

## INTRODUCTION

Research and studies have recently been initiated on the under-privileged people, namely, the Dalits in India. Though it is an encouraging fact, yet more systematic and classified studies are required because the Dalits are located over a wide range of areas, languages, cultures, and religions, where as the problems and solutions vary. Since the scholars and historians have ignored the Dalits for many centuries, a general study will not expose sufficiently their actual condition. Even though the Dalit Christian problems are resembling, Catholics and Protestants are divided over the issues. Some of the Roman Catholic priests are interested and assert their solidarity with the Dalit Christian struggle for equal privilege from the Government like other Hindu Dalits. On the other hand, most Protestant denominations are indifferent towards any public or democratic means of agitation on behalf of Dalit community. They are very crafty and admonish Dalit believers only to pray and wait for God's intervention.

However, there is an apparent intolerance in the Church towards the study and observations concerning the problems of Dalit Christians because many unfair treatments have been critically exposed. T.N. Gopakumar, the Asia Net programmer, did broadcast a slot on Dr. P.J. Joseph, a Catholic priest for thirty -eight years in the Esaw Church, on 22 October 2000.<sup>1</sup> Joseph advocated for the converted Christians that the Church should upgrade their place and participation in the leadership of the Church. The very next day,

---

<sup>1</sup> T.N.Gopakumar, Kannady [Mirror-Mal], *Asia Net*, broadcast on 22 October, 2000.

with the knowledge of the authorities, a group of anti-Dalit Church members, attacked him and threw out his belongings from his room in the headquarters at Malapparambu, Kozhikode, where he lived for about thirty years. Finally, he was admitted in the Government hospital and the Church authorities asked him to vacate the campus. Ironically, a group of his fellow priests conducted a fasting on 21st October 2000, praying for the repentance and good sense of Dr. Joseph. The Asia Net commentator added, that “the man spoke on behalf of the down-trodden and is crucified like his Savior.”<sup>2</sup> Though there are many who have to be expelled from the campus are still remaining, the one who spoke for the Dalit believers was illegally mustered out.

The writer’s studies in SAIACS became an immediate reason for selecting this topic of research. All these years, my mind has been disturbed much on the discrimination among Christians and I was distressed about this issue. In SAIACS, I have been aware of a real difference in terms of Christian relationship and unity. Here, the unique way that SAIACS respects and regards their service staff workers, irrespective of their background, and very specially, the common meals served has challenged my mind and I realized that here I can boldly develop a study that addresses issues on discriminations. Besides, my interactions with Dr. Graham Houghton motivated my thoughts and he has encouraged me to be a voice and model on the Dalit people. This inspired my mind to initiate a research on the downtrodden that is the Dalits of Kerala.

### **Rationale of the Study**

The unique culture and character of the people of Kerala State have greatly impacted the origin and growth of the Pentecostal Churches in Kerala. From the beginning, this denomination has consisted of different ethnic groups, that is Dalits and non-Dalits.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

After a period of nine decades, statistics indicate that there is a reasonable and recognizable proportion of population of both the communities in the Church.

At the beginning, Pentecostals maintained a cordial relationship and unity in the Church. But due to various reasons, beyond their control, the Pentecostal Dalits still remain marginalized in many areas.

Though Pentecostalism claims biblical foundations, believers from different sections, especially the people from the outcaste background are discriminated against in the Church. Although the Dalits responded first to the Pentecostal faith, every thing in ecclesiastical and administrative affairs were wrested from them when the Syrian Christians began to join Pentecostal Churches. Dalits have not been considered for leadership or administration of the Church. They were neither encouraged nor privileged to exercise their capabilities. Usually, they were treated as second class citizens in the Church affairs.

There were a few feeble attempts made against the inequality and the nepotism in the functioning of the Church. It seems that the Hindu ideology is accused for this social disparity, in the Church. This cannot be a justification for her failure in maintaining unity and harmony among the believers.

Like other denominations in Kerala, the Pentecostals have made few efforts in formulating their history yet it seems to be biased in favour of the Syrian Christians. The Dalit Pentecostals are marginalized and not given the due representation in all these historical documents. The history is presented in such a way that it will confuse an ordinary reader, that the Pentecostalism is the outcome of the Syrian effort. This is not true.

Dalit Pentecostals could not produce a piece of their history because of various reasons and could not defend their part in the formation of Pentecostalism in Kerala. Thus the present historical records are not complete and the people will not know the truth. To set the record straight is the business of this thesis.

There are a few works produced by non- Dalits on this topic for academic purposes. Yet the real heartbeat of the insider has not adequately been heard or made public. Though these works are informative, their assessment on certain areas such as reasons for Dalits adopting Christianity is not well balanced or even fair.

A few things should be explained initially to get the idea of this work more clearly. The writer believes in the unique biblical principle of the unity of the body of Christ. Indeed, according to the Bible, there is no disparity of any kind in the Church. All are one in Christ, and thus equal. However, the writer's use of the term, Dalit Pentecostals is not to segregate the body of Christ into several groups, rather to focus mainly on the communities of Dalit origin, who are Pentecostals. So ethnic origin is more emphasized for the sake of the study.

The word Dalit is employed to identify the people who belong to those of outcaste background in the Indian context. Dalit refers to the caste-oriented idea and not simply the suffering people of any community. They were addressed by several other names and the Dalit community heard it with resentment. Nevertheless, this word is well approved by the entire community, because it does not undermine their dignity and group them under one fold.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Apparently, an educated Dalit Pentecostal reader suspects that the Syrian historians of Kerala Pentecostal Church are biased and prejudiced in their historical accounts. Did they represent Dalit Pentecostals in the right perspective? Have they not contributed anything to the Pentecostal movement in Kerala? What are the contributions of the converted Dalits? This work will mainly answering these questions from the Dalit perspective.

## **The Aim of the Study**

This study is focused on the Pentecostal community as a whole for introspection and challenges the Dalit-origin Pentecostals in particular to maintain a fair status and relationship. It describes some of the frustrations and unfulfilled hopes of Dalit Pentecostals.

## **Limitation of the Study**

Since the Dalit Pentecostal history has not been produced before, the sources of the work are limited. Many Dalit Pentecostal Churches do not have any documentation of their history and the writer had to depend on oral reports. Some pastors may be out of the ignorance, failed to respond to the questionnaire. Some views then are not complete. Since it is the history of almost nine decades, and covering the entire State, regrettably the writer could not travel around and gather all necessary information within the stipulated time frame.

## **Methodology**

The writer has undertaken research work in the libraries of SAIACS and UTC referring to related books, unpublished Theses, journals and Microfilm.

In order to gather first-hand information, personal interviews are held with Dalit and Syrian Pentecostal leaders, political leaders as well as women from either group. Personal meetings with some of the founders of Dalit Pentecostal Churches were also made. Interviews with the Pentecostal editors and writers also contributed. As well a few group discussions with Dalit pastors and educated youth also are incorporated in the work. Another means of collecting the information was Questionnaires. Many respondents expressed their personal convictions and opinions, while answering the questions. A Television broadcast is also included in the collection of information.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. A STUDY ON THE CONCEPT OF DALIT

Dalit, is a modern term for the untouchables of India, who have been exploited and subjected to atrocities due to the social stratification of Indian society. In many cases, Dalits are easily targeted even in this independent nation where the Constitution guarantees equal rights and privileges to every citizen. Throughout the centuries they have been victimized religiously, socially, culturally and most of all economically. The immediate cause of such discrimination according to the Tamil Roman Catholic priest L. Stanislaus, is the caste system, promulgated by Aryan Dharma.<sup>3</sup> The questions are; should this sociological group, the Dalits, be oppressed and tyrannized in this land? Are they not part of this vast Indian nation? How is it that this vast community has become so dejected and rejected? The importance of the study is obvious.

#### 1.1. ETYMOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE TERM DALIT

The term Dalit derives from the Sanskrit, *dal*, to crack, to open, and to split<sup>4</sup>. Dalit is also a Marathi word for those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate and active way<sup>5</sup>. James Massey in *Roots: A Concise History of Dalits*, explained Dalit, as the burst, the split, the broken or torn asunder, the trodden down, the scattered, the crushed and the destroyed.<sup>6</sup> So it suggests, an afflicted and beleaguered people.

---

<sup>3</sup> L. Stanislaus, *The Liberative Mission of the Church Among Dalit Christians* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> James Massey, *Roots: A Concise History of Dalits* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1991), p. 9

The present use of the term originated from the nineteenth century Marathi social reformer Mahatma Jyotirao Phule who used the word in connection with the suppressed.<sup>7</sup> Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, a well renowned Dalit leader, and the architect of the Constitution, said that the word describes the oppressed and broken victims of the caste-ridden society.<sup>8</sup> This term specifies the outcastes and despised community. During the 1970's, the Dalit Panther Movement of Maharashtra described it more broadly as "members of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, Neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, woman and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion."<sup>9</sup> So Dalits are exclusively the socially marginalized people of India.

Dalits were addressed by many names and Massey points out that these have been changed occasionally. In most cases, to despise them or to show contempt.<sup>10</sup> Since they were considered outside *Chaturvarna*, the Four-Caste System, they were labeled Out-Castes, and Untouchables and alienated from the main stream of the society. Many Dharma Scriptures called them slaves.<sup>11</sup> Nisada, Malicha, Chandala, and Achuta imply the sense of physical impurity. Narasihma Mehta introduced Harijan, a popular title propagated by Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>12</sup> However, the Dalits in refused it because they believed that it would demean them as illegitimate children of Devadasis.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Stanislaus, *Liberative Mission*, p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> James Massey, 'History and Dalit Identity,' in Bhagavan Das and James Massey (eds.), *Dalit Solidarity* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1995), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> S.M.Michael (ed.), *Dalits in Modern India Vision and Values* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications), p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> In Nov. 24, 1985, the Government of India prohibited the terminology.

The Aryan suppression of Dalits for many generations is clear in these names. They exercised religious whip to safe guard their stand. Jose Kananaikil observes, "religion came in as handy instrument to legitimize this exploitation system and to make others accept it without protest."<sup>14</sup>

In 1999, Government of India recognized Dalits as Depressed Classes through an Act promoted by British Officials.<sup>15</sup> However, the 1931 Census of India, introduced a new title, the Exterior Castes, by J.H.Hutton, an eminent anthropologist and prominent writer on Indian castes because of some breach of caste rules and it would connote exclusion and not extrusion from other castes.<sup>16</sup> During the Round Table Conference in 1931, Ambedkar suggested two names: Protestant Hindus or Non-Conformist Hindus.<sup>17</sup> In 1935, Simon Commission introduced the name Scheduled Castes and was accepted by the Government of India.<sup>18</sup> This term is standardized in the Constitution of the Republic of India, and Article 341 empowers the President to include any caste, race or tribe among the Schedule caste, after consulting the head of the particular state, to notify by an order.<sup>19</sup> 16. All these names are related to the racially discriminated people.

In order to define Dalits, anthropologists and sociologists have adopted two dominant perspectives.<sup>20</sup> The Marxist, Subaltern view emphasizes the class analysts of the Marxist ideology, including all the exploited and working class proletarians.<sup>21</sup> It focuses the wide range of all working class. The Dalit Panthers also supports this stand to certain extend. Professor Gangadhar Pantawane explained Dalit as follows: "Dalit is not a caste.

---

<sup>14</sup> Stanislaus, *Liberative Mission*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> John C.B.Webster, *The Dalit Christians: A History* ( New Delhi: ISPCK, 1996), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Stanislaus, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> John C.B.Webster, 'Who is a Dalit?' in S.M.Michael (ed.), *Dalits in Modern India* (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications), p. 68-69

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution. Dalit believes in humanism. He rejects existence of God, rebirth, soul, sacred books that teach discrimination, fate, and heaven, because these have made him a slave. He represents the exploited man in country.”<sup>22</sup>

Secondly, the traditional communal view. This view explains the Dalits are people groups included within Hindu society who belong to those castes which Hindu religion considers to be polluted by the virtue of hereditary occupation.<sup>23</sup>

Evaluating both perspectives, the former generalizes the suffering and exploitation part alone while ignoring the fact of caste status. In the Indian context, more than class, caste is crucial. Paul Chirackarodu, a Kerala Dalit leader rightly observed that the grand result of the first class-dominated communist movement in India which took place in Kerala in 1940's, Dalits supported the Party because of its stand against the oppressors and landlords. Later on, Dalits are seeking shelter in different other political parties because the Communists did not realize the fact and influence of caste in our society.<sup>24</sup> Afterwards, these parties also had to realize the reality and influence of caste feeling and changed their strategies to nominate candidates of influential castes in the constituencies, contrary to the their non-caste propaganda and secular identity. Even their leaders prefer same race marriage alliance. People adorn the tail of their castes at the end of their names as a matter of prestigious. Based on these facts, our society is deeply caste oriented and many factors are cherishing it well.

Moreover, the opinion of Pantewane might be a genuine expression against the exploitation nature of many religious, especially, Hinduism, but his conclusions about all

---

<sup>22</sup> Massey, 'Dalit Identity,' p. 12-13.

<sup>23</sup> Michael, *Dalits in India*, p. 69.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Chirackkarodu, 'Dalit and the Left,' in A.M.Abraham Ayrookuzhiyil (ed.), *Dalit Desyita* (Delhi: ISPCCK,1990), p. 68.

Dalits are refutable because all Dalits are not infidels. Many of them gladly adhere religious life when they are torn apart. Instead of acknowledging the verity of the caste sociology of India and its adverse effect on Dalits, mere class analysis would not be a fair deal with the real issue. The traditional approach is more convincing.

To identify a Dalit, two factors must be considered. The historical documents and testimonies related to the classification of the society must be examined. Interestingly, all these records are supporting traditional view. From 1881 to 1931, six consecutive Census records except of 1891, all were based on castes.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, Ambedkar had testified before Simon Commission in 1928 that Bombay Trade Unions wished to preserve caste distinctions. In 1937, at a Depressed Class Conference in Bihar, a prominent Dalit leader, Jagjivan Ram clarified those members of the Kissan Sabha, the Farmers' Union were the exploiters of Dalits.<sup>26</sup> This indicates that within the working class, racial discriminations are prevailing in India. So class analysts is a futile effort.

Secondly, the traditional religious structure of the society. As Hutton had mentioned, the exterior castes were also Hindus, because they worship the same deities and through they refused entry to the temples, boxes were placed outside, to receive their offerings. This indicates the division among the same religious group in the name of caste. Muslims and Christians were exempted from the section of depressed classes.<sup>27</sup> In conclusion, Dalits denote exclusively the lower caste people of India and other explanations are deceptive and biased. If we ignore the legitimate inheritors of the

---

<sup>25</sup> Webster, 'A Dalit,' p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p.72.

downtrodden and apply a broad meaning to the concept, it is the harsh denial of the privileges of a community who had been treated inhumane for centuries.

## 1.2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT

Three factors make difficult the discussion of the origin of Dalits. Firstly, disagreement among scholars.<sup>28</sup> They differ about the origin of Dalits and Dalits fear it as a global conspiracy of the non-Dalit historians. Secondly, inadequacy of Dalit literature. Due to their illiteracy and social backwardness they could not edit their history. However, Massey observes that the absence of right material to write a Dalit history is the most difficult task, yet there are some archaeological and literary sources which can enable us to formulate some possible historical conclusions on Dalit.<sup>29</sup> Finally, manipulation of history. Though H. K. Trevaskis, in *The land of the Five Rivers*, mentioned that history is the key to the solution of many of world problems of the present day.<sup>30</sup> It is not true with the history of Dalits in India because in history, Dalits are not properly represented. They are always focused objectively. Some historians do not even regard Dalits part of the so-called Indian civilization. Romala Thapar, in her work, *Interpreting Early India*, argues that the Vedic Aryan culture became the foundation of Indian culture.<sup>31</sup> Thus the aborigines denied place in the civilization of their land. Moreover, myths and stories have had fabricated to maintain Aryan dominion in the society. Hindu scriptures like Ramayan and Mahabharatha, more specifically, Srimad Bhagavat Geetha presented Dalits as object. Manusmriti has the worst reference about Dalits:

---

<sup>28</sup> Stanislaus, *Liberative Mission*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Massey, *Roots*, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup> Massey, 'Dalit Identity,' p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

The dwelling Chandalas and Suapakas as (should be) out of the villages; they should be deprived of dishes (apapatra), their property (consists of) dogs and asses, their clothes (should be ) garments of the dead, and their ornaments (should be) in broken dishes and they must constantly wander about.<sup>32</sup>

Scholars agree that the problem of untouchability is related to the Aryan invasion.<sup>33</sup>

Aryans were highly self-conscious, sharing a common language and religion, they migrated into Northwest India around B.C.1500. They remained in constant conflict with the natives for various reasons and looked down them, culturally inferior and excluded as ritually unclean.<sup>34</sup> Due to Aryan military exercises, the natives withdrew into regions as yet unoccupied by Aryans. Post Rig vedic literature of Aryan mention about the primitive forest-dwellers that were kept on the fringes of Aryan society in the conquered regions.<sup>35</sup>

### 1.3. THEORIES ON THE ORIGIN OF DALITS

The impure intermixture of the four varnas. Michael, after surveying the *Sutras*, confirmed this theory.<sup>36</sup> Second theory is related to the Unclean and menial occupation. Some believe that they were despised because of their mean job allotment. Thirdly, the pure-impure principle.<sup>37</sup> Von Fuerer-Haimendorf, an eminent anthropologist believes that untouchability is because of urban development and is the result of an unclean and ritually impure occupation.<sup>38</sup> Ambedkar surprised scholars with his new theory. He opined that the distinction between the Hindus and untouchables in its original form, before the advent of untouchability, was the distinction between Tribe men and the Broken men from alien tribes. Broken Men who subsequently came to be treated as untouchables, He identifies

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>33</sup> Michael, *Dalits in India*, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> Massey, *Roots*, p.12.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Stanislaus, *Liberative Mission*, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Michael, *Dalits in India*, p. 14.

the two roots from which untouchability has sprung: One, contempt and hatred for the Broken Men, and the continuation of beef-eating by the Broken Men after it had been given up by others.<sup>39</sup> However, Stanislaus discovers the origin had an economic base, i.e., division of labor, and a definite function in society; later social and religious legitimization were given to them.<sup>40</sup>

In literature, most scholars agree that the existing civilization of ancient India was about 1500 B.C., at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, had been destroyed more than once by invaders. The Rigvedic hymns have stories about the destruction of the Indus civilization and indications of conflicts among different groups of people.<sup>41</sup> These hymns are directed to two warrior gods. Ramaprasad Chand has made this observation correctly, "the hymns reveal two hostile peoples of the land of the Seven Rivers now called the Punjab - the deva worshipping Arya and the deva-less and the riteless Dasya or Dasa."<sup>42</sup> Aryans preserved a hostile approach towards the Dasya or slaves in all aspects.

Archaeological evidences also support the pre-Aryan inhabitants in India. *Ancient Cities of the Indus*, a major archaeological research paper by Gregory L. Possehl and archaeologists like Sir. John Marshall, Dr. Earnest Mackay, Sir Martimer Wheeler, S.R.Rao, Gurudip Singh, C.Ramasway also have supported this fact.<sup>43</sup> Sir John Marshall has well acknowledged the ancient civilization of pre-Aryan India when he says:

Hitherto India has almost universally been regarded as one of the younger countries of the world..... now at one single bound, we have ..... established the fact that in the third millennium before Christ and even that in the third millennium before Christ and even that the people of Punjab and Sind were living in well-built cities and were in the

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Stanislaus, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Massey, *Roots*, p.13.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 22.

possession of a relatively mature culture with high standard and craftsmanship and developed system of pictorial writing.<sup>44</sup>

Excavations confirmed certain outward resemblance between these early inhabitants and the people of the Western Coast of Tamil Nadu. Their clothes and style of hair were almost the same.<sup>45</sup> Though stigma of castiesm sprang up in the later Vedic age, it was between 600 B.C. and 200 A.D. that untouchability appears as such.<sup>46</sup> Contemporary Buddhist literature also shed lights to the practice of discrimination in North India. Aryans began to extend their control to the south, and the *varna*, colour distinctions also spread around.<sup>47</sup>

Sangam literature, written around 300-600 A.D., contain references of broad divisions of society somewhat similar to the four *varnas*.<sup>48</sup> As a result, a new order of hierarchy under the Brahmanical authority with its exploitative and oppressive nature began to operate. The political transition during the eighth century A.D. by Muslim invasion, failed to establish any change in the social structure because of class divisions within.

During British rule, the missionaries made efforts to extinguish caste differences though Germans generally followed the policy of non-interference, upholding the existing practice of racism.<sup>49</sup> They made Provisions in the Act to protect the civil and religious rights of every citizen.<sup>50</sup> Missionaries took exceptional interest in attending the sores of the depressed in the caste-dominated society. They also had to abide the social practices in

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.28-30.

<sup>46</sup> Webster, *Dalit Christians*, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern religoius & Secular Movements in India*, (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust), p. 280.

<sup>50</sup> Webster, *Dalit Christians*, p. 43.

order to establish themselves in the Indian soil. So they permitted caste differences in the Church.<sup>51</sup> Because of the missionaries, the officials exchanged ignoble titles of the Dalits to a decent name whereby Dalits achieved a modest status. Prior to the scheduled castes, the title depressed classes were used by the British Government and also by the various reform movements. Though the Government decided a communal award for the scheduled castes, was canceled due to the fasting treat of Mahatma Gandhi out of the fear that the scheduled castes may be separated from the Hindu community. Thus the provisions of Dalits were once again snatched away.

However, in the nineteenth century, there was a tremendous move among the Dalits. Bhatki Movement helped Dalits particularly in the spiritual matters. Though many movements could not bring any significant social change they reformed and revitalized the community. Few eminent leaders like Mahatma Jotirao Phule and Ambedkar, voiced for the total uplift of Dalits.<sup>52</sup>

In the independent India, national rulers continue the Aryan negative attitude towards the Dalits though the Constitution proclaims special privileges. Now there is an awaiting menace against it because the ruling coalition at the centre, the Brahman-dominated government is sponsoring a constitution review Panel, for bringing changes in the fundamental rights and privileges and specially of Dalits and thereby revoking the old Aryan suppression in secular India.

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Pp. 44-47.

### 1.3. BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF DALIT

Bible speaks about Dalits. Liberation theologians are trying to interpret and contextualize this concept in accordance with the Marxian perspective. The Hebrew term, *dall*, to languish, be weakened, be low, and be feeble.<sup>53</sup> Its different forms are constantly used in the Old Testament. More specifically, it has been used as an adjective, in order to denote the state of certain people. Generally, the root and related words indicate the people of low social status as opposed to those who are great or noble; people of straitened economic means as opposed of those who are wealthy, a people who are physically or socially weak as opposed to those who are powerful and strong.<sup>54</sup> A deeper sense and showing the process of reducing certain people into Dalit state are stated in Job 20:18-19; Psalm 79:8, Proverbs 14:31, Jeremiah 5:34.

Since New Testament perspective is more related to the spiritual aspect of man and its immediate focus is on the body concept, such a classification is not much necessitated. Instructions are given in the epistles on the Christian treatment in the master servant relationship. However, the Dalitness is not as clear as in the Old Testament. Apostles instructed the Church to remember the poor, the economically weak.

Prabhu concludes that the Biblical understanding of the poor could be spelled out in three prepositions.<sup>55</sup> The poor in the Bible form a *sociological* Group whose identity is recognized by the social situation. The poor in the Bible are a *dialectical group* whose identity is recognized by the antagonistic groups standing against them. The poor in the

---

<sup>53</sup> James Massey, 'The Role of the Churches in the Whole Dalit Issue,' *National Council of Churches Review* Vol. CXVI No.5 May-June (1996) 325-333.

<sup>54</sup> George M. Soares- Prabhu, 'Class in the Bible: The Biblical Poor or a Social Class?,' in rokiaswamy, G. Gispert- Sauch (eds.), *Liberation in Asia Theological Perspectives* (Gujarat: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1987), p. 34.

<sup>55</sup> Massey, 'Dalit Identity,' p. 34.

Bible are a *Dynamic group* who is not passive victims of history but those through whom the Lord shapes the history.<sup>56</sup>

Thus the Bible speaks about the materially and socially rejected peoples, the weak and feeble of the society. Though men and systems overthrow them, God is known as their helper and refuge. However, the Indian understanding of Dalits is primarily based on the caste system introduced by Aryanism.

#### **1.4. SOCIOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS**

The natives possessed an advanced civilization. Although, they are reduced to an insignificant people, they inherit a glorious past. They were hard working self-reliant, civilized and sincere. They were caring for the rest of the society while the priestly class concentrated on feeding their deities, the Dalits had to work in the field to feed the rulers and their military. They inherited cultural programs like folk dance and traditional entertainment.

Rev. Theophilus Appau of the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, has analyzed Dalit sociology with his own code EPSIPEGS.<sup>57</sup> E stands for Economics. Appau clarifies that the early ancestors of Dalits were rich and never depended on any for their meals. They had financial stability in the society. Nevertheless, Stanislaus has rightly pointed out, the caste system has brought the Dalits to the unfortunate economic conditions.<sup>58</sup> Hindu Religious laws did not permit them the right to make property, education, and complaints, but only to serve the upper castes.<sup>59</sup> Ambedkar argued that the caste system has its economic manifestation: First of all, it divides labourers, secondly it

---

<sup>56</sup> George, 'Biblical Poor,' p. 37.

<sup>57</sup> Theophilus Appau, Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary (Interview, 10 May 2000).

<sup>58</sup> Stanislaus, *Liberative Mission*, p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

disassociates work from interest; thirdly, it disconnects intelligence from manual labourers; fourthly, prevents mobilization; and above all, deprives Dalits of all economic avenues of employment and puts him nearly in the position of a slave.<sup>60</sup> Some economic changes have taken place during the British rule. Since 1947, Dalits are provided with some Constitutional privileges under Article 46, “the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker section of people and in particular SC/ST and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”<sup>61</sup> Reports prove that the provisions are only in the paper.

Dalit society traditionally followed self-governing set-up, a model for democratic governance but were driven away from Power. Now this powerless community has to fight for their privileges. Reservation technically offers some loaves of power to them practically they are away from the red carpets of power. There are enough examples of Dalit ministers and eminent Dalit IAS officers were humiliated, harmed or even killed by their high caste colleagues because of their intolerance towards them. Ambedkar himself is an example.

Dalits maintained equal social status in their community. In the early Dalit society, the family ties were very warm and delicate and the women were given due respect. In a small Dalit family also, intimacy is comparatively higher. Unfortunately, now Dalit women are not liberated duly.

Though majority of them are illiterates, they uphold ideological values. In the past, their religious practices and rituals were well knitted ideologically. Even their idols resembled their ideological stand. Their places of worship were natural, open and contextual. They worshipped both goddesses and gods equally and the nature.

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. P. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Their psychological expressions and emotions are instant and sometimes outbursting. Usually they are not hard heartened and never hatch any rivalry. They are loyal and least corrupted in the society.

They have a deep sense of environment. Though they are the sons of the soil, their place of living is very small and most of them possess only a piece of land because of oppression. Yet their animals, children, and relatives live closely and utilize the rest of the land for vegetation. Formerly they worshipped the nature and offered sacrifices to her.

They preserve the dignity of Gender relationship. In the Dalit society, there is an equal respect for both sexes. Mother is respected highly and symbolizes goddess.

Finally, Dalits value spirituality. Every action is the outcome of one's faith. In Dalit festivities, they enjoy complete transcendence by the way of singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments throughout night. They were relieved from their burdens of hard work by participating their religious gatherings. They adored anything for their utmost satisfaction and hated hypocrisy.<sup>62</sup>

## **1.5. PRESENT STATISTICS OF DALITS IN INDIA**

Dalits have improved considerably in various aspects of life in spite of many social, religious and Government hurdles. Recently (1994), the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, which was tabled on the Parliament points out that the share of the SCs and STs in various jobs and governance continues to be dismal.

For example, only one percent of ST and eight percent of SC candidates were employed in the Group A category of Indian embassies while the enormous chunk of the rest continues

---

<sup>62</sup> Appau, Interview.

to be with the upper castes.<sup>63</sup> Even in the other three groups of employment in the embassies, the percentage representation of SCs does not go beyond seven percent and of STs does not go beyond 1.20. The categories figure very badly in the employment profile of the Central government. In 1995, 10.12% SC candidates were holding Class I posts and the figure in the case of SSTs was still worse, 2.89%.<sup>64</sup>

In the area of judiciary, the report reveals that their share is negligible. In March 1982, the SC judges were a little more than one percent while none of them belonged to ST. Now within two decades, the figure does not change much. With the help of reservation, few got into the government services and there are stories of negligence and misrepresentation of them. Often special recruitment and concessions are only a public gimmick.

Recently, Supreme Court of India was much concerned about the Creamy Layer of the down castes. The intention behind such a move is alleged as a Brahman conspiracy to divide the marginalized economically into small fragments and abrogate their nominal benefits. The Communist regimes have succeeded in achieving many benefits to the depressed.

The down trodden have made progress politically. One has even rises to the level of becoming the President of India. Out of the sixteen Prime Ministers of India, just one was from the non-Brahmin background and did not permit him to complete his term.

Because the Prime Minister is the Executive Chief of the State. Except few places, they have to depend on the reservation seat to get an access to the corridors of powers. The

---

<sup>63</sup> Editorial, 'Where Do the Dalits Stand After 50 years of Aryan Rule,' in *Dalit Voice* Aug 16- 31, 2000.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

discriminated people are not shared adequate benefits of economical and technological advancements of the Republic. According to 1987-1088 reports, their ratio of poverty line is 57 in the rural area. The work force of the scheduled caste in 1991 was 1338,233,277. The literacy rate in 1991 was 37%, including 23.8 million women.<sup>65</sup>

After fifty years of independence, the country is not serious about groans and needs of this people. Aleyamma, comments that “Dalit problem is a combination of economic, social and religious issues. Unless there is a movement which tackles all the three areas of suppression full Dalit liberation may not be possible.”<sup>66</sup> The marginalized must strive together to cast down the thresholds of castiesm. Now the Brahmins are keen to re-convert many of them who uphold other faiths. Dalits should reject Aryan Dharma which made them condemned and come out of their villages where they are despised and limited and settle down in the urban culture in order to share the advantages of technological progress and create themselves economic stability needed for a better and more prosperous future.

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Aleyamma, *Religious*, p. 296.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. SOCIAL HISTORY OF DALITS IN KERALA

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter primarily deals with the historical analysis of the social structure and status of Dalits in Kerala. It consists of the Christian approach to the Dalits and the missionary activities among them. Unless the Dalit history is dealt with exclusively, their Christian history cannot be appraised.

A few factors must be considered in this historical study. Bernard Cohn, in his analysis of Indian society at the beginning of the nineteenth century has observed that the orientalist created a history in which the Dalits have little place. He acknowledged that even the missionaries, more accurately the Evangelicals also pursue the same device of installing the Brahmin as the head of the Society.<sup>67</sup> However, the nineteenth century was a turning point when there was a clear departure from the Brahminical theory of caste origins, in favour of more generalized speculative theories about racial conquest and mixture. And these documents were framed from data gathered out of direct observations and study from the life and practices of the natives.<sup>68</sup>

Webster points out that ethnographers have applied two assumptions in their treatment of Dalits and other castes. The chief factor was their caste title based on their line of descent. The second assumption was that the basic details about their traditional common occupations, beliefs, ceremonies and patterns of interaction with other castes did

not change much over time. Therefore, some of the facts and figures quoted might be outdated information.<sup>69</sup> Besides, in the administrative view of India, village was the basic unit of study more than caste. Because, the British government drew considerable income from land-revenue, and the administrators were particularly interested in the patterns of land holding in the villages for their survey and study.<sup>70</sup> However, Dalits rarely possessed any land of their own and were virtually excluded from the study. Therefore, historians may find difficulty in writing the history of the Dalits, depending on the official records. In turn of course the veracity of the present historical records are disputable.

## **2.2. A Historical Analysis of the Social Structure of Kerala**

Kerala, in the tourist language is “God’s own country”, has a long history and tradition as an integral part of India. This southern state stands different in various aspects from other states. Sreedhara Menon, a Kerala historian commented that “Kerala has had the distinction of being an independent geographical position and peculiar physical features have invested Kerala with a distinct individuality.”<sup>71</sup> A Popular Hindu mythology claims that Kerala was raised from the depth of the ocean. It is located between the Western Ghats in the east and the Arabian Sea on the west. Fifty percent of the population lives by agriculture. Kerala produces the dominant share of cash crops in India and is rich industrial potential and infrastructure facilities. Tourism is one of the main revenues of the state.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Webster, *The Dalit Christians*, p. 5-6.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History* (Madras: S.Viswanathan Printers & Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> [n.a], *India 2000, Research Reference & Tourism Development* ( New Delhi: Publication Division , Ministry of Information & Broad casting , Govt. of India), p. 762-765.

The earliest racial strain of people in the state was the Negritos and the Proto-Austroloids were, according to Menon, the main element in the Dravidians population, who descended from Mediterranean region, and occupied south India.<sup>73</sup> They were, some think as the founders of the Dravidian culture in south.<sup>74</sup> Some of their kinsmen moved to north and established the Indus valley civilization.<sup>75</sup> Aryans who came to the northern India, around 1500 BC., drove out the Dravidians of the valley. Such communities as Vellalas, Ezhavas, the Scheduled castes such as the Pulayas, Parayas and Kuravas are descendants of them.<sup>76</sup>

The Aryans, who entered Kerala two or three centuries before the Christian era, had changed the social fabric of then existing society and completed the present racial composition of the population of the state. Till the emergence of the Aryans, Philip argues that rigorous caste and communal barriers were unknown in the society.<sup>77</sup> There was large measure of freedom and equality among the people. The toiling classes were held in high esteem by the kings and the nobles. Women enjoyed high social status. Child marriage and women seclusion was unknown to them. Labor was considered with dignity and the people were divided in to tribes on the basis of their profession and the land they occupied.<sup>78</sup> Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. Foreign trades were also practiced in those days. Aryans brought advanced technologies to the production of crops and they had the knowledge of *rituchackra*, the knowledge of seasonal cultivation and they were holding key to economic production.<sup>79</sup> Menon comments that the Aryanization of Kerala

---

<sup>73</sup> Menon, *Survey*, p.3.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> A.T.Philip, *The Mar Thoma Church and Kerala Society* (Thiruvananthapuram: Juhanon Mar Thoma Study Centre, 1991), p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> A.Selvaraj, *The Impact of Christianity Upon the Dalits in Kerala : A Study of Transformation* ( D.Miss, SAIACS,1994), p. 6.

was a slow but steady process, which affected in subtle manner “not by the force of arms, but by the arts of peace.”<sup>80</sup> It ended in the final submission of the local Dravidian races to “the superior intelligence and administrative skill of the Brahmins of the North”.<sup>81</sup>

Philip observes that the early inhabitants did not practice any organized form of religious pursuit, rather it was a mixture of primitive rites and practices.<sup>82</sup> However, Jainism and Buddhism entered in to Kerala prior to the first century AD.<sup>83</sup> Kunjan Pillai comments that Buddhism was more popular in Kerala but Jains had deep roots in the northern part of the state.<sup>84</sup> Christian and Jewish presence emerged in Kerala right from the first century AD. but the former also invariably maintained the divided social culture. Abraham Thomas Vazhyil observed that “the Syrian Christians were more part and parcel of the high caste society of Kerala.”<sup>85</sup>

According to tradition, by eighth century AD. , Aryanization reached its climax,<sup>86</sup> the Buddhists were defeated and the Aryans established themselves in Kerala. They established Vedic Schools for the propagation of Manu Dharma.<sup>87</sup> Sree Sankaracharya was the most illustrious leader of Hinduism in the ninth century AD.<sup>88</sup> Local kings like Kulasekhara Alwar, Cheraman Perumal Nayanar and Viralminda Nayanar extended their sturdy support to the Aryan missionaries.<sup>89</sup>

Bishop Cald, who well formed the Church Missionary Society in Tinnevely, commended on the tactics employed by the Aryan immigrants in spreading their ideas. He said that

---

<sup>80</sup> Menon, *Survey*, p. 80.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Philip, *Mar Thoma*, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Selva raj, *Impact*, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Menon , *Survey*, p. 81.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Philip, *Mar Thoma*, p. 8.

The Aryan immigrants to the south appear to have been generally Brahmanical priests and instructors, rather than Kshatriya soldiers, and the kings of the Pandyan, Cholas, Kalingas and other Dravidians appear to have been simply Dravidian chieftains, whom their Brahmanical preceptors and spiritual directors dignified with Aryan titles, and taught to imitate and emulate the Solar, Lunar and Agni-kula race of kings.<sup>90</sup>

With their allegiance to the rulers, Aryans influenced the rich merchants by throwing open to them the trade route to north India.<sup>91</sup> Later, they declared the ruling class Kshatriyas and the trading class Vaisyas, belongs to the superior castes. Eventually, these classes considered their own kinsmen inferior in the society and the Brahmins established dominance above all other castes. Then they introduced changes in the society like, detaining the practice of eating beef and they condemned those who used it.<sup>92</sup> They denied privilege of education to the Sudras and low castes. They looked down both the women and widows and negated their privileges.<sup>93</sup>

They were very intolerant towards other faiths like Jainism and Buddhism. They had damaged images and temples of other religions in Karumadi and Pallickal.<sup>94</sup> Aryans introduced temples and festivals to hinder the growth of other faiths.<sup>95</sup>

The Chola-Chera war of eleventh century AD. led to far reaching economic and social changes in Kerala society.<sup>96</sup> The Brahmins, who were involved in the religious duties, in the name of war against Chola, began to mobilize military exercises. They established *Salais*, training schools, for arms training for Nambuthiri youths and compulsory *kalari*, Gymnasia, practices were introduced. They even organized a *Chavar*, suicide squad to vanish their enemies. Because of their participation in the battle, Brahmins

---

<sup>89</sup> Menon, Pp. 126-128.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 82.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p. 83.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p. 83.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 128.

made maximum advantages.<sup>97</sup> A new feudal system emerged as the Brahmins occupied all the properties of the temples and educational institutions attached to it. Moreover, during the critical period of the war, several ordinary tenants who owned land and properties transferred their possessions in toto to Nambuthiri Brahmins and temples. Because lands and endowments thus made overcome to be looked upon as Devaswams they enjoyed freedom from devastation by enemy forces as well as exemption from the payment of tax of the state. Thus emerged the *Janmi*, Land lords system, dominated by the Aryans.<sup>98</sup>

Another historical development of the after effect of the Chola-Chera war was the inception of Matrilineal or *marumakkathayam*, replacing the *traditional* Patrilineal, Makkathaya system, introduced by the Aryans.<sup>99</sup>

Due to the compulsory military training, many businessmen abandoned their carrier and subsequently, the foreign trades and the economy of the state declined. Both Buddhism and Jainism began to disappear and the Aryanization turned more organized and systematic on the basis of castes and sub castes.<sup>100</sup>

These social changes witnessed the break-up of the political unity of Kerala. The Viceroy or *Naduvazhis* of different nadus, provinces, asserted their independence. The state was divided in to different minor kingdoms and there were loggerheads between the local rulers.<sup>101</sup> E. Kunjan Pillai, a historian of Kerala suggests that

Conversion to Christianity at that time was permitted only to the people belonging to the higher levels of society who had real faith in the teachings of Jesus Christ. The Christian converts continue to practice the same social system and practices, as before, still another factor of the Christians was that they

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p.132.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 133.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Selvaraj, *Impact*, p. 10-11.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p.134.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

maintained a high standard of morality in trade business etc. It was not possible to distinguish a person as Hindu or Christian in those times merely by name.<sup>102</sup>

The landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut in May 1498 marked the beginning of a new era in Kerala history.<sup>103</sup> According to B.N. Puri, they entered India with the sword in one hand and cross in the other. Philip quotes the words of K.M. Panicker “That the Captain General’s (Vasco da Gama’s) ship flew at its mast a flag on which was painted a large cross of Christ and also carried cannon, symbols of the new power entering the East.”<sup>104</sup> Their main intention to bridging commercial relationship with India was hindered by the existing Muslim merchants of Calicut. In order to fulfill the Papal commission to evangelize India, they had to resist Muslim attack and to organize men who could join with them in the fight.<sup>105</sup> Most of the new converts were women who lived in marriage or concubine with Portuguese men. Ezahvas and the fisher men community also received their faith. Though Portuguese pleased the local rulers, they remained in conflict with the Brahmins.<sup>106</sup> Syrian Christians also invariably kept aloof from the foreigners. In one particular incident, a Syrian priest withdrew from the presence of the Portuguese clergy because of their association with the untouchables.<sup>107</sup> Portuguese succeeded in establishing their authority because they were able to build their fortress and maintained troops for the local rulers and cultivated friendly relations with minor chieftains and others whose co-operation was necessary for the procurement of spices.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> Philip, *Mar Thoma*, pp.12-13.

<sup>103</sup> Menon, *Survey*, p. 160.

<sup>104</sup> Philip. p.14.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Joseph Thekkedath, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. 2 ( Bangalore: Theological Publications in India,1982), Pp.19-20.

However, by seventeenth century, the situation turned in favour of Dutch who overthrew the power of Portuguese and wielded in Malabar more or less the same influence that the Portuguese had exercised before.<sup>109</sup> They had made some significant contributions to the religious and economic fields. They were unlike their predecessors, liberal and tolerant yet initially blamed for some religious aggression.<sup>110</sup> Later on, they built Churches and appointed native Latin Christians in some important positions.<sup>111</sup> They showed respect for Hindu sentiments and their temples and institutions were protected and well maintained religious harmony. They created conditions favorable for the revival of Kerala trade. Agriculture was upgraded with more scientific methods and exporting and importing systems were balanced.<sup>112</sup> However, the local king Marthanda Varma at the battle of Colachel defeated them in 1741.<sup>113</sup>

The Brahmin domination continued firmly because they possessed large portions of land in the name of temple trustees and matrimonial relationship with the royal families. Moreover, many Nambuthiries were made ministers of the rajahs and their spiritual preceptors. Nayars, who were the militia of the land, enjoyed considerable power in the state.<sup>114</sup> The lower classes such as the Barbers, Wassermann, Potters and Weavers were also practically Nayars. Other Hindu communities like tiyas or Ezhavas were farmers and never permitted to share the civic life of the society.<sup>115</sup> Muslims in north had some influence.<sup>116</sup> Jews also were present and they were divided by color.

---

<sup>109</sup> Menon, *Survey*, p. 210.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. p. 218.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 219

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. Pp.218-220.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p. 234.

<sup>114</sup> Selvaraj, *Impact*, p. 11.

<sup>115</sup> Menon, *Survey*, p. 226.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 228.

All untouchable castes were considered agrarian slaves, whose task was tilling the lands of their lords. They were mainly Pulayas, Parayas and Kuravas. Their masters had the power of life and death over their slaves. They had no access to the public roads in the presence of higher castes.<sup>117</sup> They were not admitted inside the house of their masters. History testifies the presence of numerous slaves with the upper caste masters. The ancestors report that the tax system was in favour of the high castes and Dalits were levied heavily. Death tax, Head tax, Breast tax, War tax, was the few among the many. Rev. Joseph, a Dalit Christian priest cites that tourists like Dr. Buckanan and Logan have mentioned in 1841 about the practice of slavery in Kerala.<sup>118</sup> There were slave- markets, where the slaves were sold and the master had right to sell or kill his servants. Though it seems that the Christians were against slavery, they also practiced it. The first Dalit convert in central Kerala, Habel, was a slave of one of the known Christian families in Kerala, the Modayil family.<sup>119</sup> A slave was sold at an equal cost of an ox and a slave couple cost only 200 to 300 rupees in Malabar, according to Bucknan.<sup>120</sup>

Slaves were classified in to different section such as war-captives, religious-slaves<sup>121</sup> and others those who were defiled by the low castes. However, Pulayas and Parayas were always considered as slaves. They were ill-treated inhumanely and cruelly. Bertholowmea, a foreign tourist recollects that he had witnessed the hanging of five Dalit men for killing a cow.<sup>122</sup> He also recorded the execution of a Channan for stealing a coconut from a Nair's house.<sup>123</sup> In case of suspicion of robbery, their ears and fingers were

---

<sup>117</sup> Joseph, *Hiistory*, p. 21-22.

<sup>118</sup> Rev. P.C. Joseph, *Poikayil Shri Kumara Guru* [ Poikayil Shri Kumara Guru-Mal] ( Thiruvalla: Chritsava Sahithya Samathy, 2000), p. 37.

<sup>119</sup> Rev. P.C. Joseph, 'Mahathaya Kaippatta Sambhavam' [ The Great Kaippatta Event- Mal], *C.S.I. Diocese of Madhya Kerala 140th Habel day Celebration Souvenir* , September 8, 1994. 7.

<sup>120</sup> Joseph, *Poikayil* , p.38.

<sup>121</sup> Those who violated the caste or religious rules.

<sup>122</sup> Joseph, p. 39.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

chopped off. In order to identify their slaves, masters used to mark on their slaves with hot-iron pieces. Chopping off the nose and breasts of slave women and men's sexual organs were the normal punishments. Some Dalits were branded as rebels and were buried their bodies up to the neck and had poured oil on their heads till they died and in some cases they were burned alive. In certain cases, their bodies were tied to two trees and torn apart. Many were hanged up side down for days together. Several of them were thrown to wild beasts.<sup>124</sup> Dalits were yoked with bulls and oxen in the fields and on roads. Hundreds of poor people were drowned for strengthening dams, a superstitious belief. Pulayas and Parayas were chained and taken to the slave markets. Numerous slaves were taken to the cities and to Cochin, except on Sundays. Some times, Church buildings were used to stable the slaves.<sup>125</sup>

Though the masters were supposed to feed their slaves, in many cases, they were not provided even for their minimum living. After hard labour from dawn to dusk, they starved and even man handled daily. Paul Chirackarodu, a popular Dalit leader in Kerala adds that the slaves were neglected when they become sick and most of them died in their hunger.<sup>126</sup> They had no social status or education facility. They were denied access in the temples, Churches and public places. The government also did not distribute justice to them and treated like animals.

By eighteenth century, there were three main provincial states in the southwest coast of India, namely, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. Twenty-six principalities have been identified as subordinate to these states. A contemporary document of 1747, however,

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Paul Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar Keralathil* [Dalit Christians in Kerala- Mal] (Thiruvalla: CSS, 2000), P.29.

identifies as many as seventy-five minor rulers in Kozhikode and Kochi.<sup>127</sup> The British got control of the states around 1800.

At the British rule, the old feudal system made way for a centralized administration by 1790. Many of the privileges of the high castes and the Syrian Christians were eliminated. During this time, the troops of Tippu, based in Kerala, had an anti-Christian attitude. They destroyed Churches and massacred Christians and priests.<sup>128</sup>

During nineteen and twentieth centuries, a new social system has emerged with various social and economical impacts. There were social and administrative reforms in view of modernizing Kerala.<sup>129</sup> Hereditary offices were eliminated and corrupt officials were dismissed. The judiciary and legal formalities were based on the Western principles demanding equal penalty for equal offense. Compulsory services in the Government without payment of remuneration was abolished and wage system was introduced.<sup>130</sup>

### **2.3. The Social Movements of Dalit Liberation**

The most important achievement of this period was the social movements developed in Kerala. M. Stephen, a proficient Pentecostal Dalit writer identifies two major reforms or protest movements in the period.<sup>131</sup> The Nadar and the Upper-Cloth Controversy. Muthgukutty Swamy was the main organizer of this movement that took place between 1820-60. The Nadars many of whom were not allowed to wear clothes above waist and their effort to do so was persecuted by Nairs. As a result the Government made an order in 1814 regulating the dress of women. The Nairs came to the extent of

---

<sup>127</sup> E.R.Hambye, *History of Christianity in India*, Vol.3 (Bangalore: The Church History Association of India, 1997), p.15.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.Pp.18-20.

<sup>129</sup> Menon, *Survey*, p. 221-222.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. Pp.324-27.

strip off the loose blouses or jackets of Nadar women. In spite of their complaints to the Government, the Nadars were beaten up and the Dewan made a declaration on 27th December 1858 in favour of the Nairs.<sup>132</sup> It created a situation of revolt. Government had to bend before the demand of the people, and in 1865, a new order was issued on the right to all lower castes to wear upper clothes.<sup>133</sup> Because of the agitation, the Government and Nairs had to recognize the dignity of the low castes and specially their women.<sup>134</sup>

The Cheramar Movement under Ayyankali, the charismatic leader of Pulayas, was the second agitation. He was born at Venganoor in Trivandrum.<sup>135</sup> Cheramers were denied the privilege of education and walking on the streets and education. Then he organized his people against this behaviour. Since he grasped the need of education, he started a school for Cheramers at Venganoor in 1904. In 1907, he founded the *Sadhu Jana paripalana Yogam*, the Assembly of the Depressed, for their socio-economic liberation.<sup>136</sup> He asked Pulayas not to work for Nair landlords until their children were permitted to enter in the schools.<sup>137</sup> After a long struggle, Pulayas were given representation in Sir Mulam Assembly, the then Legislative Assembly where Ayyankkali voiced for his people. Because of his determination, the Government granted them house sites, schools and employment in the Government departments.<sup>138</sup> He worked for political power of untouchables and their socio-economic freedom. Subsequently, Cheramers today enjoy improvement socially, economically and politically.

---

<sup>131</sup> M. Stephen, *A Liberated Vision* ( Delhi : ISPCK, 1999 ), p. 71.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p. 72.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p. 75-76.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.s

<sup>135</sup> Menon, *Survey*, pp. 328-329.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Stephen, Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Stephen, *Liberated*, p.75.

A third significant movement was the Ezhava Movement under the leadership of Sri Narayana Guru. He too revolted against Brahmin ascendancy and campaigned for the mitigation of the rigor of caste.<sup>139</sup> He proceeded ahead by installing separate deities and consecrated special places for the low-caste people against provocation of Brahmins. He fought against such practices as *Talikuttukalyanam*, *Tirandukuli* among Ezhavas and succeeded in dissuading people from these practices. Menon observes that “the work of Narayana Guru helped to rouse the Hindus from their age-long slumber and to give the Hindu religious reform movement in Kerala a social bias and practical run”.<sup>140</sup> Stephen opinions that this movement brought upward mobility of his community and impacted the nature of the traditional caste system.<sup>141</sup> However, now this community is well established politically and economically and they have emerged as a dominating ethnic group in Kerala.

Kerala, in the new millennium has a lot of developments in the social structure and economic fields because of the Christian influence and education. Now Kerala stands as an exemplary state for many other Indian states in education, social life and economy. However, she has an ignoble past.

### **2.3. Background of Dalits in Kerala**

Apart from Aryans, all others were considered as Dalits in Kerala. They were regarded as the children of the sea and jungle. They are the descendants of the Indus valley civilization. In the ancient days, Kerala had active business relationships with the Indus

---

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Menon, *Survey*. P.325.

<sup>141</sup> Stephen, p. 75.

valley. Teakwood, sandalwood, spices and beautiful birds were exported to them. Thus some of them were sheltered in the shore of Kerala during the Aryan invasion.<sup>142</sup> Hence they are known as the sons of the sea. While the other refugees settled down in the mountain areas in association with the tribal there and emerged as the sons of the jungles.<sup>143</sup> Aryans had no relation to the sea and they prohibited crossing the sea. They had no control over the sons of the sea. They did not therefore object to the conversion process of the European missionaries among the sons of the sea, in the 16th century. Syrian Christians, Muhammadeans and the Latin Christians are all belong to this group. Nairs, Ezhavas, Pualyas and Parayas were considered as the children of Jungles and they were dominated and exploited by the Brahmins. When Protestant missionaries converted them, the Aryans strongly protested it.<sup>144</sup>

Joseph recorded that “according to the 1836 Census report, there were 1,64,864 slaves in Travancore, including in the government custody. Logon has recorded in the Malabar Manual that there were 1,57,758 slaves in Malabar. It was the account of the Pulayas alone”.<sup>145</sup> The way is now open to for a brief explanation of various catagories of the Dalits.

### **2.4.1 The Pulayas**

Bishop Caldwell opined that they were the earliest race of inhabitants in Kerala.<sup>146</sup> They were the slave community in a caste-based society. He explained, “ I consider the black low caste races of southern India not Turanians, or immigrants of any sort, but

---

<sup>142</sup> Dalit Bandhu , `Sanchara patham' Orbit in Thomas Kadankavil (ch.ed.), *Dalit Ekopanam: Chila Ulkazchakal* [*Dalit Solidarity: Some Insights - Mal*] ( Kottayam: Centre for Dalit Solidarity, 1999), p. 42.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. P. 43.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Joseph, *Poikayil*, p. 43.

aborigines, like the Negroid aborigines of the Eastern Islands and Australia.”<sup>147</sup> The term *pulaya* is derived from the word *pula*, indicating a ceremonial pollution, taint or defilement. Because of their social immunity, they were forced out of the streets and common places. They were traditional slaves and illiterates.

Pulayas were divided into three divisions. Ina Pulayas considered superior. The Tandu Pulayas used to wear grass. Finally, the Kana Pulayas, they used to wear better and more artificially made aprons.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, they were divided in to western and eastern Pulayas. Due to their economic inadequacy and landlessness, they constructed simple houses with grass and wood. They were not permitted to wear ornaments or clean dress.<sup>149</sup> They had to work in the fields extensively and were paid very low, sometimes in kind not in cash. They were punished brutally even for simple mistakes. In order to relieve from the pain of the hard labour, they used intoxication and during their festivities, they dance and sing through out the night. They had to depend on their masters to the extent that they had to get permission from their masters for their personal needs like marriage and children. They were considered as objects of transaction.<sup>150</sup>

L.A. Krishna Iyer comments on their religion, “the Pulayas are animists, but are slowly coming on to the higher forms of worship. Their gods are Parakutty, Karinkutty, Chathan and the spirits of their ancestors.”<sup>151</sup> They maintained their own pooja systems and appointed own priests. They were not idol-worshippers and Bhagavathi was their main

---

<sup>146</sup> J.W. Gladstone , *Protestant Christianity and the People's Movement in Kerala* (Trivandrum: Seminary Publications, 1984), p. .33.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Bandhu, ‘Sanchara’, p. 43.

<sup>149</sup> Gladstone, *Protestant*, p. 35.

<sup>150</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 26-27.

<sup>151</sup> Gladstone, p. 36.

goddess. Temples were unknown to them. They were freed from their clutches of bondage only at the 'Declaration of slavery' in 1853 and 1855.<sup>152</sup>

#### **2.4.2 The Parayas**

Before the Aryan invasion, they possessed higher position and lands. There are several similarities in the traditions and customs between Parayas and Brahmins.<sup>153</sup> Though he hold ancestral possessions and titles in some parts of the country, other parts, their life was miserable. During Aryan occupation, they bribed Brahman priests and took shelter under them.<sup>154</sup> However, they consider themselves superior to other low castes but despised by others because they were eating carrion. They were bought and sold like cattle, starved, flogged like buffaloes and socially discriminated by denying all privileges.<sup>155</sup> They too followed own religion and worshipped devils. They engraved stone images and made blood sacrifice to their ancestors.<sup>156</sup>

Edgar Theston observed that "almost all Parayas became Christians; so they gained status in the society; they were liberated from the oppressed social condition of struggles."<sup>157</sup>

#### **2.4.3. The Kuravas**

They were one of the early tribes of Kerala, inhabited in the southern part. Kuravas were divided in to Kuravas, Kakka Kuravas, Kunda Kuravas, and Malankuravas.<sup>158</sup> Tradition says that they had their own kings and kingdoms.<sup>159</sup> At the time of aggression, they took refuge in the hills and were made cultivators for their conquerors. They were

---

<sup>152</sup> Joseph, *Poikayil*, p. 44.

<sup>153</sup> Chirackkarodu, p. 25.

<sup>154</sup> Gladstone, *Protestant*, P. 37.

<sup>155</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 28.

<sup>156</sup> Gladstone, p. 37-38.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

also denied their rights and privileges in the society. John Knox wrote to the then Foreign secretary of the London Missionary Society that “the Nairs and Syrian Christians who mastered them were not willing to distribute any favours to them and resisted any attempt to improve their condition, because they were afraid that they were shown justice, their own profit would be lost”.<sup>160</sup> They were denied admission in the school begun by the missionaries for Pulayas. As a result, in 1885, it was reported that “hardly a man among could read and all of the women were illiterate.”<sup>161</sup>

They worshipped the spirits of the dead and offered to mountain gods every year and they gathered in small temples where used rude stone images to represent the spirits and their own priests ministered there.<sup>162</sup>

#### **2.4.4. The Hill Aryans**

They situated in the eastern mountain parts of Kerala. They possessed own houses at the height of two to three thousand feet, from the sea level.<sup>163</sup> They are more civilized than any hill tribes like Mannars and Muthuvans. Many of them own large areas of land and cultivated it. Though mountains were far from plains, the Brahmins claimed ownership and charged tributes from them.<sup>164</sup> This innocent people were exploited by the plain educated people and the Government officers. The Nairs forced them to offer fowls and rice at their annual festivals, though they had no relation to other religions. Even Syrian Christians as well as the Muslim traders exploited them and looted their jungle resources.<sup>165</sup>

---

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p.43.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p. 44.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Chirackaarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 25.

<sup>163</sup> Gladstone, *Protestant*, p. 40.

<sup>98</sup> Bandhu, ‘Sanchara’, p. 44.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

The reason for exploitation was lack of protectors and leadership. They became easy prey to wild animals and natural calamities. They also worshipped ancestors and heroes.

Roman Catholics began their work among them in the 16th century under the leadership of Archbishop Menezes. They believed that Christianity would release them from their burdens.<sup>166</sup>

## 2.5. Dalits and the Church

Most Kerala Christians boast about their apostolic heritage. However, till the coming of the Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century, the large population of Dalits had not been reached or positively influenced by the so-called Kerala Indian Christians.

The Catholic Bishop's Conference of India in 1985, with 115 of all their Bishops decided to set apart a separate Commission for the welfare of the Christians of Scheduled Castes, tribes and backward classes. In their Justice Sunday worship Order, they confessed that:

Although our unity and fellowship in Christ transcends all man-made differences, we ourselves as Christians are not free from such discriminations against our sisters and brothers of Scheduled caste origin. Hence we begin this celebration by reviewing our life and asking for *their* pardon and God's forgiveness.<sup>167</sup>

It reveals the attitude of Roman Catholic Church towards Dalits. It was for the first time such a confession of the Church, after 440 years of their history in the missionary enterprise in India since the time of the pioneer Francis Xavier.

---

<sup>166</sup> Gladstone, *Protestant*, p. 40.

<sup>167</sup> Rev. M. Azariah, 'Church's Concern for 'Dalit' Christians', *The South Indian Church Man* August (1986) 3.

The western missionaries were not exceptional. In fact, the first Protestant missionary, who arrived in Kerala, initially focused on the development of the Syrian Church. Rev. Dr. Claudius Buchanan was deputed by Lord Wellesly to inquire in to the state of Christians in Malabar and he visited Travancore in 1806.<sup>168</sup> He proposed certain reforms and union, in the Church. Mar Dionysius admitted that some extra-scriptural<sup>169</sup> practices prevailing in the Church. Yet the Bishop did not commit himself to any agreements.<sup>170</sup> Buchanan spoke of the possibility of associating and assisting the Syrian Churches in Travancore. Colonel Munro, the then Travancore Resident also welcomed the suggestion and Church Missionary Society carried it out. In 1813 Colonel Munro made a special order to assess the social condition of the Syrians and observed that they were behind secular and theological education. Therefore, he established two colleges to train children from fifty-two Syrian parishes.<sup>171</sup> This “old Seminary ” building still remains in the middle of the town of Kottayam, central Kerala.<sup>172</sup> The Church Missionaries spent their initial twenty years working among the Syrians. They believed that by reviving these Christians, they would reach the entire nation for Christ. Moreover, they were delighted to see a group of Christians among the pagans in the east.

Ten Brink made a thorough study on the contribution of the missionaries to the Syrian community for his Doctoral programme and presented the following observations.

1. Syrians are benefited of the translation of the Bible in to Malayalam language.
2. The restoration of the preaching of the Word to public worship.
3. Public worship in the known language of the people.
4. Higher level of education among both clergy and laity.
5. The promotion of civil liberties and social reforms.
6. A growing sense of mission and concern for evangelism.

---

<sup>168</sup> Chirackkarodu, Dalit Christavar, p. 71.

<sup>169</sup> Extra-Scriptural implies the pagan practices adopted in the Church.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. P. 74.

<sup>171</sup> C.M.Augur, *Church History of Travancore* ( New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990) , p. 78-79.

<sup>172</sup> Chirackkarodu . Pp. 70-72.

7. The Church Missionary Society Press
8. Marriage of the parish priests.
9. Sunday schools in the Churches.<sup>173</sup>

Moreover, they had constructed and renovated many parish buildings.<sup>174</sup> However, Syrians, after enjoying all the benefits from missionaries, did not remain loyal to them. Syrians ridiculed them when they preached from the street corners instead of the thronos, the altar of the Church. Some of the Syrian bishops distrusted their proposed ecclesiastical reforms and rebuked them. Missionaries were embarrassed and humiliated by Syrians and finally missionaries had to resolve to sever their association with them. The reconciliatory efforts of Bishop Wilson of Calcutta and the resolutions of the Kottayam Synod of 1935 also failed. Finally, the bewildered missionaries determined to set out for separate missions in Kerala.<sup>175</sup>

Nevertheless, in the eternal plan of God, the time was fulfilled to deliver the oppressed people of Kerala. The missionary activities among the Dalits will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Fortunately, Protestant faith reached to southern Travancore by the effort of a Dalit Christian. Maharasan was the instrument in this great task.

### **2.5.1. Veda Manickiam and the Mylaudi Church**

Maharasan was born of a Dalit background in the village of Mylaudi near to Nagarcoil, in south Travancore.<sup>176</sup> Agur, the historian, records that his ancestors, a few generations before were cultivators near Tanjore in the Chola kingdom, and unable to bear the persecutions and cruelties from the government officials, they left their native land and

---

<sup>173</sup> E.L. Ten Brink, *The C.M.S Mission of Help to the Syrian Church in Malabar, 1816-1840* (England : University Micro films, 1960), pp. 262-279.

<sup>174</sup> Agur, *Church History*, p. 983.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid* . Pp. 982-994.

settled down Vallanad east of Palayamkottai. Here also their life became miserable due to the attack of the Maravars and finally he moved to a peaceful country comparatively, Travancore, which was known as the “Land of Charity”.<sup>177</sup> Most of them though farmers, well-versed in Astrology, medicine, poetry and women of the family were also said to have practiced those arts.<sup>178</sup> Traditionally their family was Shivites and Maharasan was brought up in the orthodox practice of Hinduism. As he grew, known as an honourable devotee and made several pilgrimages Hindu temples. During his pilgrimage to Chidambaram temple along with his nephew Shivagurunathan, he was sadly disappointed when he saw wickedness and impiety with in the sacred courts.<sup>179</sup> So he decided to return in the next morning. His mind was very much disturbed and in the sleep he saw venerable white man attired in bright robes and holding a stick asking him: “ Know you not yet that all come here merit punishment You have unwarily taken a dangerous step in coming to this place? Though we chide you thus, yet we are willing to forgive you if you will only correct yourself. Without therefore a moment’s delay retrace your steps, we shall guide your way.”<sup>180</sup> With a perplexed as well as curious mind he reached his sister’s house in Tanjore. It was the only place in south India where Protestant missionaries were working and Christianity began to flourish there through the ministry of Rajnaickan who became a believer.<sup>181</sup> Along with him, Sathyanathan joined in the ministry and with much hardship, the Church grew there. By the time Maharasan reached his relatives they were members of the Church of Rev. John Casper Kohlhoff.<sup>182</sup> While Maharasan was attending Christian worship and later listened to the Word he realized the meaning of his earlier dream. After

---

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p. 424.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 424 -425.

<sup>178</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 40.

<sup>179</sup> Augur, *Church History*, Pp. 430-433.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 43.

reading the book *True Wisdom*, given by the missionary, he adhered the truth of the gospel and Kohlhoff baptized him. The Pastor was very happy about his conversion and referred him as the “the first fruit of Travancore for Christ”.<sup>183</sup> Rev. Kohlhoff called him Veda *Manickam*, “the Germ of the Bible” and his nephew Sivagurunathan in to *Masillamani*, “the spotless Germ”.<sup>184</sup>

After his conversion, the missionaries trained him in the Word for a short time. Vedamanickam was eager to propagate the gospel in Travancore but missionaries were afraid of the superstitious Hindus would kill him. However, Vedamanickam returned to his place and started preaching the gospel to his people and about thirty people were converted.<sup>185</sup> It was the First Protestant Church in Kerala. Unfortunately, some of the believers were not completely abstain from their idol worship and black magic, even though, he resisted it strongly. In his second visit to Kohlhoff, Vedamanickam insisted to send some missionary to south Travancore and invited Rev. Ringeltaube to visit Mylaudi.<sup>186</sup>

Vedamanickam and his believers were under constant persecution from the local Hindus because there were no missionaries to protect them. At once, Rev. Kohlhoff sends his assistant Sathyanathan to Major Maculay with a letter to revoke the persecution against Christians for which he was very positive.<sup>187</sup> Rev. Ringeltaube also requested the government to tackle the situation under control. He delighted to work among the oppressed and poor people in Mylaudi and expressed his intention to build a parish hall in Mylaudi. Though lots of land were waste there, the Dewan , Velu Thampi Delwa did not

---

<sup>182</sup> Augur, Pp. 435-437.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. p. 440-441.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. Pp. 439-442.

<sup>185</sup> Chirackarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 46-47 .

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. p. 49.

allot an inch of land towards the religious demand of the Dalit Christians. He was a self-willed, crafty, Hindu fanatic, afraid of the spread of Christianity in Travancore. In 1807, Ringeltaube returned to Mylaudi and baptized about 40 Dalit Christians.<sup>188</sup> The missionary advised Vedamanickam to construct a small chapel in his own property without the permission of the King. Finally, Ringeltaube purchased a piece of plot at the boundary of Travancore and named it Canannore.

Dewan and the King, out of their religious insanity, agitated against the British and under the leadership of Kunjukutty Pillai, the Nair army dismembered nine Christian priests and as many as three thousand Christians in Travancore. Colonel Maculay himself testified about the floating bodies in the sea.<sup>189</sup> After the fierce battle, Syrian Christians became enemies to the Dalit Converts and accused them for the cause of the war. Dalits always remained loyal to the missionaries. Vedamnackam was branded as a spy and traitor and the king ordered to appear before him. Manickam realized the danger and he and his people escaped in to the jungles of Maruthva and remained there in fasting and prayer. They spent thirty-three days in the forests and had a dream of his deliverance after three days.<sup>190</sup> Indeed, British army defeated the local army and the Christians were liberated from their persecutions. The government granted them the land and in 1809, the first Protestant Church was constructed at Mylaudi.<sup>191</sup>

### **2.5.2. The Mallappally Movement**

Indeed, the first Protestant work of the Church Missionary Society started in 1838 after their separation from Syrian Church. They began to focus on the depressed

---

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.p. 50.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.p. 57.

<sup>189</sup> Augur, *Church History*, Pp. 528-536.

<sup>190</sup> Chirackarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 64-65.

untouchables in central Travancore. Missionaries realized that the slave communities were more open to the gospel, which would liberate them from social anathema.<sup>192</sup> Thus they initiated welfare programmes for their social development and spiritual deliverance. The Mallappally Movement was the most important event in this great feat.

Daivathan was the only son of Mailan and Anima, a slave couple of Modayil Pothan's family. While he was disposing the remains of the black magic in the brook, Daivathan heard a sound telling him "the works that he does is wrong and there is a living God."<sup>193</sup> In another occasion, he became very much discouraged against the slave customs and he resolved to depart from all these heathen practices. He decided to find the living God and disclosed his desire to his master Mr. Pothan, who encouraged him.<sup>194</sup>

Rev. T.S. Rangging, the C.M.S. Madras correspondent proposed to initiate a work among the poor and asked Rev. J. Hawksworth to supervise the work. In the year 1850, Rev. Rigland visited Travancore. During his visit at Mallappally parish, he heard the melodious singing of the Pulaya women from the field. He was attracted to them and was informed about all their sufferings. In consultation with Rev. Hawksworth, popularly known as the Apostle of the Depressed Classes and Rev. George Mathan, the native Syrian priest, they decided to educate this people in a thatched shed at Kaippetta. It was a school in the sense, a four-pillared thatched shed with a mud wall at the height of three feet.<sup>195</sup> However, local high caste people did attack them and in many times, they burn down the shed. In order to motivate their education, missionaries promised them paying five rupees to those who attend the school. They readily made available themselves to learn from the

---

<sup>191</sup> Augur, *Church History*, p. 552.

<sup>192</sup> Joseph, *Souvenir*, p. 56

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

missionaries. In spite of persecutions, Rev. George Mathan boldly continued this *Adima Pallikudam*, the Slave School, where thirty pupils were trained.<sup>196</sup> It was a great reform task in those days because education was prohibited to the backward classes. In 1854 September sixth, rain was pouring down heavily and streams were flooding every where. Missionaries swam through the waters and reached the Church and all were wet. At the arrival of the missionaries, the slaves also reached there. The missionaries were thrilled by the enthusiasm of the Dalits. There were thirty people ready for baptism but only eight people were baptized including Daivattan, who was named Habel.<sup>197</sup> Thereafter, there was mass conversion from the Dalit communities. Rev. George Mathan and the parish people were considered socially desecrated because they had accepted the low caste people in to the Church. However, many schools were opened and the mission fields were increasing. Nairs devised new methods of aggression against the new converts. They burned down their Churches and schools. Dalits, standing on the ashes of their Churches and schools pledged and declared “ here we have seen our God and we will worship Him here”.<sup>198</sup>

John Cox, a missionary recollected “our people are calumniated and punished upon false representations, while by tacit connivance of the higher authorities - they are insulted - degraded, and robbed and have no redress”.<sup>199</sup> At the eighth anniversary of the first baptism, Bishop Gell from Madras visited Travancore and delightfully conducted the Confirmation service to more than one thousand Dalit converts. The ministry spread around the neighboring areas like Chelakombu, Enath, Perunthuruthy, Kadamuri, Kangazha, Kothattukulam, Moovattupuzha, Kothala, Pampady, and Ranni where many

---

<sup>195</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalits Christavar*, p. 84-85.

<sup>196</sup> Rt. Rev. T.B. Benjamin, `Habel Dhinam : Charithraparamaya oru Avalokanam ‘ [ Abel’s day : A Historical Evaluation -Mal], *140th Habel Day Celebration Souvenir* , p. 1-2.

<sup>197</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 88.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid. p. 85.

<sup>199</sup> Gladstone, *Protestant*, p. 79.

Dalits turned to Christian faith. Rev. Henry Becker and Rev. Joseph Peet also encouraged the mission among the backwards.

Nevertheless, there were no theological schools for their new Evangelists and in his return to England, Rev. Hawksworth informed the people about the need of their education. So they contributed two hundred and fifty pounds which they collected in memory of a Cambridge Professor, Nicholson and entrusted Hawksworth to undertake the building project at Kottayam. He built the school, namely, Cambridge Nicholson Institute. The Veloor Church is the out come of this Institute, working among the outcastes.<sup>200</sup> After twenty-five years of the first baptism, Dalit population in the Church incredibly enhanced and many of them made local pastors and school teachers. Moreover, one of them became the member of the Sree Moolam Praja Assembly, the Travancore government. Dalit Christians should remember Rev. George Mathan for his hardwork for the conversion of Dalits. Thus Mallappay Church stands as the monument of the first conversion from the untouchables in Central Kerala.

## **2.6. Results of Christian Missions among Dalits**

This work will not be completed if the contributions of missionaries are not acknowledged. East India Company was not positive towards the missionary endeavors because they feared exertion in their business prospects. They believed their religious involvement might adversely effect their trade links. However, William Ringeltaube began his work in the southern part of Kerala in 1806 without the permission of the government, but was sanctioned in 1809. Thus London Missionary Society began to work

---

<sup>200</sup> Rt. Rev. T.B. Benjamin, *Souvenir* , p. 2-3.

first in south.<sup>201</sup> They became instrumental in the conversion of Maharasan of Mylaudi. They also have contributed towards the re-structuring of Kerala society.

Fortunately, with keen interest and hard work of Charles Grant, William Wilburforce and Colonel Munro, in 1813, Protestant missions were given permission to share their faith with Indians which benefited Dalits ultimately.<sup>202</sup>

Resident John Munro was responsible for introducing the Church Missionary Society to Kerala and they commenced their work in 1816 under the leadership of Thomas Norton.<sup>203</sup> He was invited to help the ancient Christians in Kerala. However, the missionaries and Syrians did separate themselves.

In 1834, Basel Evangelical Missionary Society commenced its work at Mangalore, on the west coast of south Canara. The first missionaries to arrive there were Revs. Hebich, Lehner and Greiner. They established centers at Tellicherry and Nettur in 1839 as a beginning point. In due course, the work spread to other stations at Canannore, Calicut, Kodakkal and in Palaghat.<sup>204</sup> They involved in education translation, literature, journalism and printing.

Though the primary aim of the missionaries was to proclaim the Gospel they felt the need of social concerns and philanthropic services for the natives. Indeed, missionaries had direct access to the colonial administration, but they did not depend fully on the government machinery to achieve their goal. Historian K.M.Panickar, and the first Prime

---

<sup>201</sup> J.W.Gladstone, Christian Missionary Work and Socio- Religious Movements in Kerala 1850-1910 in *Indian Church History Review*, Vol XXX, No.1, June, 1986, p. 30-31.

<sup>202</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Daliit Christavar*, Pp.37- 39.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Wilma John , The Basel Mission and Socio-Economic Revolution in Malabar in K.C.John (ed) *hristian Heritage of Kerala* ( Cochin : Fr. George Veliparambil, 1981 ), Pp. 251-253.

Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru have critically concluded otherwise.<sup>205</sup> They were very serious about the oppression and suppression of the untouchables. Protestant missionaries gave much priority for promoting English education which would in turn enable them to stabilize power in India. Ringeltaube, the first Protestant missionary in Kerala had schools attached to all his congregations.<sup>206</sup> In 1827, Church Missionary Society had seven schools with hundred students. In 1830, the London Missionary Society had ninety-seven schools with 3100 pupils.<sup>207</sup> Education provided self-identity and discipline to the depressed classes and the realization of social discriminations which empowered them to demand their rights and privileges. Moreover, it equipped them for government jobs and better opportunities in life. Missionary schools enabled many caste children to come together. Till the last quarter of the nineteenth century, all the government schools were admitted only the higher caste students.<sup>208</sup> Gladstone confirms that “English education was one of the dynamic factors which instilled the suppressed sections of the society with a strong desire for emancipation.”<sup>209</sup>

When the society was split in to castes and sub castes, Dalits became the victims of the discriminations. However, the privilege of education intensified their battle for social privileges and the missionaries endorsed it. Webster points out that “both G.A.Oddie and Duncan Forrester have published important studies of the Protestant missionary attitude toward caste during the nineteenth century. These indicate that by the 1850s Protestant missionaries achieved a consensus not only in condemning caste but also in trying to

---

<sup>205</sup> Chirackarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 36.

<sup>206</sup> Gladstone, *Indian Church*, p. 31.

<sup>207</sup> Gladstone, *Protestant*, p. 71.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72.

<sup>209</sup> *Indian Church*, p. 32.

eliminate caste within Churches.”<sup>210</sup> In fact, some Indian Christians had even confused the missionaries on the best strategy for removing the caste barrier within. Oddie and Foresster have also shown that missionaries pioneered in mixing castes, including Dalits, within their schools despite opposition from higher caste parents.<sup>211</sup> Because of their relation to the British rulers and their strong stand against caste discrimination, the poor people were inclined to the missionaries. They relied on missionaries for their solution. Augur observed that “ the first spectacle that would often strike Ringeltaube on his return to his house from the visits was the numerous long Cadjan petitions (written in Palmyra leaves) the people used to hang on the low roof of the Verandha of his small Bunglow.”<sup>212</sup> The missionaries always helped them whatever possible through the Resident. However, the government made a declaration in 1829 against approaching anybody other than the appointed government officials.<sup>213</sup> Brahmins and Nairs realized the danger of social freedom of weaker communities and demanded no change in the established customs, caste rulers and social relationships. Thus Church Missionary Society along with William Wilbourforce fought for the abolition of slavery. In 1835, Benjamin Bailey and Joseph Peet freed all the slaves who were given by the Travancore government at Munro Shore. Munro Island Declaration was a historic event in favour of Dalit Christians.

We the undersigned, acting as trustees of Munro Island, do hereby declare that... who has hitherto been slave of the soil, inform this time liberated by us and made a free man, and that his life and offspring are wholly and forever free and are regarded by us only as hired servants and that no one has any right to bring them into servitude again. At the same time we declare that we do not consider ourselves as released from any just claim which he or his wife or offspring may have upon us according to the custom, privileges or law in consequence of their having been slaves.

---

<sup>210</sup> Webster, *Dalit Christians*, p. 37.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.p. 38.

<sup>212</sup> Gladstone, *Indian Church* , p. 32.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

`8th Mar 1835'.

Benjamin Bailey , Joseph Peet' <sup>214</sup>

By this declaration the missionaries not only pronounced that the commitment of the slaves to missionaries is to be seized and the response of the missionary care for the slaves still continues. In 1847, Rev. Mead, Mault, Bailey and Baker and their brethren approached the Government of Tranvanore to plead the entire emancipation of the whole slaves, about 165,000 in Travancore and Cochin. They proposed various measures for the emancipation of their wretched condition, on the lines of the humane and liberal policy followed by the British and other European Governments.<sup>215</sup> However, the Government did not consider it for five years and always replied evasively. The Church and missionaries are responsible for both the Royal declarations in favour of Backwards. Firstly, emancipation of all future children of Government slaves and abolition of all restrictions in regard to the covering of their upper parts of Shanner women in south Travancore.<sup>216</sup>

The missionaries were very serious about the deteriorating health and hygiene of the down-caste people. One of the missionaries wrote, "... although our great work is to promote the eternal interest of the people, we cannot but feel for these poor sufferers; and if consistently with our higher projects we can procure for them some relief from their temporal distress, it is our delight to do so."<sup>217</sup>

The missionaries campaigned for the cause of social privileges of the converts. Lower caste people were not permitted to walk on the public streets. In 1851 an Ezhava

---

<sup>214</sup> K.I.Ninan, *Sabha Charithra vijinthanangal : Anglican Kalghattam* [ Church History Evaluations: Anglican Period - Mal], ( Thiruvalla: Christava Sahitya Samathi, 1997), p. 42.

<sup>215</sup> Augur, *Church History*, p. 891.

<sup>216</sup> Philip., *Mar Thoma Church*, p. 18.

<sup>217</sup> Gladstone, *Indian Church*, p. 33-34.

Hindu convert, Cherian by name, was not allowed to walk on the road near to the eastern gate of the temple road at Thiruvalla. The missionaries took the matter with the Dewan and he forthrightly refused the privilege. The Government declared that the religion would not make the change of caste. It was the practice that the lower caste people were not paid for their wages from the higher castes. Devasahayam, a convert and seven others refused to work without payment. They were brutally beaten and Devasahayam died out of injuries. The missionaries took the matter to the notice of the British administration and assured that the workers must be paid for their labour.<sup>218</sup>

Another significant contribution of the missionaries to the Dalits was the Declaration of equal privilege in the Church. In the Travancore -Cochin Anglican Church, the backwards were the dominating population. The mass movement in Travancore was a milestone in the history of Anglican Church.<sup>219</sup> Missionaries always pleaded for the unity and equality of the backwards and Syrians in the Church. Many of the Syrian priests and laymen ridiculed the emphasis of harmony. Missionaries provided food, cloth and place of worship to the new converts. The new social arrangement was not acceptable to the traditional Christians. Thus missionaries had to construct separate Churches for the low castes. The masters and slaves were reluctant to sit together and worship the same Lord. Some Syrians quit the Anglican Churches in Kollad and Pallam of Kottayam District of Kerala. In the Nedungada Church, when the backwards entered the Church through the main access, the Syrians jumped out of the Churches through windows. They maintained separate cemeteries for Syrians and Dalits.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>218</sup> Ibid. p. 36-37.

<sup>219</sup> Webster, *Dalit Christians*, p. 33.

<sup>220</sup> Ninan, *Sabha Charithra*, p. 44.

**The Magna Carta of Dalit Christians** was a significant contribution of the missionaries. The very outset of the gathering was so gorgeous that Bishop Gill with all his royal robes, appeared at the pulpit of Kottayam Cathedral on 25th August 1909, declaring the equality and fraternity of the new converts and Syrian background. This was an amiable settlement over the dissension in the Cambridge Nicholson Institute, where the Dalit converts were made to sit on the floor instead of with the Syrians. So three Dalits discontinued their studies. In the Congregation, Bishop emphasized that both the Dalits and Syrians are equal before God and all are one before Him and the missionary intention was not to start another Syrian Church in Travancore-Cochin. The Bishop handed over the Declaration to the people.<sup>221</sup>

Later, Syrians changed their attitude and began to associate with Dalits, might be to seize their leadership. By the middle of nineteenth century, the Backward population in the Church was about forty thousand and the Syrians were only three thousand but they hold all the powers.<sup>222</sup> Missionaries never encouraged the 'baptized heathenism' in their conversion enterprises. Due to the high caste sponsored persecution, the missionaries had to allot special 'Mission Compound' to the Dalits.<sup>223</sup> The writer is familiar with such a compound and the facilities provided to the converts at Kattampackal, Kottayam District, Kerala.

Moreover, while sponsoring their material needs, the missionaries did not fail to discipline them spiritually. Many of the new converts were struggling with their old pagan practices and polygamy. However, they were trained and disciplined in these areas also.<sup>224</sup>

---

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.p. 45.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Chirackarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 94.

<sup>224</sup> Ninan, *Sabha Charithra*, p. 46.

Any genuine observer will inquire about the reasons, why did the missionaries failed to develop a wellunited Church in Kerala? Ninan observes that Church Missionary Society missionaries lacked any industrial culture like the Basel missionaries. The condition in the Malabar Coast was not the same in the south. Thus the caste barriers were eliminated to an extent.<sup>225</sup> Dalits were conscious of the Syrian ill treatment meted out on them and they were not confident of depending on them than the missionaries. So the converts always related themselves to the missionaries than the natives. The charity of missionaries was another factor that the backwards did not relay on the Syrians. Psychologically, Dalit minds were more committed to the missionaries than the local leaders.

Finally, Dalits cannot ignore the numerous benefits in several areas, patronized by the missionaries. It is true that, had the Protestant missionaries were not arrived in Kerala, the Church would have been as a monoethnic, Syrian amily fellowship.

---

<sup>225</sup> Ibid. p. 47.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. DALITS AND KERALA PENTECOSTALS

#### 3.1. Introduction

The prime focus of this chapter is to explore the relationship and contribution of Dalits to the Pentecostal Church in Kerala. In order to understand Kerala Pentecostal history, two things should be considered. First of all, it was written after many decades of its origin. Thus, much related data was not available for reference. Secondly, though the movement consists of different ethnic groups, there is an ethnic predominance by a section of the Church and they are mainly the writers of the history. Therefore, it is true that the present history is biased. Regarding the documentation of Pentecostal history of Kerala, writers like Saju<sup>226</sup> and Daniel Ayoor<sup>227</sup> have acknowledged their limitations of sources and materials in the writing.

T.P.Abraham, General Secretary of the Sharon Fellowship, a Pentecostal Church in Kerala has described reasons for it. Firstly, there are too many divisions in the Pentecostal denomination. Many of them do not have their own publication. Secondly, most of the Churches do not maintain any statistical accounts. Finally, some are reluctant to declare their growth because of false spirituality.<sup>228</sup>

---

<sup>226</sup> Saju, *Kerala Pentecosthu Charithram* [ Kerala Pentecostal History- Mal] ( Kottayam: Good News Publications , 1994), p. iv.

<sup>227</sup> Daniel Ayroor, *Keralathele Pentecosthu Sabhakal* [ Pentecostal Churches in Kerala-Mal] (Mavelikara: Beer-Sheeba Bible Institute, 1985), p. viii.

<sup>228</sup> T.P.Abraham, ` Keralathele Pentecosthu Sabhakalude Valarcha' [ The Growth of the Pentecostal Churches in Kerala- Mal ] in Achenkunju Elanthoor, *Unarvinte Jualakal* [ Flames of Revivals- Mal ] (Kottayam: PPAI, 1992), p. 58.

### 3.2. An Ethno- Centric History of Kerala Pentecostalism

Historical accounts of the Pentecostal Church in the state indicate, a communal polarization, revolved around the Syrian Christian community, and Pentecostal writers have generated the idea that Kerala Pentecostalism has Syrian predominance. They have completely marginalized others, the Dalits in particular. Samuelkutty, who made a detailed study namely, *Dalit's Place and Contribution towards Pentecostalism* have well commented about the Syrian prejudice. He said, "it seems to the writer that Pastor Abraham, an ardent Syrian Christian, except in his new faith and practices of Pentecostalism was not completely free from his Syrian prejudice and even worried about the future influence of his denomination if the majority were from the Dalit communities."<sup>229</sup> Finny Jacob, a prominent Pentecostal leader of Kerala, comments that "Pentecostalism was not an imported commodity to Kerala. It was the outcome of the revival in the Syrian Churches."<sup>230</sup>

Another advanced study on the origin of Pentecostal Churches in the state was done by V.A. Varughese in his SAIACS doctoral programme, he conveyed the same views.<sup>231</sup> In his interview with a former Church of God Overseer, Rev. M.V.Chacko, who commented on the sociological dimensions of the Pentecostal mission strategy, the people group method, the latter expressed that "the majority of the people who have responded to the Pentecostal faith were the Syrian Christians, because when God had prepared certain men as pastors, Abraham, Samuel, A.C.Samuel, Varughese and others, they were able to

---

<sup>229</sup> T.S. Samuelkutty, *The Place and Contribution of Dalits in Select Pentecostal Churches in Central Kerala from 1922 to 1972* (Unpublished Thesis M.Th. U.T.C, 1999) p. 59.

<sup>230</sup> Ayoor, *Keralathele*, p. ix.

<sup>231</sup> V.A.Varughese, *A Historical Analysis of the Origin and Development of the Pentecostal Churches in Kerala with Special Reference to its View of Mission* (Unpublished Dissertation, D. Miss. SAIACS, 1996). p.

reach out to their local people better than others.”<sup>232</sup> However, on another occasion while explaining the work of the Church Missionary Society among Dalits in Kerala, Chacko admitted “later the same method became the pattern for the great harvest in favour of the Pentecostals.”<sup>233</sup> Here the Syrian leader is contradicting himself by acknowledging that Dalits were part of the great movement.

Varughese, in his work, establishes the Syrian domination by displaying twenty four photographs of Syrian Christians as the early Pentecostal leaders of Kerala, and he considered only one Dalit pastor in the list.<sup>234</sup> It gives the impression that only Syrians were Pentecostal leaders and workers in the early part of the movement, which is not true. Saju in his work, set apart an introspective write-up on “why did the backwards become indifferent towards Pentecostalism?” where he repeatedly mentions “we”, “our” or “us”, referring as Syrians as if Pentecostals are Syrians along.<sup>235</sup>

All these indications are leading towards the wrong notion that Kerala Pentecostals are homogenous. Samuelkutty confesses that “it appears to the writer, who wrote the denominational history or general history of Pentecostalism, avoided the Dalit pioneers with the intention to give an upper caste colour to Pentecostalism.”<sup>236</sup> He further indicates that “another difficulty to find out the role of Dalits is that, mentioning their name without referring to their backgrounds makes it very difficult to distinguish them from the upper castes. This is perhaps an upper caste deliberate device to avoid thinking of Pentecostals in connection with Dalits.”<sup>237</sup> However, K.J. Joseph, a senior Pentecostal minister critical

---

<sup>232</sup> Ibid. p. 175.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. p. 177.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid. pp. xi-xviii.

<sup>235</sup> Saju, *Penthecothu Charithram*, p. 50-51.

<sup>236</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 70.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

about this partisan history and totally disapproved such a sidelined representation of the history.<sup>238</sup> A detailed study will be given about the origin of Kerala Pentecostal Churches in the following section. Another incredible opinion is that there is a similar allegation against the history of the global Pentecostalism also.<sup>239</sup>

### **3.2.1. A Comparison of the World and Kerala Pentecostal History**

Walter J. Hollenweger, a prominent writer on Pentecostalism says that,

There is a debate as to whether Charles Parham or William Seymour is the founder of Pentecostalism. Some Pentecostals were ashamed of their black origins and looked for another founder. Charles Fox Parham was the first to invent the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with speaking with tongues as the `initial sign.<sup>240</sup>

He further clarified that “Pentecostalism has come to a cross roads. From its own ranks there comes the challenge first for a critical historiography.”<sup>241</sup>

Now people are divided on its origin. Saju also is critical about the claim of the western world on the beginning of Pentecostal formation in the Bethel Bible College at Topeka, in the ministry of Charles F. Parham in 1901. After surveying the revivals in different parts of the world, Saju concludes that it was only an attempt of the white men to monopolize the origin of Pentecostalism.<sup>242</sup> While dealing with the origin of the movement, Sam Mathews, an Indian missiologist, in his doctoral dissertation namely, *The Pentecostal Movement in South India: Relevance in Theological Education*, quoted David J. Du Plessis saying that “there is no man who can claim to have been the founder of this

---

<sup>238</sup> Pastor. K.J. Joseph, Senior Minister, Pentecostal Church, Vellor (Interview, 2 Oct.2000).

<sup>239</sup> Cheryl Bridges Johns, *Pentecostal Formation: A Pedagogy Among the Oppressed* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 65.

<sup>240</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, ‘The Black Roots of Pentecostalism’ in Allan H. Anderson & Walter J. Hollenweger (eds.) *Pentecostalism After a Century : Global Perspective on a Movement in Transition* (Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), p. 41.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>242</sup> Elanthoor, *Jualakal*, Pp. 96-98.

world wide Christian revival. In the second place, there has been no new emphasis on any special doctrine. Rather, the emphasis is upon an experience.”<sup>243</sup> He further quotes Lydia Susana, “the Pentecostal movement arose simultaneously in various parts of the world; Armenia, Wales, South India and the western United States. It was not the exclusive property of any religious confession, although Churches belonging to the Holiness movement undeniably played an important role in the new movement.”<sup>244</sup> Moreover, Hollenweger argues that,

Two worldwide Christian movements were founded by non-Europeans. One is the global Pentecostal movement, and the other is Christianity itself. The founder of Pentecostalism was a black ecumenist from the United States; the founder of Christianity was a story-telling rabbi who belonged to the oral culture of the Middle East.<sup>245</sup>

Nevertheless, James R.Goff affirms, “it is Parham alone who formulated the distinguishing ideological formula of tongues as initial evidence of the Holy Spirit baptism. That discovery, in effect, created the Pentecostal movement.”<sup>246</sup> In fact, Seymour is excluded because of his race- and class-transcending spirituality.

It is clear that the historical accounts of Pentecostalism have some form of nepotism everywhere. This work concentrates on producing a document related to the ignored community, the Dalits of the present Pentecostal history of Kerala. Therefore, it deals with persons, places and events related to the spread of the message of Pentecostalism among the oppressed class people.

---

<sup>243</sup> Sam Mathews, *The Pentecostal Movement in South India: Relevance in Theological Education* (Unpublished Dissertation D.Miss. SAIACS, 1996), p. 15.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>245</sup> Anderson, *Pentecostals*, p. 36.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. p. 41.

Pentecostal theology emphasis is on liberation.<sup>247</sup> However, their priority is related to the spiritual deliverance of the people and their fight for social cause and justice needs improvement. While Roman Catholics and other Protestant Churches are in the fore front of agitation against the evils of Dalits, Pentecostals keep a very mild stand on such issues. K.J. Mathew, an ordained minister of Assemblies of God explains the similar idea, when he said “the Pentecostals cannot appreciate the World Council of Churches funding the guerrillas who combat against racism and oppression because they consider that agitation is the divine.”<sup>248</sup>

Pentecostals are classified into three groups: First, the Classical Pentecostals like the Assemblies of God worldwide or the Elim Pentecostal Church in Britain. Secondly, the Charismatic Renewal Movement, different groups appearing in older Churches like the Anglican, Presbyterian or Methodist Churches. And finally, the Pentecostal or Pentecostal-like non-white indigenous Churches in the Third World.<sup>249</sup>

### **3.3. Origin of Pentecostalism**

Scholars agree that revivals contributed to the origin of Pentecostalism. Hollenweger evaluated that the Pentecostal revival has its root in the Catholic spirituality of the holiness revival of the nineteenth century and also in the post-Civil War black spirituality.<sup>250</sup> Cheryl comments that the Wesleyan revival of the mid to late 1800s had a radicalizing and prophetic character. Revivals were not only responsible for spiritual awakening, it created an awareness of social anomalies of slavery, child labour, illiteracy

---

<sup>247</sup> Stephen, *Towards*, p.iv.

<sup>248</sup> K.J. Mathew, ‘Sabha Sasthram’ [Ecclesiology - Mal] in K.C. John . *Pentecosthu Daiva Sasthram* [Pentecost Theology - Mal] ( Thiruvalla: Reader’s Publication, 2000), p. 828.

<sup>249</sup> Stephen, *Towards a*, p. 4.

<sup>250</sup> Cheryl, *Penetcostal formation*, p. 65.

and exploitation of women and the deterioration of the slums.<sup>251</sup> At Oberlin College became a centre of Christian reflection and action aimed at the liberation of the black people from slavery and racism.<sup>252</sup> Sam Mathews observes that during the revival in 1896, in the American South east, North Carolina led by William F. Bryant, at the Shearer Schoolhouse in Chrokee Country, experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with an initial experience of speaking in tongues.<sup>253</sup>

Saju identifies three valid reasons for the birth of Pentecostalism at the beginning of the twentieth century. He says firstly, the motivation to eagerly wait for the spiritual gifts in the last days. Secondly, the great desire for Christian perfection generated out of Keswick conventions and thirdly, the Holiness movement which considered sanctification as a second -experience.<sup>254</sup>

Some scholars think that, Pentecostalism originated Charles Parham, the founder of the Bethel Bible College at Topeka in Kansas City. He encouraged his students to discover the biblical teachings on baptism of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of the spiritual gifts.<sup>255</sup> Many of his students experienced it in the college and specially on 1901 January first, Miss. Agnes Ozman requested Pastor Parham to lay hands on her and pray for her and after the prayer she spoke in a Chinese language for three consecutive days.<sup>256</sup>

Indeed, Parham had some information on the subject from others and he did not bring any new invention on the Pentecostal experience. Moreover, Sam clarifies that

---

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid. p .36.

<sup>253</sup> Sam Mathews, Thesis, p. 20.

<sup>254</sup> Saju, *Kerala Penthecosthu*, p. 16.

<sup>255</sup> Cheryl ,*Penetcostal Formation*, p. 37.

<sup>256</sup> Varughese, Thesis, p. 34.

Parham's understanding of the speaking in tongues was in relation with foreign missionary only<sup>257</sup> which is not the popular Pentecostal conviction.

### 3.3.1. Influence of Black Spirituality and Pentecostalism

Most scholars suggest that William Joseph Seymour is the founder of the organized Pentecostalism. He was born in a Baptist Negro slave family on 2, May 1870 at Lusiana centre villa.<sup>258</sup> In 1895, he moved to Indianapolis and worked in a restaurant and became the part of the Methodist Episcopal black Church. During his stay at Cincinnati, Ohio in 1900-02, he related to the Holiness movement and later joined with the Evening Light Saints group.<sup>259</sup> In 1903, he became the pastor of a Church at Houston and attended the Bible School of Parham and believed in the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Hollenweger explored the life of Seymour from the doctoral thesis of John Douglas Nelson, *For Such a Time as This*, explaining Seymour's study with Parham.<sup>260</sup> According to Nelson, Parham was a sympathizer of the Ku Klux Klan and therefore he excluded Seymour from his Bible classes. Seymour was allowed only to listen outside the classroom through the half-open door.<sup>261</sup> Parham was blamed as a racist. For him the Jews, Anglo-Saxons, Germans and Scandinavians, the Aryan Indians and Japanese- in short Jews and Aryans -are the master race. Under them are the gentiles: French, Spanish, Italians, Greeks, Russians and Turks. At the bottom are Africans and Malays, Mongolians and the indigenous Indians.<sup>262</sup> However, Seymour accepted the doctrine of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit from Parham and began to propagate this experience.

---

<sup>257</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>258</sup> Anderson, *Pentecostals*, p. 39.

<sup>259</sup> M.V.Chacko, 'Pentecosthu Muthal Asuza Vare' [From Pentecost to Asuza -Mal ] in Achenkunju Elanthoor (ed.), *Unarvente Jualakal [Flames of Revival- Mal]*, p. 27-28.

<sup>260</sup> Anderson, *Pentecostals*, p. 40.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

In 1906, Seymour preached in a black Holiness Church at Los Angeles based on Acts 2:4. This sparked the spirit of revival which continued for three years in 321, Asuza street and there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and tens of thousands of people were baptized in the new experience.<sup>263</sup> Seymour proposed a casteless, colourless and countryless revival and “white bishops and black workers,” Hollenweger notes,<sup>264</sup> “men and women, Asians and Mexicans, white laundry women were equals” and the ministry grew in many dimensions.<sup>265</sup>

Seymour had many challenges from white Christians there. Clara Lum and Crawford were two white women who assisted in publication. Later, Lum cheated him by taking away the mailing address list because Seymour did not listen to her advice to avoid marriage.<sup>266</sup> Because he lost the mailing list, he could not maintain his correspondence. In 1906, Seymour was invited to preach in a Union Convention and Parham was displeased about the spiritual manifestation in the meeting and they both separated. Again, W.H. Durham, who worked with him in Chicago, returned to Asuza and rejected the doctrine of sanctification as a second work of the Holy Spirit. Then he rebelled against Seymour and locked the office. In 1914, Durham started Assemblies of God.<sup>267</sup> The debate on the founder of Pentecostalism and the denial of the contribution of black spirituality are diminishing the validity of a complete history.

In spite of constant humiliation he developed spirituality that in 1906 led to the revival in Asuza Street, Los Angeles.<sup>268</sup> During this revival, professors and black Black

---

<sup>263</sup> Saju *Pentecosthu Carithram*, p. 16-17.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid p.41.

<sup>265</sup> Anderson, p. 43.

<sup>266</sup> Chacko, *Pentecosthu Muthal*, p. 30-31.

<sup>267</sup> Anderson, *Pentecostals*, p. 39.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

spirituality has an undeniable influence on Pentecostalism. Hollenweger has contributed a lot to this study. He builds on the black roots of the origin of the movement.<sup>269</sup> First, their *liturgy* is oral unlike the other Churches whose liturgy is written. Secondly, their theology and witness is narrative. The third characteristic of black oral culture is maximum participation at the levels of reflection, prayer and decision making and therefore a form of community that is reconciliatory. Next the inclusion of dreams and visions into personal and public forms of worship- just like in the life of Jesus, who taught using imageries which needed no explanation but spoke for themselves. Finally, an understanding of the relationship between the body and mind that is informed by experiences of correspondence between body and mind. And he concludes that this element is applied in the ministry of the sick by prayer, which one finds in the Pentecostal Churches.<sup>270</sup> All these are the essential ingredients of Pentecostalism.

The most striking aspect is how to consider Pentecostalism. Hollenweger, concludes that “if Pentecostalism is qualified by a religious experience, Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues, then one might consider Parham as its founder. If, however, it is the oral missionary movement, with spiritual power to overcome racism and chauvinism, then there is only one candidate left and that is Seymour.”<sup>271</sup> If the above mentioned characteristics are indicative of Pentecostalism, the founder of modern Pentecostalism is undoubtedly, Seymour himself. Saju says “that the revival under Seymour is not popularized because he was a black.”<sup>272</sup> So present Pentecostal history has some form of favoritism.

---

<sup>269</sup> Cheryl , *Penetcostal Formation*, p. 67-68.

<sup>270</sup> Anderson, *Pentecostals*, p. 42.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid. p. 43.

<sup>272</sup> Saju, ‘Unarvu Oru Sarvaloikika Prathibhasam’ [Revival A Global Phenomenal - Mal] in Achenkunju Elanthur (ed.), *Unarvente Jualakal* , p. 108.

### 3.4. Pentecostalism in Kerala

Because of different perspectives regarding the origin of Pentecostalism in Kerala, a rethinking and study is necessitated today. In 1909, George Burg, the first Pentecostal missionary reached Kerala and conducted few meetings.<sup>273</sup>

Ayroor has presented six reasons<sup>274</sup> which caused the growth of Pentecostalism which needs a critical analysis. Firstly, the revival among the Syrian Churches. Secondly, Bible-centered sermons. Thirdly, Brethren teachings on the faith baptism. The next is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during meetings of Punchammannil Mammen Upadeshi and Kochukunju Upadeshi. Finally, teachings on holiness and separation and healing meetings.

There have been many revivals, Kerala had also experienced such a phenomenon. By the coming of the missionaries in the nineteenth century, the soil had been prepared for a mighty revival. One of the features of the revival in Kerala was it came from outside. Varughese observes that the first revival preacher who came to Kerala was John Arulappan, from Tamil Nadu.<sup>275</sup> Saju indicates that the later revivalists like V.D.David, Vidhuvankuttyachen and Thangaiah Athisayam were also from Tamil Nadu.<sup>276</sup> During his visits in 1853 and 1859, Arulappan led wonderful spiritual awakenings in Kerala.<sup>277</sup> Along with David, George Graph from Australia also visited Kerala. Saju points out that during their meeting people experienced deep penetration of the Word and the Spirit.<sup>278</sup> Another significant spiritual movement was during the ministry of Punchammannil

---

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ayroor, *Keralethele*, p. 40.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Saju, *Penthecosthu Charithram*, p. 27.

<sup>277</sup> Varughese, *Historical Perspective*, p. 42.

<sup>278</sup> Saju, p. 28.

Mammen Upadeshi and Sadhu Kochukunju Upadeshi in 1905.<sup>279</sup> However, Saju concludes “by this time the Pentecostal revival became common in different parts of the State.”<sup>280</sup> Here he may be talking about the revival and Pentecostal experience not the Church. Stephen says that, “the revival in Kerala and the subsequent Pentecostal awakening was a liberative movement as it was a protest against the theology and practice of the Episcopal Churches.”<sup>281</sup> So his claim of Syrian revival as a cause of Pentecostal origin cannot be approved. Undoubtedly, Pentecostalism was the result of awakening. However, the claim of the Syrian revival influence as one of the causes, should be examined.

Pastor Joseph totally disapproves this claim of Syrian revival and says that it is a false propaganda. He adds, “till recent past, the public opinion in Kerala was that, Pentecostal means a Dalit Christian.”<sup>282</sup> For instance, Puthen Kulangara Skariah, from Karickode, Kottayam District, Kerala, adopted the Pentecostal faith from a Syrian background, he was alienated from the family and they nicknamed him “Pulayan Skariah” Another instance is, Pastor E.V. Joseph, a former minister of the Church of God in India, left the Jacobite Church and accepted the Pentecostal fellowship, he was called “Pulayan Avatha.”<sup>283</sup> Pastor K.C. John, the General Secretary of Indian Pentecostal Church, Kerala State has acknowledged that “it was Pastor K.E. Abraham, the founder of IPC, has contributed a Syrian colour to Pentecostalism”.<sup>284</sup>

Sag and Aurora identifies the emergence of the Syrian dominated Brethren movement as a cause of the birth of Pentecostalism in Karen.<sup>285</sup> It is unacceptable because,

---

<sup>279</sup> Ayroor, *Keralathele*, p. 36-37.

<sup>280</sup> Saju, p. 29.

<sup>281</sup> Stephen, *Towards a*, p. 33.

<sup>282</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> K.C. John, General Secretary, IPC, Kerala State ( Interview, 2 Oct. 2000).

<sup>285</sup> Ayroor, *Keralathele*, p. 36.

even before the birth of Brethren movement in Karen about 1898 in Kuttyil Mathai's house at Kumbanad, people had the exercise of spiritual gifts including speaking in tongues, among the Dalits during the revivals in 1873, 1875.<sup>286</sup> Secondly, the Brethren did not encourage speaking in tongues rather they discouraged it. For instance, George Burg,<sup>287</sup> during his second visit, though he was invited to preach in a Brethren convention at Thrikkannamangal, in 1910, they did not allow him to preach due to his speaking in tongues experience.<sup>288</sup> So missionary conducted separate meetings in Adoor and Kottarakkara.

K.E. Abraham in his biography recorded his bitter experience with the Brethren. After his Baptism in the Holy Spirit experience, the Brethren Church that had been constructed on his own land, a few yards away from his house, denied him the privilege of worship in the same Church. Abraham describes it as a heart-breaking experience.<sup>289</sup> This is the case of a former Brethren believer who accepted the Pentecostal faith. Pastor Joseph mentioned a classical example covering the same attitude. Robert F. Cook, the founder of Pentecostal Churches in Kerala had a Syrian cook, Oommechen, Brethren Church member.<sup>290</sup> Every Sunday morning after serving food to the missionary, Oommechen went to worship in his Brethren Church because it was disgrace to him, to worship with the slave people in the missionary's Church.<sup>291</sup> K.V. Simon, a most prominent Brethren teacher in Kerala had very critically underestimated the experience of speaking in tongues

---

<sup>286</sup> G. Chedith, *Keralathile Christahva Sabhakal* [The Christian Churches of Kerala- Mal] (Kottayam: Oriental Institute of Religious Studies Publications, 1989), Pp. 327-29.

<sup>287</sup> Ayroor, p. 39.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Pastor K.E.Abraham, *Yesu Krustuvinte Eliya Dasan* [The Humble Servant of the Jesu Christ-Mal] (Kumbanad: K.E.Abraham Foundation, 1983), p. 68.

<sup>290</sup> Robert F. Cook, *Half a Century of Divine Leading* (Chengannor: Church of God Press, 1938), p.101.

<sup>291</sup> Joseph, Interview.

and considered it as heretical.<sup>292</sup> Varughese accepts that the Roman Catholics, Jacobites and the Mar Thoma churches maintained a hostile stand against the Pentecostal Churches in the early period of her birth.<sup>293</sup> Therefore, the history written in favour of the revival of these traditional Churches and the Brethren movement, eclipse the true history of the Pentecostal origin in Kerala. Samkutty says, “though in the initial stage the Brethern fellowships welcomed Pentecostal missionaries to preach among them, soon they changed their stand because of the speaking in tongues experience.<sup>294</sup> So Brethren contribution is also a doubtful factor.

This necessitates a keen examination on the history Kerala Pentecostals. Burg’s ministry at Thuvayoor Kollam District led an independent prayer group under the leadership of Paruthippara Oommechen, to adopt the Pentecostal teaching.<sup>295</sup> Burg conducted meetings in several parts of Central Travancore and attracted many people to his fold. Mathai Upadeshi and a active worker of the Church Missionary Society, Dr. Oommen Mathai accepted the doctrines of Burg and were baptized at Bangalore.<sup>296</sup> Ayroor describes that two lady missionaries, namely, Miss. Bouncil and Miss. Ante Winkle, came down to Travancore to associate with Burg and later joined with Mathai Upadeshi and worked in these places.<sup>297</sup> However, these native converts very zealously proclaimed their Pentecostal message in different parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu but could not establish a single Pentecostal Church anywhere.

---

<sup>292</sup> T.A.Kurian, *Mahakavi K.V.Simon* [Great Poet K.V.Simon-Mal], (Angamaly: Premier Prinetr, 1990), Pp. 242-244.

<sup>293</sup> Varughse, *Historical Perspective*, p. 65-66.

<sup>294</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 68.

<sup>295</sup> Saju, *Penthecosthu Charithram*, p. 31.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ayroor, *Keralathele*, p. 41.

### 3.4.1. Robert F. Cook and Kerala Pentecostalism

Though the fire of Pentecostalism sparkled in different parts of the country, Robert F. Cook was the person who, according to Samuelkutty, shaped it in Kerala.<sup>298</sup> Cook was brought up in a pious Baptist lay preacher's family. He says,

At the age of seven I gave my heart to the Lord and desired water baptism, but was denied me, the minister deeming me too young then. However, at the age of twelve I received a glorious re-awakening through a song, "*Work for the Night is Coming.*" I saw my unprepared condition as the foolish virgins, so I cried out under strong conviction, asking the Lord to cleanse me that I might be ready.<sup>299</sup>

Cook was dedicated to the service of the Lord by his father, at the age of fourteen, after his personal confirmation.<sup>300</sup> He was active in the ministries of the Church, youth meetings and open-air services. Many sick people were healed through his prayer including his father.<sup>301</sup> He started his evangelistic meetings right inside the Church and eight people were saved.<sup>302</sup> Later, he was endued with the power of God with speaking in tongues, and interpretation. While he was attending the First world-wide Pentecostal Camp at Chicago, Illinois, in 1912, he was conformed in calling to serve the Lord in India, by the testimony of a missionary from India, and a vision confirmed it.<sup>303</sup> This vision was related to the work among the brown-skinned people in India. In October 1913, he landed on Indian soil. After a brief stay at Ootacamund, they moved to Bangalore. In 1914 January, Cook reached Kerala. They conducted meetings at Kottarakkara, Adoor, and Thuvayoor. During the four-day meetings at Thuvayoor, he emphasized deliverance, and at the end of the meeting, on fourth January, in his first baptism service in India, sixty-three people were

---

<sup>298</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 68.

<sup>299</sup> Cook, *Divine Leading*, p.10.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.p.11.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid. p. 15-16.

baptized.<sup>304</sup> Quoting Cook, “In January, 1914, at the close of the four days meetings, I baptized sixty-three in water; this being my first baptismal service in Travancore.”<sup>305</sup> Due to the First World War, Cook had to remain in Bangalore for security reasons.<sup>306</sup> However, Cook could visit Travancore as there was no political prohibition from the Government. In the following years he ministered in Thuyavur, Chaliakare, and Sooranadu and the Churches were established.<sup>307</sup> After the War, Cook had to join with a foreign agency because of political compulsions. Therefore, in 1919, Cook associated with the Assemblies of God purely for political reason.<sup>308</sup> In actual fact he was an independent missionary in India and suffered in manifold ways for the sake of the gospel. Since 1921, Cook and his second wife, Mrs. Bertha Fox settled in Travancore.<sup>309</sup> Because of his burning desire to evangelize Kerala and his limited access to the people, Cook started a Bible training program at his residence in Kottarakkara in 1922 he trained local men and sent them to the mission field.<sup>310</sup> Later the school had to shift whenever he moved his house, and finally settled in its own building at Mount Zion, Mulakuzha, near Chenganoor.<sup>311</sup> By this time, the ministry had expanded to different places like Punalur, Edamon, Kumbanad, Ezhumattur, and Ranni.<sup>312</sup> However, his ministry was mainly among the Dalits and they supported his missionary endeavor.

Since he was confirmed about his mission field in India, he always was willing to associate with any one of his faith. So when there was a proposal to work with an Indian

---

<sup>304</sup> Saju, *Pentecosthu Charithram*, Pp. 35-39.

<sup>305</sup> Cook, *Divine Leadings*, p. 29.

<sup>306</sup> [n.a]. ‘Dhaiva Sabha Charithram’ [Church of God History-Mal] Mulakuzha: *India Dhaiva Sabha Kerala State General Convention Souvenir* (1996) 5.

<sup>307</sup> Mammen Philip. *Robert F. Cook* (Vennikulam: Deepam Book Club, 1992), Pp. 41-52.

<sup>308</sup> *Suviner*, Sabha Charithram, p. 6.

<sup>309</sup> Philip, *Cook*, p. 78-79.

<sup>310</sup> *Suviner*, p. 6.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

Pentecostal leader, K.E. Abraham, he volunteered himself and the Malanakara Penthecosthu Sabha was born on sixth September 1926 at Mazhukkir.<sup>313</sup> Cook returned to India as an Assemblies of God missionary but by 1927, he had to sever his relation with them.<sup>314</sup> Samuelkutty suggests that the immediate reason was the alienation of Cook from the Superintendantship of the newly constituted South Indian- Ceylon Districts of the Assemblies of God.<sup>315</sup> However, George Cook, the son of Cook sees it as a plot against his father.<sup>316</sup>

Moreover, it is observed that the native Christians were under deep impression of nationalistic feeling and they compelled Cook to dislodge his relationship from what was felt, foreign domination.<sup>317</sup> However, Cook had an intensive passion for the ministry in India and accepted the request of the Syrian brethren. Yet, these brothers also did not keep their relationship with him. By 1930, under the leadership of K.E. Abraham, the Syrian brothers rebelled against the leadership of Cook and isolated him. Only a few Syrian leaders and all the forty Dalit Churches remained loyal to Cook.<sup>318</sup> This separation created a deep wound in the mind of Cook more than the previously because he had such a great concern for Indian Church.

During his holidays at Ootacamond, he met J.H. Ingram who encouraged him to join with the Church of God, headquarters at Cleveland, Tennessee.<sup>319</sup> After consulting with his Church representatives, Cook and his Church joined with the Church of God on May fifteenth, 1936. In fact, it was an answer to the needs of the Churches under Cook.

---

<sup>313</sup> Abraham, Eliya dasan, Pp. 142-144.

<sup>314</sup> *Suviner*, p. 11.

<sup>315</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 58.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> *Suviner, Sahbha Charithram*, p. 11.

<sup>318</sup> Joseph, *Manuscript*, p. 21.

<sup>319</sup> Philip, *Cook*, Pp.187-189.

Because of this new association, they received financial assistance to maintain their organizational needs.<sup>320</sup> Along with the new missionaries from America, Cook could extend the work to the northern part of Travancore.<sup>321</sup> Cook had a great concern for orphans and needy and he established an orphanage at Ernakulam, in 1942. The project was started to help a Hindu convert sister and her two boys.<sup>322</sup> In 1949, Cook registered his Church with the Government, in the name of India full Gospel Church of God at Coimbatore. After completing a unique and glorious ministry in India, leaving a role model Christian character and achievements with Indian Christians this great lover of Indian Missions withdrew to retirement in 1950.<sup>323</sup>

Pastor Cook was concerned to work among the poor.<sup>324</sup> He remained faithful to his call to minister to the poor.<sup>325</sup> Joseph says that Cook always identified with the poor and needy and the outcastes always considered him as an angel of God to them.<sup>326</sup> He included adequate representation to the Dalit leaders and pastors like M.M.John and P.C.Samuel were members of the Church Councils.<sup>327</sup> It must be noticed that though Cook mentioned the names of many Syrian leaders, one question is, he hardly mentioned any Dalit convert. Cook lived as simply as his people did in the congregation. He always had only one pair of pants mostly torn and stitched and he accommodated any situation for his stay and food.<sup>328</sup> Cook introduced many new missionary methods to Indian church. He initiated Bible Training program, which was the first of its kind in Kerala.<sup>329</sup> His love for the

---

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. Pp.192-194.

<sup>321</sup> Suviner, p. 14.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Philip, *Cook*, Pp. 225-227.

<sup>324</sup> Saju, *Pentecosthu Charithram*, p. 51.

<sup>325</sup> Philip, p. 34.

<sup>326</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>327</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 71.

<sup>328</sup> Philip, Pp. 42-44.

<sup>329</sup> Suviner, *Sabha Charithram*, p. 7.

deserted orphans and widows was another example. He has contributed certain unique practices to Pentecostalism such as reciting *raktham jaim*, victory in the blood of Jesus, beating the drum in the Church worship, may be associated with the Dalit style of worship, namely, walking in line towards the river for baptism while singing and proclaiming Bible verses. As in the case of Seymour, Kerala Pentecostalism is founded upon the teachings and practices of Cook. He could be known as the father of Kerala Pentecostalism. Therefore, Pentecostalism in Kerala is formulated with the ministry of Cook. As it is already mentioned, the ministry of Cook was predominantly among the lower castes, including the first founded Church at Thuvayoor.

### **3.5. Causes and Consequences of the Growth of Pentecostalism**

Pentecostalism started in Kerala about nine decades ago, and has emerged as growing community in the Christian Churches circle. Among prominent Pentecostal Churches there are more than 3200 Churches and other thirty small groups have almost one thousand Churches and the same number of pastors.<sup>330</sup> Moreover, the Kerala Pentecostals have been acknowledged by the world community because of their strategies and leaders. The growth of the Pentecostal Churches is not based on any human skill or Church growth principles. It was initiated by the Holy Spirit and God's grace some untrained men were used.

Abraham claims that the Pentecostal practices have influenced other traditional Churches in the spiritual matters like fasting and prayer, Bible study, Meditation and Evangelism.<sup>331</sup> Other Church members used to attend their spiritual meetings where as Pentecostals do not attend other Churches. Pentecostals are missionary oriented. Abraham

---

<sup>330</sup> Abraham, 'Sabhakalude', *Unravente*, p. 81.

affirms that “according to the 1990 statistics, out of the fifty seven Pentecostal charismatic missionary movements, twenty nine are from the Kerala Pentecostal Churches; and thirty percent of the missionaries are from this Church alone.”<sup>332</sup> However, it is difficult to account the Pentecostal numerical growth in relation with the Indian Church growth because most of their converts are from other mainline Churches only.

Pentecostals uphold evangelical faith. Abraham claims that they always defend the purity of the biblical teachings.<sup>333</sup> Because of their evangelistic thrust, they establish training schools and sending people for pioneering work.

Pentecostals contributed to the social reformation. Because of the transforming power of the gospel, thousands have been rescued from destruction. They emphasis on Christian morality and have enough witnesses of transformed lives.

Regarding the causes of their growth, Abraham attributes the work of the Holy Spirit as the primary factor. Since revival at Pentecost began Church, the utmost person in the work of Pentecost is the Holy Spirit.<sup>334</sup> Varughese explained another aspect of their growth because of their style of their work in reaching people. They follow the people group policy.<sup>335</sup> In most of the cases, new converts of Pentecostalism have social alienation and it is necessary to win the confidence of their own people, so they pray and evangelize their own people. Chacko admits the other extreme of it when he said, “even today, though Pentecostals did not have any barriers of caste or tribe, yet the majority of the Pentecostals are Syrians, working among Syrians.”<sup>336</sup>

---

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid. P. 83.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid. P. 78.

<sup>335</sup> Varughese, *Historical Perspective*, p. 174.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid. p. 175.

In the early days, they practiced the inter-caste concept.<sup>337</sup> Syrian Churches are always comprised of a mono-ethnic majority. Alexander Mar Thoma, in his, *Heritage and Mission*, has specified that “due to caste prejudice, Syrians failed to reach the low caste people.”<sup>338</sup> However, the Pentecostals followed the principle of reconciliation. They became a model for other Churches to realize the need of unity within the body of Christ. Indeed, this change attracted Dalits to embrace the new faith. However, there are a few exceptions every where.

Pentecostals believe in the believers’ priesthood and exercise of spiritual gifts. Stephen asserted that,

It is a non-hierarchical, non-ritualistic and non-authoritarian, and a Free Church tradition. This kind of structure will enhance more freedom and participation for the laity and clergy in the worship and ministry of the Church. This kind of structure is a challenge to the hierarchical and authoritarian churches.<sup>339</sup>

Their concept of miracles and wonders attracted many to adopt their faith. Chellya Zachariah, a Christian physician from Tamil Nadu has concluded from his survey that in Tamil Nadu, many Hindus adopted Christianity because of their physical healing and deliverance from demonic possessions.<sup>340</sup>

As in the case of apostles, persecution helped the Pentecostal Church to grow. Varughese reminds that, “the traditional Churches always opposed the new movement.”<sup>341</sup> Many were cast out from their families, some of them were physically attacked and a lot them were publicly condemned by society and Churches. Their indigenious policy strengthened their growth though few Churches have financial assistance from abroad.

---

<sup>337</sup> Ibid. p. 176.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Stephen, *Towards* , p.11.

However, Pentecostal Churches in India need introspection and improvement in the area of relationship and discrimination. They are blamed for their splintering spirit.<sup>342</sup> Numerous groups have been formed. Another concern is their focus to re-convert members of Main line Churches.<sup>343</sup> Pentecostals have to reach out to the non-Christian world. Materialism and commercialism have crept into Church and many are misusing spiritual gifts for personal gains.<sup>344</sup> Racism grieves majority of the congregation which divide the Body of Christ. Pastor Abraham is mainly responsible for such an initiation, based on caste lines in the Pentecostal work in Kerala.<sup>345</sup>

### **3. 6. History of Dalits in the Pentecostal Church**

If Cook is considered as the pioneer of the Pentecostal Church in Kerala, then the Dalits were the first respondents of Pentecostal faith. Saju affirms that the mission of Cook was related to the downtrodden and working class in the society.<sup>346</sup> Cook himself narrated his first experience of speaking in tongues and the interpretation of it through his wife, confirming the ministry among the poor in India.<sup>347</sup> V.V.Thomas, a researcher on Dalit Pentecostals in Kerala, and Church History Professor in Union Biblical Seminary, affirms that the “Thuvayoor Church was a Dalit populated Church.”<sup>348</sup> Samuelkutty also supports the same

---

<sup>340</sup> Varughese, *Histoircal Perspsective*, p. 177.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid. p.178.

<sup>342</sup> Rev.E.J.Chacko, *Keralethele Chila Swathantra Sabhakaral* [Some Inedependant Churches in Kerala-mal], Kerala: The Theological Literature Council, 1986), p. 34.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Abraham, ‘Sabhakalude’, *Unarvinte* , p. 88.

<sup>345</sup> Chacko, Interview.

<sup>346</sup> Saju, *Penthecosthu Charithram*,p. 36-37.

<sup>347</sup> Cook, *Divine Leading*, p. 11-12.

<sup>348</sup> V.V.Thomas, Researcher on Dalit Christians, Bangalore, Interview ( 2 Nov.2000).

opinion.<sup>349</sup> While referring to his mission in Travancore, Cook himself admitted the response of the Dalits to the Gospel. He writes,

Travancore is a Hindu State or kingdom. Here the Hindus are divided in to many castes or classes. Our main work is mostly among the low castes, those called the untouchables or the neglected; such respond readily to the Gospel and became sincere worshippers of the supernatural. The Lord blesses them abundantly in spite of their gross ignorance. A good number of the so-called Syrian Christians do not come far behind spirituality.<sup>350</sup>

Another place of his early work was at Edamon, Punalur, ministering among the estate workers.<sup>351</sup> Samuelkutty commented that “another important and notable shift was that with Cook, Pentecostalism attracted Dalits, it became a mission to the Dalits.”<sup>352</sup> He finds the reason that “it was a common feature in the Indian scene that missionaries always concentrated among the responsible groups. It is reasonable to think that by this time the Syrian Christian Community became familiar with the new movement and they openly showed their aversion to Pentecostalism.”<sup>353</sup> However, Samuelkutty is wrong in his conclusion on the reason for this shift. Because, Burg arrived in Kerala in 1909 and Cook accompanied him in 1914. Cook only established Pentecostal Church. The illogical argument of Samuelkutty is that, within this period of six or seven years, the Syrians become familiar with Pentecostalism and showed their aversion to it. Again, the Syrian historians do not want to accept that Pentecostalism started among the Dalits. Many reasons could be traced for his passion for the Dalits. Firstly, Cook confessed his commission to minister among the poor.<sup>354</sup> The second reason may be his Asuza street orientation. Because most of the Asuza Street missionaries were associated with working among the poor people. Samuelkutty counts it as a valid reason, comparing the situation in

---

<sup>349</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 67.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid. p. 26-27.

<sup>351</sup> Philip, *Cook*, p. 42.

<sup>352</sup> Samuelkutty, p. 55.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

Kerala.<sup>355</sup> Thirdly, may be, as Joseph pointed out that it was the “divine programme of God to answer the heart-cry of the depressed people in Kerala.”<sup>356</sup> Finally, it could be his deep concern for both the spiritual and physical suffering and oppression of the downtrodden.<sup>357</sup> Now, the Dalits consider Pentecostalism as their mother denomination. However, the followers of Cook are not faithful in this regard; they divide the Church according to caste and condition of the people.

Throughout his ministry, Cook showed exceptional interest to evangelize the oppressed people and his work always remained fruitful. A major turning point of Cook’s ministry, was the initiation of a Davit leader, Vellikakara Chothi.<sup>358</sup> Chothi alias Evangelist Mathai, was a member of the Sri Mulam Assembly, the popular Legislative Assembly in Travancore, and a social worker among the Dalits.<sup>359</sup> When he learned that this missionary had a heart for the working class, Chothi beleived that the missionary would enable his people to advance their spiritual condition. He approached Cook and invited him to preach to his community.<sup>360</sup> This attempt was not for any material benefits rather spiritual. Cook was very happy to accept the invitation because it was the fulfillment of his longing<sup>361</sup> and he was aware of their sufferings. Cook said, “these low castes are treated as inferiors by the Syrians and high-caste Hindus. When meeting a high caste, they are supposed to step aside, off the path way, if necessary, for fear of contamination.”<sup>362</sup> He continues, “many times I saw them ignored, I was grieved. On one occasion it began to rain during a meeting, and the people ran for shelter; the Syrians made for the house, but the poor had to

---

<sup>354</sup> Cook, *Divine Leading*, p. 14.

<sup>355</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 62.

<sup>356</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>357</sup> Cook, p. 99.

<sup>358</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>359</sup> Cook, *Divine Leading*, p. 101.

<sup>360</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>361</sup> Cook, p. 100.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.* p. 98.

take shelter in a cow shed at a little distance. When I saw this, I took shelter in the cow shed, mingling with them.”<sup>363</sup> During his visit at Vellikara, the missionary experienced the marvelous out-pouring of the Holy Spirit as in the days of the apostles and many were healed. At the end of the meeting, sixteen Dalits were baptized.<sup>364</sup> They took him to many surrounding villages for preaching the Gospel and many embraced the Pentecostal faith. In fact, the working class people became the immediate community of Pentecostal faith in many parts of Central Kerala.<sup>365</sup> When the labourers were experiencing the speaking in tongues, the Syrians Christians mocked them by saying that it was the spirit of some drowned missionaries.<sup>366</sup>

Joseph says that the Dalits became the promoters of the new movement to the northern part of Travancore.<sup>367</sup> They were the main initiators to take the missionary to their relatives and own people to preach the gospel. Pastor. M.J. John Mallappally, a Dalit and a close associate of Cook, had sown the seed of Pentecostalism in the Piravaom area and pastors like Vettunkal Mathai and Punnattukuzhi T. J. Joseph, with the power of God and courage they witnessed amidst stiff opposition and physical attack from traditional Christians, and the Pentecostal faith reached to the northern region.<sup>368</sup> Once Pastor Mathai was preaching in an open-air meeting and one Syrian Christian after listening to the truth of the Scriptures, angrily punched on the face of the preacher. The pastor lost his three front teeth, while bleeding he prayed, “Lord, visit this land” and later many were added to the Church.<sup>369</sup>

---

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid. Pp.102-107.

<sup>365</sup> Philip, *Cook*, Pp. 86-88.

<sup>366</sup> Joseph, Interview,

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> *Suviner*, ‘Dhaiva Sabha’, p. 99.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

Another significant event of the Pentecostal growth among the slave communities was the meeting of the missionary Poikayil Yohannan's place. He was a Dalit leader, who received divine revelation and had at least 5,000 followers throughout Travancore.<sup>370</sup> He was an out standing preacher in the mar Thoma Church, he later left the Church because of the caste disparity and discrimination by the Syrian Christians.<sup>371</sup> Though he joined the Brethren, he became more and more indifferent towards Christianity because of discrimination.<sup>372</sup> He had no other option than leaving the faith. he began to criticize the Syrian distinctions and decided to serve his people for their manifold welfare.<sup>373</sup> Thus he established Prathyasha Raksha Daiva Sabha, a movement exclusively for the aboriginal and claimed himself as the Guru of his people.<sup>374</sup> As a spiritual leader and social worker, Yohannan contributed much to the depressed class by raising their problems in the Legislative Assembly of Travancore, as a Member.<sup>375</sup> The Syrian Christians became furious because of his remarks against their suppression and discrimination in the traditional Churches, and tried to exterminate him.<sup>376</sup> Even now, the Syrian community remains unregretful for loosing such a leader of Christianity. Rather they figure him as a false teacher to hide their failure. It is true that he adopted a lot of Hindu pagan practices. However, we cannot ignore the basic realities. Yohannan was not indifferent towards missionaries.<sup>377</sup> Cook was invited to preach the Word in his premises to the audience about 2,000 people.<sup>378</sup>

---

<sup>370</sup> Cook, *Divine Leading*, p. 121.

<sup>371</sup> Philip, *Mar Thoma*, p. 50.

<sup>372</sup> Joseph, *poikayil*, p. 46-47.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

<sup>375</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Saju, *Penthcosthu Charithram*, p. 49.

<sup>378</sup> Cook, *Divine Leading*, p. 91.

According to Cook, “this gathering reminded me of what we read in the book of Acts where a great multitude were gathered from various parts of the Roman empire on the day of Pentecost, and then went back to their homes with something to think over, after hearing the message and seeing manifestations of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>379</sup> He admitted that after the meeting, he had received new openings to many neighboring villages where the poor people were prepared to sponsor his meetings.<sup>380</sup> During his meeting at Mavelikara, again many oppressed people responded to the Gospel and about eighty of them were baptized.<sup>381</sup> Considering the places and people of his ministry, it is very clear that Cook focused more on the Dalits communities in Kerala and the Churches established through his works were mainly among them. Therefore, it is natural that people generally consider that Pentecostalism belongs to Dalits.

Nevertheless, Cook had to encounter much opposition from Syrian traditional and evangelical Christians. They debated with him in public over the experience of speaking in tongues and even printed tracts and handbills against his ministries and asked people to pray against him.<sup>382</sup>

During the convention at Arattupuzha, a theologically qualified Syrian youth visited Cook and asked him “whether he knew Hebrew or Greek.” While Cook replied negatively, the young man questioned him, “how can you comprehend the Scriptures.” Cook answered him, “the Holy Spirit enables him to understand it. At his reply, the young

---

<sup>379</sup> Ibid. P. 124.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Philip. *Cook*, p. 105.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid. p. 88.

man marveled and at another occasion the same youth had to admit that Cook was speaking in tongues in the Hebrew language.<sup>383</sup>

Although the revival spiritualism motivated the Syrian traditional Churches, they were not very positive towards the new Pentecostal movement. In all adversities, Cook was a prayer warrior and man of faith. Samuelkutty says, “it seems in this unfavorable situation it was natural that he turned to the more receptive group, which welcomed his movement.”<sup>384</sup> It was rather a deliberate choice of Cook to work among the poor.

Other Pentecostal missionaries also focused on the depressed communities and had inspiring results. Samuelkutty mentions about the work of Miss Bouncil and Miss Aldiningil along with a native missionary A.C.Mathai, they concentrated their attention among the out castes in Southern Travancore where they achieved great results.<sup>385</sup> Another popular Dalit Pentecostal preacher was Pastor. C. Mannesse. He was born and brought up in a Hindu family in 1878 as the son of a Village physician and magician. Though he accompanied his father for many magical exercises, he was against it. In 1896, he became a Christian and dedicated his life for the ministry in 1900. After his baptism of the Holy Spirit experience, he started working with missionaries in the southern part of Travancore. K.E.Abraham, the founder of IPC, had the baptism of the Holy Spirit experience under his ministry.<sup>386</sup> Since 1932, Mannaesse associated with the ministry of Assemblies of God and after pioneering Pentecostal Churches he died in 1938.<sup>387</sup>

There were Dalit Pentecostal pioneer pastors like M.M. John, N.J.Stephen and P.D.Chacko, whose names are not in the modern Pentecostal pavilion. In the Assemblies of

---

<sup>383</sup> Suvanir, ‘Dhaiva Sabha’, p. 47.

<sup>384</sup> Smauelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 56.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Saju, *Penthecosthu Charithram*, p. 62.

God Church, K.S. David contributed immensely to the work among Dalits in southern Travancore.<sup>388</sup> C.S. Mathew, was a Pentecostal leader among the backwards. He was born in 1915 at Kottathur, was saved in 1936. He was a member of the Brethren movement. After his Spirit baptismal experience, he formed the Indian Full Gospel Church of God which later became World Missionary Evangelism Fellowship. He was an eminent preacher and hymn writer. After completing forty-six years of ministry, he entered into rest on 11th October 1985.<sup>389</sup> K.E. Mathew, was a popular Dalit pastor in the Indian Pentecostal Church. He was the Centre pastor of the Peerimadu, Idukki District. He visited several countries and was a good preacher.<sup>390</sup>

Even though Abraham concentrated upon his own community, he had extended the faith to the Dalits in his locality and they followed in the faith.<sup>391</sup> He mentions about his ministry among Dalits in Kanakappalam, Erumaly, Valiyakavu and the origin of two Dalit Churches there.<sup>392</sup> However, Abraham blames the Dalits of these Churches, of joining have joined with the foreign missionaries for some temporal benefits.<sup>393</sup> Samuelkutty denies this accusation and said that it was just because of the caste superiority of Abraham.<sup>394</sup> In fact, Samuelkutty is critical about the attitude of Abraham towards the Dalit believers.<sup>395</sup> Though Samuelkutty approves the part of Syrian revivals, in the origin of Pentecostalism, he later admits that “we must observe that during the period the Syrian Christians of Mar Thoma, or Anglican Church and even the Brethren did not shown

---

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Samuelkutty, p. 70.

<sup>389</sup> Saju, *Pentecosthu Charithram*, p. 207.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid. p. 251.

<sup>391</sup> Abraham, *Eliya dasan*, p. 53.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid. p. 119-120.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and ontribution*, p. 69.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid. p. 70.

interest in Pentecostalism. Thus the only hope for these leaders was among the Dalits.”<sup>396</sup>  
So out of the need that the Syrians turned to the Dalits.

The most significant stand by Dalits was taken when they remained with missionary Cook in 1930 when all Syrian leaders and believers joined with Abraham.<sup>397</sup> Early Pentecostal leaders have acknowledged the spiritual standard and maturity of the new converts. Abraham disclosed one of his experiences at Punalur during a convention in 1926. At the first day of the meeting, the clouds covered the area and heavy rain was expected. Abraham says that there was a prayerful Dalit believer called Moses who came and told him that “Sir, you prepare the message and I will take care of the rain.” Then he went to pray and the meeting was not disturbed by rain.<sup>398</sup> Many of the Dalit believers were attracted to faith healing as practiced by Cook and other pastors. There are believers who still follow the same faith in many Churches. During the days of Cook, the Dalits had adequate participation in the Church Councils; pastors like M.M.John and P.C.Samuel were members of it.

### **3.7. Major Reasons for Dalits Embracing Pentecostalism**

Historians have explained many reasons for Dalit inclination to the new faith. Samuelkutty proposed certain socio-cultural factors related to it.<sup>399</sup> Chirackarodu also allude to the missionary contribution in the field of education for the new converts.<sup>400</sup> Education inspired self -awareness within the community, and they became conscious of their social identity. The liberation movement of Ayyankali helped to a certain extent. Though the new Christians became part of the Church, they did not share equal status in the mainline Churches. This discrimination might have encouraged a better spiritual

---

<sup>396</sup> Ibid. p. 69.

<sup>397</sup> *Suviner*, ‘Dhaiva Sabha’, p. 11.

<sup>398</sup> Abraham, *Eliya dasan*, p. 145-146.

atmosphere where they had better opportunities. George Oommen, a scholar on Kerala Pulaya community and the Professor of United Theological College, well observed that “the Pulaya Christians used several methods to protest such as ... joining other denominations such as Salvation Army, and Brethren.”<sup>401</sup>

Graham Houghton, the Principal of SAIACS, in his article in the *Mission Mandate*, observed a fundamental of evangelism, is the Christian concept of reconciliation.<sup>402</sup> Paul explains the oneness in the body of Christ.<sup>403</sup> Indeed the Syrian Christians failed to practice this biblical principle in the mainline Churches, instead they discriminated against Dalits. Dalits as well as the missionaries became offended when the Church was divided in the name of caste and color. They were waiting for an opportunity to react against it. Samuelkutty observed that the revival spirituality of Syrians did not change their approach to the poor converts.<sup>404</sup> Whereas, Pentecostalism appeared with a New Hope to the Dalits. Their social attitude and biblical emphasis on brotherhood might have influenced many educated and spiritual minded people of the backwards. Instead of segregating people, the new faith promoted unity and participation. Samuelkutty perceived the radical change of the ecclesiastical system which they addressed each other, as brother and sister.<sup>405</sup>

Dalits were sincere in their spiritual thirst and were satisfied with the Pentecostal message. Though the content or texts of the sermons are not available today, it is assumed that they were appealing to the burdened hearts of Dalits. It is likely that the Holy Spirit controlled the entire communication of the message and penetrated in to human hearts.

---

<sup>399</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 74.

<sup>400</sup> Chirackarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 83.

<sup>401</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 76.

<sup>402</sup> Graham Houghton, ‘Our Theological Task in Evangelism,’ in M.Ezra Surgunam (ed.), *Mission Mandate : A Compendium on the Perspective Missions in India* (Madras: Mission India 2000, 1992), p. 365.

<sup>403</sup> Eph. 2:14.

<sup>404</sup> Samuelkutty, p. 78.

Varghese has indicated that “Pentecostalism was appealing to the poor and needy of the Indian society. This included all castes, but was more appropriate to the Dalits in our society.”<sup>406</sup> According to Samuelkutty, the eschatological hope and faith message might have captivated those poor people. They have seen lives transformed by the Pentecostal influence.<sup>407</sup> Undoubtedly, the life and ministry of Missionary Cook influenced many Dalits. His affection and accommodation with the working class really captivated them. The traditional Christians did not make exception for Dalits. E.J.Chacko, a Dalit Centre pastor of the IPC, appraised Cook and said that, “ it was Cook who first took the initiative and struggled to proclaim the message of Pentecostalism to the Dalits which liberated them from the lethargy of nominal Christianity.”<sup>408</sup> Above all, it was the Divine Programme to redeem an oppressed people through the work of a committed and commissioned man of God. Now almost every converted Christian in Kerala feels that Pentecostalism is their mother denomination because the Syrians patronize all other groups. Dalits are more comfortable and enjoy liberty in life and ministry and that may be one reason that there are more Dalit-oriented Pentecostal groups in Kerala.

### **3. 8. Contributions of Dalits Towards Pentecostalism**

In the expansion of the new faith the Dalits have contributed a great deal. In the pioneering work of Cook, the labour class believers had keen interest to bring their folk in to the same faith. So they encouraged the Missionary to preach the message to the working class relatives in the surrounding estates of Chaliakkara, Edmon and Sooranad.<sup>409</sup> Moreover, when he moved to Thiruvalla division, again the ministry was to the poor

---

<sup>405</sup> Ibid. p. 79.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.p. 64.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid. p. 89.

<sup>408</sup> Ibid.p. 69.

<sup>409</sup> Philip. *Cook*, p. 34-45.

people alone and Churches were planted there.<sup>410</sup> In the Southern part of Travancore, the work was carried out among the poor, and by the poor.<sup>411</sup> In Central Tarvancore, Pentecostal ministry was spread initially among the Dalits and by the arrival of Pastor Abraham, it was monopolized by the Syrians. Churches in Piravaom and Keezhoor areas were the first Churches in those places and both the people and leaders were from low castes.<sup>412</sup> Idukki, the high range District, was reached by the gospel in the early forties by a group of migrant Christians converted from Piravom area.<sup>413</sup> Now, the majority of the Pentecostal population of this District is from the Dalit background.

### 3.9. Conclusion

Before concluding, it would be appropriate to note down the testimony of Rev. T. G. Koshy, the President of Sharon Fellowship Church. He narrated his ministry experiences in the mid sixties, and how did the poor believers sustained their pastors.<sup>414</sup> Rev.Koshy recollected the faithful giving of the poor Dalit believers at Valanjambalam, Thiruvalla, in spite of their poverty and struggle of life, enabled him to survive in the ministry. Pastor. K. C. John, State Secretary of IPC has a high commendation for the contribution of Dalits to Pentecostal ministry.<sup>415</sup> He said, “in the early days, pastors were fed by the nullari, bit rice and pidiari, handful rice which the believers collected through out the week, and through the small offerings of egg and first- fruits.”<sup>416</sup> The new converts had not only endured physical attacks but also loss of employment, and social segregation because they embraced Pentecostalism. Both the worldly powers and the traditional

---

<sup>410</sup> Saju, *Pentecothisu Charithram*, Pp. 82- 104.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid. Pp. 53- 60.

<sup>412</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>413</sup> Saju, p. 250-251.

<sup>414</sup> K.C.John, Interview.

<sup>415</sup> T.G.Koshy, President Sharon Fellowship, Adur, Kerala ( Interview 3 Oct. 2000).

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Thomas, Interview.

Christian powers joined together against the growth of this new movement. These socially powerless people overcame every thing by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thomas described it well, quoted that “though Pentecostalism was a movement of the poor people, it was not a poor movement.”<sup>195</sup>

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. THE DALIT STRUGGLE FOR PLACE AND RESPECT IN PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES

It is strange that in the body of Christ a section of its members have to struggle for their survival. At first, coming to Christ and the Pentecostal movement was a refuge for the poor and under privileged. However, the Dalit Christian communities came to be viewed as a ‘thorn in the flesh,’ by the body of Christ. One writer, Saju, had the boldness to call for an investigation into the matter. He asks the question, Why did the Backwards become indifferent towards Pentecostals?<sup>417</sup>.

Saju comments on important historical factors related to the above question. He agrees with Ayyankali, the Dalit liberator, who advocated that the mere change of religion will not guarantee any social equality to the Dalits.<sup>418</sup> Ayyankkali pleaded for a social change rather than a religious one. He stated that his people should fight for social liberation within the framework of Hinduism. Saju reveals that some of the Syrian Christians, who were against the Dalit intrusion to Christianity, supported Ayyankkali.<sup>419</sup> Because they did not like to get their laborers to become Christians and to be equal in the Church. Hindus promoted anti-missionary sentiments among the low-castes so that they would not embrace Christianity. When upper caste Christians behaved indifferently, many Dalits abandoned their Christian faith, and returned to Hinduism. Chothi, a former worker and promoter of Christian missions, and Poikayil Yohannan are classic examples. Initially,

---

<sup>417</sup> Saju, *Pentecosthu Charithram*, p. 50-51.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

these leaders were not anti-Pentecostal; they were supporters of the movement. The stand of Saju is to be appreciated for his favour of the warm relationship the Dalits enjoyed with Cook. In the absence of the missionary Cook, in 1924, Syrian Christians swarmed to the new faith and eliminated the Dalit majority, and marginalized them in their own Pentecostal Church. Dalits, sensed the danger and looked for a way out. Saju rightly says that it was due to the failure on the part of the Syrians to adopt the incarnational missionary perspective as Cook had done.<sup>420</sup> The movement which the Dalits once gladly accepted and propagated was restricted by them.

Indian Christians displayed gross negligence both politically and ecclesiastically in the case of Dalit converts. Indeed, the most popular Dalit leader, Dr. Ambedkar, who denounced Hinduism was not willing to join with the Christian faith because of the discrimination he saw within the Church. Though he condemned the Hindu faith and its Brahmanical suppression, he could not see unity within the Church. History proves that the Church in India has traditionally ignored the cause of the downtrodden converts on many occasions. In 1935, when an Indian Act was being passed against the Dalit Christians, the Church did not support the demands of Ambedkar, who advocated a system of reservation based on caste and not religion. Many Christians joined with the Hindu majority and supported a reservation based on religious considerations.<sup>421</sup> Indian Christians failed to discern the Hindu intention for emphasizing religious reservation. The Hindu Fascists were afraid of the growth of Dalit Christians because they saw that the Dalit Christians would lead the Dalit movement in India. Christians thought that if caste

---

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

<sup>421</sup> Dalit Bandu, Christava Dalit Prashanam Ambedkarude Vishanathil [ Dalit Christian Issue in the Ambedkar's Perspective- Mal] ( Vaikom: Hobby Publications, 1996), p.10.

reservation was awarded, it would divide the Church.<sup>422</sup> However, the Sikh leaders were wise enough to foresee the danger of religious reservation and demanded caste reservation, it was granted in 1950. The Buddhist leaders also pleaded for their people and their people also were given the same privilege in 1990 and their people remain satisfied in that religion.<sup>423</sup> Now, after much experience, Christian leaders in India are demanding the same benefit for their Dalit brethren. This shows their lethargy towards the backward Christians in India. Therefore, some Dalits have developed an aversion to Christianity, they need not be blamed; it is a natural consequence of casteism. Yet, the Dalit Christians remains continued to loyal to their faith.

#### **4.1. Areas of Discrimination**

While describing the challenges of the Pentecostal perspectives, Stephen reveals that, “the erosion of moral values is also found among the Pentecostals. Caste and class discrimination is not completely wiped out from the Pentecostal Churches. The Dalits are very much neglected in the community.”<sup>424</sup> Then on the Pentecostal ethics, he writes that,

The Pentecostal awakening also was fascinated by the marginalized as they could find acceptance and identity. The Pentecostal Churches recognized the identity of all classes, especially, the Dalits who were considered as slaves and untouchables by the society. The poor find identity in Pentecostal Churches in all countries but this does not mean that the discrimination against the poor and Dalits are [sic] completely disappeared from the Pentecostal Churches. As it has been happening all through the decades, the Pentecostal Movement is also domesticated by the dominant, though Pentecostal movements continue to be an open community or open Church.<sup>425</sup>

---

<sup>422</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid. p 11.

<sup>424</sup> Stephen, *Towards* , p. 27.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

Pastor Joseph agrees that discrimination crept in to the Church in the absence of Pastor Cook.<sup>426</sup> Syrians have meted out serious injustice against the Dalits. The Church which started among the poor, became a tent of differences. Sociologically, differences are likely in a multi-ethnic community but wrong motives and pretensions created many problems. For instance, at the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, it was built upon unity and oneness because of opposition by the entire society. Samuelkutty commented that “in the historical analysis of the early Pentecostal believers in Kerala, they both were poor and so they could relate very easily.”<sup>427</sup> Pastor T.K. Abraham, a Dalit Pentecostal affirms that the Syrian Christians who came to Pentecostalism were from a low economic background. Thus they had no difficulty in having fellowship with the Dalits.”<sup>428</sup>

The writer sees two immediate factors for the emergence of serious discrimination in the Church. Firstly, Pastor Abraham who segregated himself for a Syrian Pentecostal emphasis appears to have promoted a partisan attitude towards Dalits. Samuelkutty asserted that Pastor Abraham had an indifferent attitude towards the Dalit Pentecostals.<sup>429</sup> Moreover, when Abraham left Cook, the Cook’s Church was branded as a Dalit Church.

Secondly, the sudden economic growth of the Syrian Pentecostals in the late 1950s widened the gap between the rich and the poor in the Church. This was due to the outflow of Syrian Christians to the Gulf and American countries which they considered a special blessing. Since they had greater educational opportunities they could make use of the employment openings and the resultant economical advancements created a visible

---

<sup>426</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>427</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 66.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid. p. 70.

difference in the Church in Kerala. Unity and adaptability were the marks of Pentecostalism, and most of the divisive activities took place after this period.

#### 4.1.1. Indifferent Attitude

*Caste in the Kerala Churches*, a classic study on the discrimination within the Church was done by Ninan Koshy, on behalf of the Kerala Council of Churches. Koshy pointed out the serious attitudinal problem between Dalit Christians and Syrians Christians. He examined many Syrians and identified two attitudes among them: the old social service attitude of giving a helping hand to the inferiors, and a hostile attitude.<sup>430</sup> Pastor Joseph also feels that Syrian Christians maintain a sort of apathy towards the new converts.<sup>431</sup> Many of them stated opinionated that Christians from backward classes are not good Christians. They said: “How can a Pulaya be a good Christian? He will always be a Pulaya.”<sup>432</sup>

McGavaran observed that the traditional Christians in the state objected to the possibility of both communities engaging in intermarriage.<sup>433</sup> Pastor John denied the possibility of such marriage relationship because he said “it is not a theological factor rather a sociological factor; every caste has their concern for ethnic purity and even the backward communities do not marry each other.”<sup>434</sup>

Even in the form of addressing each other, the Syrians refer Dalits by their caste such as, Chacko Pulayan or Mathai Pulayan. However, this form of address is much resented by the backward Christians.<sup>435</sup> Where as, the Syrians require to be addressed in a

---

<sup>430</sup> Ninan Koshy, *Caste in the Kerala Churches*, (Bangalore: CISRS, 1968), P. 1.

<sup>431</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>432</sup> Koshy, p. 30-31.

<sup>433</sup> Donald A. Mc Gavaran, *Ethnic Realities and the Church : Lessons from India*, (California: William Carey Library, 1979), p. 254.

<sup>434</sup> John, Interview.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

respectful manner. Earlier, the Pentecostals addressed every one equally, now the style is changed to *Achayan*, a respected term for rich, and the poor are called brother. The most extreme Pentecostal group, the Pentecostal Mission where they classify the believers according to their caste.

Though the Bible guarantees believers priesthood, most Syrians Christians are unwilling to accept a Dalit priest as the one to baptize their child.<sup>436</sup> Nevertheless, the Pentecostal Churches have a different stand, which accommodate ministers of any kind. Samuelkutty observed that earlier, all Pentecostal pastors were not theologically qualified and economically sound and therefore both the Syrians and Dalits were well accepted.<sup>437</sup> Although, So the attitude of the Syrian Christians was not very positive towards new converts. Pentecostals had a different approach but were not without blameless.

#### **4.1.2. Caste Discrimination**

Sunny Jacob describes “casteism is the worst enemy of human race. It segregates people into unnatural, unjustified groups. It denies the humanity of millions of people, simply because the Brahmanical order propagated the myth of creation mentioned in the *Purasu Sukta* of the Rig Veda.”<sup>438</sup> Chirackarodu pointed out the two main ingredients of casteism. They are traditional membership by birth and marriage relationship between people of the same caste.<sup>439</sup> Donald McGavaran, who studied the Indian Church, rightly pointed out that “the Church in India is rising in a thousand places is intensely caste conscious and is coloured by caste.”<sup>440</sup> Koshy scans through the issues of casteism in the

---

<sup>436</sup> Koshy, *Caste*, p.42-43.

<sup>437</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 68.

<sup>438</sup> Sunny Jacob, Untouchability, ‘Untouchability and Castiesm,’ *Indian Currents* October 8, (2000) 48.

<sup>439</sup> Chirackarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 129.

<sup>440</sup> Mc Gavaran, *Ethnic Realities* p. 17.

Church. He says, “casteism has been within the Church for more than a century. The persistence of caste structure within the Church, whether in its traditional or changed form, affects the life and growth of the Church.”<sup>441</sup> He further observes that, “in many places separate congregations, places of worship and cemeteries exist for different sections of the same denominations of the Church.”<sup>442</sup> Chirackkarodu says that the Syrian Christians are giving more respect to the upper class Hindus than their own fellow Dalit Christians is and they are benefited by it.<sup>443</sup> K.J. Mathew, who made an advanced study on the Kerala Pentecostal Churches, commented that “in such a situation, the Dalits were attracted to the Pentecostal doctrine of baptism in the Holy Spirit irrespective of caste and colours.”<sup>444</sup>

McGavaran observes that some Christians are reluctant to acknowledge the caste factor. He said, “they will insist that the Church is almost free from caste prejudice.”<sup>445</sup> He narrates the manner some of the Christian reflected his observations.<sup>446</sup> In response to the questionnaire of the writer, the President of the New India Church of God, a Pentecostal group in Kerala, answered that “we haven’t got any discrimination between Dalits and other sects as far as our Church is concerned”<sup>447</sup> Whereas, T.P.Varghese, the former Assistant superintendent of the Assemblies of God in Kerala accepted that casteism is prevailing among Pentecostals, and adds that “it is because of the lack of proper regeneration.”<sup>448</sup>

---

<sup>441</sup> Koshy, *Caste*, P. 1.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 130.

<sup>444</sup> K.J. Mathew, *Denominational Pluralism Among Pentecostals in Kerala: Causes and Responses, 1920 to the Present*, (M.Th Thesis, U.T.C. 1993). P. 91.

<sup>445</sup> McGavaran, p. 19.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid. P. 20

<sup>447</sup> President, New India Church of God, Reply to the Questionnaire , Chenganassery, 10, Nov.,2000.

<sup>448</sup> T.P. Varghese, Reply to the Questionnaire , Thiruvalla, 26, November, 2000.

Mathew Joseph, a Malayalee Dalit Pastor, says, “Pentecostalism has more racism than any other Christian group, but not all Pentecostals”.<sup>449</sup> Mathew a former Catholic from Malabar region confesses that “I have realized deep gap between the Dalits and Syrians only after joining the Pentecostal Church.”<sup>450</sup> He further clarified that, “in our areas, marriages are conducted between Syrians and Dalits in the Catholic Church; but in the Pentecostal Church who claim more closer relationship will not marry. Moreover, Pentecostals have reservations about giving a holy kiss after the worship.”<sup>451</sup> Abraham Mathew, another Dalit Pentecostal pastor in Bangalore asserts that racism is very strong among Pentecostals in the central Kerala.<sup>452</sup> K.J. Mathew believes that the division or separation of the Dalits from others is mainly due to the embarrassment caused by the high-handedness of the Syrian Christians.<sup>453</sup>

Undoubtedly, casteism prevails in Kerala Pentecostal Churches, but is not as visible as the other denominations. It affects inter personal as well as ecclesiastical relationships and has influenced upon the Church planting and administration efforts also. Varughese quoting Rev. Chacko, “even today though Pentecostals did not have any barriers of caste and tribe, yet the majority of the Pentecostal workers are Syrians working among Syrians.”<sup>454</sup> Almost, all Dalit Churches belong to the Dalit groups and in most cases are not accepted in other places. However, there are few a Churches having mixed congregations, yet the privileges and opportunities for Dalits are questionable. Some Syrian Pentecostal Churches accept backward people in their assemblies, but do not promote them in the ministry and other areas.

---

<sup>449</sup> Mathew Joseph, Reply to the Questionnaire, Bangalore, 20, November, 2000.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Abraham Joseph, Reply of the Questionnaire, Bangalore, 21, Nov. 2000.

<sup>453</sup> Mathew, *Denominational*, p. 95.

In many cases, casteism affects the appointment and transfer of the pastors. Indian Pentecostal Church, the largest Pentecostal group has divided the regions according to the caste domination. Vaikom Centre consists of only Dalit Churches, yet there are Syrian Churches within the region which have still not joined with it, Pastor John agreed this was the case.<sup>455</sup> Although there are able and senior Dalit pastors in the Centre, the Syrian dominated Council has appointed a Syrian retired college Professor, and a junior ordained pastor as the Center Pastor. Pastor John justified the appointment and said the people in the Centre had asked for his service because they believed that due to his influence, he could initiate many developments especially in the construction of buildings.<sup>456</sup> In fact, poor Dalit pastors have less chance to become a centre minister because of their poverty. Pastor John proudly mentioned the Kanam Centre Pastor, E.J. Joseph,<sup>457</sup> but Samuelkutty says he was assigned because of compulsion from the Dalit community.<sup>458</sup> Another name mentioned was pastor John Chellappan, the National Council member of IPC,<sup>459</sup> later investigations proved that he was elected because he is from Idukki District, a mountain area, where many others were not willing to go and work, and Dalit Churches are greater in number.<sup>460</sup>

Regarding Church administration, Koshy observes that there are clear examples of upper caste domination. Many new converts are discouraged because of partiality and discrimination in the traditional Churches and left to join the congregational set up. They do not have equal representation in the administration of the Church, commensurate with

---

<sup>454</sup> Varughese, *Historical Perspective*, p. 143.

<sup>455</sup> John, Interview.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 145.

<sup>459</sup> John, Interview.

<sup>460</sup> John Mathew, Popular Pentecostal Writer , Bangalore ( Interview, 25 October 2000).

their numerical strength.<sup>461</sup> In some Churches, backward classes do not have any representation at all in Church bodies. The backward classes are free to attend services in the Churches, and while some necessary welfare projects may be available to them, they must not interfere in anything or expect anything more than that. Because of this, Dalits are not represented in administration, and seek to have separate Churches.

These days the under privileged are forming their own Pentecostal groups and are flourishing. This helps them to prepare capable leaders among their people, and show equality of expertise with other groups. Samkutty Chacko, the editor of *Hallelujah*, a Pentecostal quarterly, claimed that in IPC, the democratic system is followed in election.<sup>462</sup> However, how is it that despite the thirty percent Dalit population, they have no representation or seats in the General Council. In this Church, backward believers can rise to zonal or regional leadership in the daughter organizations, but not represented in the state leadership of the Church. They are not lacking any leadership qualities or competency, rather, they show exceptional ability in their own organizations. However, Samkutty, the State joint secretary of IPC denies this and claims that eligible people are being accommodated.<sup>463</sup>

Sunny says that the challenge of the Church in India is to fight against the caste system internally as well as externally.<sup>464</sup> He further comments that the Church has no moral right to proclaim the message of the Kingdom of God when it is divided by caste.<sup>465</sup>

---

<sup>461</sup> Koshy, *Caste*, p. 58.

<sup>462</sup> Samkutty Chacko, editor, *Hallelujah*, Kottayam, (Interview, 3 Oct.2000).

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

<sup>464</sup> Sunny, *Untouchability*, p. 49.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

### **4.1.3 Economic Disparity**

Koshy acknowledges that the vast majority of the backward Christians are agricultural labourers who own no land of their own.<sup>466</sup> Most of them are daily workers and their work is mostly seasonal. So their families cannot maintain economic stability and therefore they are dependent on other people in society. In many cases, they force their children to go to work in order to assist the parents. Quality, professional education is not affordable to them. So they are unable to go abroad for decent jobs or have a good earning capacity. Though their children are getting only a nominal education scholarship from the Government, their education rate is higher than the Hindu Dalits who are enjoying many benefits, due to religious discrimination against Dalits.

V.M. Varkey, a senior Dalit pastor from Idukki District says that the social suppression is so severe that even if the Dalits begin a business, people of other caste will see to it that it is closed by hook or by crook<sup>467</sup>. They are lacking any public support to establish themselves.

Even the Government services are limited to Dalit Christians. They are not prepared to bribe or influence politicians to secure any such opportunities. So future generations are also tied to the cycle of poverty, educational and social discrimination.

### **4.1.4. Social Discrimination**

Koshy observes that social discrimination within the Church is clear from the treatment accorded to the backward classes by Syrian Christians.<sup>468</sup> Although there are some changes, contemporary Syrian Christians have reservations in participating in the

---

<sup>466</sup> Koshy, *Caste*, p. 54.

<sup>467</sup> V.M.Varkey, Senior Dalit Pentecostal pastor, Idukki, ( Interview , 5 October, 2000).

<sup>468</sup> Koshy, *Caste*, p. 62.

social functions of the Dalits. However, in the Pentecostal Churches the trend is bit different, they participate in social gathering of mixed communities and even dine together. There are variations in their treatment with other communities however.

Whether it is in main line Churches or Pentecostal Churches, intermarriage is very rare and generally creates controversy. Koshy reveals that some people advocate intermarriages as a solution and quotes the experience of the North Malabar region, where missionaries promoted it.<sup>469</sup> He reveals that almost all Syrians cannot think of their children marrying low caste Christians.<sup>470</sup> There were intermarriages among the Pentecostals, in the emigrated regions of High Range and Malabar. However, since the economic gap has become great, likelihood is not evident but rare. Education and economic priorities have replaced the equable attitude of the Pentecostal believers now.

#### **4.1.5. Underprivileged**

Pastor Mathew argues that the backward class lacks privileges in the Churches.<sup>471</sup> Mr. Mani, a theologically qualified Dalit Pentecostal believer testifies that he never was asked to preach in his Church nor did any one consider him for any other activity. So he has started his own ministry outside the Church.<sup>472</sup> Missionary Cook granted the Dalits adequate priorities but later on they did not get the due privileges. This side lining is not only in the matter of leadership, but also in the area of participation in events and programmes, they are largely ignored. Abraham painfully expressed that most of the talented and able men from depressed communities are neglected or driven out of the

---

<sup>469</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

<sup>471</sup> Mathew, Questionnaire.

<sup>472</sup> Mr .Mani, Reply to the Questionnaire , Bangalore, 15, November, 2000.

Church.<sup>473</sup> The following section deals with the consequences of discrimination which led to the Church splitting into two groups.

## 4.2. History of Separations

Although it is unbiblical for the body of Christ to be divided along the lines caste and region, Kerala Pentecostals have made it their practice. The traditional Churches either deny that they have Dalit members or ignore them. The Pentecostals, who claim to recognize them and have majority number of Dalits, set a bad example.

According to Ayroor, the first formalized separation took place in 1953.<sup>474</sup> Pastor C.S.Mathew, a Brethren evangelist, had a Pentecostal experience and decided to revive his mother Church. He organized a youth team called *Sannadha Suvisesha Sangam*, Voluntary Gospel Team. However, his people were not happy about his new experience and he therefore started The Independent Church of God in 1947. His work began to flourish among the poor people.<sup>475</sup>

In April 1953, Pastor Mathew approached Syrian Pastor Abraham with a desire to join with IPC. His intention may have been to widen the scope of his ministry and gain approval from the Syrian community. However, Abraham restrained him by explaining the danger of future split between the ministers of Syrian and Dalit communities. Though he promised him all spiritual support in the ministry.<sup>476</sup> In the same year, Pastor Abraham ordained ministers including Pastor Mathew and three others, at the Ranny convention.<sup>477</sup>

---

<sup>473</sup> Abraham, Questionnaire.

<sup>474</sup> Ayroor, *Keralathele Penthecosthu*, p. 81.

<sup>475</sup> Saju, *Penthecosthu Charithram*, pp. 204-206.

<sup>476</sup> Abraham, *Eliya dasan*, p. 404-405.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

Practically, Pastor Abraham's decision may have been correct but it created a wrong opinion about the Pentecostal movement.

#### 4.2.1. The Church of God Division

Rev. M.V.Chacko refers to it as a sorrowful event in the history of the Church of God. Still he contended that it was God's plan because it provided the backward ministers to grow and extend in the ministries<sup>478</sup>. According to J.C.Dev, a prominent Christian writer in Kerala, the division was the most unfortunate event in history.<sup>479</sup> Saju says it was due to the lack of Christian love.<sup>480</sup> The writer contends that it was a victory over the suppression of one group by the other. It was not against caste or for caste. After the departure of Cook, the Church of God administration was under the control of the Syrian leadership and they became very nepotistic and partisan in their function. They absolutely ignored the backward people who toiled both day and night for the growth of the movement. So they felt neglected and dismayed on many occasions. When the administration and Bible school were well established, the founders were rejected. When the power mongers got hold of authority, the poor people were rejected.<sup>481</sup> No Dalits were appointed as Ordained pastors or as Centre pastors, neither as Bible College teachers nor as office staff.<sup>482</sup> The leadership ignored their requests. Some missionaries also ignorantly supported this injustice. Pastor T.J.Stephen of the Paradi Church published a statement on the injustices meted out to the poor in the church. Rev. William Pospisil, the then President responded to it in the

---

<sup>478</sup> M.V. Chacko, 'Kerala Division oru Charithra Niyogam' Mal- Kerala Division - A Historical Event in *Kerala Division Silver Jubilee Suvineer '97*. p. 8.

<sup>479</sup> J.C.Dev, 'Ngan Ariunna Kerala Division' Mal- Kerala Division as far as I Know in *Kerala Division Silver Jubilee Suvineer '97*. p. 18.

<sup>480</sup> Saju, *Pentecosthu Charithram*, p. 265.

<sup>481</sup> Sunny Varkey, 'Charithrathinte Spandanam' -Mal [The pulse of the History] in *Kerala Division Silver Jubilee Suvineer '97*. p. 2.

<sup>482</sup> Saju, p. 266.

worker's conference, and caused pain to the Dalit pastors.<sup>483</sup> At this point the under privileged pastors realized the inevitable consequences, and decided to demand for a partnership in the administration, which would listen to their grievances. They formed an Action Committee under the chairmanship of pastor K.J.Markose. On behalf of the thirty-three Dalit Churches, On 22 June 1970, they submitted a memorandum, to the Church of God Councils and missionaries under the leadership of Pastor K.J.Joseph, pleading for equality and equal privileges in the Church.

Their demands were: firstly, while selecting the Bible college candidates, sixty percent of them should be selected from the oppressed communities so that they also will be useful in the ministry. Secondly, youngsters who are well versed in Malayalm should be trained to work within Kerala State while those proficient in other languages should be sent outside for higher studies. Thirdly, in order to execute these suggestions, appoint two Bible college directors one each from Syrian and Dalit backgrounds. Fourthly, believers from the Cheremar and Sambava communities are illiterate and if lacking care, may quit the Church for simple reasons. Therefore, it is necessary to accommodate them in the Church by redressing their grievances. So assign two representatives from both the upper and lower caste communities with full executive powers. Fifthly, there are serious allegations against the administration that they are not equally considering the applications for Church constructions and other needs in an impartial way. Since the office staffs are Syrians, they might show favoritism in the process of applications. Therefore appoint a faithful person from the backward people to assist the state secretary. Six, in order to avoid nepotism and guarantee equal and adequate participation for all, appoint officers

---

<sup>483</sup> Joseph, Interview.

from backward community also. Finally, according to the regulations of the Church of God by-laws, promote all pastors from the unprivileged communities who also have completed their five year's service.<sup>484</sup>

After the Council meeting, in response to their demands, the missionary thanked them for bringing the issues to his notice and agreed to examine their demands. On 21, May the following year, during the General Body meeting at the headquarters, the Syrian majority demanded segregation of Dalits.<sup>485</sup> By sensing the carnality of the demand, one of the Syrian pastors, U. Thomas argued for an amicable settlement by sharing the power and privileges equally with the Dalits.<sup>486</sup> Indeed, the Dalits never demanded a separate power block, rather they advocated for due justice and privilege. Because of the rigorous stand taken by the Syrians all negotiations failed. On 22, February 1972, the Church of God was born as the Dalit group, namely, Church of God in India Full Gospel, Kerala Division. Their Council convened on the following day and the new Overseer Rev. K.J. Chacko took the leadership.<sup>487</sup> Samuelkutty observed that the Syrians interfered even in the new appointment. They insisted that none of the agitators be appointed as the new Overseer. Thus they influenced the foreign authorities to select a new person who was away in Andhra Pradesh.<sup>488</sup> Historically, the causes and consequences of this split have impacted on the Church, both favorably and adversely.

---

<sup>484</sup> From the copy of the Memmorandum submitted to the Church Council on 22, June, 1970.

<sup>485</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

<sup>488</sup> Samuelkutty, *Palce and Contribution*, p. 145.

### 4.2.2. Consequences of the Split

There are various versions about the outcome of the separation. Dev assesses it as both a moral and spiritual liberation struggles.<sup>489</sup> Saju posits that Pentecostalism lost its foundation of brotherhood. He also adds that other groups cannot boast because they are not immune from such dissension.<sup>490</sup>

After the separation of these groups they have achieved commendable growth both in ministries as well as organizationally. World Missionary Evangelism Church affiliated to the organization of John Douglas in America established their work in India.<sup>491</sup> They are one of the fastest growing groups, with 400 Churches, spread in all fourteen districts of Kerala, having a population of 70000. In 1950, Pastor Mathew had established a Bible school to train their people for pioneering ministry. When he considered the need of the unprivileged, he started an orphanage for poor children. They produce a monthly publication and a Radio programme.

At the time of its formation, Kerala division had only sixty-five Churches with ten buildings. At the silver jubilee in 1997, they had about 265 local Churches and 165 Church buildings.<sup>492</sup> Rev. Sunny Varkey claimed that Youth, Children and Ladies departments are flourishing amazingly. They have a Gethsemane Evangelism Crusade, conducting evangelistic meetings in the unreached areas with the aim of Church planting.<sup>493</sup> The most fascinating step was the starting of a Bible college by faith to equip their workers, at their office building in 1984. Now the work has spread to Trivandrum area also. Recently,

---

<sup>489</sup> Dev, Ngan Ariunna, *Suviner*, p. 14.

<sup>490</sup> Saju, *Pentecosthu Charithram*, p. 267.

<sup>491</sup> Ayroor, *Keralethele*, p.80-81.

<sup>492</sup> Dev, 'Ngan Ariunna', *Suviner*, p. 18.

<sup>493</sup> Suuny, 'Charithrathinte', *Suviner*, p. 2-3.

they purchased a convention stadium at Kottayam with the generous contributions of the poor believers.

Even though the denomination bears a caste stigma, the under privileged people have freedom to initiate programmes and plans fearlessly. Unfortunately, the Churches are not finding any significance in the historical accounts of the Kerala Church. Abraham Ayroorkuzhil has made the observation that the Dalit Churches are remaining a minority within the minority of the Christian community in India.<sup>494</sup> Pastor John is particular about the social isolation of Dalit Christians and comments that the Syrian Christians should identify with the problems of the Dalits and lead their struggle for privileges.<sup>495</sup> Until and unless we set right our household discriminations, how can strive against the political discriminations of the Dalit Christians? However, in spite of all these humiliations, the Dalit spirituality encourages them to keep a warm relationship with their Syrians brothers.

---

<sup>494</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 236.

<sup>495</sup> John, Interview.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5. EVALUATION OF THE EXISTING STATUS OF PENTECOSTAL DALITS IN KERALA**

Though Dalits have embraced several religious patterns, they have not been greatly benefited by any. They were part of the Hindu religion and became slaves to the masters of that religion. Hindus exploited them to the maximum and out of frustration, they followed Christianity which promised them freedom and equality in the congregation. Later on, the Dalits realized that their dream of unity and oneness is only a dream of their own making. However, the Dalits were not ready to give up so easily. Since they did inherit certain blessings and favours from and were comparatively better off, if they lived as Christians did. As it was a complex and difficult process it is necessary that several very certain important areas should be discussed.

#### **5.1. The Achievements of Dalit Pentecostals**

Chirackkarodu observes that due to discrimination and differences in the traditional Churches Dalits were motivated the Dalits to take refuge in the congregational Churches such as Pentecostals, Baptists and Brethren.<sup>496</sup> Dalits also experienced the ill treatment as second class citizens in the Syrian dominated main line Churches. They had to sit and worship separately in their congregations, remain silent in the administrative affairs, and bury their dead in the lowest part of the cemeteries. Recently, at Kuravalangadu Roman Catholic Church, in Kottayam district, a Dalit dead body was exhumed and buried in

another grave because it was buried in a tomb where an upper caste Christian was buried.<sup>497</sup> Above all, traditional Christians followed a set pattern of ritualistic worship, whereas the Dalits emphasis was on a real spiritual form of worship.<sup>498</sup> They are isolated from the huge property concerns of the Church, and are not included in the privilege of decision making. So they began to seek places where they had greater opportunity.

### **5.1.1. Denominations**

After 150 years of Christianity, the Dalits saw that the Syrians were not ready to accept the Dalit majority in the Church. Chirackkarodu states that this caused them to establish their own congregations.<sup>499</sup> Most of these Churches are situated in the emigrated districts of Idukki, Kozhikode, Wayanadu and Cannannore. The main reason may be that in these places, the Dalits have greater economic independence than other areas, as people naturally do not accept any kind of domination by others. In these districts, both the Dalits and non-Dalits have a closer relationship than in the rest of the state.

After the advice of Pastor Abraham, Pastor Mathew established the India Independent Church of God which later associated with World Missionary Evangelism fellowship. Pastor Mathew had a great concern for his people and started the first Dalit Bible College, namely, The Hebron Bible College at Ranny.<sup>500</sup> Most of his graduates became pioneers in the mission field and leaders of the church. The Kariamplavu Convention is popular among Dalit Pentecostals where thousands of them gather each year. Pastor Mathew was also a popular Hymn writer and orator. He was the Dalit Christian leader who led many public agitations and courted arrest in his fight against

---

<sup>496</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 233.

<sup>497</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>498</sup> Chirackkarodu, p. 234.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

injustice towards the Dalit converts. The India Independent Church of God has over five hundred Churches and an equal number of pastors. Organizationally, this group is very strong with a well-equipped Youth and Ladies wing. Most of the Churches own Church buildings and cemeteries. Rev. O.M. Rajukutty, a good orator and able organizer, is the Overseer of this Church organization.

Another important Dalit Pentecostal Church is Church of God in India-Kerala Division. This is an established organization with the capacity of 300 Churches with approximately 90% having their own Church buildings. They have a well organized and functioning Office system under the control of the Overseer Rev. Sunny Varkey, and have separate departments for Youth, Women, and Sunday School. Faith Bible school is a vernacular training centre, which provides a basic theological education for their workers. The annual convention at Kottayam is known for its spiritual emphasis and cordial worship.<sup>501</sup>

The Independent Assemblies of God, headquarters at Elappara, Idukki district is another Pentecostal Church group working among the Estate workers.<sup>502</sup> Since its inception in 1968, they have grown more than four hundred local Churches and about the same number of pastors. The India Life Bible College is probably the only English medium Bible College owned by Dalits. They also have two orphanages, one at Kottayam and the other at Elappara.<sup>503</sup> Rev. A.I. Chacko leads the organization. Their focus is mainly among the coolies and the working class.

---

<sup>500</sup> Saju, *Pentacosthu Charitharm*, p. 206.

<sup>501</sup> Sunny Varkey, *Charithrathinte, Suviner*, p. 2-3.

<sup>502</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Chritsaavar*, p. 234.

<sup>503</sup> Ayroor, *Keralathele*, p. 95-96.

Global Mission of India is another group working in the High Ranges of Idukki district. They have about two hundred Churches, and they conduct charitable work for the welfare needs of the poor. Rev. P.M.Baby is the Director of this group, stationed at Elappara.<sup>504</sup>

#### **5.1.1.1. Some Smaller Pentecostal Groups**

Rev. M.P.Mathai heads the Philadelphia Gospel Church of God consisting of working class people only. The India Gospel Mission, under the leadership of Rev. V.M.Jacob consists of a Dalit congregation. Rev. Joy V.John, is the President of the All India Church of God<sup>505</sup>. The India Church of God is another indigenous Pentecostal Church, whose headquarter is at Thalappady.<sup>506</sup> Its founder pastor K.P.Markose, was a graduate of the Church of God in India Bible College at Mulakuzha, he could not accept the discrimination within the Church and began a worship service in his residence in 1967. They now have more than twenty Churches and approximately twenty-two pastors in the Church.<sup>507</sup> Rev.K.M. Philip leads the Church in its present rate of growth.<sup>508</sup> Another Church in Idukki district, Bible Believer's Movement under the leadership of Rev. K.J.Samuel focuses on the Dalit community. Salem Pentecostal Churches and Full Gospel Assembly in India are two Dalit organizations at Mundakkaym. The Pentecostal Fellowship in India is headed by Rev. Sam Peter; The Free Church of God by Rev. K.J.Thomas and Mount Sinai Church at Pulickal Kavala; the Gospel for India under the

---

<sup>504</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christhavar*, p. 236.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Saju, *Penthecosthu Charithram*, p. 216.

<sup>507</sup> Ayroor, *Keralathele*, p. 108-109.

<sup>508</sup> Chirackkarodu, p.236.

leadership of Rev. K.K. Das and Rev. K.M. George leads the Faith Revival Church of God at Kattappana. There are just some of the Dalit oriented Pentecostal Churches in Kerala.<sup>509</sup>

Interestingly, there are very few Pentecostal Churches with Syrian leadership, which have a Dalit majority of members. Thomas Philip, the President of New India Bible Church conceded that he never intended to start a separate denomination from the scheduled castes, but from the very beginning, Dalits began to flow to his Church in large numbers and some Syrian Christian members began to withdrawn from the Church. This tendency on the part of higher caste Christians stimulated him to take a special interest in ministry among the Dalits, encouraging them in all areas of life.<sup>510</sup> While many congregations consist of people from background communities, they continue to grow in their spirituality worship within the Churches.

### **5.1.2. Institutionally**

In spite of limited resources and encouragement, Dalits have established various institutions. In some cases, they have generated foreign funds to establish institutions, such as Bible schools and orphanages which effectively functioning. Although they have manpower and commitment, channeling the resources is a real problem. Within some existing organizations, they are not appointed as the head of the institutions or any other key leadership positions. Pastor George John, a Dalit pastor, explained his situation while working in a Pentecostal institution in Kerala.<sup>511</sup> When working with a missionary lady, he was entrusted with various responsible positions. When the administration was handed over to Indian Christians, they deposed him for no reason and after much difficulty and

---

<sup>509</sup> Ibid. pp.236-238.

<sup>510</sup> Mathew, *Denominational*, p. 93.

<sup>511</sup> George John, a Dalit pastor at Cochin (Interview, 30 September, 2000).

argument retained him but no particular job was assigned to him. Indeed, he continues there to keep his name there. This is just one of many examples in the Pentecostal institutions in Kerala, where instances of upper caste Christians create difficulties for Dalits.

### 5.1.3 Educational Improvements

Kerala society and especially the Dalit community are greatly indebted to the missionaries for their contribution in the field of education. Missionaries encouraged free and compulsory education for all, particularly the under privileged. Selvaraj, who made an advanced study on the benefits of missionary endeavour to the Dalits, has come to the conclusion that it resulted in two main areas.<sup>512</sup>

It resulted in the area of social transformation and religious reformation.<sup>513</sup> Because of the provision of education facilities, the poor now had the privilege of educational instruction. According to Selvaraj, before the missionaries, the upper castes alone had the privilege of education as the temple was the centre of instruction and the priests were the instructors. In order to provide education to the oppressed, the missionaries started *pallikudams*, Church Schools.<sup>514</sup> Through this the Dalits became sensitive to their oppression and a social and religious transformation took place. The Edinburgh Conference defined that the aim of missionary education is conversion of pupils.<sup>515</sup> So Christian missions and education proved a most dynamic force in the upliftment of Dalits. Bishop Thoburn in 1893 observed that “Christianity alone could secure for the Dalits any public employment worthy of the name; Christianity alone could

---

<sup>512</sup> Selvaraj, *Impact*, p. 27.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 82.

point out to them a way of escape from the long and weary conditions of semi-bondage in which they and their fore-fathers had lived.”<sup>516</sup>

Secondly, due to the new religious insights produced through the *pallikudams*, Dalits abandoned their filth, ignorance, superstition, and devil worship. They turned to Christianity as the solution to their problems. There are now a good number of highly educated people in Dalit society, especially in the Pentecostal Church. Unfortunately, because of the step-motherly policy of the Government, they have no job reservation or availability and many post-graduate people are taking any kind of job for survival. One of the major set backs of the Dalits is lack of English education. They are limited in their opportunities because most schools are teaching in the vernacular, and the better jobs require competency in English.

It is true in the case of theological education also. Initially, Pentecostals did not support the idea of Biblical education. John Thannickal, the president of Nava Jeeva Ashram, commented, “in the early days of the Pentecostal Movement, theological education was understood as unspiritual because spirituality was not identified with higher education or wealth but rather it was identified with poverty and low estate.”<sup>517</sup> However, now the trend is reversed in Kerala, and Pentecostals are providing many Bible schools in Kerala. IPC, Assemblies of God, and Church of God have many Bible schools and many individuals are running schools with foreign support.

Though the Dalit Pentecostals have many Churches, they have only a few Bible schools in Kerala. Varghese says that there is a greater desire among the poor people for

---

<sup>515</sup> Selvaraj, p. 45.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid. p. 51.

theological education than in the past. During the last nine decades, there are only two M.Th. graduates from the Dalit Pentecostals.<sup>518</sup> At the same time many Syrian Pentecostals have higher education. Pastor John said that the IPC church does not sponsor anyone for higher education. All are going for studies independently.<sup>519</sup> He may be correct, but there is mutual assistance for such candidates. Among the Dalits, only those who leave Kerala are able to go for theological education in English. Only a few Dalits are teaching in a reputed Bible Colleges meanwhile an even lesser number have had the privilege to study abroad. The immediate need of the Church is to train able and committed men from under privileged background in recognized Seminaries. Otherwise, social and biblical emphasis on justice to the poor and weaker cannot be fulfilled.

#### **5.1.4. Ministry and Leadership**

Koshy identifies one of the serious concerns of converted Christians is related to Church ministry and administration. These complaints are valid and reasonable because high caste Christians are not willing to share power and authority. Recently, the Mar Thoma Church has reserved two seats in their general council for the Dalit community. The Anglican Church also follows some kind of reservation in the administration. However, in the Pentecostal Church, the situation is not the same. Without doubt, the backwards have proved their Christian spirituality and ministerial quality. According to Samuelkutty, they were the leaders of Pentecostalism till the forties but later they were thrown out by the educated Syrians, Pastors M.M.John, P.D.Chacko, K.J.Markose were popular leaders from the community.<sup>520</sup>

---

<sup>517</sup> Sam, *Thesis*, p. 111.

<sup>518</sup> The two Dalit Pentecostal M.Th. graduates are Rev. M. Stephen and Rev. P.P.Joy.

<sup>519</sup> John, Interview.

<sup>520</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 163.

In IPC, and Assemblies of God, they had only a limited number of Dalit leaders. Particularly in IPC, after the separation of Dalits in the Church of God in 1972, Kanam, Idukki, and Vaikom centres were given to Dalit leadership because the Churches belonged to the Dalits.<sup>521</sup> Assemblies of God gave fewer opportunities for the backward class, and only two pastors were ordained in the fifties and sixties. Pastor K.J.John had the privilege of becoming the secretary and president of the youth department in his centre in 1950s and 1960s.

Dalits have serious objections against such discrimination in the Church. Pastor. T.V.John, a senior minister for more than thirty-five years said that they will make purchase Dalit ministerial ability and hard work but never allow them to come up in life.<sup>522</sup> After 1970s, the under privileged had succeeded in their efforts for equal power and leadership. Pastor Joseph recollected that soon after the formation of Church of God Division, the Dalits had proved their ability in administration and ministry.<sup>523</sup> They have achieved tremendous results in the area of Church growth, infrastructure, and leadership. The power struggle was quite evident in the Church of God, but in IPC, and Assemblies of God, it was mostly silent.<sup>524</sup> The basic cause of such struggle was due to the opinion that Dalits were incapable and incompetent. In a similar vein is the story of some Congregational Churches also. Instead of testing and trying their ability, many Syrians just belittled the potentialities of the Dalits in their Churches.

## **5.2. Dalit Contribution within Pentecostal Churches**

As pioneers of the Pentecostal movement, the Dalits have contributed a great deal of the denominations. Unfortunately, Syrian writers have not recorded it accurately. Their

---

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> T.V.John, a senior pastor at Palaghat, Interview 30 September 2000.

<sup>523</sup> Joseph, Interview.

<sup>524</sup> Samuelkutty, *place and Contribution*, p. 166.

writings give the impression that the Syrians alone enrich Pentecostalism. Samuelkutty admits this failure on the part of the historians.<sup>525</sup> He states that the reason Dalits did not write their history may be due to the lack of education and encouragement.<sup>526</sup> However, the Dalit eschatological hope consoles them that their labour recorded in heaven. Generally, they do not expose or express their protests against the injustice done to them because of their passive nature and feeling of helplessness. They are continually live in fear for their survival today and being exploited for the entire future, and their inferiority complex constrains them from exposing their struggles and injustices.

V.D.John, the Dalit freedom fighter of Kerala, remarked that “until and unless the Dalits raise their voices of torments boldly, everybody will misrepresent them and the world will not be attending to their grievances.”<sup>527</sup> A.P.Nirmal, a renowned Dalit theologian of India has said that, “Christian Dalit theology will be produced by Dalits. It will be on their own Dalit experiences, their own aspiration and their own hope. It will narrate the story of their suffering and their pathos. It will appreciate liberation which is meaningful to them.”<sup>528</sup> In order to realize their eligible rights and privileges, the under privileged Christians have not only to fight against the old traditional religious practices, but against traditional Christians also. No people in the world should have to fight such odds, especially within Christendom against fellow Christians.

### **5.2.1. Contribution in the pioneering ministries**

As soon as Dalits realized the calling and commitment of Missionary Cook to the poor, they took the initiation to extend his pioneering work. In fact, they took him to many

---

<sup>525</sup> Ibid. P. 156.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> V.D.John, Founder and General Secretary of Backward Converted Christian Federation, Alappuzha (Interview, 4, October, 2000).

new places to visit with their relatives, so pastor Cook could easily share the gospel with them. The new Churches were started due to the hard work and enthusiasm of the oppressed people. According to Cook, these people have taken much pain to attend meetings after their hard labour in the field and they were willing to listen till late of night, they brought mats with them to sleep there.<sup>529</sup> He found that they were serious about his message and extended their material support to him. When Pastor V.D.Pathrose knew that Cook was in financial straits, he walked many miles and gave him eight rupees which the missionary appreciated very much.<sup>530</sup> Once a Dalit pastor went to the police station in dressed a woman's dress fearing the attack from enemies. If he had gone in man's dress to save the life of the missionary, the Syrian Christians and upper caste Hindus would have killed him.<sup>531</sup>

Indeed, missionary Cook had come to India without any prior experience of Church planting, but the needs of the depressed class people challenged, and enabled him to plant many Churches. They toiled along with him in the pioneering work of Pentecostal faith in the estates, hills and valleys of Kerala. In the absence of the missionary and in the midst of severe opposition from traditional Christians, the people remained faithful to his teachings and strove for the Pentecostal movement. Pastors M.M.John, P.D.Chacko, N.C. Pathrose, K.J.Markose and P.P. Philipose were some of the early pioneers with missionary Cook but their names have not been added to the Syrian written Pentecostal history.<sup>532</sup> Pastor K.S.David was a early pioneer along with the Assemblies of God missionaries in the south Travancore areas. In the IPC also Dalits have pioneered many Churches in the northern and eastern part of Kerala.

---

<sup>528</sup> Vinod John, 'Themes in a Dalit Theology of Mission,' *Dharma Deepika*, Dec.(1999) 51.

<sup>529</sup> Cook, *Divine Leading* ,p.

<sup>530</sup> Joseph, Interview.

Dalit pastors are good in evangelistic programmes as well as in music ministry.<sup>533</sup> There were many pastors among them who were powerful communicators and preachers. According to Pastor Joseph, they were out numbered by the increasing number of the Syrians and the backwards were not economically competent enough to claim their chance. Because, the cost of musical instruments and the payment for the team members need more financial security. There were many music groups involved in the full time ministry, run by the backwards, almost withdrew because of economical reasons, and now dominated by upper caste Christians.<sup>534</sup> They have many wealthy people to sponsor their team. The Ezhamkulam Team was very popular Dalit group in the music ministry.

The poor people are honest in supporting the ministry and most of their Churches have survived by local income. Some of the Churches are built on sites given by poor believers out of their small piece of land.<sup>535</sup> They are very regular in their Church attendance, and participation. They walk miles together in the evening to attend a meeting even after their hard labour in the daytime. Samuelkutty says that in the initial period, their presence was very much needed for strength of the new movement as well as contributing to a spiritual atmosphere, but this was often exploited by Syrians.<sup>536</sup>

Pastors from the downtrodden communities were mightily used in the charismatic ministry like working with the demon possessed, praying for the sick and conducting deliverance meetings. Pastors P.D.Moses, V.J. Joseph, T.V.John, T.S.Mathew and many more could be added in the list. Samuelkutty accepts that the upper caste Christians wanted to experience the manifestation of the gifts from the Dalits but did not allow them

---

<sup>531</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 158-159.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid. p. 157.

<sup>533</sup> Samuelkutty, *Place and Contribution*, p. 160.

<sup>534</sup> Pastor M.A.Das, a Dalit pastor for more than ten years at Vellor, (Interview, 2,Oct. 2000).

<sup>535</sup> T.V.John, Interview.

to handle the administration and leadership of the Church thinking that the Dalits were unqualified.<sup>537</sup>

### **5.2.2. Dalit Literary Contribution**

With regard to their opportunities and education, they are not too far behind. In the early days, there were no Pentecostal books available for study, therefore many could not do any basic literary work. Pastor. K.J.John, was a known writer in the sixties, who often reflected upon the disunity and contention within the Church. There are a number of writers like Pastor M.D.Daniel, P.H.Peter, D. Chacko, K.M.John, Dr.M. Stephen, M.D.Daniel, V.M.Varkey, Eva. Mathew Palathunkal, O.J. Thenmankuzhi, V. Joy Scariah these are some of the Dalit Pentecostal writers. Since there are not many who became theological teachers, Dalits, therefore lack advanced theological learning and writing. Their themes were generally related to their freedom in Christ and the clarion call for focusing on heavenly things.

---

<sup>536</sup> Samuelkutty, p. 161.

<sup>537</sup> Samuelkutty, p. 160.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. FRUSTRATIONS OF DALIT CHRISTIANS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1. Disappointments of the Dalit Christians

This chapter deals with the heartthrob and frustrations of Christian Dalits in general and Pentecostals in particular. As these problems are related to the oppressed community as a whole and certain issues need to be given special attention in the Pentecostal Church. Dalit Christians are living in increasingly different times, seemingly more than ever before. Chirackkarodu points out that the growing socio-economic and religious conditions in India lead Dalits to utter confusion and disappointment.<sup>538</sup> Although relieved of the Brahmanic suppression and having embraced Christianity, their lives are not much different from earlier times.

Sadly, the Dalits have paid a great price to retain their Christian faith. Chirackkarodu records out some of the criticisms against these new converts.<sup>539</sup> It is said of them that a Pulaya Christian cannot be a good Christian; that they are mere emotionals that most of them are communists and they had adopted Christianity for the sake of various benefits and they are also enjoying undeserved offices in the Church.

While facts are quite different to these above does not suit the context. They abandoned their old faith for a better prospect. They are true seekers of spirituality and contended, when they found Christ. They have sacrificed many of their political and cultural elements for the sake of Christian faith, while Syrian Christians have not lost

---

<sup>538</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 238.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.* p.134.

anything even though they retained many of their unbiblical customs and practices. Dalits have been de-linked from their Hindu relatives and suffer social isolation from their own people. Chirackkarodu identifies the social dichotomy problem of the backward Christians.<sup>540</sup> Other Dalits became enemies to them and try to prevent benefits of any kind towards them because they think the Christian Dalits are more advanced. They accuse them for being benefit -seekers in the Church. In the light of this a discussion is necessary to explain some of the frustrations of these converted Christians.

Because of their political and ecclesiastical isolation, the under privileged Christians always see themselves as two kinds of people. Ever since they embraced the Christian faith, they were considered as an appendage to the Christian society. The Hindus refer to them as unpatriotic citizens and on the tails of the foreigners. Inside the Church, they are the unnumbered extras. Traditional Christians are not prepared to accept them as full Christians. A Mar Thoma Priest remarked that “all Syrian Christians in India are converts from the Paraya or depressed class people”.<sup>541</sup> Yet Syrians call the Dalit converts *pudu christiani*,<sup>542</sup> new Christians. Oppressed converts are treated as second rate believers in the Church and are not become part of the majority Christian community, they have remain as a separate sect within the Church. Any times they are frustrated in Church life and feel compelled to ask why did I accept the Christian faith?

Dalit Christians live in a kind of political despondency. Chirackkarodu says that they are discarded thrice in the history.<sup>543</sup> They were rejected out of the *Chaturvarnya*, four-caste system and declared untouchable. Secondly, when they denounced their caste-

---

<sup>540</sup> Ibd. p. 241.

<sup>541</sup> T.A.Samuel, a Mar Thoma Church member, Bangalore, (Interview, 5 Sept., 2000).

<sup>542</sup> *Pudu Christiani* is commonly addressed to a Pulaya or Paraya Christian in Kerala by the Syrian traditional Christians.

<sup>543</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 153.

ridden Hindu religion and accepted the Christian faith, the Church imposed the same spirit of casteism, and they feel alienated. Finally, the Indian Government took away their equal status with their Hindu fellow Dalits and left the entire Christian community in despair; Dalits received special privileges, whereas, when Dalits converted to Christ and having become Christians have received far less a grant in aid and than the Dalits who did not choose to become Christians.

Dalit Bandu says that it was not only an attack against their constitutional benefits but against their human rights.<sup>544</sup> Through the Presidential Order of 1950, which declared that “no person who professes a religion different from Hinduism shall be deemed to be a member of Scheduled caste for the purpose of the reservation,”<sup>545</sup> this eliminated the Dalit Christian privileges guaranteed in the Constitution of the nation. This was in gross violation of the Constitution and blatant denial of the fundamental right, Articles 14, 15, 16(2), 29, 338, 46, 341 as well as the UNO Human Rights Article 18. Since 1874,<sup>546</sup> the Christian Dalits had been entitled to equal benefits, and this Presidential Order dashed the hope of Christian converts. Dalits have tried to repeal this declaration more than forty times in the Parliament, and in the Supreme Court but without any success.<sup>547</sup>

It was this Order which led the Dalit Christians into economic chaos directly affecting lack of employment opportunities in the Government service and Public Enterprises. Meanwhile their own Hindu relatives were able occupy good positions and become financially secure, while many Christian Dalits became well educated but were

---

<sup>544</sup> Dalit Bandhu, *Onnamathai Dalithar* [First of All Dalit - Mal], Vaikom: Hobby Publications, 1994. p.5.

<sup>545</sup> n.a. *Demand for Restoration of Equal Rights for Christian Dalits*, Madras: National Coordination for Dalit Christians, 1998. p. 3.

<sup>546</sup> In 1874, The Mysore Government declared job reservation for all backward classes.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid* p. 27-28.

unable to secure a job.<sup>548</sup> These circumstances led many to seek financial security and return to the old religion, and gain the material benefits experienced by their Hindu relatives. The first Indian Administrative Service officer from the Scheduled Caste was Mr. Surendran, a former Christian.<sup>549</sup> The present Supreme Court Dalit judge, Justice K.G. Balakrishnan was Markose, born in a Dalit Christian family. Although they have rejected their Christian faith they enjoy all the benefits of secular society. However, now this type of re-conversion is also not very easy.

There are thousands of Dalit Christian educated youngsters struggling without any suitable job openings and therefore who have to work in the field. Sibin Mathew, a B.Sc. Maths first Class holder Dalit Christian, working as a carpenter, he desperately commented, “no plan of re-conversion, even if no job.”<sup>550</sup> He is representative of thousands of Dalit Christian qualified people. At the same time, in the name of poor and depressed people, the Church has established hundreds of institutions but they do not employ the Dalits. Joseph Pulikkunnel, a Catholic lay leader and a sympathizer of Dalits states that “the bishops who enjoy the political privileges of minorities and establish school and colleges, why they do not reserve job opportunities for the Dalit Christians in such institutions?”<sup>551</sup> Dalit Bandhu comments that Syrian Christians are running hundreds of charitable organizations and institutions in the country but none of them are hailed like Mother Theresa, because of their inward attitude and negligence towards the poor.<sup>552</sup> When the Church does not distribute justice to their poor brethren, how can they plead for their

---

<sup>548</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p.238.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.

<sup>550</sup> Sibin Mathew, a Maths graduate, now working as carpenter (Interview 3 Oct. 2000)

<sup>551</sup> Ibid. p. 241.

<sup>552</sup> Bandhu, *Onnamathai*, p. 18.

political privileges? Here again the Church exhibits her indifferent attitude to Dalit Christians.

When Christians follow the worldly style of ethnic dominance and develop Christian Social stratification, Dalit Christians becomes more alienated. It is true in all churches that the Dalits are only worshippers, not in ministry. Other than the Dalit oriented Pentecostal Churches, Dalit leadership anywhere else is very rare. Abraham Joseph condemns the non-motivational attitude of Syrians toward the converted Christians.<sup>553</sup> Upper caste believers never encourage any backward men to be involved in leadership.

Division between Dalit Christians is also another matter of concern. Chirackkarodu explains that in south Travancore, among the LMS Christians, there are different groups among the Channar Christians and the Paraya as well as the Pulayas.<sup>554</sup> Among the Pulayas, they are again divided into west and east, they do not intermarriage. More over Pulayas and Parayas always maintain a discriminatory attitude between each other. It is against the principles of Christianity, and this divisive spirit will steal the strength of the unity of Dalits altogether. Dalits constructing separate Churches for each community is not a healthy practice. It is confirming to their practices rather than following Christian principles.

This depressed people are always dependent people due to their poor circumstances. In many cases, they become insecure and live with a guilt or inferiority complex, it is a hindrance in the process of growth. Because of their poor education and motivation they cannot realize their potential and often given up lives, trying in despair. They fail to take any risks to challenge and prove their ability. However, there are people who have challenged the system and overcame all the obstacles before them. Paul Chriackkarodu is

---

<sup>553</sup> Abraham Joseph, Questionnaire.

<sup>554</sup> Chirackkarodu, *Dalit Christavar*, p. 240.

one who has succeeded in Kerala. If they are well motivated and molded, and given the opportunity any more will show the same success.

Another area of deep concern is promoting higher education in both secular and theological areas. Dalit Christians value the power of education, which has transformed their society, yet, and struggles to retain their religious and social standards. Though there are many secular graduates among the Pentecostals, there are very few qualified in theological education. Pentecostal agencies do not give any priority to them, to equip them with quality education. There are hardly even two or three people of Dalit origin with a post graduate level education, and perhaps only one or two with foreign education. They have no access to or even opportunities to influence the ruling Church bodies. They are not able to be educationalist, philosophers or decision-making members within the Christian Churches in which they are the majority.

Underprivileged Christians are bothered about their exploitation even though they cannot raise their voice against it. Though they are conscious that they are being misused religiously, socially and politically, their very dependence and powerlessness, restrains them from reacting against such exploitation. Dalit youth are involved in almost all political parties, but are never given opportunities elevate them to state level leadership. They are used only for displaying the placards or stick on the handbills. Sadly, it is not much different in Church administration and leadership attitude of today.

Among Pentecostals, the Dalit Pastors and Christian workers are facing a lot of problems. Though they desire to be successful in ministry, neither their family background nor their organizational authorities encourage them to advance their life and ministry opportunities. Many of them wanted to go for higher theological studies to advance and enhance their ministries, they lack moral or physical support. Hardly any pastors are able

to maintain a good library or reference books. Many of them are hindered in their ministry carrier and unable to prove their competency. Due to their financial position they find themselves unable to send their children to English education and provide for a better future for them.

In fact, they are not recognized in their Churches and society. Many of them should be acknowledged for their deep faith and marvelous contributions to the Church. Since the leadership is with others, these warriors of faith have not been affirmed before the world or their own.

One of the major concerns of the Dalits is the passive attitude of the Syrians in matters of the Dalits. This is not something new, they have developed a neutral stance regarding the affairs of their Dalit brethren. They always remain as mute spectators in the privilege struggle of the under privileged people. Although, the Dalit Christians constitute seventy five percent of the Indian Christians, due to their social low profile and economic barriers, they are always marginalized.

Even though the Syrians are a minority in the Indian Church, they have always identified with the upper castes and obtained certain dignities and facilities. They have wealth and power and could use their influence for their positive outcome. In Kerala they have separate Church and political parties, yet they maintain a dead silence in the affairs strife of Dalits. The Dalits feel complete isolation in the absence of the missionaries. Chirackkarodu proposes two possibilities open before the Dalit Christians. Firstly, that they leave the Christian faith and become a Schedule Caste and attain material benefits.

Secondly, to hold firm to their Christian belief, and live in the spiritual richness amidst the material poverty.<sup>555</sup>

## **6.2. Recommendations for Upward Mobility**

Since Dalit frustrations have two aspects, internal and external, the remedies are also related to both aspects.

Initially, the Dalit believers should come out of their mediocrity and build a strong mind to undertake any venture to achieve social mobility. Since globalization and modern information technology is available to any person. They must explore the right kind of sources of information and advancement in life with the help of some philanthropic people. There are many resource people available, who will extend their assistance for development. They must take advantage of such resource persons and opportunities and determine to achieve upward mobility.

Instead of having splits and fighting each other, Dalits must stand in unity and identify their weaknesses and strive for the advance of the whole community. They must explore and identify the areas of better communication and effective methods instead of cursing disadvantages in life. They must commit never to hinder the growth of another Dalit, rather to motivate and guide them in an upright manner.

Underprivileged Christians should get maximum support from the Church and other Christian institutions for help with better English education and access to modern information technology. This means enabled they must get access into Computer education and Inter Net communications. Christian Schools and colleges must reserve a

---

<sup>555</sup> Chirackkarodu, Dalit Christavar, p. 243.

maximum number of seats for them in a time-bound period. Theological schools and colleges should select students from Dalit background and encourage their talents and abilities. Capable people could be appointed in various offices and give them an opportunity to exhibit their smartness. Seminaries like SAIACS, where future leaders are molded, should take special interest in selecting a number of underprivileged students and revitalize them as potential leaders of the people. Considering Dalits poor education, orientation level courses should added at their own level to enable them to join the main stream after a year of elementary catch up study. If some of them are equipped well, the curse of discrimination will not be maintained in Christendom, because they will become agents of spiritual and social change.

Churches must take necessary steps to eliminate all class and caste discrimination at the grass-root level. Proper biblical teaching and moral instructions should initiate from the home, Church and Christian society. Disciplinary actions should initiate against believers who practice such unhealthy relationship in the body of Christ. Social relationships like marriage and business should be based on mutual understanding and strictly based on Christian character.

Since the Church is God's property, every one in the Church should get the benefit of its function and power. Mono-ethnic domination of any form at any level is not appropriate. Church is the replica of God's administration and any abuse of its authority is accountable and disgraceful.

Since India is a democratic nation, any form of injustice is objectionable. Christians should make use of the parliamentary and democratic means of expressing protest. Regarding the political discrimination of Dalit Christians, Church should employ

democratic method of protests and abide with complete solidarity with their right means of struggle. As Jesus said “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”<sup>556</sup>

The Indian Church must undertake such a challenge and devote itself to biblical faith and renewal among the community known as Dalit Christians. If it does so, and if it God’s grace could succeed what a wonderful model and that would be to the body politic. Surely this would be a Christian contribution to nation building. Likewise, surely this would bring glory to God in the History for the complete service of Dalit Christian brothers.

---

<sup>556</sup> Mathew. 25: 40.

## CONCLUSION

This work has produced some observations on the life of Dalit Christians in Kerala, in general and Pentecostals in particular. One of the main concerns of the Dalit Christian community is the presence of the Hindu concept of castism in the Church, the root of all discrimination. Ever since Christianity converted the backwards it is obvious that caste feelings are very common in the Kerala Church. Before the coming of the Protestant missionaries in 1571, the Catholics baptized a few Pulayas at Mulanthuruthy, Cochin. However, they were not permitted to partake the communion with others. The communion was served to them on Saturdays and they celebrated Christmas on December 26. There are about 125 lakh Dalit Christians in India, who have not entered in to the main stream of the national and ecclesiastical life. They do not have any political or economical dominance but only owning few independent Churches. Dalit Christians are satisfied with the message of Christ but their lives have continued to be miserable due to the fact of their dependence. Until and unless, the Church pays serious attention to their spiritual and material concerns, a holistic development will not take place among them and they will remain utterly disappointed and frustrated.

The first chapter deals with the term Dalit and its historical development. The word is explained from a communal perspective and emphasized in the Indian context with the sociological factors of the community. Then chapter two is an attempt to discuss the social conditions of Dalits in Kerala, which narrates the burden of slavery and its evil consequences. It refers to the tremendous contribution of the missionaries for the uplift of the under privileged people. The next chapter discusses the main theme of this work. It deals with the Dalits and Pentecostalism in Kerala. The research focuses on the historical aspects of the work of the missionary Robert Cook among the Dalits, and the causes and consequences of their embrace of Christian faith. Chapter four consists of the survival problems of

Pentecostal Dalits, in the denomination. A major split of the first Pentecostal Church in Kerala is also discussed.

Chapter five is a survey of the existing status of the Dalit Pentecostals, in relation to their achievements and contributions to the Church. The work cannot conclude without referring to their frustrations as well as their discouragement as Christians. The last chapter is more of the melancholic reflection of a Dalit Christian with a few recommendations proposed for the upward mobility of the entire community relating both the Dalits and the Church.

As long as Dalit Christians remain in disparity and despair about their misfortunes and future, the mission of the Church is incomplete. This is my prayer that the Pentecostal Churches may fulfill God's obvious intended purpose for all His people and in turn that the greatness of the kingdom of God may be experienced in the Church, so that Pentecostalism and the entire Christian community may truly express in every way just may in Christ. And moreover that the witness of this glorious transformed community of the household of faith will extend its influence upon the entire nation. This must be the Christian contribution to nation building. This is what the nation needs but first this must take place among the followers of Jesus Christ and exemplary denomination in the Christendom.