

## **Subaltern Mobilization and Resistance: A Historical Exploration of Pulayas, the Untouchables of erstwhile Cochin**

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**Abstract:** The paper titled as **Subaltern Mobilization and Resistance: A Historical Exploration of Pulayas, the untouchables of erstwhile Cochin** is a narrative discourse of history of Pulayas, the untouchables and their organized resistance against social exclusion. Mobilization also known as mass Mobilization or popular mobilization refers to mobilization of the civilian population. The process usually takes the form of large public gatherings such as mass meetings, Marches, parades, processions and demonstrations. Those gatherings usually are part of a protest action. The present study is an attempt to explore the historical importance of the social mobilization of subalterns; the Dalits of Cochin. It is an empirical study on the basis of both primary and secondary sources. Through a positivist approach, wide and the scientific arrangement of maximum available facts are incorporated with the study. Textual analysis is the major operation adopted to collect data. The present study is an analytical, interpretative and critical in nature and it is a narrative, descriptive account of dalit movements of Cochin an erstwhile princely state of Kerala.

**Keywords:** Subaltern mobilization and Resistance, Untouchables, Backwater Conference, Pulaya Maha Sabha, Jathikummi

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Date of Submission: 06-10-2017

Date of acceptance: 18-10-2017

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kerala witnessed some organized movements against caste based discrimination especially in Travancore. At that time Kerala was politically divided into three provincial states named Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. Malabar was directly under the control of British and other provinces were ruled by Local Rajas. Movements against the social evils were different in nature in these areas. Under the rule of local Rajas, elite peoples of Travancore and Cochin had more influence in society. They were always tried to keep the rigidity of caste based social stratification. So the social life of outcaste peoples was more miserable in Travancore and Cochin. This is the major reason for the emergence of social reform movements in these areas.

The dalit situation of Cochin was very deplorable. Socially and economically they were hardly moved to the extreme dark side of the Cochin State. Brahmanical ideologies and feudal mode of administrative system made the life of dalits more suppressive. By the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century the lower caste peoples of Cochin became conscious about their civil liberties and started to be organised themselves. As far as the history of Cochin is concerned, the period from 1900 to 1947 is an era of social transformation of Dalit communities of the State. Colonial interventions and universal educational policies adopted by the Christian missionaries were the major reasons for the social changes among the dalits of Cochin.

During the period from 1900 to 1948 witnessed drastic changes among the lower castes of Cochin. They were organised under different leaders and formed various caste organizations even under some extreme unfavourable conditions. Caste organizations, mass campaigns, struggle for constitutional reforms for educational and social equality etc. are the strategies followed by the dalit leaders for the emancipation of subalterns of the state. Generally the dalit movement of Cochin can be divided into two phases. First phase is starting from 1900 and ends with 1924. This is a period of the formation of caste associations, mobilizations, and mass campaigns. The second phase started from 1925 and it was an opening of subaltern's intervention in the Legislative Council of the Cochin State.

It was a new platform which enabled them to raise their demands for equal consideration in every aspect of human life in a dignified manner. It was a period of resurgence of lower caste sections of Cochin state to their socio economic and political freedom for a certain extent. So the period from 1900 to 1948 can be considered as an epoch of subaltern social mobilization and resistance against the caste system which oppressed dalits into the most deplorable condition of social inequality.

## **II. MOBILIZATION AND RESISTANCE. (1900 to 1924)**

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the beginning of an epoch of social awakening of outcastes too. There was started mobilization and resistance movement against the social evils practiced in Cochin. Some eminent leaders like Pandit K.P. Karuppan, Krishnethi Asan P.C. Chanchan, K.P. Vallon, P.K. Chathan etc. were worked for the emancipation of the downtrodden peoples of Cochin. Under the guidance of these leaders, dalits of Cochin realized the strength of organized resistance. The meetings before the formation of an organization was a Himalayan task in front of them due to the absence of a place to assemble. The lower castes were not allowed to use any place in land to make a gathering. Kayal Sannelanam, a meeting organized by the Pulayas of the state in the backwaters of Cochin was first kind of such a meeting organized in the water instead of land. In 1913, Pulayas started their organization by overcoming a lot of barriers. The first and second Pulaya conferences which are conducted at Ernakulam formed an organization and constituted committee along with its by-law. After the formation of association, the leaders of this movement tried to organize campaign among the outcastes. Such activities could help them to create a consciousness about the unity among the downtrodden people. Through the organized protest movements, Dalits of Cochin succeeded to capture a position in the society partially.

### **II.1 .Pandit K P Karuppan and Jathikummi.**

From the above mentioned dalit leaders of Cochin, Pandit Karuppan was the most prominent personality who to stimulates the dalits to protest against the social order of Cochin. He was a writer as well as a social reformer. He could understand the miseries of dalit communities of Cochin including his own Vaala community due to the social stratification on the basis of caste. Pandit K.P Karuppan was born to Pappu or Ayyan popularly known as Athopoojaari and Kochupennu belong to Kandathiparambu family near Cheranelloor in present Ernakulam district on the 24<sup>th</sup> May 1885. After his elementary education, he studied Sanskrit. In January 1905 he joined Ernakulam St. Teresa's Convent High School as Sanskrit Munshi. About five years later he joined as a clerk in newly formed Fisheries Department but might be in June 1911, he was appointed as Sanskrit Teacher in the Caste Girls High School, Ernakulam by the Government of Cochin<sup>1</sup> It was a school exclusively for the girl students belongs to upper caste. Later he became an Assistant Protector of Depressed Classes, Secretary to the Elementary Education Committee, Superintendent of Cochin Vernacular Education and in January 1935 he was made as a lecturer in the Maharajas College Ernakulam a post in which he continued his death on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1938.

Karuppan as a heterogeneous person from the lower cluster was very interested to work among the weaker sections of the society. He was a well-known Sanskrit scholar and composed many literary works. One of the poems written by Karuppan named *Jathikummi* played an important role in the history of dalits of Cochin. It was written by Karuppan at the age of 20 in 1905 and published in 1912.<sup>2</sup> *Jathikummi* is a work depends on Sankaracharya's *ManishaPanchankam*.<sup>3</sup> Thread of this work is the dialogue in between Sankaracharya and an outcaste. Meaninglessness of caste and its aftermaths which negatively affected to society and Hindu religion etc. are the major facts discussed in this great work. Each line of *Jathikummi* reflects the rigidity of caste consciousness of society. Peoples of Cochin especially the outcaste were very much interested in these songs and used to sing in various occasions. They were tried to meet the author of this great work and met Karuppan. It was resulted to the formation of Pulaya Mahasabha in Cochin. In the middle of 1930's Government of Cochin instructed Karuppan to write a report to Gopala Krishna Deodhar, a well-known social reformer and the president of Servants Society of India about the social conditions of lower castes of Cochin.<sup>4</sup> Malayalam translation of this report is also available in *K.P Vallon Smaranika* published in August 1981.<sup>5</sup> It is a detailed report from Karuppan about the social condition of dalits of Cochin as well as the starting of their effort to form an organization among them.

Even before the availability of published form of Jathikummi, it was very popular among the downtrodden peoples of the society and they learned it by heart<sup>6</sup>. The song was composed by Karuppan in the form of *Kummi* songs. *Kummi* is one of the most important and ancient form of folk dance performed by the women of Tamil Nadu and Kerala villages. They stand in circle and dancing with claps rhythmically. One of the women leads the singing with a favorite song while the rest take up the refrain. It was also free from the clutches of Sanskrit and followed a Dravidian style of literary composition.<sup>7</sup> Simple form of these *Kummi* songs reached maximum and spread among the laymen and they used to sing the songs from Jathikummi in different occasions. Each of the lines of Jathikummi tried to question the complex form of caste system and also pointed out its worthless hierarchical structure and its implications. It criticized the intolerable effects of caste system such as untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability.<sup>8</sup> The songs from Jathikummi orally spread and stimulated the lower caste peoples very much even though they were illiterate. The idea which highlighted through the songs deep rooted in the minds of people and sown the seeds of resistance. The retrospective thoughts of them sparked fire in their mind. They could realize their deplorable social condition and understood the necessity of resurgence.

Report by Karuppan is very clear about the enthusiastic approach of a group of Pulaya youngsters those approached poet Karuppan at his residence. It was near to the Diwan's Bungalow at Ernakulam.<sup>9</sup> The gentle approach of visitors impressed him and asked about their visit. Politely they informed to Karuppan about the purpose of their visit that all of them wanted to be as the disciple of Pandit Karuppan and also demanded more songs and poems. Karuppan became very happy and impressed on their attitude of self-realization. Karuppan accepted the demands of Pulayas with great pleasure and wrote and gave some compositions to them. He took initiative to do something to wipe out the ignorance enveloped them and also encouraged an idea of an organization among them. The first day which they met the Karuppan has changed the vision of Pulayas. They became very interested in the words of Karuppan. It was a close and meaningful communication. They became very conscious about the caste based discrimination of Cochin State. Karuppan had some plans and instructed them to come another day for a meeting.

After few days they came again and Karuppan tried to make awareness among them about the importance of an organization to attain the freedom to enter public places, education and other social well-being of the Pulaya community. Karuppan was a well-known leader and experienced with social organizations.<sup>10</sup> He wanted to start such an organization among the Pulayas to eradicate their social backwardness. But the social situation was not favorable for them even to conduct a meeting to discuss about an organization for Pulayas. They were denied to conduct a meeting on land which is prohibited to them due to caste discrimination. They could not access a place in land for a meeting.

## **II.2. Kayal Sarnmelanam (The Backwater Conference)**

Kayal Sarnmelanam, one of the great event in the history of Kerala renaissance, but not discussed in a deserved manner so far. This is the meeting organized by the Pulayas of Cochin, the untouchables, in the backwaters of Cochin and this historical event deserve special mention due to its way that how the meeting was organized. Organizational effort of Kayal Sarnmelanam primarily credited to the peoples from a remote island of Cochin named Mulavukadu. It was an extremely backward place at that time. Geographically, it is isolated from the major parts of Cochin and surrounded by backwaters. There was no any facility to live high class people at Mulavukadu. So they avoided the Island and entering only to collect rent of land, and they are the land owners. So inside the Island, dalit life is better than the outside. They are free to walk anywhere there. No discrimination on the basis of caste because all the inhabitants of that place are belonging to out caste including Ezhavas. They have basic facilities for primary education and it was known as 'Kudipallikoodam'. So the Pulayas from Mulavukadu was able to read and write and led a better life comparatively the Pulayas from the other parts of Cochin State.<sup>11</sup> The small Island Mulavukadu contributed prominent five members as the leaders for the dalit social movement of Cochin. Krishnethy Asan, P.C Chanchan, K.P Vallon, Dakshayani Velayudhan and K.K Kannan Master are the five leaders from Mulavukadu.<sup>12</sup> The enthusiastic approach of the peoples from Mulavukadu was properly directed by Karuppan and T.K Krishna Menon.<sup>13</sup>

Krishnethi Asan (1877-1937) was the leader of Pulaya visitors of Karuppan's house from Mulavukadu. He was a contract worker.<sup>14</sup> He organized Pulayas for a meeting to discuss about the formation of an organization for Pulayas. Under the leadership of Krishnethy they met Karuppan at several times for his valuable advices. During that time the untouchables were not allowed to summon on the land of Cochin owing to the caste discrimination. This social condition was the one of the major threat for the Pulaya meeting. After a long discussion in between Karuppan and Pulayas under Krishnethi, they decided to conduct the meeting in water instead of landed portion of Cochin. Thus the first meeting of untouchables of Cochin was fixed in the water.<sup>15</sup>

Kayal Sammelanam was one of the great event happened in the dalit history of Cochin. This is a symbolic way of protest against the cast based social stratification. By a Royal Proclamation, the untouchables of Cochin were not allowed to gather on land anywhere in Cochin.<sup>16</sup> In order to overcome this royal decision they organized a massive assembly on small boats on water. They tied boats together and arranged seats for that great meeting. Peoples were also used boats to participate the meeting. The crowd consisted of old and young as well as boys.<sup>17</sup> It was too difficult to make such a meeting at that time. During this period construction of retain wall in its progress in the western side of the Ernakulam town. Krishnethy Asan was a sub-contractor of that project under a European and he made the arrangement for the meeting.<sup>18</sup> For the purpose of construction works there was a huge raft and the Pulayas used this raft by the help of Krishnethi and made a platform as the venue for the meeting.<sup>19</sup>

Except the year, exact date, time, place and number of participants etc. are not known to us even today. Year of occurrence of the meeting is known from the autobiography of T.K Krishna Menon titled as 'The Days That Were'.<sup>20</sup> He has written about around 100 numbers of Pulayas were landed near to his residence from boats and approached him to ask help to start an organization for them. The date of this event is mentioned as 21<sup>st</sup> April of 1913.<sup>21</sup> And there is a possibility of more than two or three such meetings in backwaters before the above date, and this may be the last.<sup>22</sup> Place and time of the meeting is also unknown. K.N Sukumaran, relative of K.P Karuppan writes in his article on Jnanodayam Sabha Platinum Jubilee souvenir that, Kayal Sammelanam was organised near to Venduruthy at evening.<sup>23</sup> He had a close relationship with K.P Karuppan in his last days. TKC Vaduthala<sup>24</sup> says in his work titled as *VyekthiMahathmiyam* that Kayal Sammelanam was organized in backwaters near to the eastern side of the modern Naval Headquarters, Venduruthy.<sup>25</sup> Both K.N Sukumaran and TKC Vaduthala are saying the same opinion about the place of meeting. P.C Kochukrishnan, the son of P.C Chanchan M.L.C narrates about the history of Kayal Sammelanam in Jnanodayam Sabha Platinum Jubilee souvenir. He also says that it was a meeting organised in a place somewhere in between Burmah Company and Huzur boat jetty.<sup>26</sup> Some of the relatives of K.P Karuppan also shared the memory that the place of meeting was to the west of St. Theresa's Convent or a place known as "Thoosam" a centre of Vaala community which is closed to the Burmah Company.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Meera Velayudhan, daughter of Dakshayani Velayudhan quoting the lines from his mother's writings in Mathrubhumi weekly 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2014. It says that the meeting was organised in Bolgatty region on the platform of native boats which is tied together.<sup>28</sup> The available evidences and writings are adequate to make a conclusion that, it was a series of meetings conducted in the different parts of Cochin backwaters.

It was very difficult to organise such a meeting in day time in the water bodies of Cochin. As part of the inland water transportation facilities of the state had continuous boat services and it made backwaters of Cochin as a rush one in day time.<sup>29</sup> The most probable time of Kayal Sammelanam may be in evening or night. The writings of K.N Sukumaran also agree with this. He says that it was organized at evening after the occupation of Pulayas.<sup>30</sup> Actual number of participants is not available but they tried to confirm the participation from the coastal side of Cochin State. T.K Krishna Menon himself was a witness of a crowd around one hundred in number of Pulayas on 21<sup>st</sup> April of 1913. According to P.C Kochukrishnan, Pulaya members from Mulavukadu, Panambukadu and Vaduthala have participated in this water conference. They had a plan to ensure the presence of Pulaya peoples from Kadamakkudi, Kumbalam, Venduruthy, Ochamthuruthu, Elamkunnappuzha, Njarackal, Edavanakkadu, Cherai, Vypin etc.<sup>31</sup>

Decisions taken by the Pulayas under the leadership of K.P Karuppan, T.K Krishna Menon and Krishnethi made very far reaching result for their awakening. It was a great opening to the

awakening of out castes of the state, especially for the Pulayas. It created a mind of unity among them and Krishnethy emerged as a prominent leader of Pulayas of Cochin. They decided to form an organization for Pulayas named Cochin Pulaya Maha Sabha.<sup>32</sup>

### **II.3 First Pulaya Conference.**

As part of the decision taken in Kayal Sammelanam, the Pulayas of Cochin organized their first official meeting with the help of K.P Karuppan and T.K Krishna Menon at Ernakulam St. Albert's High School on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1913.<sup>33</sup> The Pulayas from Mulavukadu, Panambukadu, Ochanthuruthu, Njarackal, Vaduthala, Ernakulam etc. were participated in this meeting.<sup>34</sup> The meeting was presided over by Krishna Menon. The Autobiography of T.K Krishna Menon, 'The Days That Were' gives a clear description about the first Pulaya Conference which is conducted at Ernakulam. The true extracts are follows.

.....*"On 21-4-1913, more than a hundred Pulayas came by boat to my reclamation ground to the west of Kumarayalam with a petition to me to help them start an All Cochin Pulaya Association. At my request some of them went out once and fetched Mr. Karuppan. We prepared the notice for the meeting. After getting the consent of Rev. Fr. Dominic to held the meeting in the St. Albert's High School Hall. I got the notice printed. Its wide circulation was undertaken by the Pulayas themselves, whom I specially advised –those who went about the work- to tell their people to attend the meeting after a good wash and with a neat dress. This injunction, I was glad to note everyone had scrupulously followed whom we meet on 25-5-1913. The hall was found too small to accommodate the gathering. So the meeting was adjourned to the open grounds on the southern side. The steps of the stone staircase served us as our platform. Rev. Fr. Dominic, Mr. Karuppan and myself spoke to them to about them; about the need for an association, and exhorted them to give up their bad habits and to work hard jointly and severally, for their development. We induced two or three from among them also to address their fellow-men and fellow-women. Ladies, of whom there were a good number, evidenced as much enthusiasm as the males. It was a lively, unique gathering. It was the first of its kind. I felt happy over it."*....<sup>35</sup>

The role played by K.P Karuppan is an important one to co-ordinate the conference. In his report he has mentioned about this event. Karuppan says that more than 1500's of Pulayas have participated in the first Pulaya conference conducted at Ernakulam.<sup>36</sup> He also mentioning about the names and effort of school manager Rev. Fr. Dominic, T.K Krishna Menon and Krishnethy Aasan.

The first Pulaya conference unanimously decided to prepare and submit a petition to Diwan of the state. Following are the important demands of Pulaya meeting.

1. Give freedom to access public places without any restriction on the basis of caste and creed.
2. Give necessary orders to Education Department to admit the Pulaya children to schools.
3. Start primary and technical educational institution exclusively for Pulaya children.
4. Free education up to certain class.<sup>37</sup>

It was authorised to T. K Krishna Menon to draft and submit the petition in front of the Government authorities. He made necessary action for the same and also wrote letters to the King. Meanwhile the Pulaya Conference Raja of Cochin was in his tour at Koonoor in Tamil Nadu.<sup>38</sup> And the King Rajarshi (Rama Varama) replied as...

.....*"I have perused with much interest the accounts of the meeting of the Pulayas. From the number of the persons attending the meeting, I am glad to see that this backward class of my subject has also begun to realise their poor condition and is anxious to improve it. I quite remember the incident that took place at Bolghatty on the day referred to in the letter. I shall give the memorial my best consideration when I get it."*.....<sup>39</sup>

After the meeting of Krishna Menon with Raja, he was pleased to graciously permit Pulayas to submit memorial to the Government on the subject. Menon himself drafted the petition without delay and submitted the same.<sup>40</sup> On 9<sup>th</sup> July 1913, T.K Krishna Menon received a letter from letter from the Diwan Mr. KasthuriRangalyer. Letter says...

.....*"With reference to the memorial presented by you to the Diwan on behalf of the poor Pulaya community of the State praying for free primary education and also for the free use of all the public the rough fares, I would like to discuss the subject with you in all its aspects."*

*"I shall be glad if you can kindly look me up for a few hours on the morning of Sunday next." ....<sup>41</sup>*

Menon continues in his autobiography...

*..... "We had a full and free talk on the whole subject of the Pulaya disabilities, the possible way of removing them and of helping community in getting free primary education. Our talk did bear fruit in ample measure, although it took some time for the Government order to be published. This order with its Malayalam rendering was printed and published by the Pulaya Samajam, and it was broadly circulated among all adult Pulayas in the state. Their joy was unbounded." ....<sup>42</sup>*

It can be considered as the beginning of an epoch of the subaltern social mobilization and a period of resistance. Owing to the collective effort of the Pulayas and some humanitarians, the most deprived section of the society could forward a single step by starting with an organization. And it was the result of self-realization and self-motivation to improve the social condition of the oppressed. They set their agenda to attain knowledge through education, and they believed that this is the only possible way to uncover the ignorance and disabilities.

Reclaiming social dignity by getting freedom to walk along public roads was very difficult one at that time. Deep rooted caste consciousness denied the minds of upper castes people to allow the freedom to walk on public roads or access the public places. But it was broken by the outcastes of Cochin with the help of Pandit K.P Karuppan. On a festive occasion, the Pulayas were mobilized near to the Ernakulam town in backwaters on boats. They invited the attention of the King by native drums and other traditional musical instruments banding loudly. Karuppan informed to Diwan about the Pulayas, the untouchables of the state and their problems including unapproachability and unseeability. The words of Karuppan touched the heart of Diwan and allowed the Pulayas to participate in the event. Thus the untouchables of Cochin landed on the towns of Ernakulam.<sup>43</sup>

#### **II.4. Second Pulaya Conference**

In September 2013, the second conference of Pulayas also held at the same venue under the same leaders. Meeting was presided over by K.P Karuppan.<sup>44</sup> Around 2000 Pulayas were summoned to participate in the meeting.<sup>45</sup> T.K Krishna Menon says...

*..... "In September of the same year, we again meet when a set of rules were passed for the working of the Association and a Committee was constituted for the same purpose. The collection made was left with Fr. Dominic for safe keeping. He subsequently gave it to Mr. Karuppan and took a registered hypothecation bond for it. I did not leave them there. I made them hold meetings in several centres where they lived so as to create in them for a desire for solidarity and better living our propaganda created an awakening among the people at the same time." ....<sup>46</sup>*

They levied 3 paise as entry fee to arise fund for the Association. Krishna Menon questioned this and participated in the meeting. The Pulayas of Cochin used this opportunity to extend their heart felt gratitude to Menon.<sup>47</sup>

In this meeting they constituted a committee for Cochin Pulaya Maha Sabha. And also prepared and accepted unanimously its by-law for its effective working. Krishnethy Asan, the man behind the effort from Pulaya side selected as the president. It was a right decision taken by the conference by the advice of Karuppan and Krishna Menon. He was also very capable and an accepted person among the Pulayas. He was the man who motivated Pulayas to approach Karuppan to form an organization for them. He has proven his leadership quality on the occasion of Kayal Sammelanam. Financially he was not bad as a contract worker. P.C Chanchan a young enthusiastic Pulaya got selected as the secretary of the Sabha. Later he became the first nominated member from the Pulaya community.

#### **II.5 Campaigns of Pulaya Maha Sabha.**

The second Pulaya conference made a complete form for the Pulaya's organization. Formation of a working committee and by-law strengthened the structure of Pulaya Maha Sabha. And also they planned to conduct meetings at several places where Pulayas lived. The continuity kept association as a lively one among the Pulayas. As part of the campaigns meetings were conducted in different parts of the state. Njarackal meeting was initiated by the Head Master of the Njarackal School, named Peter. They also organized meetings at Amballur and Thripunithura, the south-east

side of the Cochin State. The meeting which is conducted at Amballur was presided over by T.V. KasthuriRangaIyer, the retired Acting Diwan of the state and SreenarayanaChandravarkar presided the meeting at Thripunithura.<sup>48</sup> P.C Chanchan, the leader of Pulaya Maha Sabha organized a number of meetings all over the Cochin State. And it was the period of expansion of Sabha to various parts of the state. He organized several meetings at Panambukadu, Elankunnapuzha, Njarackal, Edavanakadu, Palluruthi, Mulanthuruthy, Chalakudy, and Thrissur.<sup>49</sup>

Formation of Pulaya Maha Sabha became a platform for their leaders to make awareness among the Pulayas. Pulayas were lived in miserable conditions due to ignorance and economic deprivation. More over a number of social restrictions were imposed by the caste society over them. Lower caste peoples were not allowed to cover their body. Females of the out castes were banned to cover the upper portion of their body and most of them were not capable to buy a piece of cloth. Wearing of good and neat cloths and use of foot wares, umbrella etc. by an out caste was a crime. They were ill-treated by the upper castes in connection with such a crime. Male members were not allowed to crop their hair. In shortly the life of lower caste peoples, especially the Pulayas was in a most deplorable situation.

Cochin Pulaya Maha Sabha launched campaigns among the Pulayas in their settlements. Since the first Pulaya conference itself prioritised personal hygiene and give up of unwanted habits from Pulayas. Instructions given by the leaders reminded the needs of neat cloths and encouraged to cover the body with the same. Under the leadership of P.C Chanchan, a campaign was organised among the Pulayas of Mulavukadu. The purpose of campaign was nothing but to make awareness among the Pulaya ladies about the importance of covering their upper parts of the body. With the help of others, Chanchan distributed roukas, a kind of dress to 50 Pulaya ladies to cover their body and questioned the unwanted practices imposed by upper castes up on the lower castes.<sup>50</sup> This is new and first time experience for the Pulaya women of Mulavukadu.<sup>51</sup> Men from Mulavukadu were the first Pulayas who cropped their long hair.<sup>52</sup>

In the first Pulaya Conference, one of the resolutions taken by them was nothing but to submit a representation to the Government about the education of Pulayas. They continued their efforts with the help of T.K Krishna Menon. Behalf of Pulayas, Menon continuously made letters to the authorities and made several meetings with them. During the period in between 1913 and 1921 Pulayas conducted so many meetings in different places. Some of the meetings were presided over by the Diwan of the state.<sup>53</sup> In his autobiography, T.K Krishna Menon specified the collective effort which was made by them as 'Pulaya Movement'.<sup>54</sup> The association worked among the Pulayas to make some reforms with in the community. They tried to make better awareness among the Pulayas about their dress, ornaments, cropping of hair etc. and aimed to civilize the community along with the actions to secure civil liberties.<sup>55</sup>

After the religious conversion of Krishnethi, the activities of Pulaya Maha Sabha faced a lot of challenges due to the absence of proper leadership. The youngsters of the organization were not experienced and not capable to lead Sabha in a proper way. So the period started from 1917 to 1924 is a big gap. In 1924, annual meeting of Pulaya Maha Sabha was held at Maharajas College under the president ship of Diwan T.S NarayanaIyyer.<sup>56</sup> This conference became a mile stone of the further development of the Pulaya Movement in Cochin State. In this meeting K.P Vallon emerged as a great leader of Pulayas. Since 1917, from the age of 17 Vallon engaged in the activities of the organization and he worked hardly to keep the mobility of his community as well as the activities of the Pulaya Maha Sabha. Annual meeting decided to select P.C Chanchan as the secretary and K.P Vallon as the joint secretary.<sup>57</sup> After a long period of 7 years, the organization of Pulayas got efficient leader as Vallon and Chanchan to lead the community as an organized one.

### III. CONCLUSION

As far as the Dalits of Cochin is concerned, the middle of third decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century was a notable period for their social awakening and transformation. In 1925, a Legislative Council was constituted in Cochin and this is the period of transition of Cochin Sate to a new system of administration with the participation of various sections of the society. The depressed class communities also got representation in the newly formed legislative assembly. After Pandit K.P Karuppan a well-known leader of weaker sections of the state, the Pulaya leader P C Chanchan got

nominated as a Member of Legislative Council. It can be considered as the second phase of an era of dalit awakening and struggle for constitutional reforms. It is notable that the ameliorative measures taken by the Government owing to the effective participation of dalits for their awakening. As part of the establishment of civil rights and constitutional reforms, the Government of Cochin State also extended its support to the dalits and their efforts to a certain extent by providing possible assistance. But it was not free completely from the caste based social norms and conditions. It was a long and continuous protest movement against the social order of the state. Later it became inevitable to take necessary remedial measures by the Government for the elevation of the dalit population of the Cochin State.

The Support from some prominent personalities from outside the community played a vital role in the social development of the dalits. Name of Pandit Karuppan, T.K Krishna Menon and K. Ayyappan deserves special appreciation for their contribution. Pandit Karuppan was the man who inspired the out castes of the state to form an organization. T.K Krishna Menon was also very sympathetic to the dalit situation of the state, and he worked for their wellbeing. He played a leading role at the time of formation of Pulaya Maha Sabha. K. Ayyappan, popularly known as Sahodaran Ayyappan was also supported the demands of lower sections of the society especially as a member of Cochin Legislative Council.

We can generalize that the social transformation of dalits of the state was an outcome of a collective effort which was made by various group of people to affirm the social inclusion of the same. In this juncture spread of education was a core point of attention for the development of dalits. Not only in the field of education, in other areas of life of dalits has touched by the Government. Providing land, water, financial assistance etc. are the some instance of Governmental interference in the form of social welfare activities for the progress of dalit communities of the state of Cochin.

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  - [2] T.P Sankarankutty Nair, Op.Cit, p.54.
  - [3] ManishaPanchankamis a set of five verses composed by Sankaracharya.
  - [4] Ramadas Cherai, AyyankalikuAadarathode (Mal.), Ernakulam, 2009, p. 199.
  - [5] K. P Vallon Smaranika, Thruvananthapuram, 1981.pp.35-52.
  - [6] P. GovindhaPillai, Kerala NavodhanamYugasanthathikalYugasilpikal(Mal.), Vol.3, Thiruvananthapuram, 2009, p. 234.
  - [7] G. Kumara Pillai, KaruppanumMalayalaSaahithyavum, Jnanodayam Sabha Platinum Jubilee souvenir, EdaCochin, 1993.p.44
  - [8] T.P Sankarankutty Nair, Op.Cit, p.54.
  - [9] Pandit K.P Karuppan, PulayarudeUyarthezhunelpu, K.P Vallon Smaranika, VrindavanamVenugoplan (ed.), Thiruvananathapuram, 1981, p.40
  - [10] In February 1909 Karuppan was able to establish the first Vala organization in Anappuzha near Cranganore known as the KalyandayiniSabha. But there was a central authority to control it. Later in 1911 at Thevara a Vala SamudayaParishkaini Sabha too was founded. Similarly ProbhodhaChamdrodayam Sabha was set up at North Parur, Jnanodayam Sabha in Edacochin, Arayavamsodharini Sabha in Engandiyoor and SanmargaPradeepa Sabha at Kumbalam.
  - [11] P. GovindhaPillai, Op.Cit, p.232.
  - [12] Ramadas Cherai, Op.Cit, p.171.
  - [13] T.K Krishana Menon was a member of a famous Nair family In Cochin named Thottakattu. He was a well know writer as well as a layer. Krishna Menon was very sympathetic to the social condition of depressed classes of Cochin and tried to help them to form an organization among them. Formation of Pulaya Mahasabha was the result of a collective effort taken by him along with K.P Karuppan. He presided the first meeting of Pulaya Mahasabha which is conducted at St. Albert's High School on 25.05.0913.
  - [14] Dr. Meera Velayudhan, Chintha weekly, February 21, 2014.pp.12-13.
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- [26] P.C Kochukrishnan, Op.Cit, p.121.
- [27] Ramadas Cherai, Op.Cit, p.113.
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- [31] P.k Chathan Master, Op.Cit, p.98.
- [32] K.N Sukumaran, Op.Cit, p.39.
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- [34] P.C Kochukrishnan, Op.Cit, p.121
- [35] T.K Krishna Menon, Op.Cit, p.351
- [36] Pandit K.P Karuppan, Op.Cit, p.43.
- [37] The Malabar Herald (Weekly Newspaper), Vol. IX, No.14, 7<sup>th</sup> June 1913, Cochin, p.5. Quoted by Ramadas Cherai in his book 'AyyankaalikkuAadarathode' p.116.
- [38] Ramadas Cherai, Op.Cit, p.117.
- [39] T. K Krishna Menon Op.Cit, p.355.
- [40] Ibid, p.356.
- [41] Ibid.
- [42] Ibid. p.357
- [43] This incident has different interpretations by the writers who share their memories in different articles. Some of them say that, it was an event of agricultural exhibition organized at Ernakulam Siva Temple ground. Another version says, the event was organized at Ernakulam Maharajas College as part of the birthday celebration of the King of Cochin and a drama written by K.P Karuppan named Balakalesam. Date of this incident is not available and it is assumed that only after Kayal Sammelanam or and the formation of the Pulaya Maha Sabha.
- [44] K.N Sukumaran, Op.Cit, p.40
- [45] Pandit.K.P Karuppan, Op.Cit, p.43.
- [46] T.K Krishna Menon, Op.Cit, p.352.
- [47] Ibid.
- [48] Pandit K.P Karuppan, Op.Cit, p.47.
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- [51] Ibid.
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IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) is UGC approved Journal with Sl. No. 5070, Journal no. 49323.

Vinayan M C. "Subaltern Mobilization and Resistance: A Historical Exploration of Pulayas, the Untouchables of erstwhile Cochin." IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) , vol. 22, no. 10, 2017, pp. 28–36.