the high caste communities now have a rethinking towards English education. Argument in favour of English education has emerged from various corners of the society. One of the news papers of the period has reported this trend in the following words: 'once they (Nambutiris) insisted that English became a foreign (mlechha) language and it would harm their people. Now they have a feeling that English is essential for their community to cope with the changing need of time. Now there is a rush of higher caste boys to Madras to get education in the schools run by the Europeans'. Same feeling was explicit in the memorandum submitted by Manavikrama Raja of Kozhikode, a representative of *Janmi Sabha* to Arthur Lawley, the Governor of Madras. It said: "we have the objects of the encouragement of education in western lines of the scions of the ancient aristocracy of the district, and especially of the Nambutiris community, once a powerful theocracy, who though possessed of great wealth and influence have hitherto lagged behind in the march of progress because of the lack of modern education." *Kerala Kesari* reported

that, 'it is very essential to study English. Now it is emerging as a royal language. The English educated people have preference in government service and other related occupations.⁵²,

Along with wealthier native class, now the middle and lower income groups began to send their children to school. Many rich landlords, merchants and local rajas too had contributed substantially to educational progress. In some cases, local committees were formed to start and run a school mainly depending on the patronage of these agencies and in many other the patrons themselves invested lions share for the expense of the schools. Started initially as elementary schools, they were upgraded later as Middle Schools and High Schools in the second half of the 20th century. The Rajas High School at Nileswar, Rajas High School at Chirakkal, and Rajas High School at Kottayam (Pathiryad) belong to this category. Muthedath Mallisseri Kuberan Nambuthiri had established a school at Taliparamba. Some of the people belong to the lower castes then find out conversion as a way to attain English education and to establish a new self among the oppressed people. For instance, a group of people from Malabar went to Punjab and converted to Sikkism at a grant function held under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar, M.R.L. Biswas and S. Chaudari. They included K.C .Kuttan who changed his name as Jaising, E. Raghavan, BA (Harnam Singh) S. Ragahvan (Kripal sing) and C.K Krishnan (Rajith sing)⁵³.

The active involvement of private agencies and the activities of Christian Missionaries helped to improve the educational status of Malabar in the first decade of the 20th century. British educational reports provide us a clear indication of this trend. The British Report on Education in 1907 suggests that, in the distribution of Secondary Schools in the Madras presidency, Malabar stood second to Tinnenvely with 40 schools. Total number of school going girls was increased to 8847. While looking into the general condition of female education, Madras ranked first with 28.9% followed by Nilgiris and Malabar with 12.8 and 10.6 percentages respectively⁵⁴.

The outbreak the World War in 1914 had direct impact on educational activities in Malabar. As the result of the uncertainty prevailed in various sectors, the war, affected the progress of education in various directions. Recruitment of instructors from Europe has been impossible since the outbreak of the war. It had been necessary for government to economize itself. There was curtailment of funds to private bodies and missionary societies. At an early stage in the war, the problem arose as to how the educational facilities offered by these schools were to be continued and how this was to be financed. Within a short span of time Malabar recuperated from the hurdles of the War and by 1924 it emerged in the first position in the Madras Presidency in the case of private schools. Special care was given to improve the educational status of minorities. For instance, aftermath of Malabar rebellion, special

educational officers for Mappila education were appointed in charge of south Malabar and north Malabar. Following this, the total number of Mappila students in the secondary schools in Malabar district rose from 910 to 967. There was a rise in the number of Mappila elementary schools for boys from 1382 to 1423. The number of girls schools for Mappilas in Malabar district increased from 87 to 123 and their strength from 4315 to 5800.⁵⁵

In 1931, there were 4126 Elementary Schools in the district with strength of 342000 pupils, largest for any district in the Madras Presidency. Private enterprise was responsible for 65% of the schools and Local and Municipal administration was responsible for 33%. In 1933, there were 18000 pupils attending secondary schools, the largest number in the Presidency. By 1936, the percentage of school goers to the population was 7.2 for males and 9.6 for females⁵⁶. By 1936, the Malabar District Board ran twelve hundred schools, more than any other district in the Presidency. Though Malabar accounted for less than eight per cent of the Presidency's population, it had 10 per cent of the schools; and more than 70 per cent of these schools were run by local managements receiving Grants-in Aid

The educational status of Malabar indicates that, two important factors that stood in the way of the overall development of Malabar as an educational center, which include the apathy of traditional society towards women education and the poor turnout of depressed castes in educational institutions. The 1871 Census indicates that, Malabar occupied third position in Madras Presidency in female instruction.⁵⁷ The 1881 Census shows, that Malabar ranked first in the female rate of attendance in the districts of Madras presidency. The paradox is that 97.52% of women were still illiterate.⁵⁸ Official estimates suggests that, girls did not get pass the primary level even in the 1890's when out of 200647 girls of school going age, only 11164, or 5.6%, were registered as pupils, and only 9436 or 4.7 % actually made it to the school⁵⁹. In 1901, in female education Malabar occupied second position in the madras presidency. But still the percentage of female education was 4.1. In 1903 -04, Primary Schools in Malabar returned largest number of girls with a total number of 14298 pupils⁶⁰. In 1904-05 there was a remarkable increase of girls in the primary schools with a total number of 14784⁶¹. But it is not the case while considering their performance in higher education sector. For instance, in 1897, when there were 1116 boys in the Upper Secondary Schools, number of girls was only 11⁶².

In 1906 there were only two girls in Zamorins College and one in Brennen College⁶³. Even in the royal families of Malabar, the educational status of the women was not satisfactory. For instance, in Chirakkal royal family, the first women matriculate came only in 1948. We may read the conservative mind of Malabar society towards women education in the statement of A.K. Gopalan, erstwhile communist leader of Malabar. He has narrated an incident that happened in his native place- 'at a place

called Kadachira in north Malabar, my father had started an English middle school. 60 Years ago (1905), it was difficult to establish an English school in a village like that. And there was not even enough encouragement for such a venture. When my sisters also sent to school, the conservatives become angry. It was simply unthinkable to them that girls dressed in the modern style should go to school along with boys.⁶⁴ One of the great obstacles in the way of female education, as per official view was “the absence of the stimulus rewards”.

In spite of the opportunities offered by the British through the setting of schools, there was poor turnout of depressed castes in educational institutions. The official estimate suggested that, in 1897, out of 19152 *Panchama* boys of school going age only 913 was under instruction. Out of 20476 *Panchama* girls, only 109 with a percent of 0.5 had their education. In 1903-09, less than 2.5% of Harijans of school age were under instruction. The schools assigned for the aboriginal tribes were not in a well to do position. For instance, the only school for *Panias* in Malabar was closed during the year 1904 and the school for Kurichyas of Wayanad was unaided. The only school maintained by the Basel Mission for the aboriginal tribes was one at Wayanad Taluk, intended for Kuravas. Like in the case of women education, the attitude of the high caste people was not favourable to the entry of depressed classes in educational institutions. There was large scale opposition to the starting of the schools for the depressed castes. Many a places there reported the attack of the elite people towards the low caste people when the latter were admitted to the schools. A Cheruman school was tried at Calicut but the Nairs and Tiyyas used to way lay the boys as they were going to schools and snatched their books out of their hands. Two Adidravida students were beaten at Payyoli Sreddenanda Vidyalayam by higher caste men⁶⁵. When Nayadis of Malabar were admitted to District Board School in 1938, the students of higher castes had completely boycotted the school.⁶⁶ At Archur, Mappila children boycotted classes when *Dalit* children were admitted to the school.

While studying the response of native people towards English education we can draw following inferences. Malabar had a well equipped system for knowledge production and dissemination long before the coming of the British. Though it was not universal in nature, each communities of the region had their own pattern of knowledge assimilation and diffusion. Indigenous pattern of education was enough to cater the needs of a localized economy based on pre industrial mode of production. The entering of the capitalist economy following the colonial occupation has created fundamental changes in the basic structure of traditional Malabar society which necessitated corresponding changes in the educational pattern also. The Malabar story tells us that after initial apathy almost all communities of

the region responded positively to western education. The Missionaries, private agencies and individuals contributed much to the dissemination of western education in the region. The aspirations and ambitions of the people to reach new horizons of knowledge were further nourished by social reform movements of the 19th century.

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