RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE İLAVAS: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY
CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF

THE ĪLAVAS OF SOUTHERN KERALA

By

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ABSTRACT

Of all the Hindu communities in southern Kerala, the Ilavas are the largest. They were, however, traditionally considered outside the pale of "varṇa" and treated as "untouchables" by the higher castes. A 'man of vision' of this community, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru (1855-1928) introduced religious and social reforms that brought about an awakening among the Ilavas at the beginning of the twentieth century. The consequent changes among the Ilavas brought them to an escalating series of confrontations with the upholders of the traditional caste order.

This thesis focuses on the reformation of the Ilavas and analyses their place and position in the larger social structure. It argues that their reformation can only be understood essentially as a process of "modernization". By modernization is meant an indigenous, historical and ongoing process in which people participate both consciously and critically. The Ilavas in their awakening have incorporated the values of modernity into their culture without losing the core values of the
tradition. The history of the awakening of the Ilavas is, therefore, a case study of modernization within the framework of traditional Hindu society.

In order to make this case study a field was chosen for research in consideration of maximum suitability. That field is an area of southern Kerala called Murukkumpula, not far from Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala. In view of the stress on change and continuity, which is the theme of the thesis, the field research has helped to establish that the modes of change in this particular area can be seen exhibited in the leadership of an elite; a reorientation of values; a rationalistic and democratic approach to the direction of change; an expression of freedom and responsibility among the members; social mobility based on equality and overall development and a network of institutions that sustain and propagate the ideals of the movement and hold the community together.
This work is a study of the change and continuity in the religious life of the Ilavas of southern Kerala. 'Sanskritization' and 'Westernization' are the theories generally used to explain social change in the context of Indian history and culture. An exploration into the changes in the life of the Ilavas in a rural area in southern Kerala, namely Murukkumpula, has led to the conclusion that both 'Sanskritization' and 'Westernization' are inadequate to explain fully the changes among them especially since the turn of this century. The transformation among them is an indigenous, ongoing process in which the members of the community participate consciously. This transformation is viewed in this thesis essentially as a process of Modernization.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first three chapters provide the background to the main body of the thesis. Accordingly, Chapter I introduces the basic issues and analyses the import of the theoretical formulations such as 'Sanskritization', 'Westernization' and 'Modernization'. Chapters II and III provide the necessary historical and cultural background of Kerala in general and of the position of the Ilavas in that society.
over the centuries. Particular attention has been paid to the socio-political conditions in the nineteenth century against which the awakening of the Iḷavas took place.

Chapter IV deals specifically with particular focus on the Iḷavas in southern Kerala. In as much as this awakening was set in motion by Śrī Nārāyana Guru and his disciples, particularly Kumāran Āśān and Dr. Palpu, special attention is given (in this Chapter) to their 'life and work' and to the institutions that they founded.

Chapter V makes the shift from the general to the specific giving a profile of an area of the State chosen as most suitable for the thesis, viz. Murukkumpuḷa (not far from Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala), where the field research was conducted for fourteen months (June 1984-August 1985). The succeeding chapters deal with the impact of the work of Nārāyaṇa Guru in various aspects of the life of the Iḷavas at Murukkumpuḷa under the following thematic classifications.

Chapter VI looks at the process of change in the socio-economic life of the Iḷavas of Murukkumpuḷa. It underscores the progress made in terms of social and economic advancement that the community has registered since the time of the Guru. Chapter VII focuses upon
religion: its position in the domestic life of the Ilavas and its institutional ramifications. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru was a prophet and an advocate of change, who found religion as a dynamic force that penetrates into the lives of the people, keeps them together, strengthens their social and communal bonds, emphasizing the freedom and dignity of the individual and the sense of responsibility. The SNDP Yōgam, an institution of the Ilavas, founded by Nārāyaṇa Guru and his disciples, acts not only as an agent of change but also as a control system.

The concluding chapter highlights the points of change as well as continuity among the Ilavas of southern Kerala, in the light of the materials discussed in the previous chapters. From a theoretical point of view, it is argued that the pattern of change and continuity is nothing but a creative collision between the forces of tradition and those of modernity.

Several people have contributed directly or indirectly to the completion of this thesis. While only a few are mentioned, I am deeply thankful to all of them, particularly to the members of my Church and most of all my parents.
I express my deep appreciation and gratitude to Professor Paul Younger who has been generous with his time and knowledge. I gratefully acknowledge the guidance of Professor John G. Arapura who filled me with a strong desire to pursue this enquiry in a critical manner. Sincere gratitude is also due to Professors Phyllis Granoff and David R. Kinsley of the Department of Religious Studies and Professors Edward Glanville and William L. Rodman of the Department of Anthropology, for constructive criticisms and helpful suggestions.

It is impossible for me to put into words the deep sense of indebtedness I feel towards Mrs. Anny Varghese for her patience, understanding and care in typing the endless drafts as well as the final copy of this thesis. I am indebted to Mr. V.T. Varkey (London Board of Education, Ont.) who helped me to prepare the photographs and drawings; to Mr. Mathew Mukkattu (Fanshaw College, London, Ont.) who assisted in preparing the graphs; to Drs. T.M. Thomas (University of Bridgeport, Connecticut, USA), Thomas Joseph (Dufferin-Peel RCSS Board, Toronto) and G. Subbiah (Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan, India) who were available for consultation and reading the thesis on several occasions; and to all others who showed continued interest in seeing the work through to its completion.
I owe a special debt of gratitude to the people at Murukkumpula for graciously co-operating in my field research and giving me valuable information. I sincerely thank McMaster University, particularly the Department of Religious Studies, and the Mar Thoma Church without whose generous financial assistance this thesis could not have been done.
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**MALAYALAM**

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1 Only the vowel forms that appear at the beginning of a syllable are listed; the forms used for vowels following a consonant can be found in grammars; no distinction between the two is made in transliteration.

2 When u is used in combination with the vowel a (ወ), the combination is also transliterated by a.

3 The vowel a is implicit after all consonants and consonant clusters and is supplied in transliteration, with the following exceptions:
   (a) when another vowel is indicated by its appropriate symbol;
   (b) when the absence of any vowel is indicated by the superscript symbol a (also used for the vowel d) ; and
   (c) when the following modified consonantal forms are used:

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4 When a appears as a subscript in a cluster, it is transliterated a.

5 Exception: Anusvāra is transliterated by a before gutturals, a before palatais, a before labials, a before cervabals.

6 This paper is reproduced from the Library of Congress Bulletin, February 1964.
I INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study of change and continuity in the religious life of some Ilavas of southern Kerala. The main question which this dissertation is designed to answer is: What are the patterns of change in the life of this group of Ilavas since 1900 and what role did religion play in the transformations observed?

This dissertation describes the place of the Ilava community in the Hindu society of southern Kerala. It also examines the phases through which the community has passed since 1900 and the role of religion in each phase. It discusses the mechanisms of tradition, the forces and direction of change and how changes are sustained. It will also attempt to wrestle with the theoretical question as to what patterns can be observed in the changes within the Hindu community and in religious communities in general.

1The Malayalam semivowel 'y' has no English equivalent. I am using 'la' to denote it in this dissertation. For the word Ilava, others have used words such as Izhava, Ezhava and Irava. By 'southern Kerala' I mean the geographical division of the present Kerala State, generally represented by old Vēnāṭ of the 10th century, consisting of the Tālukks of Quilon, Kottārakkara, Chirayinkil, Nedumangāṭ and Trivandrum.
1. Kerala and Her People

Kerala lies along the coast line of the Arabian Sea on the southern peninsula of India, surrounded by Tamil Nāṭu (Madras) in the south and east and Karṇāṭaka on the north. It has a total area of about 38,863 sq. kms. forming 1.04 percent of the total area of India.¹ Kerala was formerly divided into three areas: Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The southern part of Kerala with which this dissertation is concerned formed the old Vēnāṭ and later the Travancore State. The central part of Kerala, the old Cochin State, was independent until Travancore and Cochin were integrated as one unit on July 1, 1949. Malabar, which was a part of the Madras Province until 1956, lies north of Cochin. The reorganization of the States of India on the basis of spoken language brought the Malayalam speaking areas of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar into one single State, Kerala, on November 1, 1956.

Three major religions divide the people - Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Twenty five million people living

with their tradition, culture, language, hopes and aspirations constitute the Kerala society.

Table - 1. Major Religions in Kerala and India.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Hindus %</th>
<th>Muslims %</th>
<th>Christians %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>25,453,680</td>
<td>58.15</td>
<td>21.25</td>
<td>20.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>665,287,849</td>
<td>82.64</td>
<td>11.35</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the census of 1981, Christians constitute 20.56 percent of the total population of Kerala. They hold the tradition that St. Thomas, the Apostle of Christ, came to Kerala in the first century A.D. These St. Thomas Christians became prominent in the field of trade and commerce. The Christians were treated on a footing of equality with the upper caste Hindus.²


²The Savarnas (the first four castes in the hierarchy) are generally called upper caste Hindus or
They held considerable areas of land and moved freely among the upper caste Hindus.¹

Muslims constitute 21.25 percent of the total population of Kerala. It is probable that the Arab traders of the seventh and eighth centuries introduced Islam among the people of Kerala.² There is also a tradition that Cēramān Perumāl, the last of the Cēra Emperors of Kerala, became a convert to Islam and propagated that religion in the State. Though Muslims are few in southern Kerala, they are given respectable status by the Hindus.³ Muslims were primarily interested in trade and commerce. The Mosque is the centre of all social and spiritual activities of the Muslim community. The majority of Muslims in Kerala are

² Continued: simply Castes. "Christians and Muslims were regarded as Castes too, and they accepted such a status". Srinivas, M.N., Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India, 1952, p.31.


² There has been considerable trade between Arabia and Kerala over the centuries.

³ A good number of Muslims are in the Malabar area.
Sunnis and their religious observances conform to the Shafi Law.¹

Hindus form 58.15 percent of the total population of Kerala. The traditional Hindu society was organized around the three great ideal structures: the four castes, the four stages of life and the four ends of mankind. The four castes consisted of the four varṇas or the hierarchy of the castes of Brāhman (priests), Kṣatriya (warriors), Vaiśya (merchants) and Śūdra (labourers). The four stages of life (āśrama) are those of brahmacārya (student), grhaṣṭa (householder), vānaprastha (forest dweller) and saṃnyāsa (renunciant). The four ends of human beings are dharmā (righteousness), arthā (prosperity), kāma (sensuous pleasures) and mokṣa (spiritual liberation). These remain the building blocks of Hindu society.

According to Hinduism, the religious experience of man takes its root in society. The task of man is to take this world seriously, mature here and reach out to the beyond (mokṣa). The 'ends' of humankind as described,

above, find fulfilment in the individual and are related to his social life. **Karma**, the moral law of cause and effect by which one reaps what one sows, and **samsāra**, rebirth, combine to teach that the particular caste into which one is born is determined in the present by how one acts. A person has a definite place in the **samsāra** (cosmos).

According to the great philosopher, Śankarācārya (eighth century A.D.) this role of man in the **samsāra** (according to his advaitic teaching and **māyā** concept) is only a stepping stone to the final realization. According to him the means of this spiritual liberation (freedom from the world of **avidyā**) is wisdom (**vidyā**). In his religious quest for liberation man takes into account the society about him.

Society is part of the larger order and has two functions: to maintain order in the face of chaos and to provide ways and means for the individual to move forward to the ultimate realization (spiritual liberation) that **ātman** (individual self) is **Brahman** (universal self). In Indian society the former is fulfilled by the political order and the latter by the social and moral order.
Traditionally the caste order determined the function of society, the āśrama system provided man with a pattern of development through his life and the 'ends' of man gave him purpose and direction.

The four fold caste division of the Hindu community (mentioned above) as defined by Manu is not prevalent in Kerala. The role of the merchant community is performed largely by Christians and Muslims. In Kerala the Brāhmans, Kṣatriyas and Nāirs are called the caste Hindus (savarṇas). The other Hindus are called the outcastes (avarṇas) or the Backward Communities.

The Brāhmans were traditionally at the apex of the social hierarchy of Kerala. Among them pre-eminence belonged to the Brāhmans of Kerala who were known as Nambūtiris. According to Thurston, the traditional view of a Nambūtiri is:

His person is holy; his directions command; his movements are a procession;

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1Manu is the mythical figure believed to have given Dharma Śāstra (ethical codes and caste duties) for the people of India.
his meals nectar; he is the holiest of human beings, the representative of God on earth.¹

Although their numbers were not very great, the Nambūtiris dominated the social scene. Most of the temples and a considerable portion of the land formerly belonged to them. They interpreted the Hindu Scriptures and the Sacred Law. They had authority over all religious ceremonies and practices. Some of them became counsellors or ministers in the State.

The Nambūtiris are patrilineal and followed the makkattāyam system of inheritance.² Until the beginning of this century only the eldest son was permitted to marry from the Nambūtiri caste. This resulted in a situation where a majority of the Brāhman women had to live as spinsters. The other male members of the family had liasons (Sambandham) with women of the lower castes.³


²The system of inheritance from father to son is called makkattayam.

As a result, the Brāhman population remained relatively low.

In Kerala, the Kṣatriyas were only a minority and they were generally counted along with the Brāhmans. The Nāirs were considered the Śūdras of Kerala. The traditional functions of the Kṣatriyas were shared by the Nāirs. They were hereditarily regarded as men who fight for the regional leaders. They provided the militia of the State. The frequent wars with the neighbouring Cōla kingdom in the eleventh century brought the Nāirs into prominence. But later on when the war was over the military gymnasiums called Kaḷaris, where boys had military training, had no further function. With the disbanding of the hereditary militia by the British in 1802 the Nāirs turned to agriculture.

The social organization of the Nāirs was based on matrilineal descent (marumakkattāyam system of inheritance) and they lived in a joint-family system with impartible family properties.¹ They were allied by a system of

¹Mother had a prominent place in the matrilineal system and her elder brother was called Kāraṇavan. The adult female members were married in sambandham but their husbands did not reside there. Likewise the wives of the male members of Nāir joint family did not stay there.
marriage with the Nambūtiris. According to this system the Nambūtiri men could have conjugal relationships (saṃbandhams) with the Nāir women, but the Nāir men could not with the Nambūtiri women. The Nāir women practised polyandry with the inheritance of property through the female line. The visiting husbands undertook no obligation towards their wives and children.

Although the Nambūtiris had the privilege of education, when the Government schools were started early in the nineteenth century the Nambūtiris refused to send their children to these schools. The Nāirs on the other hand were quick to get their children educated there (as were the Christians). The other castes were not permitted in these government schools.¹ A few educated Nāirs entered the administration towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The out-caste groups were considered polluting and therefore untouchable. Among the untouchable communities the Īlavas constituted the uppermost layer and they were

¹Even in 1910 there were only 976 Brāhman boys in the government schools. First time a Brahman girl entered school was in 1911. See Lemercinier G., Religion and Ideology in Kerala, New Delhi: D.K.Agencies (P) Ltd., 1984, p.270.
in this sense next below the Nāirs.\textsuperscript{1} The Ilavas were bound together as a community and differentiated from other caste groups by their own mode of religious worship and practice. Since they were segregated from the other segments of society, they had their own temples and religious leaders. The well known story of Ārōmal Čēvakar, a hero of the sixteenth century shows that there were Ilava families who had an important role in martial history.\textsuperscript{2} However, the great majority lived as agricultural labourers, builders, petty traders and bullock-cart drivers. In the southern areas of Travancore their occupation was mainly weaving and rearing of coconut trees. However, some of the Ilavas were Āyurvedic physicians who had knowledge of Sanskrit.

The Ilavas practised a mixed system of inheritance with some using a matrilineal system like the Nāirs and others a patrilineal code.\textsuperscript{3} The educated and the

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{1}Ilavas were said to pollute a Nambūtiri from 36 paces and a Nāir from 12. Jeffrey Robin., The Decline of Nayar Dominance, London: Sussex University Press, 1976, p.21.


\textsuperscript{3}Ilavas of certain areas followed the matrilineal system of inheritance. Robin Jeffrey notes that the Ilavas in the areas of Southern Quilon followed a mixed system of inheritance. Jeffrey, Robin., The Decline of Nayar Dominance, 1976, p.21.
\end{quote}
adventurous among the Ilavas became in course of time landlords. In recent times some of the educated Ilavas go outside the State seeking employment. In 1970 the Backward Class Reservation Commission of Kerala reported that the population of Ilavas was 4,457,808. This is about 35.15 percent of the Hindu population of Kerala.

At the bottom of Hindu social hierarchy below the Ilavas are the communities now generally called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. According to the census figures of 1981 there are 68 Scheduled Castes and 35 Scheduled Tribes in Kerala. Traditionally, they were the servants of the higher castes. Although they live in close interdependence with the higher castes, many areas of life were considered inaccessible to these people. They used to live segregated in their own settlements which were often some distance from the residential quarters of the caste Hindus. Even more than the Ilavas these people were considered untouchable and unapproachable.¹

¹The laws regarding the pollution distance (unapproachability: one caste must stay away from another, a system, a unique variant to Kerala) were abolished only in 1936 in Travancore and 1947 in Cochin.
2. The Ṛḷava Movement

As mentioned earlier, Ṛḷavas had been traditionally considered outcastes. It was on this outcaste status that all religious, social and economic discrimination against them was founded. Ṛḷavas could not enter the temples of the higher castes or approach anywhere near them because they were considered to be a source of pollution. The right to enter the temples, especially those State owned temples which were supported with tax monies, therefore, became a central and symbolic concern to them.

The most important of the many courses of action undertaken by the Ṛḷava community for the amelioration of their condition was the one guided by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru (1856-1928). He broke the monopoly of the Brāhmans with regard to religious authority when he installed a Śiva image at Aruvippuram near Trivandrum in 1888. In addition to his consecration of temples at different parts of Kerala, Nārāyaṇa Guru advocated several reforms among the Ṛḷavas to give them greater respect within the larger society. His reforms were based on religion. He rejected the distinctions of caste. He organized the Ṛḷavas into
the Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Paripālana Yōgam (SNDP Yōgam) in 1903. By the turn of this century they had attained a sufficient level of social consciousness, identity and ambition, that they could launch large scale agitations for the removal of inequalities. The continuous effort of the elite members of the community over the following decades eventually brought them the status that they have now in Kerala society. Today the Īlavas have a significant role in the politics of Kerala and they hold a key position in shaping the future of Kerala society.

3. Change and Continuity

This dissertation discusses the response of the Īlavas to the challenge of change both in responding to the reformation of Nārāyaṇa Guru and to the continuing leadership of the elite members of the community. In participating in this process of change they did not lose their identity. They considered the possibility of becoming Christians or Buddhists, but did not, nor did they attempt to claim the status of the Nāirs or Brāhmans. Instead they remained Īlavas and fought for their freedom and equality in terms of that identity. For centuries, the
Ilavas were economically backward, socially outcaste and politically insignificant. But in the course of the last few decades, the Ilavas made history by their progress economically, socially and politically. In the course of this overall progress, religion played a vital role in keeping the community united and clear in its goals.

A society does not accept new norms all of a sudden. The process is bound to be gradual and usually takes an even slower pace in rural areas. In Kerala, the new and old temples of the Ilavas continue side by side - one increasing in importance and the other diminishing. The continuity with the past can be seen today in the attitudes of the older people who seek to maintain traditional religious customs and practices. The process of change is also evident as the young Ilavas offer vegetarian food, flowers and incense in their temples even while the older people continue some form of the traditional sacrifices.

From the time of Nārāyaṇa Guru, a significant reformation was taking place among the Ilavas of southern
Kerala. A critical study of this process of change is the purpose of this dissertation.

4. The Field Work

Murukkumpula, a suburban area of Trivandrum District, was selected for field work. A research study was conducted from July 1984 to August 1985. The work was started by contacting the Ward member of the local Panchayat and gathering some initial demographic, economic and social data. Out of the total of 414 families in the Ward, 340 families were interviewed in their residences by means of a set questionnaire. By residing in the Ward for the entire period, I observed the attitudes and opinions regarding religious practices, interpersonal relations, rituals and ceremonies in a variety of ways. To gain an outside perspective, interviews of 23 families in the neighbouring Wards were also conducted.

The traditional social structure of the region was still visible in the old temples, houses, public buildings and geographical arrangement of the area. As a participant observer, I was free to collect data on both the past and present of people living in the area. This has helped me
to analyse in detail the process of change and the forces of continuity which operate among the Ilavas in the Ward.

5. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed not only to ask the residents about the changes in their personal, family and village life but also to identify the religious, economic, social and political changes of the area. It included specific questions designed to identify the changes in their religious practices and sacraments and to understand the influence of their caste leaders in bringing about the social emancipation. The data gathered has helped me to describe in detail the overall process of change and the interrelations of the various changes which have taken place in the lives of the Ilavas of Murukkumpula during this century.

6. Theoretical Considerations

There are a variety of theories that have been used to characterize the social changes that have been taking place in India since the beginning of this century. The best known theory which has been used to explain religious
change in India is 'Sanskritization'. This concept was first used by M.N. Srinivas in his book, Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India (1952). In this book he explained the caste system as a five fold hierarchy with the Brāhmans at the top, followed in order by the Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, Śūdras and lastly the Untouchables.¹ 
In his study of the Coorgs in Mysore he noted that the lower castes, in order to raise their position in the caste hierarchy, adopted customs of the Brāhmans. To denote this process of change Srinivas used the term Sanskritization.

A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmans, and the adoption of the Brahmnic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called 'Sanskritization', as certain

¹The first three castes Brāhmans (Priestly class), Kṣatriyas (Warrior Class) and Vaiśyas (traders) are called 'twice-born' (dvija) as they alone are entitled to undergo the ceremony of Upanayana which constitutes spiritual rebirth. Traditionally only they were allowed to study the Vedas.
Vedic rites are confined to Brahmins and the two other twice-born castes.¹

Here Srinivas defined Sanskritization as the tendency among the lower castes to imitate the Brähmanical customs and manners in order to move higher in the caste hierarchy. He made his concept more explicit in the Rabindranath Tagore Memorial Lecture he gave during May 1963. He said:

Sanskritization is the process by which a "low" Hindu caste or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, "twice-born" caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community.²

According to this definition, mobility results in positional changes without effecting any structural change to the caste system. He adds:

Sanskritization is generally accompanied by and often results in, upward


mobility for the caste in question; but mobility may also occur without Sanskritization and vice versa. However, the mobility associated with Sanskritization results only in positional changes in the system and does not lead to any structural change. That is a caste moves up above its neighbours and another comes down, but all this takes place in an essentially stable hierarchical order. The system itself does not change.1

The socio-cultural process which Srinivas has in mind is one in which, in a caste based society like India, people of lower castes take over customs, practices and ideas associated with higher castes in an attempt to upgrade their status or certain aspects of their status. Such customs, practices and ideas which the lower castes adopt are often directly or indirectly associated with Sanskrit texts of the Hindu traditions. It may be argued that the main purpose of Srinivas in using the special term Sanskritization was to draw attention to the special process of socio-cultural change which goes on in a caste-based society in which part of the change involves lower castes' attempt to upgrade themselves by taking over a way of life derived from prestigious Sanskrit-based traditions. This concept is, however, not adequate to

interpret fully the movement one finds among the Ilavas of Kerala.

Srinivas also mentions social changes which he calls 'Westernization'. According to him Westernization refers to changes introduced into Indian society during the British rule which continue in Independent India. Westernization is an inclusive, complex and many-layered concept. It covers a wide range from Western technology at one end to ideas such as the experimental method of modern science and modern historiography at the other. Srinivas observes that Westernization carries with it certain value preferences.

A most important value, which in turn subsumes several other values, is what may be broadly characterized as humanitarianism by which is meant an active concern for the welfare of all human beings irrespective of caste, economic position, religion, age and sex.¹

This humanitarianism has resulted in many administrative efforts to found schools and hospitals. The British-Western initiatives resulted in a reinterpretation

¹Srinivas M.N., Social Change in Modern India, 1966, p.48.
of Hinduism at both the ideological and institutional levels. The principle of equality found expression in the abolition of caste subordination and in the opening of public institutions to all irrespective of religion and caste.

Srinivas, however, discusses how even Westernization operated within the caste structure. He says:

The net result of Westernization of the Brahmans was that they interposed themselves between the British and the rest of the native population. The result was a new and secular caste system superimposed on the traditional system, in which the British, the new Kshatriyas, stood at the top while the Brahmans occupied the second position, and the others stood at the base of the pyramid.1

The result of Westernization was therefore often like Sanskritization in that it involved the use of the same caste structure but brought about a change of position of the caste groups. In this sense Westernization like Sanskritization remains an inadequate concept to explain the mobility of the Ilavas.

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Owen M. Lynch argues that both Sanskritization and Westernization are of limited utility for the appraisal of social mobility in India. Srinivas himself agrees that Sanskritization and Westernization describe the social changes occurring in modern India only in cultural terms. This is a major handicap as it means these concepts do not explain social mobility involving structural change. When a caste such as the Ilavas questions the very concept of caste hierarchy and opts for political participation to attain a new status, both concepts -Sanskritization and Westernization- fail to explain that mobility.

Milton Singer in his anthropological approach to Indian civilization uses the concept of modernization.

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2 Social change occurs when there is an alteration in the basic pattern of social organization. See Thomas, Annamma and T.M., Kerala Immigrants in America, Cochin: Simons Printers, 1984, p.12.

Using the word 'modernity' to denote the process of change he states:

Modernity is a permanent layer or dimension of indigenous culture and not simply a collection of recent foreign imports or the fashionable life-style of a privileged class. When an innovation has entered this layer, it is no longer associated with strange and foreign groups, nor is it segregated from the rest of the indigenous culture. It may be recognized for its functional or aesthetic value as an innovation and acquire prestige and status on that account.¹

Modernity indicates linear change or progress: both spiritual and material. This does not necessarily mean a change toward the type of society found in advanced industrial nations. The modern world is a recreation by men, of that given by nature. In this human act (recreation) freedom, purpose and spirit go together. In a living religious tradition, change is inevitable. A change that affects the tradition in the sense that it entails modification in terms of a wider perspective can be regarded as a sign of modernity.² According to Ganguly:

²Ibid., p.404.
Modernity consists in modifying the existing traditions and creating room for new and better traditions. In a different terminology, modernity helps enrich our existing value-orientation in terms of new values that assure us of a smooth progress towards an image fulfilment.1

The concept 'modern' involves a sense that history is moving in a particular direction, but it must be borne in mind that modernity is not a goal but a process in which people participate. It is dynamic and gives meaning to the participants. It transforms human life and society from what it has been to what it could be. Therefore as Wilfred Cantwell Smith says: "Modernity is a quality of acting and choosing, a quality of self-conscious control and direction of one's own destiny".2

There is an erroneous notion that tradition and modernity are in opposite camps. The conflict between tradition and modernity is only apparent. They are dialectically related to each other forming the vital

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components of a continuous process.\(^1\) Tradition is not merely a custom but a pattern of behaviour which is dynamic and actively upheld with admiration. In this sense, tradition is living, and serves as the starting point for modernity.\(^2\) It offers a plan or order in terms of which one legitimizes one's actions in the middle of situational flux. According to Ganguly, "A modern man is not without traditions but on the contrary, a man with richer traditions".\(^3\) The working of one's creative imagination on traditions in the evershifting present defines the true


nature of modernity. In this sense modernity is also living and present in society. It is also transcendent in the sense that it points toward a realization of the future in terms of a new concept of tradition.

The process of change among the Ilavas of southern Kerala had been gradual. It had an even slower pace in the rural areas of Kerala. This Ilava Movement was a purposeful reformation of their tradition. It was an experimentation with innovative changes where the individuals exercised freedom and purpose. It was a meaningful incorporation of changes into their indigenous culture. In this reformation there is a process of selection, interpretation and integration going on as will be seen in the following chapters. This process of change among the Ilavas is an example of what Singer called modernization.

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1 According to Heesterman, J.C., "Successful modernity does not mean the supersession of tradition or the super imposition on it on a different order". The Inner Conflict of Tradition, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1985, p.25.
II. The Ilavas of Southern Kerala Prior to the 19th Century
Tradition ascribes the origin of caste in Kerala to Paraśurāma, the reputed leader of the first Brāhman colony.¹ According to the tradition "the mythical Brāhman hero Paraśurāma reclaimed the land of Kerala from the Arabian sea and made a gift of it to the Brāhmans whom he brought from outside".² Each caste in Kerala was restricted as to its social behaviour and personal style of life. According to J.H. Hutton:

... a caste system is one whereby a society is divided up into a number of self-contained and completely segregated units (castes), the mutual relations between which are ritually determined in a graded scale.³

The pattern of associating certain occupations with certain castes and of prohibiting inter-marriage and inter-dining between castes was carefully observed in Kerala before the nineteenth century. A man born into a

caste, regardless of his personal character, remained in that caste and his pattern of behaviour was predetermined by society. The individual had no choice with regard to his function in the world. Hindus of each caste in southern Kerala lived in complete segregation from other castes. In addition to the many castes, there was a bewildering variety of subcastes within each caste, each of the subcastes having its own rank in the social scale.

For centuries southern Kerala had a set of customs, traditions and conventions that went under the name of Maryāda, Ācāra or Mārga. These conventions were sanctified by the Nambutiris by creating certain legal myths, the most important of which was the Parasurama tradition.\(^1\) The Ācāras (practices) and legal codes framed by these Brahmans had to be observed scrupulously by all the castes and communities in southern Kerala.\(^2\) These laws took the form of regulations and practices regarding untouchability, unapproachability and unperceivability. Prescriptions set out the 'polluting distance' from each caste and this legally backed unapproachability constituted

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\(^1\)Ibid., p.112.

the most obvious social disability of the lower castes and the legal framework of social oppression which the reformers would have to fight.

Francis Day, writing in 1868, says that an Ilavan must keep 30 paces from a Brahman and 12 from a Nayar, while a Kaniyan [astrologer caste] pollutes a Namboodiri Brahman at 24 ft. and a Nayar by touch.¹

This concept of pollution led to peculiar behaviour patterns.² A. Aiyappan says:

To signify respect, when men of lower caste status interact in any manner with those of higher castes, the essential parts of the pattern are: (i) keeping aloof at the prescribed distance in order not to pollute the superior person, (ii) removing cloth, if any, covering the shoulders and/or head, (iii) using in conversation self-demeaning forms of speech with the special standardised servile expressions, (iv) assuming bodily poses which have been culturally standardized.³

¹Quoted by Hutton, J.H., Caste in India, 1963, p.80. Also see Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, V, 1909, p.196.

²A vivid picture of the society is given by O.Chandu Menon in his novel Indulekha.

The higher caste Hindus could not permit the lower castes to approach them without feeling themselves polluted. According to custom, a polluted person had to take a bath for purification. Those who ignored this tradition were degraded from their rank and not readmitted to their group. The higher castes were therefore careful to keep away from the lower castes.

When Nair nobles came out in the public roads, an attendant of theirs preceded them shouting Po, Po (get away, get away) so that they would not be polluted by a person of the low caste even by a chance encounter within the prohibited distance. Failure on the part of the lower castes to make way for the Nairs and other upper castes on the public road even led to their being murdered with the connivance of the custodians of law and order.¹

The majority of the outcastes, including the Iлавas, were thus driven away from the public roads and public places to which they had no access in the presence of caste Hindus.

Over the centuries the rigours and rigidities of the caste system became etched more and more deeply in the social life of Kerala manifesting in the triple evils of untouchability, unapproachability

¹Menon, A. Sreedhara., A Survey of Kerala History, 1967, pp 261
and unseeability perpetuated towards the lower castes.¹

1. The Ḫḷavas of Southern Kerala

Ḫḷavas are a very wide-spread community on the Kerala coast. They are distributed over a vast area and have corresponding cultural differences. The cultural areas with the local names for the various subgroups can be tabulated as follows:

a) Northern Matrilineal  (i) Tiyas North Malabar

b) Central Patrilineal  (ii) Ḫḷava South Malabar
(iii) Taṅṭāns South Malabar &
(iv) Ḫḷava North Malabar
   Paṅikkars

c) Southern Matrilineal  (v) Cōva Southern Cochin &
(vi) Ḫḷava North Travancore
   Travancore

The Ḫḷavas of southern Kerala (Travancore) are divided into three subsections called Pāccilli, Pāṇḍi and Malayalam.

The Pāccilli Ḫḷavas live in an area called Pāccalur south

of Trivandrum. The Pāṇḍis are largely found in Trivandrum and Chirayinkīl tāluks.¹ The Malayalam Īlavas are found scattered over southern Kerala and are divided into four exogamous groups named Muṭṭillam, Pallīchāl, Mayyanaṭṭi and Chōli.² The Īlavas of Murukkumpūla are Malayalam Īlavas.

Historians of Kerala are finding it difficult to trace the origin of the Īlava community of southern Kerala as there are no valid historical records referring to them until about the 9th century A.D. The etymology of the word 'Īlava' seems to indicate that they were immigrants from Śrī Laṅkā.³ 'Īlavan' signifies one that belongs to Īlam' which is the ancient name of 'Śrī Laṅkā'. Jaffna is especially known by the name of 'Īlam' and from that place the Īlavas are believed to have originally proceeded to the Kerala coast. According to Thurston, the Īlavas are supposed to derive their caste name from Īla dvīpa (Īla island) or Sinhala dvīpa, both denoting Śrī Laṅkā. The

¹Thurston, E., Caste and Tribes of Southern India, II, 1909, p.394.
²Ibid.
Madras Census report of 1871 also supports this assumption.¹ One legend says:

An ancient king of Malabar injured and insulted the artisan section of his subjects, who left his kingdom and settled in Ceylon. The king and his subjects who were hard put to it by the absence of the artisans, succeeded at last in inducing them to return with the two protectors provided by the king of Ceylon. The protectors of the artisans were the ancestors of the Izhavas.²

Another myth is found recorded in the Mackenzie Collection of manuscripts in the Madras Oriental Manuscripts Library. The purport of this myth is to exalt the Iḻavas by giving them a divine origin from the God Śiva and Gāndharva women.

The nymphs were bathing in a stream one winter morning and Siva enamoured by the bathers' charm enticed them by transforming himself in a fire. They came and sat around the fire to warm themselves and the reproductive fire of god entering them, they conceived and brought forth seven boys. Siva employed his sons to manufacture toddy for offering in his temple. The Brahmin pujari (priest) of the temple, a dishonest man, used himself to drink part

¹Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VII, 1909, p.38.
of the toddy and dilute what remained with water. This was discovered and Siva's seven sons murdered the Brahman forthwith, but to kill a Brahman, even though he be a thief and murderer, is one of the five great sins. Siva, therefore punished his sons by lowering them from their divine status to that of the low castes.\textsuperscript{1}

L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer has another version:

In a Tamil puranic work, there is the mention of the name of a king Illa of Ceylon, who went to Chidambaram, where a religious discussion took place between the Buddhist priests and the Saivite devotee Manichiavachakar in the presence of king Illa and Chola and that finally king Illa was converted to the Saivite faith. His descendants are known as the 'Illavans'...\textsuperscript{2}

Thurston indicates that in the nineteenth century State Legislation of Travancore kept the Îlavas in a position of social inferiority and treated them as unlettered and uncultured.\textsuperscript{3}

The planting of coconut and the manufacture of various articles from it had been the monopoly of Îlavas from ancient times.

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., p.17.


\textsuperscript{3}Thurston, E., Caste and Tribes of Southern India, VII, 1909, p.38
In the famous grant of 824 A.D., it is distinctly mentioned that they had a headman of their guild and their duty was planting up waste lands. They had two special privileges, known as the foot-rope right and the ladder right, which clearly explain the nature of their early occupation.¹

With the advance of culture, many Ilavas gave up the occupation of extracting liquor from the coconut palm. From early times, agriculture remained a prominent profession among them. There were several wealthy and influential landlords in that community and a fair percentage remained agricultural labourers. There were weavers in the southern region who produced several kinds of cloth and made mats, tiles and ropes with remarkable skill. There were several Sanskrit scholars some of whom specialized in medicine and astrology. One of the native physicians, Itti-Achutan, assisted in the composition of the Dutch botanical monumental work in twelve volumes (1608–1703) called the *Hortus Malabaricus*.²

¹Thurston, E., *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, II, 1909, p.393.

 İlavas were also employed as soldiers along with Nāirs by the rulers of Kerala in the middle ages. They were given titles such as Chānānān and Paṇikkan. The grant of 824 A.D mentions that İlavas had headmen. Historical records mention that the King of Puṇakkāṭ had İlava forces under him.¹

Even so late as the days of Maharaja Rama Varma, who died in 973 M.E. [1797 A.D.] large numbers of Izhavas were employed as soldiers of the state, if we may believe the account of Friar Bartolomeo [Voyage to the East Indies] who is generally a very accurate writer.²

In southern Travancore İlavas used to divide themselves into two groups during the Ṭhānam festival (in September) and exercised the war lessons they learnt in kaḷaris or military academies. According to Thurston any young man who did not participate in that camp exercise was led in a procession thrice around the village and transported to the sea-coast.³ He also noted that in a room of the ancient

¹Ibid., Chānānān and Paṇikkan are titles conferred upon distinguished members of the İlavas as a family honour by some of the ancient sovereigns of Travancore.

²Ibid., p.394.

³Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, II,1909,p.397
prominent families of Ilavas antique weapons and images of tutelary divinities were carefully preserved.

A distinguishing feature of the social organization of Kerala until recent times was the presence of both the makkattāyam and the marumakkattāyam system of inheritance among certain castes and communities. Among the Ilavas south of Quilon in southern Kerala, a mixture of these two systems was used. According to this mixed mode, one's own children were not left absolutely destitute.

The issues of parents governed by different systems of law are entitled to their father's property in accordance with the rules of makkattāyam and to the property of the mother's taravad in accordance with the law of marumakkattāyam.¹

2. Religion in the Family

Traditionally the marriage of Ilava girls consisted of two distinct rights, one before they attained puberty, called tālíkeṭṭukalyāṇam (auspicious event of tālí tying) and the other generally after puberty called puṭavakota.

(giving the cloth).\textsuperscript{1} The boy who tied the tāli could be any one but the future husband had to give a cloth in a formal ceremony in order to complete the rite of marriage. Traditionally the bride would be either the maternal uncle's or paternal aunt's daughter. Customarily, there was also a ceremony for the wedded couple entering the house of the bridegroom. In all cases, unlike Nāirs and Brāhmans, the Ílava husband took his wife home and she stayed with him there. In some parts of southern Kerala a man could marry his deceased brother's wife. Fraternal polyandry (several brothers having a single woman) was practiced by some Ílavas. There were ceremonies called Tiraṇṭukulī (puberty-rite) when a girl attained puberty and Pulikuti (tasting tamarind juice) when a girl became pregnant.\textsuperscript{2}

In the former times, when death occurred in a family, only the eldest male member was cremated and others were buried. When a member died there was a ceremony

\textsuperscript{1}These ceremonies are explained in chapter VII.
\textsuperscript{2}These ceremonies are explained later.
involving the placing of three handfuls of rice in the mouth of the corpse called vaikkari. Every relative had to throw an unbleached cloth (kōṭi) over the corpse. The death pollution (pula) was traditionally observed for fifteen days after which the family members were purified by the priest of the Ṭḷavas.

A woman was under pollution after giving birth to a child, during menstruation and after a death of a member of her family. The pollution was removed at the end of a prescribed period by receiving a clean cloth from the washer-woman and giving in exchange her own cloth to be washed. If this was not done, she remained an out-caste.

The headmen of the Ṭḷava caste who were called Chāṇṇāns and Paṇikkans were invested with these titles by the Sovereign of the State. The limits of their jurisdiction were generally fixed in the Charters received from their rulers and their authority remained supreme in all social matters. Caste offences were brought to their attention by the village barber or the washerman. If on enquiry an offence was proved, a fine was imposed on the offender. If the offence was grave, a feast was given by the offender to all the villagers. In case the offender
failed to satisfy, all the services of the village priest, 
washerman, and barber were refused and the offender became 
ostracised from society.

3. Temple Worship

The İlava temples were generally low, thatched 
buildings. They included a front porch, a good deal of 
wooden railing and carving, an enclosure wall and a grove. 
Members of their own caste served as priests in their 
temples. The deity usually worshipped was Kāli, who was 
believed to help them in their military undertakings. 
Koṭuṅgallūr Bhagavati was the customary cult object of the 
caste and was zealously adored by the İlavas. A grand 
festival called Kumbham Bharaṇi was held in March when they 
offered roosters to Bhagavati and asked for immunity from 
disease.1 İlava women conducted a ceremony called 
Desakuruti. For this women fasted and took food to the 
temple. After the sacrifice of a goat or rooster by the 
priest, the women made the offering of the food to the 
deity. The İlava concept of the supernatural often 
embraced the spirits of ancestors. Although the İlavas

1Ibid., p.238.
could not enter the temples of the higher castes, they worshipped the deities standing outside the temples and leaving their offerings there.

They worshipped Śāstā (a hill deity) along with the higher castes. It was popularly believed that Śāstā went with sword in his hand over hills and dales to clear the

Śāstā or Ayyappan is worshipped by all castes in Kerala. He is more revered and feared by the lower castes in rural parts. He is believed to be born as a result of the union of Hari and Hara. It is popularly believed that he rides with sword in his hand over hills and dales to clear the country of all obnoxious spirits. There is hardly any place in the rural parts of southern Kerala where a shrine is not seen dedicated to the worship of Śāstā.

The temple at Sabarimala is considered very sacred and all Hindus of Kerala are fond of making a yearly pilgrimage. These pilgrims undertake certain austerities for forty one days and prefer to wear blue or black clothes. As a culmination of their vṛta, the devotees wearing a Tulsi or Rudrākṣa garland begin their pilgrimage carrying a cotton bag (with two compartments) called Irumūṭi. The pilgrims, with Irumūṭi on their head cover the entire distance shouting 'Śvāmiye Saranam Ayyappa'. They climb the steep and slippery mountain of Nilgiris of the Western Ghats, popularly known as Sabarimala. The temple is at a moderately high level in the thick forest and pilgrims climb the eighteen steep granite steps to reach the temple and to offer their oblations. All the Hindus, including the Ilavas, consider the pilgrimage sacred and believe that such worship averts all diseases, drives away all demons and helps the yearly monsoons.

country of all obnoxious spirits. The Īlavas like other Hindus conducted yearly pilgrimages by foot to Śāśṭā (Ayyappan) in Šabarimala (a mountain on the Western Ghats) after observing forty one days of Ṛṭa (penance).

Tūkkam (garuṭa tūkkam or kite-swinging) was another propitiatory ceremony that they performed in fulfilment of a vow to obtain some favour of the deity Kāli.

The performer of the ceremony should bathe early in the morning, and be in a state of preparation either for an year or for forty one days by worshipping the deity Bhagavati. He must strictly abstain from meat, all kinds of intoxicating liquors and association with women.¹

During the morning hours, the man under vow, dressed himself in a garment tucked into the waist band, rubbed his body with oil and was shampooed particularly on the back, a portion of the flesh in the middle of which was stretched for the insertion of a hook. This tūkkam was performed in front of Kāli. For this ceremony, a kind of car, resting on two axles provided with four wheels was used. A strong rope attached to a beam was connected with the hook which

¹Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, II, 1909, p.402.
passed through the flesh of the back. Over the beam there was a kutāram (tent) inside which two or three persons could swing at a time.

For kite swinging, the performer has his face painted green. He has to put on artificial lips and wings in imitation of those of the kite, and wears long locks of hair like those of an actor in a Kathakali. As he swings, the car is taken three, five, seven, nine or eleven times round the temple.

Pillayetuttu-Tūkkam was a kind of swinging with a child by the swinger in fulfilment of a vow. The child was first taken to the temple authorities. The child was then handed over to the swinger, who carried the child as he went round the temple. During the festival, all those who participated in the tūkkam were fed in the temple.

The Ilavas of Travancore paid homage to a spirit called Kayalil Daivam or the deity of the backwaters. Serpent-worship was also common among the Ilavas of southern Kerala. Carved granite stones representing the figures of hooded serpents were seen in the groves.

\[1\text{Ibid., p.403.}\]
Leprosy, itch, barreness of women, death of children, frequent appearance of snakes in gardens, and all other calamities are believed to be brought about by, and set down to, the anger of the serpents.\(^1\)

The dead ancestor was supposed to become a deified spirit to protect the living members of the family. Ilavas invoked the aid of their ancestors by offerings in times of sickness and other calamities. Neglect in the performance of the regular ancestral rites was supposed to invite all sorts of miseries on the members of the family.

It is also believed that the order of the demons were formerly human souls, to which proper funeral rites had not been given after burial, and hence they are supposed to wreak vengeance on the living. The spirits of men or women, who die of cholera, small-pox, child-birth, or who die by committing suicide, wreak vengeance on the living and cause misfortunes (pretha badha) to their families, and these spirits are always looked upon with fear.\(^2\)

The Ilavas performed śrāddha regularly by giving offerings to the departed spirits of their ancestors.


\(^2\) Ibid., pp.319-320.
In every house a room containing a few images of their ancestors is set apart for such religious purposes. [Sraddha]. Once every year, they perform the Sraddha at which boiled rice, plantain fruits, coconuts, and parched rice [malar], are served on a plantain leaf with a lamp lighted in front of it, and they pray, "May ye, ancestors, take this and protect us." Saying this, they close the room and all come out, with the belief that the spirits would come and take them. After some time, they open the door and distribute the offerings among the inmates of the house.¹

It was believed that one who gave to the deceased ancestors the regular offerings followed by worship to the greater deities was rewarded by merit and happiness.

Certain Īḷava houses had a southern room erected mainly to perpetuate the memory of some deceased member of the family. A pītha or seat, a conch, a cane and a small bag containing ashes were kept there. It was kept scrupulously free from pollution and worship was offered on fixed days to the ancestors.

Some of the minor demons whom the Īḷavas worshipped were Māṭan, Maṛuta and Rakṣas. Certain other local deities were also worshipped according to the local traditions.

¹Ibid., p.320. Srāddha is a ceremony in honour and for the benefit of the dead relatives.
The priest, who was also the barber, and his wife play an important role in all the ceremonies performed by the caste-men. This priest was called Ambaṭṭan in southern Kerala.

4. Privileges Denied

Iḷavas were considered as a polluting caste and were kept away from all public places and temples where the upper castes had access. As a result the Iḷavas had a low social status and most of them remained poorly educated until the middle of the 19th century.

In the traditional classification of the castes, the Iḷavas were included at the top of the polluting castes.

... in the Kerala scheme of Aryanization of the caste order, the Brahmin does not seem to have been prepared to treat the Nayars as superior to Sudras but categorized them as good or clean Sudras. If the Nayars were treated as Sudras, the Izhavas who ranked below them had to be treated as outside the four fold caste system; and measures were taken to maintain the appropriate degree of social distance.¹

The Ilavas were thus regarded as polluting the Nairs and other higher castes.

At the house of a Nayar belonging to the Illam subcaste, another Illam Nayar could enter and eat in it; a lower subcaste Nayar could enter some of the rooms, but not eat there...an artisan or Ilava could come up to the outergate.¹

Ilavas were relegated to the lower positions in society and subjected to gross social disabilities. The higher castes treated them contemptuously and owned them in a kind of servitude.

Very often, being the managers and tax-collectors of temples and Brahmin landlords, they (Nairs) were arrogant, proud and oppressive to the lower class including the Izhavas.²

The Nairs had even the right to kill Ilavas.

The use of public highways was forbidden to outcastes and anyone daring to pass on within polluting distance of a Nair would be cut down at once.³

² Ramakrishnan Nair, R., Social Structure and Political Development in Kerala, Trivandrum: Kerala Academy of Political Science, 1976, p.5.
Ilavas did not have freedom of their own and the caste structure did not give them the dignity of their persons. Ilavas were not permitted to enter within a native court of justice as they might pollute the judges, who were members of the high castes. The Nairs were the paid advocates of Ilavas in these courts of justice.\(^1\) Social justice was thus denied to the Ilavas.

Until 1865 neither the males nor the females of the Ilava community were permitted to wear any garment above the waist. Ilava women were not allowed to wear clothes extending below the knees. The high caste men regarded it an insult to them if the Ilava women covered up their breasts.\(^2\) The proper salutation from a female of the lower rank to persons of higher rank was to uncover the bosom. Higher caste men took it for granted that women of their community as well as those of the lower castes were created for their enjoyment.\(^3\) The social system did not

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\(^2\)It is interesting to note that each man of the lower caste had to pay a tax for the hair he grew on his head and each woman for her breasts. Ravindran T.K., Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala, Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1972, p.VIII.

\(^3\)To show the inhumanity, an instance has been cited which describes how an Ilava lady in Shertalai, unable to
give the Ilavas a sense of self-dignity. The Ilavas had very little chance to participate in improving their social conditions.

Malayalam, the language of Kerala, had a rich vocabulary of terms of respect which were to be used by members of the inferior caste when addressing members of a superior caste in conversation, in letters and even in documents. While addressing another person, caste honorifics were to be used, not personal names. An Ilava was expected to address a man of a higher caste as Tampurān (My Lord) while he was addressed by men of higher castes in servile expressions such as etā and nī. An Ilava addressed a caste-woman as Tampurātī (My Lady) while he referred to himself as atiyan (servant). When an Ilava talked with upper caste persons, he was expected to bend his body a little, cover his mouth with his hand, and show his respect and obedience to the higher caste person.

They [Ilava] are obliged to call their children "calves", their silver "copper", and their paddy "chaff" ... when speaking he must place the hand over the

3 Continued stand the humiliation and rapacity of the higher caste tax collector, cut off one of her breasts and presented it to him. ibid., p.LXXXVII.
mouth, lest the breath should go forth and pollute the person whom he is addressing.¹

The Ilavas were not allowed to pass through the roads near the temples of the high castes for fear of pollution. Members of the lower castes had to work without pay for the palace. Repairs of the road and other jobs were done by them on demand.

Before the dawn of this century, the Ilavas were scattered and there was little social unity among them. (Each village was segregated from the other). This lack of unity among Ilavas effectively prevented any effort on their part toward upward social mobility. The Ilavas were generally in a low economic position, and they were held down because of certain economic disadvantages. Politically, Ilavas did not count. They had no access to the royal courts. They were part of the depressed classes, the down-trodden, the inarticulate, illiterate and voiceless mass. The family organization and the system of inheritance among the Ilavas also were not conducive to the growth of strong family bonds or of individual initiative. There were no unified views of marital relationship. Some people practiced polygamy, while others observed polyandry. Child marriage was common. No rigorous morals

¹Hutton, J.H., Caste in India, 1963, pp.86-87.
were insisted on in regard to sexual relations. The Ilavas were often victims of sexual exploitation by the caste Hindus. They were normally Hindus, but could not participate with other caste Hindus in religious functions. They were cast away for fear of pollution. They were not allowed in public places and were not given admission to educational institutions.

Thus the Ilavas did not enjoy individual freedom, economic stability, social equality, leadership, political involvement or organizational strength. A lack of incentives, educational opportunities and spiritual awakening prevailed. Also, in the realm of religious practices there was lack of care, and there was hardly any provision for any kind of reformation. Outcaste status and untouchability prevailed and several privileges were denied to Ilavas in the name of religion. They faced many barriers to finding a new selfhood and development of any kind. They wanted a liberation from the social and religious structures that enslaved and humiliated them. The Ilava awakening of the 19th century was primarily a religious awakening and it was eventually through religion that they were motivated to work for their social emancipation. To understand this awakening we will look into the historical developments and social awakenings of southern Kerala in the next chapter.
III. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND SOCIAL AWAKENING OF SOUTHERN KERALA
HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND SOCIAL AWAKENING
OF SOUTHERN KERALA

Kerala, on account of its position in the extreme south of the Indian peninsula and the fact that it was separated from the rest of India by the Western Ghats, remained relatively undisturbed by the political strife that the rest of India was going through over the centuries. This isolation enabled southern Kerala to maintain a tradition of Hindu rulers who modelled their government on the Hindu religious tradition. The kings adhered to the injunction of the Dharma-Sāstrās in devising rules for the efficient working of the administrative machinery, and the people willingly accepted the existing order and looked up to their king as the Dharma-pālaka, the protector of Dharma. The maintenance of law and order and the protection of religious and social values depended on how well this balance was kept and how well the government and the governed carried out their respective responsibilities. The dynamic operation of this

process marks the history of Kerala from its ancient period to modern times.

1. Ancient Period

Ancient Kerala had contact with the countries of the outside world from the earliest times. These early contacts, dating from the Third Millennium B.C. or earlier, with foreign people such as the Arabs, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Phoenicians, the Israelites, the Greeks, the Romans and the Chinese began with the trade in Kerala's pepper, cinnamon and other spices. The foreign contacts also led to the introduction of religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The formative epoch of Kerala history was the Sangam age which comprised the first five centuries of the Christian Era. Kerala during this period formed part of the larger unit of Tamiḻakam now known as Tamil Nāṭu dominated by Dravidian people and their culture. According to the Tamil works of the Sangam age, Kerala was

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a small kingdom inhabited by the Keralaputras (sons of Kerala) known as Cēramāns with its capital at Koṭungallūr.\(^1\)

In the early Sangam age three powers ruled Kerala: The Āys in the south, the rulers of Elimala (Mount Elī) in the north and the Cēras in the region lying in between. The land was divided into five divisions (from south to north) of Vēṇāṭ, Kuṭṭanāṭ, Kūṭanāṭ, Puḷināṭ and Karkanāṭ. This dissertation is concerned with the area of Vēṇāṭ. The Āys continued as the dominant power in southern Kerala up to the beginning of the 10th century A.D. even though their kingdom of Vēṇāṭ remained a small principality. After the death of Vikramāditya Varaguṇa (885-925 A.D.) the Āys lost the status of a separate dynasty and Vēṇāṭ became part of the Cēra Empire.

In the social organization of the Cēras, the function of protection occupied a central position. They were obliged to maintain vigilance in order to defend their trading centres and their sources of supply against their neighbours, the Cōlas and the Pāṇḍyans. Trade goods

were abundant in the jungle and the local clans were organized for gathering and hunting. The regulation of proper trading of the gathered goods and the protection of the territory was the political concern of the Cēras. The Cēras had control over the sea until the 6th Century A.D.

Each clan in Kerala enjoyed considerable independence and provided a certain number of men to reinforce the Cēra army whenever military expeditions were being undertaken.¹

In the matter of internal administration it was the function of the clan chief to deal with questions involving the whole group, such as the regulation of kinship relations, the organization of festivals and the resolution of conflicts. The land was held in common and the men who made use of it gave a fixed payment in kind to the Chieftain and to the King. The kings of Travancore were the lineal descendants of a Hindu dynasty to Cēra kings.

¹In the Cēra empire the army was the hereditary preserve of certain families. The ancient Kerala society granted highest honour to the warriors who died in battle and the mothers were not hesitant to see their sons die in battle. See Lemercinier, Genevieve., Religion and Ideology in Kerala, 1984, p.76.
In the religious field harmony and understanding generally prevailed among the followers of different religious faiths in Kerala. The Cēra dynasty of Hindu kings were distinguished by their deeds of humanity and service.1 According to Krishna Iyer, the ancient people of Kerala understood 'earth-deity' as a female spirit and believed that after each harvest, the earth became exhausted and she must be periodically refreshed with blood.2 According to Sangam literature, the ancient people of Kerala believed in spirits and propitiated certain female blood thirsty spirits.3 Propitiations were congregational and by such acts people restored confidence at times of crises. Krishna Iyer mentions that ancestor worship, serpent worship (snake worship) and Sāstā worship were common among the people of Kerala from very early times.4 The social life of the people was centred around religious institutions and their religious practices gave them a sense of identity.

2Ibid., p.134.
4Ibid., pp. 138-142.
Muttoḷḷāyiram (meaning three times nine hundred), a Tamil work composed about 800 A.D. tells us about the Kulaśeṅkharas (sometimes called 'Second Cera Empire') who ruled most of Kerala from 800 to 1102 A.D. with its capital at Koṭuṅgallūr (Tiruvanchikulam).¹ In the Kulaśeṅkharas Empire the central power was confined to the sovereign, the Perumāl. He ensured the protective function by the maintenance of an army deployed over the entire territory.

Under the Kulasekharas matters of local interest and those pertaining to the day to day life of the people were regulated by assemblies called Kūṭṭams. The entire territory was divided into Nāṭ, Dēśam and Taṇa (Kara). Taṇa formed the smallest unit of administration. The Taṇakūṭṭam (present panchayat) was formed by the elders (Kāraṇavar) of the extended families (Taṇavāṭs) who met to decide upon matters of local interest. A Dēśam (number of villages) represented a unit of military organization above the Taṇa. Each Dēśam had a chief called Dēśavāḷī to govern it and an assembly called Dēśakūṭṭam.² Nāṭ consisted of

several Deśams governed by a chieftain appointed by the emperor (Perumāḷ) called Nāṭuvāli. The Nāṭṭukūṭṭam consisted of the representatives of several Deśams. A royal representative called Koyiladhikārikal controlled the Nāṭuvālis. These officials were political leaders, military chiefs and judicial officers. Thus this social system gave rise to a pyramidal structure of individualized relationships on the higher levels and a group character at the base.

Historians differ as to when the Brāhmans settled in Kerala. However, it is certain that Brāhmans were present in Kerala before the Kulaśekhara period (800-1102 A.D.).¹ The immigrant Brāhmans in addition to their religious activities attached themselves to the political power as royal counsellors, ambassadors and ministers. Under the cover of the Paraśurāma tradition, they assumed greater privileges and higher social status.²

The vast majority of the ancient temples that one sees in Kerala today had their origin during the

²Ibid., p.306.
Kulaśekhara period. The protection of these temples was the joint task of the State and the local community. Temples in those days served as centres of religious and cultural activities and as places of learning. All social and religious activities were conducted in the temple precincts. Attached to the temples were schools where pupils learnt everything from the alphabets to theology, philosophy and ethics.

Religious practices were part and parcel of the life of the native people and they derived from them meaning for their daily activities. The people of ancient Kerala, as mentioned earlier, worshipped gods and spirits inhabiting trees, rivers and hills. They erected memorial stones to the departed and offered worship at them. In temples they propitiated gods and localized spirits with offerings of meat and toddy. Koṛravai or Bhagavati, a war goddess was their favorite deity. The slow aryанизation process did not replace all the indigenous religious practices; instead it allowed the continuation of certain traditional practices (viz., the snake worship and Śāstā worship) along with the introduction of some new ones. Āryan deities became popular and their images were
installed in the temples side by side with the deities of the natives.

The Āryan religious practices received a new momentum during the Kulaśēkhara age due to the leadership of Śrī Śankaračārya (780-820 A.D.) of Kāladi, in central Kerala. The teachings of this advaita philosopher provided an intellectual basis for Hinduism both in Kerala and all over India. The observance of the caste system and the astrological system became prevalent as part of the Āryanization process.

The central religious thought became the relationship between the Supernatural (Brahman), the social system (Samsāra with the caste divisions) and the person (Ātman) in both his social and individual dimensions. The Ultimate realization (Mokṣa or liberation) had been understood as obtained by respect for an ethical code, the Dharma (Principle of cosmic, social and individual order), which varied for the different social (caste) groups. Hence to observe it (Karma) meant the submission of every man not only to the restrictions imposed by his own caste group but also to the social order of which he felt himself a part. The system also conceptualized and legitimized the
practices of ritual purity on two distinctive cognitive levels; an external one (physical, material and environmental cleanliness) and an internal one (that of mind, word and actions - piety and purity of thought).

Thus the religious system that gave a collective identity to the people during the Cēra period developed further with Āryanization during the Kulaśēkhara period and led to the formation of a highly stratified society. The phenomenon of ritual purity classified the society into distinct groups and kept each group apart from the other by the notion of pollution distance.

One significant event of the Kulaśēkhara period was the Cēra-Cōla war of the eleventh century. This war that continued for over a century weakened the central power in Kerala. It involved the whole society in the fighting and even the Vedic schools attached to the larger temples were transferred into military academies (Kalāris). The prolonged war brought about significant changes in society.

One of those changes was the establishment of Kalāris all over the territory.\(^1\) Several groups, including

Nāirs and Ilavas, took to the sword and some joined the suicide-squads (Cāver). Cāvers were special units of the armed forces who had banished all fear of death from their minds and were ready to fight for victory unto death. It was the Cāver army that finally drove out the Cōla forces from the Kulasekhara empire.

Another development was the marumakkattāyam (matrilineal) system taking the place of the makkattāyam (patrilineal) system of inheritance. The men who spent their lives on the battlefields and could not attend to the management of their households, handed over that responsibility to the women who started to own and manage the properties. The patrilineal system of inheritance lost its significance among the Nāirs (warriors of Kerala) and the matrilineal mode became the recognized pattern.

A third development was the rise of the Janmi system. During the war period several families disposed of their lands in the form of a 'grant to the deity of the temple'. This relieved such families from their commitment to pay one fifth of their harvest to the political authority (1/10 to the Nāṭuvāli and 1/10 to the Deśavāli). Instead they had to pay only 1/8th to the temple. The land that was attached to the temple was not looted by the enemy.
forces. These factors motivated the people to donate their land to the temple. But when the donors failed to make their regular contributions to the temple, the temple council exercised the right to take over the lands. The Brāhmans due to their connection to the temple managed to become the 'Board of Trustees' controlling the temple lands. The trusteeship of Brāhmans became hereditary and those who enjoyed the Janman right (hereditary right) were called Janmis.¹ The Brāhmans took advantage of this position and influenced kings and chieftains to make further gifts of land to temples. As a result of this the ancient custom of paying part of the harvest to the political authority vanished and the kings, deprived of their revenues, instituted a series of taxes.

The Cēra-Cōla war led to the breakup of the Kulaśēkhara empire.² Kerala lost its political unity and a number of independent principalities (numbering forty three kingdoms) assumed power. Religion that was central to the life of the people and stratified the society was institutionalized under the caste structure. Brāhmans

because of their ritual purity, education, management of temples and temple properties and as advisors to the kings assumed the highest status in society. They leased the temple property to the Nāirs who became their servants. Nāirs (servants of Brahmans) were treated as Śūdras in the social hierarchy. The Nāirs in turn employed the Īlavas and Pulayas to tend the coconut trees, pluck the coconuts, manufacture the toddy and cultivate the lands. Īlavas and other groups who manufactured toddy and tilled the ground were treated as ritually impure and the outcastes in society. They were also kept away from the temple premises of Sanskritic deities where Brahmans conducted worship (pūjā).

2. Medieval Period

The absence of a royal authority was the main characteristic of Kerala polity in the fifteenth century. The whole area was divided into a number of small principalities. Among them royal powers were assumed only by three kings; those of Cannanore, Calicut (both places in Malabar) and Vēṇāṭ.¹ In 1498, Vasco da Gama discovered a

new sea route to India and landed at Calicut. In the south, Vēṇāṭ was eager to have trade with the Portuguese and the Queen of Quilon (southern Kerala) invited Vasco da Gama to open a factory there. A factory was built in 1505. The life-style and attitude of the Portuguese infuriated the local people and they destroyed the factory at Quilon.\(^1\) In 1516 a new treaty was made between the Portuguese and the Queen of Quilon. This paved the way for the missionary work of Francis Xavier and other Jesuit missionaries.\(^2\)

Francis Xavier arrived in India in 1541 and he received permission from the king of Vēṇāṭ to preach Christianity among the Mukkuvas (the lower caste fishermen) and to build Churches for them.\(^3\) By 1542 he baptized several thousand people. More Jesuit missionaries reached the shore during the years 1545-1548. Cochin became a Bishopric by 1557 and all converts to the Latin rite came under the jurisdiction of this diocese.

Latin Christians were not the first Christians in Kerala. There already existed a group of Christians called St. Thomas Christians who traced their beginnings to the Apostle Thomas in the first century.\(^1\) The Portuguese on their arrival in Kerala, considered it their duty to bring the St. Thomas Christians under the supremacy of the Pope of Rome and to replace the Syrian Liturgy with the Latin one. This event is significant because the St. Thomas Christians shared the common feeling of the natives of Kerala in resenting the intervention of an external force on matters of religious practice. The St. Thomas Christians did not yield to the wishes of the Portuguese and continued to be self-governing in internal matters and to follow the Syrian liturgy.

On 26th January 1599 Archbishop Alexis de Menesis arrived at Cochin and bribing the King, pressed him to use all his temporal authority to make the Christian

\(^1\)These St. Thomas Christians were assigned an important place in the economic and social life of the land and were treated on a footing of equality with the high caste Hindus. (See Perumal J.C. ed., Christianity in India, Alleppy: Bakasham Publications, 1972, pp.34-35.) Christianity was seen as neither threatening nor undermining the caste system of Kerala, but rather working within it. (Duncan B. Forrester., Caste and Christianity, 1980, p.14.)
community bend to the wishes of Rome. Thereafter he convened a Synod at Diamper (Udayamperūr) in 1599 and made the Christians part of the Roman Catholic Church.¹ A section of the St. Thomas Christians, under the leadership of their Archdeacon refused to abide by the decisions of the Synod and they later reestablished their independence in 1653 by the oath of the Coenen Cross (bent Cross) at Maṭṭançherry near Cochin. The St. Thomas Christians thus set a pattern of how an Indian religious community would respond to an external intervention in religious practice. A similar pattern can be seen in the response of the Hindus to the persecution they had at the hands of the Portuguese.

The Portuguese harassed those who did not profess the Roman Catholic faith. Albuquerque (1509-1515) gave away Hindu women taken prisoners to Portuguese men in marriage.² The Portuguese occasionally plundered Hindu temples and broke the idols into small pieces.³ As the

Hindus were harassed they revolted and attacked the Portuguese at the expense of their life. Religiously, the Hindus turned to their personal gods in ardent devotion (bhakti). In the literary works of the period, bhakti emerged as the all embracing theme.¹

Cultural contact was not uncommon in Kerala, for there were several countries which established trade relationships with this land from time immemorial. The people of southern Kerala who were familiar with such cultural contact were hospitable and tolerated other religious practices. The growth of the Syrian Christian community in this region and the process of Aryanization were the results of such a spirit of toleration and accommodation. At the same time they exhibited a spirit of independence and freedom of worship. While the Jesuit missionaries came to Kerala, the caste hierarchy with its division of castes and outcastes (untouchables) was strong. The people who belonged to the category of outcastes like the Ilavas were denied several privileges. They had to get

permission and pay a tax if they wanted to roof their houses with tiles (instead of thatching with coconut leaves) or go out wearing jewelry. It was in this state of subjugation that some of the lower castes listened to the words of the Jesuit missionaries. Generally those who found freedom and brotherhood in the mission compounds embraced Christianity. Those Hindus who adhered to the traditional beliefs and practices resisted the Jesuit message, but fortified their Hindu religious tradition by developing bhakti or devotional practices.

By the seventeenth century, the Dutch challenged the monopoly of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. The English also soon arrived on the scene and in 1644 they obtained permission from the king of Vēṇāṭ to build a factory at Viḷiṅjam. Later, in 1684 they built a fort and opened a military store at Anjengo, a place north of Murukkumpuḷa. The local Nāir chiefs were provoked by the behaviour of the English which led to a revolt in 1721. It lasted for about six months and the English subdued it by reinforcing their army from Tellicherry.

Śrī Padmanābha Svāmi Temple, Trivandrum is an old and famous Vaiṣṇava temple in southern Kerala where the
kings of Travancore continue to worship. During the medieval period its management was vested in the Ettarayōgam, a committee of eight trustees or Uraḷārs.1 The Yōgam of the Padmanabha Swāmi Temple divided the temple lands into eight sections and placed them under the charge of Nāir nobles who were to collect and administer the revenues. These noble men called Ettuvīṭṭil Pillamār (Nāirs of eight houses) had men under them who were trained in the Kaḷaris.2 They had political power only in their own regions while all the religious authority continued to be exercised by a group of Brāhmanas called the Yōgam. The King did not have much authority either in the countryside or in the administration of the temple. The Ettuvīṭṭil Pillamār combined with the Yōgam held most of the power and sometimes posed a serious menace to the authority of the King. This complex system is an example

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1By a settlement made in 1050 A.D., the government of the Śrī Padmanābha Temple at Trivandrum which owned most of the lands in the country was handed over to a council consisting of eight hereditary Brāhman priests and the king. The king, however, was to have only half a vote. This ecclesiastical commission was given full authority to collect the revenues and administer them. Panikkar K.M., A History of Kerala, 1959, p.226.

2The Ettuvīṭṭil Pillamār belonged to eight different villages, viz. Kulathūr, Kazhakkūṭṭam, Chempazhanti, Kudamon, Pallīchal, Veṇgganūr, Rāmanāmatham and Marthāṇḍam.
of how a religious group combined with an aristocratic social power can threaten the political force of a sovereign.

When Marttāṇḍa Varma ascended the Travancore throne in 1729 according to the prevailing matrilineal system of succession, Padmanābhan Tampi and Rāman Tampi, the sons of the previous king put forward their claim to the throne according to the patrilineal system of inheritance. They got support from the Piḷḷāmār (Nāir nobles) and the Yōgakkār (Brāhmans). In 1730 Marttāṇḍa Varma took vigorous action against them and both the Tampis were caught and executed.¹ All the rebel leaders were captured subsequently, four Nambūtiri priests among them were banished (for to kill Brāhmans was considered a grave sin) and forty two Piḷḷāmār were put to death. These steps taken by the king constituted a heavy blow to the whole Janmi system of land control and to the dominant caste hierarchy in Travancore. Marttāṇḍa Varma began a new era of strong and centralized administration under the aegis of the ruling sovereign.

¹C.V. Raman wrote his historical novel Marthāṇḍa Varma about this situation. It describes how the Piḷḷāmār oppressed the royal authority. This was also a time when there were other clashes between the matrilineal and patrilineal systems of inheritance.
However, being a devout Hindu, Marttāṇḍa Varma dedicated his kingdom to Śrī Padmanābha (Viśṇu), the deity of Śrī Padmanābha Temple, and assumed the title Śrī Padmanābha Dāsā in 1750. He started the practice of placing his sword in front of the deity at an auspicious hour and receiving it back consecrated. He also paid attention to the repair of old temples and building Uttarupuras (feeding houses) to feed the Brāhmans in his kingdom.

After crushing the forces of feudalism, Marttāṇḍa Varma turned his mind to the expansion of his kingdom. He soon extended it up to Puṟakkāṭ and Vadakkumkūr in the north annexing eleven small kingdoms. Every landholder in the State was given a paṭṭa (an official document) with specification of the land tax to be paid. Custom houses called Chowkies were established to collect excise and custom duties. The government monopolised the trade. Backwaters were linked by canals for the quick movement of goods.

The revolt of Padmanābhan Tampi and Rāman Tampi against Marttāṇḍa Varma reveal the fact that in the
eighteenth century younger members of the Hindu families were often not happy with the matrilineal system of inheritance. The alliance of the Piḷḷamār and the Yōgakkār with the Tampis also indicates that religious groups who had power and authority over the temple wanted to acquire political power as well. Marttāṇḍa Varma who considered it his duty (dharma) to bring social and political order in the region crushed this attempt. At the same time he respected the religious order and acknowledged that political power was vested in him by the deity of the land (Padmanābha). Therefore he called himself the servant (dāsā) of the deity. He respected Brāhmans and built free feeding houses for them. He was interested in the welfare of his people and so he improved the transportation facilities and increased the trade. During the period of Marttāṇḍa Varma religion continued to be inseparable from the social, economic and political life of the people.

His successors, Dharma Rājā (1758-1798) and Swāti Tirunāḷ (1829-1847) attempted to bring about changes and reforms for the welfare of the subjects they ruled. The period under Kārttika Tirunāḷ Rāma Varma, popularly known as Dharma Rājā witnessed the invasion of Kerala by the Sultans of Mysore, Hyder Ali and Tippu. Travancore turned
down demands that it acknowledge the supremacy of Mysore rulers. At the same time Dharma Rājā gave refuge to a large number of princes, Brāhmans, Nāirs and Iḷavas who fled from Malabar in the wake of the Mysore invasions. He opened a network of canals and roads within the State and developed Varkala and Trivandrum with additional commercial facilities. The Mysorean attempts for about a quarter of a century to establish hegemony over Kerala necessitated that Dharma Rājā sign treaties with the British in 1795 and 1805. As a result Col. Maccaulay was appointed as the first British Resident in Travancore. His function as Resident was to see that everything necessary was done to guarantee the collection of the State revenues.

The participation of the British in the internal administration of Travancore incited resentment in many corners. Vēlu Tampi, the chief Executive under the King (called Daḷava or Divān) was not happy with the British officials who attempted to achieve control over different regions of southern Kerala. When the resident interfered actively in the internal administration of Travancore, he resented it. Setting up his office at Kuṇṭaṇa, Vēlu Tampi, issued his 'Kuṇṭaṇa Proclamation' on January 11, 1809 exhorting the natives to rally under his banner against the
The people responded enthusiastically and a battle was fought at Quilon. The British troops destroyed Dalava's house and killed many of his supporters. The King sued for peace and issued orders to arrest the Dalava. Velu Tampi realizing this, committed suicide to save his honour.

Velu Tampi's revolt indicated the desire of the people to have freedom and a rightful share in the administration of the region. The Kuntara Proclamation made it clear that the people were hesitant about the British having a voice in the internal government. The people were also afraid that their religion was in danger because of the possible dominance of the British. Therefore they considered it their dharma to fight against the British dominance.

The regency of Gouri Pārvati Bāi (1815-1829) saw the introduction of several reforms intended to establish social freedom and civic equality. She allowed the Nāirs, Īlavas and other lower castes to wear gold and silver jewelry without any payment to the State. By a royal proclamation she permitted all people to have tiled roofs for their houses. She also made a grant to the Seminary of

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1 Sankarankutty Nair, T.P., A Tragic Decade in Kerala History, Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1977, pp.64, 110, 111.
the St. Thomas Christians founded at Kottayam in 1815. She welcomed the Christian missionaries from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and encouraged them to work with the St. Thomas Christians.

The British Resident, Col. Munro, was very keen to reform the St. Thomas Church by bringing back its principles of faith and practice which prevailed before the arrival of the Portuguese. He therefore directed the missionaries Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fenn and Henry Baker, who came to Kerala between 1816 and 1819, to stay with the St. Thomas leaders at Kottayam. They stayed there and helped those traditional Christians in the training of the clergy of the church and translated the Bible into Malayalam in 1829.¹ The new set of missionaries, Rev. Joseph Peet, and the Rev. W.J. Woodcock suggested certain reforms in the church to the then Bishop Mar Dionysius IV. Even though he treated the missionaries with respect, he was not willing to act on their suggestions. On January 16, 1836 he convened a synod of the Church at Mavelikkara and drew up a document popularly known as Patiyola according to which all connections with the CMS missionaries were cut and the independence of the Church reaffirmed.

However, the availability of the Bible in Malayalam and the teaching of the missionaries awakened a few St. Thomas Church members to reform. One of them was Palakunnattu Abraham Malpan (1796-1845) who revised the liturgy, translated it into Malayalam and used it to celebrate Holy Communion in his Parish at Maramon in 1837.¹ A schism with the more traditional leaders was inevitable and the reformed Church, identified as the 'Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar', was formed.

The St. Thomas Christians formed a class by themselves in the traditional society of Kerala. They held an important place in the economic sphere and were the principal traders and planters. They honoured the caste structure of Kerala society and lived within it for centuries. The reformation of the St. Thomas Christians therefore meant only a movement within one particular class of society. It did not endanger the traditional caste structure, but fit in with the pulse of the society of Kerala in that it checked the interference of the missionaries. It also welcomed change within that limited context by bringing educational and liturgical reform to the Church.

¹Neil, Stephen., The Story of the Christian Church in India and Pakistan, p.82.
Following the separation from the St. Thomas Christians, the CMS missionaries started to work among the non-Christians. The LMS (London Missionary Society) missionaries were already working among the lower castes since 1806 in the southern regions of Travancore. Both the LMS and CMS missionaries started several schools and hospitals at different parts of southern Kerala. Swāti Tirunāḷ (1829-1847), King of Travancore, opened an English school at Trivandrum in 1834 and made it a free school. Later Utram Tirunāḷ Marttāṇḍa Varma (1847-1860) opened a school for girls at Trivandrum. The work of the missionaries and the spread of education helped to create an interest in radical religious and social reform among the Hindus in Kerala. One radical reform centered on what was called the 'Upper Cloth Controversy'. Until that time as a sign of respect for the superiors, the lower caste women in Travancore were not allowed to wear anything above their waist. Even Nāir women who had the right to cover the bosoms on occasions were expected by custom, to remove that covering in the presence of a member of a higher caste. Controversy over this custom was started as early as 1814, especially in the areas where the missionaries worked. This controversy lasted about half a century. On July 26, 1859 the following proclamation was made in Travancore by the King:
... we hereby proclaim that there is no objection... to Shanar women of all creeds dressing in coarse cloth and tying themselves around with it as the Mukku-vathigals [ladies of the fishing caste] do or to their covering their bosoms in any manner whatever, but not like women of higher castes.\(^1\)

Another proclamation of 1865 granted the same right to all the lower castes. This struggle over the 'upper cloth' involved much public agitation on both sides and reflected more widespread changes taking place within the traditional caste structure. In the Nādār or Shānar areas at the southern tip of Kerala it involved conversions to Christianity, but elsewhere where there were fewer conversions it still involved a greater social recognition for the lower castes including the Ṭlavas. From that time onwards the lower castes were counted in the affairs of the society and in the administration of the State. The communal feelings became more evident among people and each caste or community came to represent a pressure group in the political life of Kerala. Organized agitation became a means to demand the legitimate rights of different groups.

Around 1850 there was a decline in the trade in pepper and other spices and therefore the English encouraged the natives to replace their spice plantations

\(^1\)Gladstone, J.W., Protestant Christianity and People's Movements in Kerala 1850-1936, 1984, p.92.
with coconut and other palm trees. Great Britain was also developing the edible oil industry around this period. During this time the Ilavas took an interest in specializing in the processing of coconut products such as fibre and coir. Utram Tirunāḷ opened a factory for the manufacture of coir at Alleppey in 1859.

Inspite of the work of the missionaries there were no large scale conversions among the Ilavas during this period. Ilavas lived in the same areas as the highly respected St. Thomas Christians and the Ilava converts had expected that they might get the same privileges as the St. Thomas Christians. The Nāirs and the St. Thomas Christians were, however, not in favour of a movement in this direction. Hence, although some leaders considered it the Ilavas in general realized that conversion would not serve as a direct means of social emancipation. However, in the mass movements of other communities they observed a new found unity and learned the lesson that it would take an organized effort to determine their own future. In addition, they found a new spirit of freedom and independence in the reform movement that had sprung up among the St. Thomas Christians in 1836.
3. Era of Social Awakening and Mass Movements

Uninterrupted pattern of reform in the history of the Travancore State continued during the reigns of Āyilyam Tirunāḷ (1860-1880), Śrī Mūlam Tirunāḷ Rāma Varma (1885-1924), Sētu Lakshmi Bāi (1924-1931) and Śrī Chittira Tirunāḷ Balarāma Varma (1931-1956). During this period educational facilities increased with the opening of more schools and colleges. Transportation facilities were increased by the opening of the Varkala Tunnel in 1875 and the rail route to Madras from Trivandrum in 1918. Several development projects were launched with the formation of village Panchayats in 1925. Sētu Lakshmi Bāi legally abolished the animal sacrifices in temples and made the makkattāyam system the only legal form of inheritance by a regulation in 1925. It was Śrī Mūlam Tirunāḷ who inaugurated the Legislative Council in 1888 and the Śrī Mūlam Assembly in 1904. Śrī Chittira Tirunāḷ reconstituted the Legislature and introduced several administrative social reforms. All these reforms and development projects proved to be of advantage primarily for the advanced section of society. Education, however, brought with it higher expectations for all. Educated people soon resented living under both an autocratic form of government and a rigid caste hierarchy.
The awakening of the Ilava community began with the life and work of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru (1856-1928). He started his reform movement by consecrating a Śiva Temple at Aruvippuram in 1888. By this action he questioned the religious monopoly of the Brāhmans and indicated that Ilavas, like Nāirs and Brāhmans, have equal rights to own temples and to worship the Sanskritic deities. Nārāyaṇa Guru had the support of other Ilava leaders such as Dr. Palpu and Kumāran Āśān in the propagation of the reforms he initiated and in organizing the Ilavas on the State level. As a result of his initiative the Ilava organization - Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Paripālana Yōgam (SNDP Yogam) - was formed in 1903. The emancipation of the Ilavas is dealt with in the following chapters, but before proceeding with that discussion here we will briefly look at the parallel awakenings of the Nāirs and Pulayas in order to get a glimpse of the environment of social awakening in which the Ilava movement developed.

There was a decline in the social status of Nāirs from the time of Marttāṇḍa Varma. During his reign Marttāṇḍa Varma removed Nāir nobles from many responsible positions in the government and brought Brāhmans from outside the State to take over most of the higher government posts. Later many British Residents, who also
were not happy with the Nāir community's independence, brought Brāhmans from other parts of India and offered them high level government employment in Kerala. The Nāir community argued that they (sons of the soil) were denied a proper share in the administration of the State.

It was Chaṭṭambi Svāmikal (1854-1924) who provided the spiritual foundation for the social and political struggles of the Nāirs.¹ Being the son of a Brāhman born to a Nāir woman, Chaṭṭambi Svāmikal realized that the Brāhmans ultimately stood in the way of the progress of the Nāirs. He challenged the 'Paraśurāma tradition' dearly held by the Brāhmans and argued that the whole of Kerala really belonged to the Nāirs.² He questioned the traditionally accepted religious superiority of the Brāhmans. He pointed out that there were many occasions in the Hindu tradition when Śūdras are said to have learned the Vedic scriptures. Therefore he exhorted the Nāirs to learn the Vedās and insisted that every person should have the freedom to grow in spiritual life.

¹See Sukumaran Nair, G., Chattambi Swamikal, Cochin: Kerala History Association, 1982.
²He argues this in his work Pracheena Malayalam.
A general awakening among the Nāirs gradually picked up momentum late in the nineteenth century. Many of them got educated and applied for employment in the State. They still had difficulty in getting higher posts in government. A new phase in their struggle dawned with their decision in 1891 under the leadership of G. Paramēśvaran Piḷḷai to represent their grievances directly to the King of Travancore through the 'Malayāḷi Memorial'.\(^1\) At this point they also had the support of the Ilava community under the leadership of Dr. Palpu.

The memorial pointed out the injustice of the government in excluding the natives of southern Kerala from appointments in the higher grades of government service. It demanded an impartial appointment of the natives to the level of service for which they were qualified by their education, ability and integrity. The work of carrying on the social awakening begun among the Nāirs in the late nineteenth century was taken up by the Nāir Service Society (NSS) when it was formed in 1914.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Mankekar D.R., The Red Riddle of Kerala, 1965, p.68.

It was Ayyan Kāli (1863-1941) who fought for the rights of the lowest untouchable caste, the Pulayas.\footnote{Gladstone, J.W., Protestant Christianity and People's Movements in Kerala: 1850-1936, 1984, p.266f.} Realizing the importance of education for the social advancement of his people, Ayyan Kāli opened a school at Venganur near Trivandrum in 1904. Though this was in accordance with the provision of the government legislation of 1904, there was severe opposition from the higher castes and therefore the school did not enjoy a long life. In 1907 Ayyan Kāli organized the Pulayas under the banner of the Sādhu Paripālana Saṃgham. He instructed his men to refrain from working for the Nāir landlords until they permitted the lower caste children to enter those schools for which the government had already granted permission. This resulted in a riot in 1914. Ayyan Kāli was nominated to the Śrī Mūlam Popular Assembly in 1912. He served the assembly continuously for 28 years. His main concerns in the assembly were education, employment and land for the lower caste people. As a result the government gradually grew more lenient toward the requests of the lower castes. With the help of the government they received fee concessions in schools from 1924, more possibilities of employment in government service from 1929, and house sites or small scale farms after 1925.
The initiative for intensified political change in Kerala increased with the institution of a Legislative Council by Śrī Mūlam Tirunāḷ in 1888 in an effort to secure for the government the advice of representatives of the people. This was precisely the time when the Īlavas were being awakened by their spiritual leader Nārāyaṇa Guru. The Nāirs who had became conscious of the decline in their social status had taken the initiative to unite the natives of Travancore in submitting, as mentioned earlier, the Malayāḷi Memorial in 1891. Realizing, however, that this petition was going to help only the Nāir community, the Īlavas submitted another memorandum called the Īlava Memorial in 1896. Śrī Mūlam Tiruṅal Rama Varma constituted the Śrī Mūlam Popular Assembly in 1904 with the purpose of giving more participation for the people of Travancore in the administration of the State. The franchise was, however, based on land tenure and therefore the privilege was primarily of advantage of the Nāir community. Soon resentment started to build against this Nāir monopoly of the new political opportunities.

The dawn of this century witnessed the formation of a number of communal associations. In 1903 the Īlavas organized the SNDP Yōgam, in 1907 Ayyan Kāli formed the
Sadhu Paripālana Samgham of the Pulayas, and in 1914 Naı́rs formed the NSS. During the 1920s the forces of communalism were growing and even though there were some common agitations that brought the communities together each communal group tried to be independent and sought necessary Legislative measures for its own betterment. Awakened by the teachings of Chāṭṭambi Svāmikāl, the Naı́rs longed to put an end to the joint family system and their loose system of marriage. By 1919 changing the law of inheritance became a matter of serious concern among Naı́rs. The subject came up for discussion in the Śrī Mūlam Popular Assembly in 1920. After much deliberations a regulation in favour of individual partition and the adoption of the makkattāyam system of inheritance was passed in 1925.¹

Another form of social restlessness that was evident in the social and political scene of Kerala at the beginning of the century was the one popularly known as the 'Temple Entry Agitation'. As early as 1920 the Īḷava representative Kuṁju Paṇikkar demanded in the Assembly that the Īḷavas must be permitted to worship in all Hindu

¹The Nair Regulation of Malabar was passed only in 1933.
temples.¹ Along with this there were public agitations such as the Vaikkam Satyagraha in 1924 and the Guruvayur Satyagraha in 1931 demanding the right of the lower castes to enter and worship in all public temples including the important temples at Vaikkam and Guruvayur. As a result of these agitations several Ilavas were imprisoned. The death of Ilava leaders such as Dr. Palpu (1924), Kumaran Asan (1924) and Nārāyaṇa Guru (1928) created a gap in the socio-religious life of the Ilavas. The agitations at the same time attracted the attention of national leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi.² Gandhi, however, held an ambiguous position for he supported the caste structure and could not advocate equality and complete elimination of caste hierarchy even though he favoured temple entry. Meanwhile, different religious groups such as Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Sikhs were working to convert the lower castes of Kerala, and at one point the Ilavas considered the possibility of mass conversion. The Travancore government appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of

²In 1925 Gandhiji visited Vaikkam and worked out a compromise by which all the roads in the area were thrown open except for a small stretch outside the temple itself. Woodcock, George., Kerala-A Portrait of the Malabar Coast, 1967, p.237.
V.S. Subramaṇia Iyer to submit a report on the issue of Temple Entry. The report of the committee submitted to the King pointed out that among the savarṇa or upper caste Hindus there was both opposition and a strong feeling of support for temple entry.\(^1\) Realizing that the traditional hold of Hindus on the State government would weaken if the numerically large ḫala community embraced some other religion, the then Mahārājā Chittira Tirunāḷ declared the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936. This Proclamation provided the ḫalas and other lower castes with some of the honour and self-respect they sought when it gave them the right to worship in all Hindu temples of the State.

4. Political Development in the 20th Century

We saw earlier that Śrī Mūlam Tirunāḷ instituted a Legislative Council in 1888. This Legislative Council was reformed several times in the following decades. Still there was no adequate representation of minorities like ḫalas, Muslims and Christians which would require a major reformation of the legislature with a wider franchise. In

\(^1\) Gladstone, J.W., Protestant Christianity and People: Movements in Kerala 1850-1936, 1984, p.374. The Temple Entry Act of Cochin was passed only in 1947.
1932 Śrī Chittira Tirunāl abolished the Legislative Council and created instead a bicameral legislature with the Śrī Mūlam Assembly as the lower and the Śrī Chittira State Council as the upper houses respectively. The aggrieved communities consisting of Ilavas, Muslims and Christians, who were still not happy with the Legislative reforms of 1932, submitted separate resolutions to the King offering their suggestions for constitutional reform based on caste and population. The representatives of these communities met at the London Mission Society Hall, Trivandrum on January 25, 1933 and accepted a resolution to abstain from the legislatures envisaged in the Reforms of 1932. This event is popularly known as the 'Abstention (Nivarttana) Movement'.

An organization called the Joint Political Congress (Samyukta Rāṣṭriya Samiti-1932) was formed from this movement and it exhorted the voters to abstain from voting in the elections held under the new scheme. One of its leaders C.Keśavan, an Ilava, was arrested in June 1935 following a speech he made at Kozhencheri near Tiruvalla. He was sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment. On the eve of his arrest C.Keśavan issued a statement to the press.

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...In these trouble days of political growth, the burden of fighting leadership has fallen on my unworthy shoulders. There has emerged out of it the new found and precious friendship of the Ezhavas, Muslims and Christians and all the disenfranchised communities of the State; a friendship which will permanently endure and shape the democracy of the future. I long for the day when the shadow of caste Hindu monopoly is destroyed and it will be possible to welcome the Nayars to the brotherhood of equality in work, suffering and triumph. I want you to regard my arrest as a resounding victory or a presage of the coming of the day when true equality will prevail among all the subjects of His Highness the Maharaja...

Subsequently the Government widened the franchise by reducing the property qualifications. Īḷavas were given eight seats while Muslims and Latin Christians were given three seats each. The changes in the electoral law were formally announced in August 1936 and the elections were held in April-May 1937. The candidates put up by the Joint Political Congress came out successful from a large number of constituencies and T.M. Varghese (St. Thomas Christian) was elected as the Deputy President of the Sri Mulam Assembly. But when he accorded a warm welcome to C. Kesavan, who was released from prison, he was removed from office by a non-confidence motion of the Assembly at the instance of the Divān.

1 Koshy, M.J., Constitutionalism in Travancore and Cochin, 1972, p.117-118.
With the subsequent desire of the leaders of the Joint Political Congress to include the Nāir Community, the triple alliance was replaced by a political party, the Travancore State Congress' in 1936. The aim of the new organization was the achievement of full responsible government for the people of southern Kerala. The Divan C.P. Rāmasvāmi Iyer, a Brāhman from outside Kerala, was against this move. There developed a series of agitations and demonstrations which lasted for about a decade.¹ Several people courted arrest. Following the Second World War a majority of the people underwent a period of stress and strain. The Communist Party grew during this period. The people at Alleppey undertook a mass agitation and demanded an immediate end to the autocratic rule of the Divān. On September 26, 1946 the Divān assumed the supreme command of the police and declared martial law in Alleppey. This resulted in the 'Bloodshed at Punnapra-Vayalār' and several hundred persons lost their lives. On July 25, 1947 when the Divān was attending a function in the Svāti Tirunāl Academy of Music at Trivandrum an unsuccessful attempt was made on his life. C.P. Rāmasvāmi Iyer resigned from office and left Kerala on August 19, 1947.

On March 24, 1948 the first popular Ministry of Travancore consisting of members such as Paṭṭam A. Tāṇu Piḷḷai (a Nāir), C. Kesavan (an Īḷava) and T.M. Varghese was installed in office. On January 1, 1949 integration of the Travancore and Cochin took place under a new Ministry headed by T.K. Nārāyaṇa Piḷḷai. The State of Kerala formally came into existence on November 1, 1956 with a Governor as the head of the State and a popular ministry chosen by the assembly.

The early decades of the 20th century were marked for all of India by the Freedom Struggle. While the Indian National Congress was busy with the struggle for freedom, the people of southern Kerala were engaged in an effort to democratize the local government and to secure a fair representation in it for all religious communities. When Independence and with it universal franchise and self-government came to India, the Īḷavas and other communities of Southern Kerala had already a well-established interest in politics. Kerala has had 19 ministries since 1948. The frequent change of ministries can be in considerable measure attributed to the caste loyalties, communal interest and secular ideology of the people. In Kerala, Īḷavas and Scheduled Castes constitute roughly 34 percent of the population, Christians
24 percent, Naïrs and Brahmans 19 percent and Muslims 20 percent. These religious and caste groups or coalitions of them have tended to shape the party strategy and the political behaviour of the State. Because of the numerical strength of the Ilavas each of the political parties have given adequate representation to them both in the nomination of candidates and in the ministries. The role of the Ilavas in shaping the various governments of the State has been very significant and they continue to be a central political force in Kerala society.

5. An Overview

Until the mid-twentieth century, Kerala was ruled by kings who were devout Hindus. They modelled their government according to the injunctions of the Hindu religious tradition. Maintaining law and order and upholding the religious values were seen by them as the dharma of the State. Any external intervention, either from European powers or from outside officials (non-Keralites) was treated as a threat to the existing religious order.

1"Out of the estimated population of 15,230,000 of 1958 the Ezhavas are reported to be 3,700,000. Ezhavas are the biggest single community in Kerala State." See Bhagat, K.P., The Kerala Mid Term Election 1960, Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1962, p.60.
In the confrontation with the Portuguese and the English there were attraction and repulsion. Some of the lower castes of Hindu society found freedom, security and economic benefit in the mission compound and embraced Christianity. As seen in the Kuṇṭaṇa Proclamation of Vēlu Tampi (1809) and in the agitations at Quilon (1505) and Angengo (1721) the natives of Kerala questioned the dominance of the European powers in the internal affairs of the land. In the religious field, Hindus and Christians started reforming their religion asserting independence and cultivating more bhakti practices.

In the twentieth century, to check the external intervention in the internal administration of Kerala, the various communities rallied together in the State Congress and struggled for a responsible government. Once a measure of unity was achieved and a democratic government came to power, communal interests developed and became visible in the formation of the various ministries. Initially, the Communist Party with its secular ideologies threatened the system of communal interests. Since 1969, a section of the Communist Party also honours the communal values of the people.
Caste distinctions became prevalent with the Aryanization process in Kerala. Brāhmans followed by Nāirs assumed greater status and position during the period of the Cēra-Cōla war and they came to enjoy many privileges at the expense of others. It was only by the middle of the nineteenth century that the Īlava and the lower castes became conscious of their strength. Conversion was not a major factor in the quest of the Īlavas for religious and social freedom. While remaining Hindu-Īlavas, they sought ways and means for their emancipation. On their own they welcomed change within the continuity of their communal tradition.

Caste distinctions in ancient days were a way to maintain social harmony and to bring about participation in the total administration. Each caste was assigned a particular role to play. The 'part' remained significant to the 'whole' and vice versa. Agitations started to arise when a 'part' was neglected by the 'whole' and the 'whole' by the 'part'. The history of Kerala shows that in spite of disturbances, the Hindu community tried to keep this balance through a spirit of accommodation and reformation. The Īlava community when it awakened in the latter half of the nineteenth century went a bit further in propagating its ideal of 'One Caste'. The next chapter looks at the awakening of the Īlavas of southern Kerala.
IV. NARAYANA GURU AND THE AWAKENING OF THE ILLAVAS
Nārāyaṇa Guru and the Awakening of the Īlavas

Southern Kerala witnessed a social revolution of great magnitude in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Brahmo Samaj, Ārya Samaj and Prārthana Samaj reform movements in other parts of India counted on the British government to push for changes and were not necessarily involved in creating friction in society. In southern Kerala, the case was different. The orthodox Hindu kings of southern Kerala, under the direction of the Nāir Divāns and the priestly Nambūtiri advisors, were not prepared to allow even a slight change in the recognized traditions. On the other hand, the native rulers considered it their sacred duty to protect the rights and privileges of the savarnas (the higher castes). Any attempt on the part of the avarnas (the lower castes) to question the existing order was looked upon as treason and put down with a heavy hand. It was against this background that the reformers of southern Kerala had to work. This chapter will discuss the revolution set in motion by Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru, Dr. Palpu and Kumāran Aśān and the resultant progressive developments in southern Kerala during this century.
In the nineteenth century, the prevailing idea among the high castes was that the Ilavas should continue as outcastes and satisfy themselves with their traditional occupations such as toddy-tapping, farming and weaving. A great transformation was, however, gradually taking place within the Ilava community. Some educated and progressive minded Ilavas took a fresh look at their community and began to urge social reforms. Sri Narayana Guru, the acknowledged spiritual leader of the community, awakened the Ilavas, and his disciple, Kumaran Asan, gave intellectual and institutional form to the movement. Dr. Palpu, who was in government medical service outside Kerala, supported these two and worked for the social emancipation of the Ilavas. The efforts of these men had a significant impact upon the intellectual horizon and social life of Kerala.

1. Sri Narayana Guru (1856-1928)

Sri Narayana was born at Chempalanti, a village about 15 kms. south-east of Murukkumpula, as a son of Matan Asan and Kutty Amma in the year 1856.\(^1\) He was educated in

\(^1\)See Plate No.1 and 2. The Ilavas celebrate his birthday, September 9th, as Guru Jayanti. This day is a holiday for Kerala State.
Malayalam, Tamil and Sanskrit. Though he started his career as a school teacher by starting small vernacular schools, he left home before his father died in 1884 to wander as a Samnyāsi. During this period he met Ayyāvu his master of spiritual exercises. Nārāyaṇa Guru proceeded to Maruthuamala, a place south of Trivandrum, for meditations. After engaging in austerities and meditation for a few years, he dedicated himself to a far-reaching social revolution. He used his spiritual attainments for the creation of a new humanity and a new social order. He discarded everything that offended the dignity of man and freedom of the individual and tried to give the lower castes a sense of direction and self-respect.¹

From his childhood, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru abhorred the caste system and mingled freely with the Pulaya (an untouchable caste lower than Ḍālava) children with whom he ate his food. By his personal example, more than by advice, he showed the people at large and his followers in particular that all men belong to one and the same caste, that human society is one, and that the so called caste distinctions are man made and are of no good to anyone.

Emphasizing the fundamental oneness and equality of mankind, Nārāyaṇa Guru took as his motto: "One caste, One religion, One God for man."¹

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru realized that the contemporary society was suffering from three ills:

The first and foremost was that vast masses of people were weighed down by ignorance, superstitions and cultural backwardness which made them meekly submit to cruel caste system and other inhuman practices. The second ill of the society was the economic backwardness of the people. Thirdly, the people were disunited and therefore they had no power to overcome obscurantist and orthodox forces which wanted to perpetuate feudal backwardness and the caste system.²

Nārāyaṇa Guru who devoted his life for the upliftment of the millions of downgraded people of Kerala felt the need to put into practice the idealistic and pragmatic religious philosophy of Hinduism.

(a) Teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru

Subscribing to the Advaita philosophy of Śrī Śankarācārya, Nārāyaṇa Guru carried it to its logical

²Ibid., p.52.
conclusion. Acceptance of the non-duality of the individual self (Ātman) and the divine self (Brahman), according to him, naturally led to the assertion of the non-duality of individual selves. He thus gave a new interpretation of ancient Hindu religious thought and attempted to make it applicable to the whole world in the given historical context. He was convinced of the equality of all beings:

One Caste, One Religion, One God for man 
One Womb, One form, difference here is none.¹

Based on these teachings, he taught people the meaninglessness of caste and pointed out that caste observances serve as stumbling blocks for their progress. He said:

It goes to say that human nature is essentially one and fundamentally of one single sameness. The idea of dualism or plurality in the nature and race of man is a super imposition on reality by interested parties. Thus the terms 'Pariah' and 'Brahmin' exist only in imagination. In the light of reason, they are bound to disappear.²

²Ravindran, T.K., Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala, Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1972, p.XLIX.
Nārāyaṇa Guru was convinced that the existence of caste was due to ignorance (avidyā) and spiritual enlightenment (wisdom-vidyā) was required to liberate (mokṣa) people from the illusory notion (māyā) that caste differentiation was essential.

(i) One Caste:

Nārāyaṇa Guru was well aware of the traditional injunctions of the caste system. Through his career as an Ilava he learned first hand the immediate consequences of the caste system and the desperate desire of millions of people to win freedom from caste. In his wandering life, he mingled and lived with the downtrodden masses. He visited the huts of the untouchables and partook of their meals. He raised himself from the bondage of caste. He wrote in 1916:

Some of you still think I belong to this community or that creed. It is now years since I have given up such distinctions. I have also arranged that those who join the order at my Asram shall have no such distinctions.¹

He took an uncompromising stand against caste. He wrote in *Jāti Nirṇayam* (A critique of caste)

Within a species, is it not,
that offspring truly bred?
The community of man thus viewed
to a single caste belongs;
Of the human species is even a Brahmin born,
and is the Pariah too.
Where is the difference then in caste
as between man and man.¹

He taught people that terms like "Brāhman" and "Pariah"
only confused the true-reality of human nature. Selecting
two sages Parāsara and Vyāsa of unquestionable status but
of mixed origin, he exposed the meaninglessness of the
repudiation of caste distinctions on the basis of birth.²

He proclaimed the idea of 'Universal Brotherhood'
in the injunction, "Ask not, speak not, think not of
caste."³ This was a practical step he suggested to remove


³Ravindran, T.K., *Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala*, 1972, p.XLIX. Nārāyaṇa Guru once remarked that if a man's caste cannot be determined by seeing a person, there is no meaning in attributing him a caste. Caste differentiation, he said, is man made.
the notion of caste from the lives and minds of people. He exhorted his followers to mingle with the lower caste people and treat them as equals. He asked them to open their schools and temples to the lower caste people. He also gave new names to several of the low caste children.

In his teaching on 'One Caste' Nārāyaṇa Guru differed from many of the socio-religious reformers. While people like Svāmi Dayānanda, Vivekānanda and Gandhi held on to the caste ideal of Varṇaśrama-dharma while calling for reform, Nārāyaṇa Guru held the idea that 'there is only one caste and that is humanity'. The caste system in his eyes was perpetuating misery among one section of society. The Guru criticized the time-honoured belief in caste as a divinely ordained institution. He said that the caste structure was contrary to the very spirit of advaita. He attempted to clear away the social notions of inequality and hierarchy altogether.

(ii) One Religion

During the youth of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru, the Īlavas were primarily worshippers of local (usually female) deities. They had little contact with the Sanskritic
traditions taught by the Brāhmans of Kerala. During this period, the kings and the Brāhmanical hierarchy of southern Kerala were predominantly Vaiṣṇavites. The Śrī Padmanābha Temple at Trivandrum held a very prestigious position. During his student life and later in his wanderings, Nārāyaṇa Guru came in contact with a much wider sampling of temple deities and showed a liking for Śaivite worship.¹

He developed a liberal attitude towards religions while firmly standing within the Hindu tradition. He neither established a new religion nor identified himself with any particular form of Hinduism. Instead, he interpreted the values of his own religious tradition by utilizing the popular imagery, language and form of worship. He did not break off from the tradition but he changed its values in major ways.

He spoke to the ordinary people who were disgusted with their own religious tradition and were uncertain as to whether they should retain their own religious identity or adopt another that seemed to offer a greater measure of dignity. To them and to others he said that there is only 'One Religion' for man.²

¹ Most of the temples he consecrated were Śiva Temples.

Nārāyaṇa Guru did not develop a deep theoretical knowledge of other religions, but he moved about with people of other faiths and got acquainted with the practical teachings of other religions. He discouraged the rivalries and disagreements between followers of different religions. He did not condemn other religious views. According to him the goal of every religion was the same and hence there was only one religion. He did not want man to be tied to any particular religious tradition. He emphasized the need for an openness on the part of every person to learn from other religious traditions. He lived during the period when the mass movements to Christianity were taking place, but he took an interest in Christianity only to find ideas he might respect. In Christianity he did not appreciate proselytization. According to Nārāyaṇa Guru, all religions satisfy the needs or quench the thirst of those who seek the truth. He taught that those who actively engage themselves in attacking other religions hurt the cause of their own religion.

To vanquish (a religion) by fighting is not possible; no religion can be abolished by mutual attack; the opponent of another faith not remembering this and persisting in his fight, his own doom, shall he in vain fight for, beware!

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Nārāyaṇa Guru recognized the separate existence of religions. According to him, the goal of any religion is the attainment of perpetual happiness or the highest bliss. His teaching on religion was not an attempt to uphold one particular religion and reject others or to say that one is a good substitute for another. He was not attempting a synthesis by taking all the good values from diverse creeds.¹ But he believed that all religions grow and change. While Svāmi Vivekānanda, the Apostle of Rāmakrishna Mission advocated advaita as the religion that can save both East and West, Nārāyaṇa Guru never mentioned Hinduism, Vedānta or any other religion as the salvation of all mankind.² Instead he took account of the practical differences in religions. In March 1924, he convened a meeting of the representatives of various religions at his Advaita Asram at Alwaye. There he made it clear that the purpose of the meeting was not to debate but to know and let others know the teachings of the different religions. He encouraged the study of other religions.

¹Nārāyaṇa Guru did not have extensive religious visions like Śrī Rāma Krishna; nor did he attempt to go through the religious experiences in other traditions.

²Svāmi Vivekānanda visited Kerala in 1892. He once spoke: "The salvation of Europe depends on a rationalistic religion---such a religion exists, it is the absolute, of the impersonal God: The only religion that can have any hold on intellectual people". Rolland, Romain, Prophets of the New India, 1930, p.544.
For Nārāyaṇa Guru, man was more important than religion. He never wanted man to be enslaved by any particular religious tradition. He declared: "Whatever be his religion, man should be good".¹

(iii) One God

Nārāyaṇa Guru did not write any exegetical commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtra, or the Bhagavad Gītā. But his short poems reflected his understanding of advaita and its relevance in the spiritual quest of the common man. In Daiva Dasakam he pointed out the transcendence and imminence of the Ultimate Reality. In this devotional hymn he underlined the Oneness of the Reality seen in diversified forms:

You are the creature, Creator, and the medium of creation. You are God and the efficient cause of creation. You are Maya, magician and the enjoyer. You are the remover of Maya and the giver of freedom. You are the truth, knowledge and happiness. You alone are the present, past and future. You are not different even from the spoken word, when we consider it.²

Nārāyaṇa Guru attempted to demonstrate the relevance of Vedānta in the life of the ordinary people.\(^1\) He combined the theoretical advaita with the bhakti practice of loving service. He exhorted the people to discriminate reality from unreality instead of discriminating man from man, religion from religion and god from god. He taught that "God is the Universal Reality behind the world, all life is His life and all activity is His."\(^2\) Thus in the reformation of religion that Nārāyaṇa Guru attempted there was considerable continuity with the advaita of the Hindu Religious Tradition. Nevertheless, he interpreted those ideas so as to encourage the modernizing process.

Like Rājā Rāmmohan Roy, Nārāyaṇa Guru also had to confront the monotheistic emphasis of the Christian missionaries. Nevertheless, it was clear that in his mind Hinduism was sufficient for the spiritual quest of all Hindus. Nārāyaṇa Guru's teaching of 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for man' provided the Ilavas with an

\(^1\)He combined the Advaita Vedanta theory of the oneness of Brahman (ekātmavāda) with the theistic vedānta practice of love and service---[He] taught that we should serve man as man because he belongs to one humanity (jāti or caste) And because we also acknowledge that ātman, the reality in man, is non-different from Brahman. See Samuel, V.T., One Caste, One Religion, One God, 1977, p.152.

\(^2\)Ibid., p.153.
answer which was based on a spiritual foundation within the fold of Hinduism and which at the same time supported their struggle for emancipation.

(b) Consecration of Temples

Nārāyaṇa Guru realized that the key to the emancipation of the less privileged castes was to break the religious monopoly of the Brāhmans. Although the Īḻavas did have temples to their own deities, they did not have temples consecrated to Śiva and other Vedic deities. So Śrī Nārāyaṇa, a low caste Hindu himself, installed a Śiva idol at Aruvippuram near Trivandrum in 1888.\(^1\) In the temple he inscribed:

This is the ideal house
Where all live in full fraternity
Without distinction of caste or prejudice of creed.\(^2\)

In those days the consecration of a Hindu temple was the exclusive monopoly of the Brāhmans. As a step in the direction of revolting against the Brāhman supremacy in the

\(^{1}\)Aruvippuram is 43 kms. south of Murukkumpuḷa and (19 kms. south of Trivandrum). See Plate No.3.

sphere of religion, and a blow against the age old
tradition of not permitting lower class Hindus to enter and
worship in temples, Nārāyaṇa Guru acted quite contrary to
the previous practice in establishing the temple at
Aruvippuram. What he did there was to show that a man of
an untouchable caste could not only make offerings to the
deity but could also consecrate the deity. This deviation
from traditional practice did not go unprotested. A
Brāhman among the infuriated section of the Orthodox Hindus
questioned Nārāyaṇa Guru on the propriety of his action.
He answered: "I installed not a Brahmin Siva, but an
Izhava Siva."¹ By this action, Nārāyaṇa Guru revealed to
the public the hollowness of caste distinctions.

Later Nārāyaṇa Guru travelled the length and
breadth of Kerala and established many temples. Śiva and
Subramaṇya were the principal deities he installed in these
temples. Some Iḻavas were trained to serve as priests in
the temples he consecrated. He allowed Pulayas and other
low caste people to worship in these temples. He did,
however, stop the traditional low caste practice of worship
with meat and liquor, and like Chaṭṭampi Svāmikāḷ exhorted
the people to stop the practice of animal sacrifice in all

¹Balachandran Nair., ed., In Quest of Kerala, 1974, p.123.
temples. "Illumination in the hearts of deities - that was Swami's concept about the purpose of temples."¹ So he installed a lamp when he consecrated a temple at Kāramukku in 1920. He desired to inculcate virtues in the life of people and therefore he inscribed the words 'Truth, Duty, Compassion and Peace' when he consecrated a temple at Murukkumpula in 1921. It was a 'mirror' with the words 'OM' inscribed on it, that Guru installed in a temple at Kalavankōṇam near Alleppy in 1927. At the Advaita Āśram Alwaye, instead of establishing a temple he made other arrangements for conducting prayers and reading scriptural texts.

Nārāyaṇa Guru brought an awareness of human rights to the outcastes and exhorted them to practice social brotherhood among all sections of society. He accepted the doctrine of advaita but tried to translate this doctrine into action. "The essential difference between Shankara and Shree Narayana Guru lies in their application of advaita to the realm of practical life".² This is reflected in his teachings as well as his consecration of temples. In the temple consecrations he began with

¹Ibid., p.86.
personal gods such as Śiva and Subramaṇya, gradually moved towards an emphasis of the worship of virtues, and finally arrived at the contemplation of the self (ātman) as Brahman. That is to say, from the material plane, he moved on to the spiritual plane and arrived at the realization of ātman as Brahman (Aham Brahmāsmi).

Nārāyaṇa Guru threw open all the temples he consecrated for the worship of all people irrespective of caste. Whenever people raised objections, Nārāyaṇa Guru calmly persuaded the orthodox Īlavas and made them agree to admit lower caste people into the temple. He considered the temples as centres useful for acquiring spiritual strength and thereby purifying oneself. He said:

There is no need to build temples in the old style spending a lot of money. Money should not be wasted on festivals and fireworks. What temples need are spacious rooms where people can congregate and where discourses could be held. There should be schools and gardens attached to each temple. Each temple should have facilities to impart industrial training to children. The money received as offerings from devotees should be utilized for the benefit of the poor.¹

Nārāyaṇa Guru stressed the need for personal hygiene and cleanliness of the surroundings. He did not approve of temple tanks. He thought that public tanks could never be kept clean. He advised the construction of several bathrooms near temples where people could bathe under showers. He preferred good gardens around the temple where people could sit and relax. He conceived of temples as centres of enlightenment and development.

The consecration of spiritual centres like temples honoured the inherent religious forces among the common mass. It also brought them together. He realized that without these efforts there could be no uplift of the lower classes of Kerala. As a further step to break the monopoly of Brāhmans he popularized Sanskrit and English education among the lower castes. In 1914 he opened an Advaita Āśram at Alwaye and in 1915 he opened a Sanskrit school there and laid down that admission to this school be open to all who are interested in learning Sanskrit irrespective of caste or creed. He also started schools at Aruvippūram and Varkala.

(c) Social Concerns of Nārāyaṇa Guru

Ilavas generally engaged in their traditional profession of toddy-tapping, and spent much of their hard
earned money for liquor. Nārāyaṇa Guru realized that breaking this tradition was essential for the upliftment of the community. He exhorted: "Liquor is poison - don't produce it, don't vend it, don't consume it." 

Polygamy and polyandry were being practiced in some places of southern Kerala. Nārāyaṇa Guru spoke against it and exhorted the people to stop free indulgence in such practices. He spoke on the responsibilities involved in married life. He said in 1908 that legal provision should be made to give to the wedded wife and children the right to a portion of a man's individual earnings. 

The Guru spoke on the benefits of education and wanted both men and women to get educated. While education leads to higher standards, industry helps development. So he recommended the involvement of Ilavas in various trades and industry. In both education and industry he persuaded the rich to help the poor. He encouraged Ilavas to organize and bring about the regeneration of man and society. He repeatedly said: "Strength through organization; freedom through education." 

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2 Ibid., p.103.
3 Ibid., p.60.
Nārāyaṇa Guru wanted to reform certain religious customs and practices. He travelled from place to place speaking on these matters from 1905 to 1918. To make them effective he wrote letters to several local chiefs. He published his guidelines on the reformed practice of marriage in an Īlava magazine called Vivekōdayam. Inspite of all these measures some people feared social criticism and some looked for an authority with which they could over-ride the existing customs. For this purpose, Nārāyaṇa Guru went to some houses and publically asked Īlavas to follow the new procedure.

The Guru was devoted to the upliftment of the downtrodden people to higher levels of humanism. He opposed the practice of determining the status of man by his caste, religion, race or class. He believed that beneath these superficial differences there is a stratum of noble humanity. He wanted to create opportunities to awaken this innate humanity. He wanted religion to serve this purpose. And to this end he consecrated temples and said that they should be educational centres. In 1917 he said:

1These are mentioned in a later chapter.
People should be enlightened through education. Enlightenment is emancipation. When enlightened they would become aware that caste and creed were but robes and that beneath them all men were the same.¹

2. Dr. Palpu and the Īlava Memorial

Dr. Palpu, was born in 1863 in an Īlava family of Nedungōṭ in Trivandrum. He, being an outcaste, was denied admission to the College in Kerala, even though he was fully qualified. Undaunted by this discouragement, Palpu went to Madras and qualified himself in the field of medicine. He came back to southern Kerala and tried in vain for a job. He then went to Mysore and served as Health Officer and Director of the Lymph Institute.²

Dr. Palpu, the first doctor of medicine among the Īlava Caste, showed a readiness to work for the upliftment of his own community and other depressed classes. He thought that their main handicap was the lack of educational facilities. The Government of southern Kerala


²That he was drawing about Rs.1,000.00 per mensem as salary in those days is an indication of his status. But still he was ill-treated by the caste-minded hierarchy in his own State. See George, K.M., Kumaran Asan, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1972, p.16.
even denied Ilavas admission in government schools and barred their entry into service in many government departments.

When a movement was started under the leadership of Nāirs such as G.P. Pillai and K.P. Sankara Menon to demand recognition of the rights of all citizens to enter government service, Dr. Palpu joined hands with them. The resentment was against the policy of the government in importing persons from outside to hold the most important posts in public service even when persons with similar qualifications were available inside the State. Later from Mysore, he submitted a Memorial on May 13, 1895 to the Divān of Travancore, Col. Munro, highlighting the grievances of the Ilava community. Neither his Memorial nor his two reminders elicited any reply. Therefore, he came to Trivandrum and met the Divān in February 1896. The Divān pointed out the difficulties in admitting Ilavas to schools and appointing them in the government service as these were contrary to tradition. Realizing that an organized agitation was necessary to change the attitude of the government and the upper class Hindus towards Ilavas, Dr. Palpu organized a State-wide campaign. He came on leave to Travancore and travelled in almost all tāluks, in order to collect signatures from Ilavas for a memorandum to be submitted to the Mahārājā. But most of the Ilavas were
reluctant to sign the petition because of fear and reluctance to change the tradition. With much effort he collected signatures from 13,176 Īlavas and presented a mammoth petition to Śrī Mūlam Tirunāḷ Maharājā, called the 'Īlava Memorial', in 1896.

The petition recalled the services the forefathers of the present generation of Īlavas had rendered to the Crown, pledged their undivided loyalty and put forward the grievance that the benefits of many of the welfare measures the Government had introduced were being denied to them. Dr. Palpu wrote in that petition the following:

Public service, which it must be admitted, is the strongest incentive to education in this country, is entirely denied to them [Īlava] in Travancore, and to this day the Government has not shown any encouragement worth the name to an educated Tiya [Īlava], whatever his qualifications may be... At present no qualification can secure to a Tiya any of these appointments in his own native land unless he becomes a convert to Christianity or Mohammedanism or at least takes shelter under mere Christian or Mohammedan name...

Another reason argued against the entertainment of the Tiyas in Public Service, is that their social position is low... As regards this social position, it cannot be ignored that the attitude of Government towards the Tiyas was itself the main factor in having kept the community in the backward
condition...Permit me to say, that a
great deal has yet to be done by the
Government before it can be truly
said that they are doing all they can
for the Tiyas.1

The petition reflected the utter helplessness of the
petitioners. The reply of the government to the
petitioners was as follows:

It noted that the questions
raised, Viz. educational facilities
and employment under the government,
concerned not the Ezhavas alone and
hence Government had to be extra-
cautious in tackling the questions
so as not to impair the structural
compactness of an ancient society,
governed by age old customs and
traditions.2

Dr. Palpu realized that these provisions were not
adequate. With the help and co-operation of progressive
minded people such as G.P. Pillai, Dr. Palpu made an effort
to make the entire country aware of the injustice to which
the community was being subjected. All these attempts did
not have much immediate effect. Around this time Dr. Palpu
met Svāmi Vivekānanda at Mysore and held long discussions
on the condition of the Ilavas of southern Kerala. After

1Koshy, M.J., Genesis of Political Consciousness in
Kerala, 1972, pp. 190-199.

that he thought of directing the Ilava activity on the lines of religious revivalism and reformation. In Sri Nārāyaṇa Guru, Dr. Palpu soon found an ideal complement.

The coming together of Narayana Guru and Dr. Palpu was indeed a great augury for the whole community - a combination of energy and sobriety, of drive and maturity. They supplemented and complemented each other in a magnificent way. Kumaran Asan came to share the concern of these two in a very intimate and significant way.¹

3. Kumāran Aśān (1873-1924)

Kumāran was born at Kāyikkara, a small village about 24 kms. north of Murukkumpula, as a son of Nārāyaṇa and Kāliyamma on April 12, 1873. He was eighteen when he first met Nārāyaṇa Guru. Their association was a turning point in Kumāran's life and he became a disciple of Nārāyaṇa Svāmi. Nārāyaṇa Guru sent Kumāran to Bangalore for higher education. Dr. Palpu exerted some influence to get Kumāran admitted to Śrī Chāmarājendra Sanskrit College, Bangalore. After his three years of study, Kumāran went to Madras and studied Sanskrit under a private tutor. It was difficult for him, being a low caste, to get admission at Madras Sanskrit College. Then he proceeded to Calcutta

¹George, K.M., Kumaran Asan, 1972, p.16.
where he studied Sanskrit and English. Bengal was at that time in the throes of a cultural renaissance with Vivekananda and Tagore at the centre of the stage. With considerable scholarship, maturity of vision and a broader cultural outlook, Kumāran came back to Trivandrum in 1900.

Kumāran settled down at Aruvippuram where he started a Sanskrit School and taught the young aspirants. He felt deeply the humiliation his community had to suffer and wanted to dedicate his whole life, his thought, word and deed, to its emancipation.

The religious and social activities among the Ilavas organized under the leadership of Nārāyaṇa Guru had increased considerably by then. The leaders realized that a small organizational set up had to be streamlined and activities further expanded, and for that the primary step was to register the body as a society. Thus in 1903 the Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Paripālana Yōgam (SNDP) was registered as a society to foster the religious, social and educational well being of the Ilavas.¹ Kumāran Āśān was

¹Nārāyaṇa Guru was the life-President and Dr. Palpu the Vice-President of the SNDP Yōgam. Koshy, M.J., Last Days of Monarchy in Kerala, 1973, p.267.
called to work as its General Secretary. He devoted his
time and energy to the SNDP Yogam and worked there for
about sixteen years (until 1919).\textsuperscript{1} To propagate the ideals
of the SNDP Yogam, Kumāran started a monthly journal called
Vivēkōdayam, which soon became an influential magazine. The
first issue was published in April 1904.\textsuperscript{2}

(a) The Literary Works

Kumāran Āsān understood that a change of heart was
essential for a change of the environment, politically,
economically and culturally. Poetry was the medium he
chose to create a favourable response in the minds of the
general public in Kerala for the legitimate claims of the
lower strata of society. His literary creations effected a
tremendous transformation in the intellectual horizon of
Kerala. "No poet had ever shaken the conscience of Kerala
as much as Asan did."\textsuperscript{3} Āsān was honoured as a

\textsuperscript{1}He had to tour throughout the length and breadth
of Kerala and organize and establish branches of the
society, make speeches, settle disputes, represent the
central office without much assistance. He had to awaken
the masses who were steeped in ignorance and were not quite
conscious of the rights denied to them. \textit{ibid.}, p.22.

\textsuperscript{2}Vivekōdayam soon came to be referred as the 'Ilava
Gazette'.

\textsuperscript{3}Ravindran, T.K., Asan and Social Revolution in
Kerala, 1972, p.XXXIII.
distinguished Indian poet by the Prince of Wales who visited Madras and presented Āsān with a silk shawl and gold bracelet in January 1922.

The influence of age-old tradition and its consequences on human life were well portrayed in his poems Nalini (1911) and Līlā (1914). The poem 'Thoughts of a Thiyya Boy' which he wrote later depicted the disabilities suffered by the Īḷava community. He wrote:

Poverty used to be the scholar's mark; But now it belongs to the uneducated. No fee was there for instruction in the past, But no one without money can acquire it now.¹

This poem was a document that demanded just and equitable treatment and restoration of the inalienable civil rights which had been withheld from the Īḷavas for the single reason of their being born in that community. It also gave a call to the depressed people to organize themselves with discipline and unity and make their own way to progress.

¹Ibid., p. 238.
Kumāran Āśān wrote his Duravastha (The Wretched State) after the Moplah Revolt of Malabar in 1921.¹ Through this literary piece he criticized the state of contemporary Hindu society. He gave an exhortation for regeneration through internal strength. The poet was exhorting the members of the higher castes to take the initiative to give to the lower castes what they deserve. He wrote in Duravastha:²

O Holy Vaidikas permit me to address you
Even though I am not qualified to do so.
Think of the country, think of the Creed,
Think of your own severed selves,

¹It is a series of twenty two riots that took place between Muslims and Hindus during the period from 1836 to 1856. "The common feature of these riots was that a Mappila or group of Mappilas [Muslims] would murder Hindu Janmis and desecrate Hindu temples" Menon, A. Sreedhara., A Survey of Kerala History, 1967, p.337.

²Duravastha is the story of Savitri: Savitri is the daughter of a rich Brahman. The mutineers loot her home and kill her parents. She manages to escape and finds refuge in the humble dwelling of Chāthan, an outcaste labourer. The single illiterate Chāthan cares for the refugee with the devotion due to a goddess. Sāvītrī learns to admire the guileless ways of Chāthan. She resolves to educate him herself and give him the religion jealously guarded by her class. She knows this would raise him to the rank of the Brāhmaṇ and by his example others of his community too may be induced to raise themselves. She also realizes that she is in love with her benefactor and marries him, choosing to be one among the outcastes and to devote her life to their service. By the contact with a Harijan, the Brāhmaṇ maiden has lost her caste and will not be accepted back in her home even though the disturbance is over and peace has been restored. This is the Duravastha - the wretched condition.
It is very late in the day, the threads
of custom
Are almost all giving way.
It is futile to bind the people with
this rope
It is beyond the reach of hope.¹

Addressing the votaries of Hindu tradition the poet warned:

Change you the laws yourselves, or else,
The laws will change you indeed.²

These words of the poet sowed the seed of deep social
reform and spread the idea that caste distinction was
inhuman and unnecessary. The poem had its effect on the
minds of the people. The resurgent forces of progress and
nationalism started the "Vaikkam Satyagraha", the struggle
to establish the right of the depressed classes to use the
road adjacent to the Vaikkam Temple, just a year after the
publication of Duravastha.

Āśān's Candaalabhiṣuki further highlighted the
cruelty of caste and the denial of justice. The story was
taken from a Buddhist legend. The Candala woman Matangi
offered water to a thirsty Bhiksu, Ānanda, which he happily

¹Ibid., p.267.
²George, K.M., Kumaran Asan, 1972, p.58.
accepted and was satisfied. This created a new stir in her heart. So she went the next morning to the vihāra (monastery) where she was accepted as a disciple by the Buddha. The King's protest made the Buddha preach to him the foolishness of the caste system:

Is caste found in the blood
or is it in the bone or the marrow?
Is the chandala woman's body
infertile to the Brahmin's seed?¹

He questioned the superiority of the Brāhman caste when he wrote:

Is the holy sandal mark on the forehead
Or the sacred thread or the tuft of hair
On the pate a natural legacy in birth?²

The poet was certain that each individual given an opportunity would evolve to higher standards of life by his own impetus. He said in Caṇḍālabhiṣuki:

The gentle Pulaya is not wild weed
Sprouting from the foot of the paddy plant

¹Ibid., pp.60-61.
²Govindan, M., Poetry and Renaissance, 1974, p.357.
Surely it shall yield golden sheaves
of grain
Given an equal opportunity.¹

He wanted the people to come out of their own self-made
prisons of prejudice and free individuals from each
other's fetters. "He was trying to convince the oppressors
and their victims that change was the basis of life;
changelessness decay, stagnation was death."²

Āśān favoured 'love' as the means of promoting
peace and justice, social, political and economic ideals
among all people. This ideal in his poetry assumed larger
dimensions. In Candālabhikṣuki, the Buddha advises the King
to instruct the people to rise above caste and foster love.

The world dawns from love
And flourishes with love
Love itself is the might of the world
Love brings happiness to all
Love is the life itself, sir
And its negation is death.³

The love he advocated was a positive state of doing good
even to the enemy and evil-doer. In collective life he

¹Ibid., p.359.
²Ravindran, T.K., Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala, 1972, p.XLV
³George, K.M., Kumaran Asan, 1972, p.61.
used the concept of love for more useful practical purposes.

Kumāran Āsān was a revolutionary poet. He took an uncompromising stand in the social revolution he advocated in poems like Duravastha and Candraabhikṣuki. He stood for change. Yet traditional values like equality, freedom, truth and love were dear to him.

(b) Āsān and the Śrī Mūlam Popular Assembly

It was through the Śrī Mūlam Popular Assembly instituted in 1904 that Kumāran Āsān's social and political action gave new hope to the Ilavas and other lower castes. Āsān was nominated as the Ilava member to the second session of the Assembly in 1905. As a member, he spoke for the cause of the Ilavas and other suffering lower castes. It was a time when the government was eager to look after the interests and guard the privileges of the superior castes.

On February 15, 1911 Kumāran Āsān joined the discussion of the Assembly on the need to start local industries and to encourage technical studies. He asked the government to develop the staple industries of the
state such as coir-yarn, copra and weaving and to train young men by sending them to Europe and America.

He pointed out that, as the Ezhava community had much interest in the above industries, it would be desirable to send some young men from that community to foreign countries to undergo training.¹

Asān spoke on the desirability of admitting the Ilavas, Kaṇiyans, Syrian Christians and men of other communities into Sanskrit and Ayurvedic Schools.² Speaking on the educational disabilities of Ilavas in general, he said that if an accurate and exhaustive list of schools into which admission was refused to Ilavas be called for from the Director of Public Instruction, the government could realize the enormity of the injustice done to the community, which in numerical strength and wealth was not by any means a negligible factor in the State. On February 22, 1915 he asked that a special enquiry be instituted to

¹Ravindran, T.K., Asan and social Revolution in Kerala, Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Soceity, 1972, p.3.

²He said in the assembly session on February 19, 1913: The Ezhava had a special aptitude for medicine. For the study of medicine, proficiency in the Sanskrit language and literature was essential, as the Ayurvedic medical treatises were all written in Sanskrit... The Ezhava youths had to go to Madras and Calcutta for studying Ayurvedic medicine. ibid., pp. 14-16.
probe into the matter. He also spoke on the desirability of admitting Ilava girls into all the Girls' Schools of the State.¹

The Ilava students were not given admission to the hostel attached to the Maharājā's College, Trivandrum. Asān spoke about it in the Assembly on February 28, 1916. He pointed out that Ilava students were unable to procure decent accommodation elsewhere in Trivandrum. On March 10, 1921 he spoke in the Assembly on fee concessions at the school.²

The lower castes had no chance of getting enough members elected from the open constituencies to the Assembly. The Ilavas who were about 26 lakhs people were not adequately represented. On March 4, 1912 he spoke:

¹Lastly he requested that the Girls' schools of the State, now closed to the Ezhava girls, should be thrown open to them as early as possible and that lists of the Girls' Schools should be published in the gazette from time to time for the information of the Ezhavas.' ibid., p.16. 'He said that it was pitiable to observe that only 1 percent among Ilava women were literate.' Priyadarsanan, G., Kumaran Asante Prajasabha Prasangangal, Kottayam, National Book Stall, 1982, p.15.

The chance of more members from this community being elected under the present system of election was remote, as would be evident from the fact, till now, Karunagapally [North of Murukkumpula] was the only taluk from which an Ezhava was elected.¹

Āśān urged the desirability of the government laying down some definite standard by which nomination might be made from the Ilava community every year.

The government of southern Kerala upheld the principles of pollution and untouchability which stood in the way of the large majority of the people enjoying civic rights. Āśān fought relentlessly against this injustice. On February 28, 1914 he spoke on the reluctance of the government to employ more Ilavas in the Public Services.

The custom of Ĥiñṭal (pollution by distance) remained an institution, though with less severity, in all walks of life in southern Kerala in the early decades of this century. Sign-boards (Ĥiñṭal palakas) were put up on certain areas, especially near the temples prohibiting the lower castes from entering there. On March 3, 1920 Āśān

¹Ibid., p.48.
appealed to the government to take immediate remedial measures and grant them access at least to the outer walls of the temples.

Kumāran Āsān presented the need for passing a law regarding the marriage and succession of Īlavas at the Travancore Legislative Council. The government appointed a committee and the Īlava Bill came up for discussion at the Council. After necessary deliberations the Īlava Bill was passed in 1925. The SNDP Yōgam played a major role in developing a common view among the various sections of the community and helping to enforce the new rules regarding marriage, succession and partition of property.

4. Institutions and Movements

(a) The SNDP Yōgam

It was under the inspiration of Nārāyaṇa Guru that the Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Paripālana Yōgam' came into existence on May 15, 1903. This organization became a great force in the consolidation of the scattered and dissipated Īlava community and in the work of its social and economic emancipation. The by-laws indicate that its (SNDP Yōgam's) main object was to promote and to encourage
religious and secular education and industrious habits among the Ilava community. The idea was to have a unit in every village, such units to be controlled and coordinated by a taluk branch and all such branches by a District body and the District bodies by a central committee which was to be the real governing body. Now it functions with its headquarters at Quilon.

Narayana Guru was the President of the organization for 25 years until his samadhi (death). In 1905 he sent out able speakers from place to place to speak on topics like religion, morality, education and industry. The relevant portion of the directives Svami gave about religion and morality to the touring speakers are given below. He instructed:

Speeches should be made on the following topics which would generally be beneficial to the society...

(a) Religion:

(i) Reject superstitions and rituals with animal sacrifices and the like meant to propitiate evil spirits.

(ii) Speak about the superiority of worship done in the best form and also about the Saguna and Nirguna aspects of pure Hindu Philosophy.
(iii) Intelligently induce people to build temples or monasteries in the required places. (De-crying other religions should never be done).

(b) Morality:

(i) Speak about truth, cleanliness, fear of unrighteousness, theisms, unity.

(ii) Speak about avoiding meaningless and harmful customs and adoptions of nobler codes of conduct in tune with the times (as enunciated by Swami) and guide the people onto these lines.

Apart from these general instructions he laid down two special rules the speakers were to observe:

(a) No speaker should ever tell the people anything about which he had a doubt. He should get all his important doubts resolved by Swami through the Secretary of the Yogam.

(b) Speeches should never be such as to hurt the feelings of the so-called lower classes or cause agitation to the so-called higher. Care should be taken to make the people interested in the uplift of the so-called lower classes.¹

In 1908 Nārāyana Guru wrote to the secretary of the SNDP Yōgam:

Enthusiasm in the matter of construction of temples is in evidence at many places. But it has to be examined whether the temples actually fulfill their aims in full measure. God should reach every home, every heart. For this purpose arrangements should be made to propagate the principles of religion.¹

In the initial stages Dr. Palpu was a powerful force. He exhorted the Iḷavas that the annual meetings of the Yōgam should include a separate meeting for the Iḷava women. Accordingly, with the help of his aged mother, he organized such a meeting in 1903 itself.² He took great interest in organizing an industrial exhibition at Quilon in 1905. This exhibition had a great impact. Dozens of exhibits of coconut and other agricultural products were exhibited and a large number attended the function. This exhibition gave Iḷavas a sense of pride and a wider community feeling.

Kumāran Āśān served the SNDP Yōgam as its general secretary for fifteen years. Āśān worked with a sense of dedication and within a few years the Yōgam registered an over-all development. Branches of the Yōgam were organized

¹Ibid., p.102.
from one end of southern Kerala to the other. As the Ilavas grew stronger through their organization, they were no longer satisfied with accepting the slow changes effected by environmental and external forces. They wanted to speed up change by legislation and by creating public opinion in their favour by propaganda through the press and through conferences and petitioning of the authorities. For a long time the government schools in the State were closed to Ilavas. The SNDP Yōgam with the constant inspiration from Dr. Palpu and untiring work by Kumāran Āśān made indefatigable efforts to uplift their community educationally. The first attempt of the Yōgam in this field was to remove the obstacle for admitting Ilavas to government and government aided schools in the State. Later it concentrated its attention on establishing its own educational institutions.

Because of the social injustices accorded to the Ilavas, there was some interest among them in embracing some other religion. An Ilava leader C. Krishnan even advocated that the community as a whole should leave Hinduism and accept Buddhism to get rid of the caste

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1The SNDP Yōgam had its branch office at Chirayinkīl in 1904.
barriers. In this state of tension and uncertainty, Āsān gave the Presidential address of the Yogam in 1923 in which he said:

...The Yogam has now and then considered conversion to another religion to get over the caste restrictions. At the present moment Buddhism is in the forefront. The chief advocate of Buddhism is my personal friend and outstanding leader of the community, C. Krishnan, Editor of Mitavadi. The respect and love we have for him makes us think seriously about it. As far as I am concerned, Buddhism is not a subject which enters my mind newly. For its Dharma and Moksa, I maintain a high regard. But my humble opinion is that one cannot change the mental approach that one has cultivated for years, just as one might change a shirt. That is psychologically untenable. Secondly, about its physical benefits I entertain no faith. Thirdly, a community consisting of several lakhs of people with varying mental predilections cannot be converted into another religion en masse. Such a step will be unwise and will lead to distintegration in the community. And more especially, it is Swami who should advise us on religious matters. When such a person who has considerable experience and knowledge of religious philosophy is alive, it is an insult to him if we go elsewhere for advice...1

Kumāran Āsān explained further the position of the SNDP Yogam through the paper Mitavādi. ¹

The SNDP Yogam is a body functioning under a definite programme to promote the wellbeing of the Thiyya [Ilava] community. One of its main targets is religious reform. The very word 'Sree Narayana Dharma connotes the religion propounded by Sree Narayana Guru. You should be aware that, that religion is nothing but the precept of 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for Mankind'. It is not necessary for me to explain further that the religious reform included in the programme of the SNDP Yogam is based on this ideal of His Holiness. Between this and the Buddhist religion there are some essential variations... Though on a clear analysis Buddhism may not appear contradictory to this, it is obvious that on being presented all of a sudden, the mere fact that it is a different religion may evoke divergent views... In countries like Ceylon where Buddhism is widespread there do exist community distinctions. Buddhism has not placed all of them on the same footing. On the contrary, the Hindu religion has brought several low caste people into the limelight. Acharyas like Sankara, Ramanuja and Sri Krishna Chaitanya have uplifted several people. Such an uplift would be rendered possible depending upon the character of the Acharyas and the environmental conditions...

¹See the booklet on Mathaparivarthanar Rasavadam, (Thonnakkal, Sarada Book Depot, 1933.)
Why do you reject the 'Arya Samaj' which after all is more akin to Hinduism? Why don't you also revere the Dayananda religion which goes so far as to drag the untouchables out of their den and crown them as Brahmins? Why can't the Thiyyas become 'Arya-Brahmins'? Can you name any one Buddhist-Sangha which meets out such wondrous humanitarian treatment to the fellow beings in the name of religion and kindred spirit like the Arya Samaj of this province? Perhaps you do not like to wear the sacred thread and perform 'Homa' as they do. Then why can't you join the Brahmo Samaj? Why were you not attracted by the Brahmo-Samaj which has adopted the modern norms of life, at the same time not sacrificing the high religious principles, which was founded by such eminent man like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and patronised by saints like Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and has in its fold followers who are leading stars in the political attention of some of our own men? ... I may also emphasize that the basis for the religious reform, which I propose is the cardinal principle of 'One Caste, One Religion, One God' enunciated by the Guru...

These words of Kumāran Āśān reveal that discussions on the mass conversion of Ilavas to another religion came up repeatedly in the meetings of SNDP Yōgam. Evidently the leaders listened to such discussions and guided the people to understand that it was reformation of their religion and

not conversion to another religion that was necessary. Evaluating the reform movements such as Brahmo Samāj and Ārya Samāj and learning the contributions of religious leaders such as Śankara, Rāmānuja and Chaitanyā, Kumāran Āśān emphasized that they should stick on to the religious reform initiated by their religious leader, Nārāyaṇa Guru. Thus the decision Ilavas made to remain Hindus was conscious and the discussion was carried out in a democratic manner.

On July 20, 1919 N. Kumāran became the General Secretary of the SNDP Yōgam. On May 13, 1920 the annual meeting of the Yōgam passed the following resolution proposed by T.K. Mādhavan and supported by T.K. Nārāyaṇan.

Resolved to ask the government to grant to all Hindus, irrespective of caste, entry to all public temples.¹

In the following year, the Yōgam resolved:

None of the Ilavas would co-operate in any manner till the right of entry is granted, with those temples where it is not offered now.²

²Ibid., p.203. (Translated).
This resolution proposed by K.P. Kayyālakkal and passed by the Yōgam seriously affected the income of the Dēvasvam or high caste temples. Following this, two Iḷavas made an attempt to enter the temple at Kaṭakkāvūr, north of Murukkumpula. The court punished them for polluting the temple premises.¹

An agitation called the 'Vaikkam Satyāgrahā' was started in 1924 for securing the freedom of movement along the public roads around the Hindu temple at Vaikkam. Though the roads were constructed with public money, the outcastes were not allowed to pass that way. Paradoxically, the roads were open for those untouchable castes who had been converted to Christianity or Islam. T.K. Mādhavan, a brilliant leader of the Yōgam successfully persuaded the Kerala unit of the Indian National Congress to take up this agitation. The agitation started on March 30, 1924. Facing the brutalities of the orthodox Hindus and police repression with exemplary self-control, the agitation lasted for about twenty months. T.K. Mādhavan succeeded in getting the all out support of the Nāir Service Society (NSS) and the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi

¹Ibid., p.212.
for the agitations. Mannatt Padmanābhan, leader of the NSS organized a (savarna jātha) procession of the caste Hindus who supported the agitation. They went to Trivandrum and submitted their demand before the Regent Sētu Lakshmi Bhai. The agitation was called off in 1925. Subsequently the approach roads to all temples in southern Kerala were thrown open to all Hindus in 1928. Eventually, not only the approach roads, but also all the temples of Travancore were thrown open to all Hindus by the historic 'Temple Entry Proclamation' by the Mahārājā on November 12, 1936.

Still another significant achievement of the Yōgam was securing communal representation in the State Legislature. Though a legislative council was created in 1888, not even one Ilava member was elected to the legislative body for a very long time. The SNDP Yōgam asked the government several times for reservation of seats in the Legislature. The franchise was based on property qualifications. The Nāirs continued to have the majority in the Legislature, as they constituted the largest number of land-tax-payers in the State. The leaders of the Ilava, Christian and Muslim communities submitted representations to the government urging the latter to abolish property
qualifications and to introduce adult franchise and the system of communal electorates. They also asked for reservation of seats for particular communities in the legislature. The government turned down their demands. The leaders of the three communities came together to form the 'Joint Political Congress'. The three communities boycotted the elections to the legislature.¹ On August 17, 1936 the government issued a press communique according to which eight seats in the Lower House and two seats in the Upper House were reserved for Ilavas. In the 1937 elections, SNDP Yōgam contested and secured all the seats, and for the first time elected Ilava members entered the Legislative Body.

Another field to which the SNDP Yōgam directed its attention was securing jobs for the Ilavas in the public services. Jobs in government service were not normally open to the Ilavas. Against this injustice the Yōgam raised its voice. Dr. G.D. Noxe was appointed by the government to prepare rules regarding recruitment. He submitted the Public Service Recruitment Rules in March 1935. According to those rules forty percent of the

¹Ibid., pp.291-294.
intermediate section of the public service was set apart for the backward communities (including Îlavas) and all the jobs in the lower divisions of the services were required to be given on a population basis to the various communities concerned.

The SNDP Yôgam was successful in starting several educational institutions.¹ It opened schools at Aruvippuram and Varkala during the first decade of the century. There was an increased interest among the Îlavas to start more educational institutions and to have the SNDP Yôgam run them when R. Śankar was General Secretary in the 1940s. On November 25, 1945, at the annual meeting, the Yôgam decided to start a first grade college at Quilon. The college started functioning from 1948. On August 18, 1952 a trust by name 'Śrī Nārāyaṇa Trust' was formed for the management of the Educational Institutions of the Îlava community.

¹Nārāyaṇa Guru was a school teacher of Îlavas at Anjengo, a place north of Murukkumpula. Kumāran Âśān, on his return from Calcutta in 1900 A.D., started a Sanskrit school at Aruvippuram for the Îlavas and others. Dr. Palpu was also interested in starting educational institutions for the Îlavas.
Table: 2 Gazetted Officers in Government Service as on 1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>No. of Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Brahmans</td>
<td>45,868</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>6,90,495</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>11,72,934</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilavas</td>
<td>6,67,935</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>2,61,367</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the statistics collected in 1985 the Ilavas have 14 colleges in Kerala. The Śrī Nārāyaṇa Trust has 2 High Schools, 1 Training School, 14 Colleges, 1 Training College, 1 Poly Technic, 2 Industrial Training Colleges, 4 College Hostels and 1 Hospital.¹ The educational institutions include the colleges at Chempalānti and Śivagiri started in 1964.

(b) Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Saṁgham

Nārāyaṇa Guru felt the need to establish a Samnyāsi-Saṁgham (an organization of dedicated ascetics)

¹Letter from the SNDP Yōgam Secretary, A.S. Pratap Singh, dated December 7, 1985.
to carry out his religious ideals. In 1928 he started the 'Śrī Nārāyaṇa Saṁgham' at Śivagiri in Varkala. One of his early Saṁnyāsis at Śivagiri belonged to the Nāir caste. (Satyavrta). In his centre at Varkala, Guru also had inmates from the lower castes.¹

A year after the inception of this Saṁgham Guru died, but the Saṁgham continued to propagate the reforms of the Guru. Now there are 90 Saṁnyāsis in the organization, and the Saṁgham owns 15 religious institutions. It has 300 'Guru Dharma Pracharana Sabhas'.² Today the Saṁgham is very active as a religious organization fully dedicated to the ideal of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru.

(c) The Śivagiri Pilgrimage

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru encouraged the Ilavas to conduct an annual pilgrimage to Śivagiri Varkala shortly before his

¹Samuel V.T., One Caste, One Religion, One God, 1977, p.94.

death in 1928.¹ He suggested the dates be December 31 and January 1.² He asked the pilgrims to observe a ten-day austerity based on the five principles: Purity of Body, Word, Mind, Food and Deed and to go to Śivagiri in yellow dress. He further directed the devotees to organize discourses at Śivagiri during these days for the pilgrims to learn more about 'Education, Cleanliness, Piety, Organization, Agriculture, Trade, Handicrafts and Technology.

Every year this pilgrimage attracts people from far and wide.³ The Śāradā Temple and the Nārāyaṇa Guru Samādhi Mandir, provide facilities for religious worship. During the pilgrimage days study classes on the ideals of the Guru are especially arranged at the school called Brahma-Vidyālaya. The pilgrimage includes programmes such

¹Elavumthitta Rāghavan, who attended the first pilgrimage to Śivagiri was present at the pilgrimage convention in 1984, while the field-study was conducted.


³Kerala Kaumudi (Newspaper) December 31, 1984, reported that people were present from Karṇāṭaka and Tamil Nāṭu, the neighbouring states.
as the 'Procession of the Pilgrims' meeting for the
propagation of Guru Dharma, separate meetings for women,
poets and youths; and an Ecumenical Meeting with the
participation of various religious leaders.¹

(d) Śrī Nārāyaṇa Gurukulam

Some of the followers of Nārāyaṇa Guru believed
that the idea of founding Gurukula (boarding school) type
educational institutions in different parts of Kerala was
dear to the Guru. In 1949 Nataraja Guru, the son of Dr.
Palpu and a scholar, founded this movement after the death
of Nārāyaṇa Guru. Its headquarters is in Śrī Nivasapuram,
Varkala, two miles from the Samnyāsa-Sammgham at Śivagiri.
Its primary aim is to educate young children in the
Gurukula tradition and to interpret and propagate the
philosophical teachings of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru.

Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati succeeded Natarāja Guru
and is carrying out the task of interpreting Nārāyaṇa
Guru's teachings through his discourses and writings. He

¹The Kerala Governor, P. Ramachandran inaugurated
the convention on December 30, 1984 at 10 a.m. Bhargavi
Thankappan presided over the meeting for women. Philipose
Mar Theophilus, bishop of St. Thomas Christians, inaugurated
the Ecumenical Meeting.
is also the Director of an institute called the 'East-West University of Brahmavidya' founded at Varkala in the year 1963.\(^1\) The Gurukula has regular religious instruction hours in the morning and evening for the inmates. It also provides training for five years to students of age 10 and above in the fields of printing, short-hand, typing, weaving, carpentry and farming. Children are encouraged to study in the nearby school and college managed by the Ṭlavas.\(^2\) At present the Gurukula has 14 centers in India and 12 in other countries.\(^3\)

(e) Śrī Nārāyaṇa Cultural Mission

In order to propagate the ideals of Nārāyaṇa Guru and to interpret them in modern terms at different parts of the world, an organization by the name Śrī Nārāyaṇa


\(^2\)The 35th Annual Convention of the Gurukula and the 22nd Anniversary of the Brahmavidya University were celebrated at Śrinivāsapuram from December 26, 1984 to January 1, 1985. On New Year's Day (1985), a novice was admitted to the Gurukula and Muni Nārāyaṇa Prasād was given Saṃnyāsa by Nitya Chaitanya Yati. See Plate No.4.

\(^3\)Prospectus, East-West University of Brahmavidya, Varkala: University Publication, 1982, p.56.
Cultural Mission’ was founded at Alwaye in 1975. K.K. Visvanathan is its president and M.K. Sanoo its secretary. Adhering to the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru it aims at propagating the 'One Caste' ideal through community centres at various places and uplifting the down-trodden and the helpless by running social service organizations such as orphanages and destitute homes. It has several branches in Kerala and four outside the State.\(^1\) It runs libraries and schools. It has a quarterly publication by the name ‘Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma’.\(^2\)

5. An Assessment

All the modern socio-religious movements in Kerala had their beginning while the European powers were in the coast. The missionaries introduced English education first among the St. Thomas Christians and later among the underprivileged sections of Hindu society. The new system of education created an awareness among people about their position in society and the need for improvement. The

\(^1\)Outside Kerala it has branches at Madras, Bombay, Bangalore and Ahmedabad. Initial steps have been taken to have centres at more places.

first awakening was among the St. Thomas Christians. The work of the LMS and CMS missionaries among the Hindus motivated the socio-religious movements of the modern era. It evoked in them an awareness of their position in the caste-ridden society and a desire for improvement. The missionaries mingled with the lower castes and propagated the Christian doctrines such as brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God. This gave the natives a new experience and opened new perspectives on social emancipation.¹

The traditional social structure in Kerala granted greater privileges to the higher castes at the expense of the lower ones. Ṛlavas were the first lower caste to fight for privileges. As they became conscious about their rights, they organized themselves under their own caste leaders and sought for their emancipation. They sought ways and means to rise above ignorance and economic backwardness.

¹There was hardly any social movement without a religious aspect nor any religious movement without the social aspect during the 19th century in Kerala. Gladstone, J.W., Protestant Christianity and People's Movements in Kerala 1850-1934, 1984, p.416.
The able leadership of Nārāyaṇa Guru, Dr. Palpu and Kumāran Āsān helped the Iḷavas to improve their condition through their organization, the SNDP Yōgam. The consecration of temples, change in certain religious and social practices along with the religious renewal, improvement in education, opportunities for better employment and encouragement to trade and industry enabled the Iḷavas to struggle for their own betterment. They accepted the teachings of their Guru that Mankind is One and caste divisions are unnecessary. This was by no means a 'break away' from their cultural and traditional 'roots'. It was not a search for a new and different identity but a struggle to find meaning in their own identity as Iḷavas among the Hindus of Southern Kerala. The Iḷava movement expressed their concern for the people of other castes. The reformation among the St. Thomas Christians and the missionary work of the nineteenth century were catalysts that helped the awakening of the Iḷavas. But the reformation remained indigenous and leaders sprang up from within the Iḷava community. The movement among Iḷavas was a reformation within the social structure of the caste. Iḷavas remained as Iḷavas after their awakening but there occurred a major change in their
condition and social status. The movement wiped out the
discriminations and inequalities that prevailed in the
society, and the *savarṇa-avarṇa* distinction became much
less conspicuous.

The religious reformation of Nārāyaṇa Guru differed
from modern religious movements in other parts of India.
In northern India, all the reformers of religion and
prophets of renaissance emanated from the higher castes.
The Brahma Samāj, Ārya Samāj and Prārthana Samāj were all
movements that arose from the upper castes. No elite of
the upper castes in southern Kerala worked to ameliorate
the condition of their lower caste brethren. Nārāyaṇa Guru
came up from an untouchable caste. He never had an English
education. He did not travel to European countries. His
teachings and religious reforms were beneficial not only to
Ilavas but also to other communities. They evoked an
awakening among all communities. The organization of the
SNDP Yōgam (1903) encouraged Ayyan Kāli to form the 'Śādhu
Paripalana Samgham' (1907) for the Harijans and Mannattu
Padmanabhan to organize the 'Nāir Service Society' (1914)
for the Nāirs. Very often these leaders were in sympathy
with each other as was exemplified by the friendship
between Chatāmpī Svāmikal and Nārāyaṇa Guru as well as between Ayyan Kāli and Nārāyaṇa Guru. They thus became aware of the needs of others even though their approaches were different. Ayyan Kāli gave more significance to the social emancipation of the Harijans than to their religious awakening. Chatāmpī Svāmikal took an uncompromising attitude against the Christian missionary movements and the domination of the Brāhmans. Nārāyaṇa Guru stood for the socio-religious emancipation of the Ilavas and adopted a liberal attitude toward other religions. Thus the various caste movements fortified communalism, but honoured the spirit of co-existence.

Nārāyaṇa Guru restated the fundamental principles and concepts of the Hindu religion. He installed a Śivaliṅgam and a mirror in the temples he consecrated in order to show the right of the Ilavas to worship Sanskritic deities as well as modern and popular symbols. He trained Ilavas as priests and appointed them in temples, thereby proclaiming that not only Brāhmans but also Ilavas could minister in temples. There was thus both change as well as continuity in the reformation initiated by Nārāyaṇa Guru.

Dr. Palpu emphasized the freedom of the individual
and struggled to attain the rights of the community by social and political means; Nārāyaṇa Guru and Kumāran Āsān attempted the same through spiritual means such as regeneration of the person, cultivation of new virtues and provision of a helpful environment. The moral responsibility Āsān felt for the unprivileged mass strengthened him to speak for justice in the legislative bodies of the State where he had membership. Together these three (Nārāyaṇa Guru, Dr. Palpu and Kumāran Āsān) attempted the creation of a 'new man' and a 'new society'.

Today, Nārāyaṇa Guru is associated with various other institutions also. Some of them are the Śiva Temple at Aruvippuram, Samādhī Mandir at Śivagiri, Advaita Āśram at Alwaye and Sri Nārāyaṇa Gurukulam at Chempalanti. There are also various associations such as the 'Śri Nārāyaṇa Samgham', the 'Śri Nārāyaṇa Gurukulam' and the 'Śri Nārāyaṇa Cultural Mission' to propagate the ideals of Nārāyaṇa Guru. The annual pilgrimage to Śivagiri and the celebration of 'Guru Jayanti' and 'Guru Samadhi' served as an anchorage to uphold the spirit of the Īḷava movement. A recent development is the deification of Nārāyaṇa Guru by establishing 'Guru sculptures' or shrines at various prominent places in the State and the conduct of regular
'Guru Pūjā' at them. Cassette tapes containing hymns in praise of Nārāyaṇa Guru and Kīrtans (devotional hymns) of his teachings are also popular in the State. Efforts are now in progress to bring out two films depicting the life and work of the Guru. The charisma of Nārāyaṇa Guru continues to bind the Ilavas together, and under this canopy the local SNDP units and the various Ilava associations continue to flourish. A detailed study of the process of change in the life of ordinary Ilavas in a rural area of Kerala will be taken up in the following chapters in order to trace the impact of his work.
V. A PROFILE OF MURUKKUMPULA
A PROFILE OF MURUKKUMPULA

The question of how patterns of continuity and change interact in the cultures of the Ilavas in rural southern Kerala will now be taken up by selecting one village in the area called Murukkumpula. The following section begins the study by presenting a profile of the place.

1. The Place: Murukkumpula

Murukkumpula lies at a distance of 22 kms. north of Trivandrum on the east bank of Kathinamkulam lake which is part of a system of backwaters linked to the Arabian Sea. This place appears to be an extended garden of coconut trees with patches of rice-fields in some low-lying areas. The soil is sandy and is good for coconut plantations. The base economy of this place is dependent on the coconut tree cultivated primarily by the Ilava community, and the fish from the lake and the sea traditionally caught by what is now the Latin Christian community.

Murukkumpula was well-known in the last century for its katavu (Ferry) which was used for trade. (See Plate No.5 and 6). Before railway and road transport became
MAP 3. Travancore: Physical Features, showing 250, 500, 1,000, 2,000, 4,000 and 6,000-foot contours
common in southern Kerala, the major communication and commerce links were through the backwaters. For that purpose Kaṭhinamkulam lake was connected to the neighbouring lakes right up to the Vēmbanāṭ lake in the north.¹ As Murukkumpula was then famous for its coconut and coir industry, keṭṭuvallams laden with coconut produce were always on the move from there to important places like Quilon, Alleppey and Cochin to the north.² It was only in 1870 that a canal by name Cānnānkara Tōṭ was dug so as to connect Trivandrum as well to this lake. Prior to that people from Trivandrum and other interior places used to come to the Murukkumpula katavu in bullock carts (villuvanṭi) and transfer their goods to keṭṭuvallams before proceeding to the north.

Nārāyaṇa Guru (1856-1928) whose birth place was at Chempalanti, a place 16 kms. to the east of Murukkumpula used to travel along this traditional route to places such as Kaikkara and Varkala in the north.³ It was on one of

¹See Maps 2 and 3.

²A small version of dhow (masula boats).

his travels in 1891 that he met his disciple Kumāran Ḍāsiņ (1873-1824) at Kāikkara, a place 24 kms. north of Murrukkumpula. These two most famous reformers of the Īlava community used to travel through Murukkumpula and whenever they came they were attracted by the large concentration of Īlavas in the place. Nārāyaṇa Guru is said to have visited some of the prominent Īlava families of Murukkumpula and maintained friendly relationships with Nāirs, Muslims and Christians there as well. He won sufficient support of the Īlavas of Murukkumpula that in 1922 he was able to install a disc, containing the words 'AUM Satyam, Dharmam, Dayā, Śānti' meaning "Truth, Duty, Compassion, Peace" in one of the temples and this initiated what was considered one of his major efforts at reform. In order to provide a background for understanding the local people's response to Nārāyaṇa Guru's reforms an ethnographic description of Murukkumpula is attempted below.

2. The Religious Communities

Murukkumpula is a multi-religious society with Hindus forming the majority. It has 414 families with a total population of approximately 2570 members. The

1See Table 3 and Diagram 1.
Diagram 1: Percentage of Families in Major Religions

- Hindus: 59.66%
- Muslims: 6.28%
- Christians: 34.06%
Hindus, Christians and the Muslims are found in the ratio of 19:11:2.

Table 3. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OF MURUKKUMPULĀ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES</th>
<th>NUMBER OF FAMILIES INTERVIEWED</th>
<th>NUMBER OF FAMILIES NOT INTERVIEWED</th>
<th>TOTAL FAMILIES</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FAMILIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HINDUS</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>59.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISTIANS</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>34.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSLIMS</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Christians and Muslims, though non-Hindu, are regarded as caste groups by the Hindu community. Hence a preliminary understanding of all the communities is necessary to understand the place of the Ḫlavas in Murukkumpulā.

(a) Christians

The Christians in Kerala are divided into five branches:

(i) The Roman Catholic Church following the three different rites, viz. Syriac, Latin and Malayalam,

(ii) The Orthodox Syrian Church,

(iii) The Church of the East or the Nestorian Church,

(iv) The Marthoma Syrian Church, and
(v) the Anglican Church which is part of the Church of South India.¹

The Latin Catholic Christians which form a section of the Roman Catholic Church make up the entire Christian Community of the ward. They form 34.06 percent of the entire population. They worship at St. Augustine Church which is right on the east bank of Kaṭhinamkulam lake. Even though the Baptism Register kept at this Church has records only from 1934 and the inscription on the walls of the Church reveal that the Church was renovated on January 6, 1934, it is considered an old Church. The older people in the area say that the Church is quite old and that even their parents studied in a school run by this Church in its compound.²

This Latin Christian community is really a branch of the old Mission Centre and the Christian group at Putukkuricy, a strong Latin Christian centre on the seashore directly west of Murukkumpula. Until a priest started staying here in 1970, it was from Putukkuricy that priests used to come to Murukkumpula by canoe to conduct the worship services. Because of the nearness of the sea,


²This school is now managed by the Government in the neighbouring compound.
the main occupation of the non-agricultural people at Putukkuricy and Murukkkumpula had been fishing. Some of the people at Murukkkumpula claim that they originally belonged to the Paratavar community who are a class of people whose occupation is fishing using nets and boats.\textsuperscript{1} Traditionally they were considered a very low caste and even now get grants as the government has included them among the 'scheduled castes'.\textsuperscript{2} The interviews revealed that very few of the Latin Christians are engaged in fishing now. A change in the occupational status of the Latin Christians (four generations G-1, G-2, G-3 and G-4) could be seen from the Table 4. The interview sheets from various age groups are selected for this purpose.

The conversion of the Paratavar community probably took place about the time of the coming of Francis Xavier in the sixteenth century. Out of the 117 Christians interviewed a good number have names such as Pereira, Gomaz, Miranda, Lopez and Francis. These names appeared also at the Church cemetery. This is indicative of the probable connection they had with the Portuguese who came

\textsuperscript{1}They are also called Bharatavar. \textit{Census of India}, IV, 1981, p.5.

\textsuperscript{2}According to the Constitution Order 1950. \textit{Ibid.}
### Table: 4 Occupational History of Christians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper No.</th>
<th>Age of Respondent</th>
<th>Occupation of Grandfather (Husband's)</th>
<th>Occupation of Father (Husband's)</th>
<th>Occupation of Husband G-2</th>
<th>Son G-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Villa Police</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>At Malaysia*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>007</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>Collector of Alleppey</td>
<td>Panchayat Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>School Manager</td>
<td>Medical Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>026</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>At Malaysia*</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>At Singapore*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>At Ceylon*</td>
<td>Army Doctor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Employed in a foreign country.

Legend: G-2 is the respondent.
to Kerala in the sixteenth century and established Mission centres on the coastal areas of southern Kerala.¹

The interviews revealed that some of the Christians were engaged in business near the Kaṭavu indicating that their traditional association with the sea led to their involvement in the backwater boat trade. These Latin Catholics were the first group of people to go out of Murukkumpula in search of better occupations in foreign countries such as Ceylon, Singapore and Malaysia. A good number of the younger members of the community are now employed in the Arabian Gulf. The Christians are now generally wealthy and they hold a respectable position in society. They mingle freely with the Hindus and Muslims and the day to day interaction between them appears cordial.

(b) Muslims.

Muslims constitute only 6.28 percent of the population of Murukkumpula.² Even though they are a small group at Murukkumpula they have a larger concentration in one neighbourhood and are seen as a significant community.

¹Quilon was the centre of activities of Portuguese in southern Kerala. There is a large colony of Latin Catholics at Thankassery, on the sea coast of Quilon.

²The 21 (out of the 26) Muslim families interviewed have a total of 132 persons.
There is a mosque in the area and they go there for prayer regularly. They are Orthodox Sunnis and they recite their creed, observe the five daily prayers, the Ramzan feast, alms to the poor and the pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj). Their children are sent to an educational institution called Madrasa which is attached to the Mosque where they receive religious instruction.

No one in the area was able to tell when the conversion to Islam took place at Murukkumpula. A number of old Mosques are found in the neighbouring areas. Beemapalli is an important Muslim pilgrimage centre located to the south-west of Murukkumpula on the beach.\footnote{Menon, A. Sreedhara., 
Cultural Heritage of Kerala - An Introduction, 1978, p.59.} It is the most important pilgrim centre of the Muslims of southern Kerala and is dedicated to the sacred memory of Beema Beevi, a pious lady who is believed to have come from Mecca and died in the area. Historians contend that it was Umayamma Rāni who checked the spread of Islam in Travancore during her reign which started in 1677. If that is the case perhaps the conversion to Islam in the area took place before the 17th century.

Muslims in this area are either businessmen or labourers. Some are rich and own extensive coconut
gardens. A few run shops and restaurants near the kaṭavu, and a good number are now engaged in the coir business.

(c) Hindus

Most of the major Hindu castes of Kerala are found in Murukkumpūla. Even though some temple legends speak of the presence of Brāhmans, the local people remember only a few Brāhman families who had stayed in the neighbourhood. The other Hindu sub-groups include Nāirs, Īlava, Taṇṭān, Vāṇiyan, Vaṇṇān, Taṭṭān and Pulaya. The number of households in each of these castes and the percentage of their population at Murukkumpūla are shown in Table 5.

(i) Nāirs.

Nāirs had been the chief militia in southern Kerala. They devoted themselves to warfare and provided armies for the king. As a throwback to their warrior role Nāirs of Murukkumpūla and other places in southern Kerala still participate with spears and shields in the Pūjā Eṭuppū (Āyudha-Pūjā) procession of Śrī Padmanābha Swāmi Temple, Trivandrum in October every year. They also play a similar role in the annual Ārāṭṭu celebration in the month of March. Some of the older members in the area recall the regular visits of the king Śrī Chittira Tirunāl Mahārājā to
### Table 5: Population of the Caste Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste Groups</th>
<th>Total Number of Families</th>
<th>Number of Families Interviewed</th>
<th>Total Number of Persons Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage of the total Number of Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BRĀHMAN</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMBALAVĀSI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NĀIR</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>10.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĪLAVA</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>60.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAṬṬĀN</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>17.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VĀṆṆIYAN</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VĀṆṆĀN</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAṬṬĀN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PULAYA</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>247</strong></td>
<td><strong>202</strong></td>
<td><strong>651</strong></td>
<td><strong>606</strong></td>
<td><strong>1257</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: The order of castes given in the table is my own. E. Thurston and the Census of India report these in the alphabetical order.

One Ambalavāsi now present in the area is a temporary resident. Literally the word Ambalavāsi means 'one who lives in a temple'. Customarily they were assigned different services in the temple.
the Śiva Temple at Kaṭhinamkuḷam,¹ a place directly west of Murukkumpuḷa on the west bank of the lake near the sea coast. In those days, while the King travelled through the Kaṭhinamkuḷam lake Nāirs had the duty of showing the light at night from either bank.²

The Nāirs of Murukkumpuḷa were formerly tenants of State lands and from these lands were required to supply paddy for the use of the Padmanabha Swāmi Temple and the Uttupuras.³ The Kalakkūṭṭam and the Chempaḷanti families who were members of the Eṭṭuvīṭṭil Pillamārs and famous at the time of Marttāṇḍa Varma (1729 - 1758) were feudal chiefs and stayed in the neighbourhood of Murukkumpuḷa. Nāirs, because of their economic status and role in warfare exercised dominance over the other castes.

The matriarchal system of family organization was strong among the Nāirs of Murukkumpuḷa. Under this system, the family consisted of all persons who could trace their

¹The Śiva Temple at Kaṭhinamkuḷam was constructed at the time of Vīra Rāma Kerala Varma (1205-1215), the then ruler of Vēṟāṭ. The inscription at the temple shows the date as 381 M.E. (1205 A.D.).

²Such occasions were intimated to the Nair chiefs of the area well in advance. A Nair aged 66 recalled such an instance at the time of the interview.

³King Marttāṇḍa Varma opened dozens of Uttupuras i.e. places for feeding the Brahmans at the State expense. Jeffrey, Robin., The Decline of Nayar Dominance, 1976, p.4.
ancestry on the female side to one woman. With the introduction of the Nāir Bill in 1925, partition of the family property to one's own children became possible.

There are only 20 Nāir families at Murukkumpula forming 10.42 percent of the Hindu population. Though they are few in this place, they are more in number at Vailūr (Ward IV) and Kaṭhinamkulam. The Śiva Temple at Kaṭhinamkulam is a prominent and old Nāir temple, dating back to 1205 A.D., now managed by the Dēvasvam Department of the State Government. The Nāirs have a Sasta Temple and a Durgā Devī Temple at Murukkumpula.

Some of the Nāirs in the area are employed in government offices. It is only recently that a few of them took up employment in the Arabian Gulf countries. In this respect they follow the pattern initiated by the Christians.

(ii) Ilavas.

Ilavas constitute the largest caste community at Murukkumpula. They constitute 34.30 percent of the total population with 142 families.¹ The interviews revealed that the Ilavas of southern Kerala are classified into

¹Among the Hindu Caste groups, they constitute 60.70 percent.
two: the Pandy Ilavas and the Malayalam Ilavas and that the Ilavas of Murukkumpula belong to the former group.\textsuperscript{1} It has also been stated that the Ilavas of Murukkumpula can be categorized as 'Two Channans and Twelve Channans', the latter holding a higher status.\textsuperscript{2} In earlier years, marriages did not take place between members of these two groups. Now members of both these groups are present at Murukkumpula.

Ilavas, were treated as an untouchable caste. They had no access to the temples managed by the Brâhmans and Nâir communities. Old and rich Ilava families such as Pânûr, Erayil and Têngarvilâkam owned their own temples and employed their own priests. Of these, the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara Devî Temple gained prominence among the Ilavas of the locality. There was another Kâli Temple at Murukkumpula once owned by the Pânûr family. In both these temples animal sacrifices were once conducted.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}Paper No.371. This agrees with the classification given by Iyer, L.K. Anantakrishna, The Cochin Tribes and Castes, I, 1909, p.280.

\textsuperscript{2}Paper No.028. Cassette No.9.

\textsuperscript{3}Paper Nos.028 (age 76) and 104 (Age 95). Narayana Guru preached against these practices towards the end of 19th century. Setu Lakshmi Bai (1924-1931) prohibited such practices by law.
**Table: 6 Occupational History of the Ilavas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper No.</th>
<th>Age of the Respondent</th>
<th>Occupation of Grandfather (Husband's)</th>
<th>Occupation of Father (Husband's)</th>
<th>Occupation of Husband G-2</th>
<th>Son G-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>027</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>Toddy shop</td>
<td>Copra Business</td>
<td>At Singapore*</td>
<td>Vet.Dr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>031</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>At Singap*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Āyurvedic Doctor</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Homeo-Doctor</td>
<td>At Gulf*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>017</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Cloth Business</td>
<td>Cloth Business</td>
<td>At Gulf*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Govt. Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>054</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Copra Business</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Govt. Service</td>
<td>(Study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>309</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>Tea shop</td>
<td>(Study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>077</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Mantravādi (Magician)</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Medical Doctor</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**

- G - Stands for Generation
- G-2 is the Respondent
- * Employed in a foreign country
The Ilavas at Murukkumpula had traditionally been farmers and businessmen. Those who did business were confined to the business of kopra (dried coconut), coir and cloth. Change in the occupational status (four generations) could be seen from the table below. The interview sheets from various age groups are selected for this purpose. Among the Ilavas there were some landlords and a few owned toddy shops. The interviews revealed that there were some Sanskrit and Ayurvedic scholars among them.¹ Recently, some of the Ilavas have joined the army, some entered into government service and a few work as drivers.

Presently the Ilavas can be seen as in two classes: The middle and the lower classes. The middle class are economically better and have more landed property than the lower class. Some of them own automobiles and keep domestic servants.² The lower class are mostly labourers and both husband and wife work. If they have

¹Paper No.104 Kṛṣṇan Vaidian was a Sanskrit Scholar of this place.

²17.14 percent of the Ilava families have servants for domestic work.
Table: 7 Names of Ilavas: Generation-wise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper No.</th>
<th>Age of Respondent</th>
<th>Name of the Respondent</th>
<th>Father's Name</th>
<th>Mother's Name</th>
<th>Grandfather's Name</th>
<th>Grandmother's Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>091</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Lakṣmi</td>
<td>Kiṭṭan</td>
<td>Picca</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>371</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Nārāyaṇan</td>
<td>Koccappi</td>
<td>Bhagavati</td>
<td>Kocceṣūrūkkan</td>
<td>Koccepuṇṇu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>099</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Kuṭṭiappi-amma</td>
<td>Māṭan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Kaṟumban</td>
<td>Kāli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>031</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Cellamma</td>
<td>Koccummiṇi</td>
<td>Cinna</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>022</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Cellappan</td>
<td>Govindan</td>
<td>Lākṣmi</td>
<td>Palpan</td>
<td>Kāli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>029</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Pāccan Bābu</td>
<td>Pāccan</td>
<td>Kuṇṇi</td>
<td>Pappan</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>243</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Bhārgavi</td>
<td>Koccappi</td>
<td>Taivalḷi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Appukuṭṭan</td>
<td>Gōvindan</td>
<td>Lākṣmi</td>
<td>Pappan</td>
<td>Koccappi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>045</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Bhāskaran</td>
<td>Rāman</td>
<td>Cempakam</td>
<td>Koccan</td>
<td>Pōti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
small children they are looked after by older children or by grandparents.¹ There is a growing tendency among them to give their children the best education possible.

Before the turn of this century, Ilava men at Murukkumpula had names such as Kïtïn, Koccappi, Koccummuñi, Koccuceçukkan, Kaïramban, Pappan and Koccan and Ilava women such names as Picca, Cinna, Kunï, Taivalli, Koccupenñu and Potti (See the Table 7).² Interviews revealed that after 1900 they started giving Sanskritized names such as Nārāyaṇan, Bhāskaran and Gōvindan for men and Laksmi, Bhārgavi and Bhagavati for women.³

Judging from physical appearance it is not easy to distinguish Ilavas from the Nāirs. Once they could be

¹Among the 125 Ilava families interviewed there are 424 children (221 boys and 203 girls) and 98 dependents (mostly grandparents: 43 men and 55 women).

²Young respondents are not included as almost all have Sanskritic names.

³One respondent said that, while lower caste children were admitted to school, those children who did not have Sanskritized names were given the name Karuñākaran. It was the practice of Nārāyaṇa Guru also to give Sanskritized names to Ilava and other lower caste children. Such names were required for government records, over the names that were popularly used in conversation.
distinguished from other castes by their clothing and the location of their hair lock. Now these practices have been stopped.\(^1\) Untouchability is unknown to the younger generation. They are brought up in an environment of equality, social justice and educational opportunities. They live and move in a world much different from that of their parents.

Ilavas are a dominant caste at Murukkumpula. Numerically they are more in number than the Nairs and the Latin Catholics. Economically they are powerful due to the absence of Syrian Christians and Brāhmans and the relatively small number of Nairs, the three groups that tend to dominate in other regions of Kerala.

(iii) Tanțān

A group below the Ilavas that strictly follows the profession of coconut planter is known by the caste name

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\(^1\)Elderly Ilavas address the upper caste people in respectful terms, a practice which they followed for years. The young Ilavas are against this practice. Instead they assert their equality.
Tantān. They constitute 10.62 percent of the total population at Murukkkumpuḷa.¹ Their occupation is the climbing of coconut trees. Their women are usually engaged in the manufacture of ropes and the plaiting of coconut leaves. Most of them live in small huts with thatched roofs.

The Tantān is a prominent group among the lower castes and is considered next below the Iḷavas. Thurston is of the opinion that they are a group of Iḷavas who have fallen away. "The Tandans are said to have once belonged to the same caste as the Izhuvans, but to have fallen away from that position".² The chief deity of this group is Bhadrakāli, at whose shrines they make offerings. At Murukkkumpuḷa they worship at an unhoused holy place 50 yards away from the old Iraṭṭakulaṅgara Devī Temple. They also worship Maṭan and Maruta.³

¹Among the group, thirty five families were interviewed.

²Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, I, 1909, p.10.

³This is under a tree in the temple precincts. Maruta is said to have control over the spirits of smallpox. Maṭan is considered as an animal deity.
(iv) Vaṇiyan

Vaṇiyans consider themselves Vaiśyas and claim to be above Nāirs in the caste hierarchy.\(^1\) By occupation they were oil-pressers and traders.\(^2\) They pressed the coconut and extracted oil using the traditional oil mill. Once these people were a flourishing group because they were the only people who could press oil seeds for the local community. Now these oil mills are replaced by electrically run mills, leaving the old ones without enough customers and proper income to maintain their business.\(^3\) The 7 Vaṇiyan families at Murukkumpula are now poor and gain a livelihood by working as petty merchants and shop keepers.

(v) Vaṇān

Another group that is associated with the Ilavas in

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\(^1\) The word Vaṇijyam means trade.

\(^2\) Paper No.066. One of them is a coconut merchant at Murukkumpula now.

\(^3\) This change practically stopped a way of life rooted in a caste occupation. The mass produced oil is available now at the local stores.
southern Kerala are the Vaṇṇāns. Though they are regarded as a low, unclean class and are confined to the occupation of washing clothes, they have a significant role in society. It is thought that the clothes washed by them are not only clean but also ritually pure. It was required that ritually pure clothes should be worn on ritual occasions.

The 11 families belonging to this group also worship, like the Taṭṭān, at a specified area in the precincts of the Irattakulāṅgara Devī Temple, just outside its wall. Some of them live now in houses with tile and concrete roofs.

(vi) Taṭṭān

Carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, sculptors and metal workers believe that they have sprung up from Viśvakarma. The Taṭṭān (goldsmiths) make jewellery for the people in the area. There are only three Taṭṭān

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1They are also known by the name Maṇṇān. Thurston E., Caste and Tribes of Southern India, IV, 1909, p.455.

families at Murukkumpula. Two of them still keep up their
traditional occupation while the third one works as a
mechanic. Their women seldom go out for work, but look
after the household. Educationally and economically they
are more backward than the Īlavas. They have no temples of
their own. Kāli or Bhagavati is considered as their
guardian deity.

(vii) Pulayan

The caste that is considered the lowest at
Murukkumpula is the Pulayan. The word 'Pulayan' is said to
be derived from 'pula' meaning pollution.¹ Since they were
labourers attached to the soil, they were denied admission
to the markets and other public places. Until recently,
they had no property of their own. They depended on the
landlords for food and accommodation. The landlord
employed them in his fields to plough the land, sow the
seed, transplant the seedlings, regulate the flow of water
in the paddy fields or to uproot the weeds. When the crops
ripened they had to keep watch at night. At harvest time
they were required to cut the crops, carry them to the

¹Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India,
II, 1909, p.46.
barn, separate the corn from the stalk and winnow it. For all this labour, they were given a certain quantity of paddy as wages. They stayed in the landlord's property in small thatched huts, guarding the property day and night against the encroachment of cattle and the depredation of thieves.

A change in the position of the Pulayans had its beginnings from the time of Ayyan Kāli (1863-1941). The influence of this reformer, who had come to Murukkumpüla made them aware of their rights.1 With the enactment of property laws, they got the right to own property.2 With the formation of trade unions and caste associations, they now have fixed hours of work and better wages. One respondent said that he is working now at the Government Press at Trivandrum. He goes to work from Murukkumpüla by train every day. Now the Pulayans have freedom of movement and their children study in the schools. However, some of

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1Ayyan Kāli had some relatives at Murukkumpüla. Some Pulayans recall his visits to this place.

2Under the Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1963, as amended in 1969, the hutment dwellers or Kutikittappukars in rural areas were given the right to purchase lands from the landlords upto 10 cents. (Menon, A. Sreedhara., A Survey of Kerala History, 1967, p.381). The 'One Lakh Hōuses Scheme', 1972, provided permanent dwellings for several Pulayan families in and around Murukkumpüla.
their dwellings are still found in the low lying areas of Murukkumpula where they once had to stay as labourers in the paddy fields.

Hindus of each caste at Murukkumpula traditionally lived in complete segregation from other castes. The higher castes did not permit the lower castes to approach them for fear of pollution. For instance, the Ilavas were not allowed to enter the houses of Nairs. They were not allowed to take a bath in the pool of the Sastha temple. When Ilavas passed by, lower castes had to get off of the road. The caste practices of untouchability and pollution determined the location of the houses and public institutions at Murukkumpula. A look at the topography and physical layout of the community will make this clear.

3. Topography

In the present administrative system of Kerala, Murukkumpula is known as Ward-I in the Mangalapuram

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1This is a temple managed by Nairs in the past.
NOTIONAL MAP OF PANCHAYATS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS IN TRIVANDRUM DISTRICT

LEGEND
STATE BOUNDARY
DISTRICT BOUNDARY
TALUK BOUNDARY
C.D. BLOCK
PANCHAYAT
DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS
TALUK HEADQUARTERS
CORPORATION AREA
MUNICIPAL AREA

MAP 4 Map of Trivandrum District
Map of Murukkumpula

MAP 5. Reproduced from the map received from the Mangalapuram Panchayat office (August 1985).
Panchayat of Trivandrum District.¹ (See Map 4). On the west of it lies Kaṭhinamkulam Lake which separates Murukkumpula from Kaṭhinamkulam Panchayat. Neighbouring places such as Ward-II, Ward-III, and Ward-IV are locally known by the names Iṭavilākam, Muṇṭakkal and Vailūr respectively - (See Map 5). Murukkumpula (Ward-I) is bound on the south by a creek to the lake, the railway line and the road connecting the ferry to National Highway 47. On the south, the road from the ferry separates it from Ward-II; on the east a high school compound and a paddy field separate it from Ward-III and on the north paddy fields and another creek of the lake from Ward-IV. Ward-II is predominantly Muslims, Ward-IV Nāirs, Ward-III lower castes and Ward-I Īlavas.²

For studying the topography of Murukkumpula more minutely I have divided Ward-I into areas A-1, A-2, A-3, and A-4. (See Map 6). The two major roads in the area,

¹Mangalapuram Panchayat is one among the 1000 Panchayats of Kerala State. The Mangalapuram Panchayat came into being in 1953. All the Panchayats in the State are administered now according to the Kerala Panchayat Act of 1960.

²The Muṇṭakkal Harijan Colony, Khān Colony and the Harijan houses under the 'One Lakh Houses Scheme'(1972) are in this ward.
one from the ferry to Mangalapuram (Highway 47) and the other from Trivandrum to Chirayinkil, which crosses at Panachamukku and the railway line which runs across Murukkumpula form the boundaries to these divisions.

There are two temples traditionally managed by Nairs at Murukkumpula. They are the Šāštā Temple in A-3 and the Durgā Devī Temple in A-4. The Šāštā Temple is an old temple with a serpent kāvu near the creek of the Kathinamkalam lake on the northern boundary. The Durgā Devī Temple lies to the east of it with paddy fields forming its northern boundary.

Three temples belonging to the Ilavas lie within A-1 and A-2. The Šiva Temple is in A-1 near the creek of the lake on the southern side of the Ward with the Railway line forming its eastern boundary. There are paddy fields on the south and west of the temple. The other two temples are in A-2. The Iraṭṭakaḷangara Devī Temple lies near the road connecting the ferry to the Panaccamukku. The other temple which is associated with the Iraṭṭakaḷangara Devī Temple is popularly known in the locality as Era. This is
located northwest of Irattakulangara near the lake. The area west of it is made up of low-lying paddy fields.

The St. Augustine Catholic Church lies on the north of Era. Its cemetery lies on its southern side. The Kathinamkulam Lake forms the western boundary of the Church. There is a public pond lying on the west of the Railway line in A-2. The Muslim mosque in the ward is on the south of the Sasth Temple in A-3.

The residences of the various religious and caste groups form a pattern at Murukkumpula. The Nair families are very few and live around the Sasth Temple and the Durga Devi Temple in A-3 and A-4. The majority of the Christians are near the Catholic Church in A-2 even though a few live in A-3 and A-1. Muslims are concentrated to the south of the road connecting the ferry to the Panaccamukku in A-1. The houses of the Christians and Muslims are mostly near the lake probably indicating their earlier identity as fishing communities. Ilava families, though scattered in all the areas, are concentrated near the Siva Temple and the Irattakulangara Devi Temple in A-1 and A-2. Tanthang and castes below them live in clusters at some
distance from the upper castes concentrated in the low lying areas along the creeks and on the banks of paddy fields in A-1, A-2 and A-4. The Vaññāns have their residences near the public pond in A-2 and near the creek at A-1.

Houses at Murukkumpuḷa are independent homesteads with small and large compounds of coconut trees. The houses of the lower castes generally have mud walls and thatched roofs. The upper castes have larger buildings. Some of the modern buildings belonging to ḍḷavas and Christians have concrete roofs, painted walls and mosaic floors.

There are a few educational institutions at Murukkumpuḷa. Two Nursery schools, Mary Māṭhā and Vidyā Nikētan, are on either side of the road from the junction to Chirayinkil, near Panachamukku in A-3 and A-4. One of them is managed by an ḍḷava family. A Lower Primary School (L.P.S.) managed by the government lies to the east of the Catholic Church in A-2.

There is an english medium primary school, managed by a Christian near the ferry on the roadside at A-2.
The St. Augustine School is the only High School in the Ward. It forms the eastern boundary of the Ward, near the road in A-4. A Tutorial college and two Technical Institutes managed by Ilava teachers function near Panaccamukku in A-3 and A-4.

Though Murukkumpula has no government hospital, there are small private hospitals and dispensaries. Holy Cross Hospital is a mission hospital managed by the Catholic Church.\(^1\) It lies on south of the Muslim Mosque in A-3. Gāyatri Clinic, owned by an Ilava couple is near the Panaccamukku in A-4. There are two homeopathic dispensaries run by the Ilavas, one near the ferry on the side of the road in A-1 and the other south of the Railway Station near the road in A-2. The two 'Day Care Centres', the Vanitā Samājam (Reg. No.46) in A-4 near the Harijan colonies of Ward-III and Indira Mahilā Samājam (Reg. No.251) near the residence of the lower castes (Harijans) in A-1, distribute nutritional food to the poor children in the Ward.\(^2\)

\(^1\) This hospital was started in 1968.

\(^2\) These are government aided voluntary service agencies run by Ilavas at Murukkumpula.
The Veterinary Hospital, the Sub-registrar's office and the village office function in buildings owned by the Ilavas. The Veterinary Hospital is located on the northern side of the Muslim Mosque at A-3. The Sub-registrar's office and the Village office are located on the side of the road from ferry to Panachamukku at A-1. The Post Office is also on the side of this road, west of the Railway Station at A-2.

There are 135 shops and stores at Murukkumpūla concentrated near the Railway Station, the Holy Cross Hospital, Iraṭṭakuḷaṅgara Devī Temple and at Panaccamukku. These include 27 betel, cigarette and soft drink shops, 13 large and small grocery stores, 13 tailor shops, 9 tea and coffee shops and 6 restaurants. Most of the buildings rented out for these shops belong to the Ilavas. There are no large industries or factories in this Ward.

There are several recreational facilities at Murukkumpūla. Cinema houses have been running for the last

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1 The Veterinary Hospital was started in 1984.

2 The Post office has five staff members. The new Post and Telegraph building was opened on January 9, 1984.
thirty years. At present there are two theatres of which one is a modern building built in 1981. Both of these are owned by Īḷava families and are located in A-2, one on the south of the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara Devī Temple and the other on the west of the Railway Station. There are altogether 6 associations and clubs formed since 1970. Two of them, Navaraṅgam Arts Club and Vēlu Tampi Memorial Sports and Arts Club located near the Śāstā Temple are run by Nāirs. The Cultural Organization has its office in a building owned by an Īḷava near the Muslim Mosque at A-3. Īḷavas form the majority of the members of this organization. The Merchants' Association and the Railway Passengers' Association have their offices near the Railway Station. The Recreation Club, north of the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara Devī Temple in A-2 was started in 1980. Murukkumpula has no public library, even though an Īḷava once managed one called the Śrī Narāyaṇa Vilāsam Library for a number of years.¹

¹Paper No.104. This library is no longer functioning properly as the owner is about 95 years old.
VI. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE ĪLAVAS OF MURUKKUMPULA
THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LIFE
OF THE İLAVAS OF MURUKKUMPULA

At the beginning of this century, southern Kerala underwent a series of changes in the social, economic and political spheres. Social reformers like Nārāyaṇa Guru and Kumāran Āṣān attempted to utilize these changes in a way which would ameliorate the social conditions of lower caste people. Changes in the culture of people, however, are determined to a great extent by their own choices, on how they respond to external pressures and to new ideas. İlavaş, who form the most important single community in Murukkumpula, responded both to changes in the world around them and to the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru. The following section looks at this process of change in the educational, occupational, political, economic and social life of the İlavaş of Murukkumpula.

1. Education

Regular education in Kerala before the nineteenth century was meant for the higher castes. The Brahmans were provided with all kinds of teachers who made them proficient in various arts. The Nāirs, who were the militia of Kerala, had their basic education and lessons on warfare and self-defence in special schools called Kalaris.
A few of the Ilavas had their own Kañaris, but most remained illiterate cultivators and labourers. In those days children were sent to one teacher, called an Asán, from whom they would learn the alphabet and counting. Children usually learned by writing with their fore-finger on the fine sand spread on the ground before them.

The Ilavas at Murukkumpula and other places in southern Kerala were a backward class educationally until the beginning of this century. The highest learning that an Ilava could aspire to, till then, was a rudimentary knowledge of the vernacular. For a long time the government schools in the State were closed to them. We saw earlier that Dr. Palpu raised his voice about the educational inabilities of Ilavas through the Ilava Memorial submitted to the king in 1896. In 1905, Nārāyaṇa Guru not only spoke of the value of education but also sent out leaders to instruct Ilavas in the need for and benefits of education. His instructions were as follows:

(a) Explain the benefits of education and the loss caused by its lack and encourage the people to see to it with pride that not a single one of either sex in the Ezhava Community goes without at least primary education.
(b) Enthuse and help people to open schools and libraries wherever necessary.¹

The SNDP Yōgam over the years since has made a constant effort to uplift the Ilava Community educationally. Its first effort in this field was to remove the obstacles for admitting Ilava children to government and government-aided schools in Kerala. Both Dr. Palpu and Kumāran Āśān took a leading part in that effort. This struggle continued for some time. In the meantime Ilava leaders and the SNDP Yōgam concentrated its attention on establishing schools at various centres of southern Kerala. They already had schools at Varkala and Aruvippūram by the beginning of this century. The Ilava Community established its first college at Quilon in 1947. Several educational institutions were developed while R. Šankar was the secretary of the SNDP Yōgam. People at Murukkumpuḷa recall the visits of R. Šankar and the collections he made for establishing educational institutions for the Ilavas at different places in southern Kerala. A college called Śrī Nārāyaṇa College was established at Chempalānti, the birth place of the Guru near Murukkumpuḷa (16 kms. away) in the year 1964.²

²Now the Ilavas have 14 colleges, 1 Training college, 1 Poly-Technic, 13 High schools, 8 Upper Primary schools and 3 Lower Primary Schools in the State. Letter from the General Secretary of the SNDP Yōgam dt. December 7, 1985.
At Murukkumpula, the first school was established under the initiative of the Christian Church.¹ The school building was in the church compound before 1936 and Christians were the first to get educated there. This school also admitted children from other communities, but in those days caste restrictions and pollution practices prevailed in society and the Ilavas did not take an interest in joining this institution. They were more interested in agriculture and business, and parents directed their children into these occupations.²

After 1904 Nārāyaṇa Guru visited Murukkumpula and urged the Ilavas to send their children to the Christian school and they gradually responded. This was possible as the Christians were from the beginning willing to admit children from the Ilava community to the school.³ It was a

¹ No one remembers precisely when this school was started. The records at the school do not have any specific date. It can be assumed from the data gathered that the school was started sometime towards the close of the 19th century.

² The oldest Ilava at Murukkumpula told me that he could learn only to write and read Malayalam, as his father wanted his help in the coconut business. Paper No.104.

³ There was opposition from the Brāhman and Nāir teachers. They demanded that the management of the school be taken up by the government. The communique of the Travancore Government in 1936 said that schools should not be held in places of public worship. The school at Murukkumpula was handed over to the government in 1939.
primary school with classes up to standard IV. Children passing out from this school had to go to distant places to continue their education. As this was difficult in those days, Nārāyaṇa Guru repeatedly asked the local people to start a High school as well at Murukkumpūḷa.

Kumāran Āśān in the 1920s pursued this interest of the Guru and met the local leaders to ascertain the possibility of starting such a school. The local Īlava landlords were not interested as they themselves were not educated and could not see the advantages of school education. It was also a time when even educated Īlavas could not get employment in the State service. However, Kumāran Āśān succeeded in stirring up the interest of M.J. Lopez, a Christian leader, who had returned from Singapore and who had the advantage of education and travel to outside countries. Āśān as a member of the Śrī Mūlam Assembly helped to get permission from the government to start the school. The new school, called St. Augustine

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1It was Nārāyaṇa Guru who sent Kumāran Āśān for studies at Mysore, Madras and Calcutta. Guru said to the Īlavas in 1912: "In our community only a few have higher education... Education leads any community to higher standards and therefore, if we are interested in the welfare of the community, we have to encourage it... The chief language now is English. Therefore our attention has to turn to English". Sanoo, M.K. Narayana Guru, 1978, p.113.
school, was opened in 1926 with facilities to accommodate children from standard V to VIII. This system continued until the school was upgraded into a High School in 1949. Even now St. Augustine School is the only High School in this Ward.

Till 1947, fees had to be given for studying in both government and private schools in southern Kerala. With the Independence of India, fees in the schools were reduced by government grants, and the State Government gradually took more interest in reducing fees and eventually granted free education to all children up to the final grade in school. Now free education is available for all until high school graduation and in addition children of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes get government grants to buy books.\(^2\)

College education became possible for the students at Murukkumpuḷa with the establishment of two colleges, Śrī Nārāyaṇa College at Chempalanti and St. Xavier's College at

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\(^1\)Some people say that the foundation stone of this school was laid by Kumaran Ṭaṭān. Paper No.005.

\(^2\)Iḷavas are considered as a backward community but not as a Scheduled Caste. They do not get government grants for education like the Scheduled Castes of the State.
St. Andrews, both within 16 kms. from Murukkumpula, in 1964. The Śrī Nārāyaṇa College at Chempalanti is owned by the Śrī Nārāyaṇa Trust of the Ilava Community. The State transport services from Murukkumpula to these colleges which began in 1979 enabled a larger number of students to pursue their studies there.

At the time of the fieldwork, a question was asked to find out where the parents of the respondents had their education. The answers received from 99 Ilava respondents reveal that about 8.08 percent had their education with Āśāns in the area; 10.10 percent went to distant places like Trivandrum; 31.31 percent studied at the local school and 50.50 percent did not go to school at all. These figures indicate that around the turn of this century, Ilavas were an educationally backward class. However, some Ilavas who were economically well off, aspiring to come up in society, sent their children to distant places for English education.¹

¹The present pattern of education in Kerala is a course of fifteen years' duration leading to the first degree. It consists of ten years study in schools and five years of study in colleges. See The Manorama Year Book 1985, p.553.
Table: 8 Educational Status of Ilavas vs Christians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Status</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Ilavas</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No schooling</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upto Class V only</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.89</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VI-VIII</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21.13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class IX-X</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39.02</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Training</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Degree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Degrees</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: Vocational Training: TTC, Poly-Tech., Nursing, Certificate etc.
Professional Degrees: B.Ed., BT., BL., MA., Sc., ME., etc.
Table 8 presents the educational status of the Ilavas and Christians at Murukkumpula. The figures given in the Table indicate that while only 2.44 percent of the Christians are illiterate, 7.94 percent of the Ilavas have not gone to school. That the educational standard of the Ilava community is lower than that of the Christians is also evident from the fact that 66.67 percent Ilavas as against 82.11 percent Christians have studied above the primary level (Standard V).

There were several difficulties that in the perception of the Ilavas had hindered them in the field of education at Murukkumpula in the earlier decades of this century. The dominant among them were the following:

(i) The schools had mainly Brahman and Nair teachers and children in the school practised caste restrictions.¹

(ii) Until Independence children of other low castes did not come to the school. Therefore in school the Ilavas felt like the lowest group.²

(iii) In the school Ilavas were not allowed to draw water from the well or drink

¹Narasimha Iyer, Ramakrishna Iyer, Sankara Pillai, Velu Pillai and Nārāyaṇa Pillai, were teachers at this school in the 1920s. Paper Nos. 006, 007, 031, 117, 221 etc.

²Children of higher castes were reluctant to sit with Ilavas. The teachers would not touch them, and threw sticks at them rather than spank them. Paper No.022.
Table: 9  Education by Age of the İlava Respondents in Ward - I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Profess. Degrees</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
<th>Pre-Degree</th>
<th>School Final</th>
<th>Vocat. Train.</th>
<th>Up to Std.VIII</th>
<th>Up to Std. V</th>
<th>Std.IV &amp; below</th>
<th>Not gone to Sch.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 60</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 - 70</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 - 80</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 and above</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from the same utensils as other students.\(^1\)

(iv) Fees had to be paid to the school for education. Some of the Ilavas did not have fees, or did not have anything to eat during 'lunch-break'.

Nārāyaṇa Guru and Kumāran ᴴᵃⁿ raised their voices against this situation. Their advice and personal influence eventually gave rise to some local leadership in Murukkumpūla.\(^2\) These local leaders took the initiative in admitting more children from the lower castes to the school and discouraging the discriminatory practices.\(^3\) These efforts gradually yielded results.

The table clearly shows that those who are below the age of 60 (having been children when the reforms started) have higher educational standards than those who are above that age. Out of 29 persons who are above 60 years of age (4 of these went to school before 1929), 11 persons (37.93 percent) studied up to the Lower Primary; 7 persons (24.14 percent) studied up to the Middle School and only 5 persons (17.24 percent) graduated from school.

\(^1\)Paper Nos. 045, 354. (Cassette No.10)

\(^2\)Paper Nos. 002, 015, 022, 031, 104, 266 etc.

\(^3\)Paper Nos. 005, 026, 045 etc.
After 1930 more schools were opened at different places in southern Kerala under the initiative of the government and religious organizations like the SNDP Yōgam. Students from Murukkumpula started to go to Kaniapuram and Attingal by foot and to Trivandrum by train for higher studies. The table above indicates that out of the 48 persons whose age falls between 40 to 60 years (i.e. those who went to school between 1929 and 1949), 20.83 percent went for higher studies; 47.50 percent graduated; 57.92 percent completed Middle School (grade VIII) and 78.75 percent completed Lower Primary (grade V).

By 1947 people at Murukkumpula had become generally conscious of the benefits of education and a larger number joined schools and colleges. The above table shows that out of the 47 Ilavas whose age falls between 20 and 40 years (i.e. those who went to school between the years 1949 and 1969), 21.28 percent went for higher studies; 53.20 percent graduated; 65.97 percent completed Middle School and 84.99 percent completed Lower Primary.

\[1\] In earlier days a few students had gone to Trivandrum by Kettuvallam for studies.
Table:10 Education According to Age Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Age Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above 60 years Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Primary</td>
<td>37.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School</td>
<td>24.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>17.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Studies</td>
<td>8.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table indicates that as the years passed by, there was a decrease in the number of persons who limited their studies to the Lower Primary classes (up to standard IV). On the other hand there was an increase in the number of persons who graduated from school and went for higher studies. Today 92.06 percent of the Îlavas at Murukkumpula are literate. Of this number, 40.48 percent have graduated from school and 11.91 percent are either college graduates or post-graduates.

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1. The literacy of the people at Murukkumpula now stands at 94 percent. The literacy of Kerala is 70.42 percent where as that of India is only 36.03 percent. Census of India. Paper 3 of 1981, series:10.

2. 7.94 percent Îlavas have post-graduate degrees.
Education led to freer mingling among the younger generations of the various castes than was possible in the previous century. It was difficult to maintain caste regulations in the school, and the students had to rub shoulders both in the classroom and playground. Students behaved more freely and on more equal terms with children of both superior and inferior castes than their parents had. With the growth of education, the differences between the various castes in dress and fashions, in language and pronunciation and in the standard of personal cleanliness, measures by which caste was traditionally recognized, have disappeared.¹

The progress in education of the Ilavas of Murukkumpuḷa was partly due to the opportunities they had at the Christian schools. It may appear that there is an element of Westernization in the educational change. But the total process of change cannot be called Westernization because Westernization as such would not deal with the caste distinctions and prejudices the Ilavas faced in Kerala society. Instead, that part of the change regarding caste structure was set in motion by the religious

¹As English education became popular, the place of Sanskrit as a measure of literacy and educational achievement declined.
awakening initiated by Nārāyaṇa Guru. He came to Murukkumpūla several times around 1904 and exhorted the people to get educated and to get rid of caste. He emphasized the significance of getting enlightened by vidyā (education). Kumāran Āsān who stayed at Thonnakkal (5 kms. east of Murukkumpūla) and visited Murukkumpūla several times and explored all possible avenues for the education of the people. This initiated an awakening among the Īlavas of Murukkumpūla. This awakening met with resistance from Nāirs and Brāhmans and the government took over the administration of the school at Murukkumpūla in 1936. At the same time Kumāran Āsān and other leaders were repeatedly asking the government to admit students from all the lower castes (including girls) in the government schools. In spite of the resistance of the higher castes the Īlavas pursued education, but in seeking an education the Īlavas did not follow either the route of religious conversion or of Sanskritization (assuming the status of higher castes). The speeches of Kumāran Āsān at the Assembly reveal that he demanded the right of education for the Īlavas on the basis of their status as a 'Backward Community', and not on the assumption that they were adopting either western ways or the culture of the higher castes.
The monopoly of education by the higher castes was shattered with the rise in the number of lower caste persons graduating from schools and colleges. Traditionally, the ritual purity of the higher castes and their association with literacy and learning was thought to fit them for a range of administrative and professional occupations. In those days, most of the lower castes, because of their ritual impurity, were considered servants who provided only material support for the rest of the society. Education granted equal opportunities for employment and a new freedom of choice in employment. It also created an awareness and acceptance of the new idea that each person enjoyed his or her own self-acquired status.

Education served as a powerful agent of social change among the Ilavas of Murukkumpula. It opened up greater opportunities for work for the lower caste people and a freer choice of occupations. Social mobility through occupation happened in a remarkable way for the first time.

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1 Mr. Kuñjukṛṣṇan, an Ilava from Murukkumpula, served the State Government as the Public Service Commissioner (P. No. 364) Adv. Rāghavan was another with an early government appointment. (P.No.358, 361). When educated Ilavas were appointed to such responsible administrative posts in the Government Service, men of superior castes had to serve under them and members of the public had to show respect to them inspite of the lowness of their caste-status. Traditional occupations were thus seen to be no longer obligatory. Caste sanctions prescribing or prohibiting occupations do not ofcourse prevail any longer.
2. Occupation

A good number of Ilavas at Murukkumpula, traditionally, were agriculturalists.\(^1\) An equal number were labourers or business men. Though Ilavas are popularly known as toddy-tappers, that was not a traditional occupation of Ilavas at Murukkumpula. (See the following table). Nevertheless those Ilavas who did business were mainly engaged in the preparation and sale of coconut and coir products. Some were also engaged in the cloth business as weaving was done in some places south of Murukkumpula. The labourers were mostly engaged in coconut gardens or in the paddy fields. Nārāyaṇa Guru encouraged the educated Ilavas to innovate in the earning of material wealth and the promotion of industry and other productive business. This he understood to be necessary for the total development of the Ilava community. Inspired by the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru and Kumāran Āśān, the Ilavas at Murukkumpula realised that the traditional occupational pattern and the landed economy were not going to help in their social emancipation.

Before the turn of the century, it was almost impossible for Ilavas to get a government position in

\(^1\)It was a time when population was less and the Marumakkattāyam system of inheritance (Joint-family) prevailed in Travancore.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. Occupations</th>
<th>Occupation of Husband</th>
<th>Occupation of Husband's Father</th>
<th>Occupation of Wife's Father</th>
<th>Occupation of Grand Father Husband's Wife's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculture</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Business</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shops</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Daily wage earnings (kuli)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Medical</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Temple Management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Toddy Shop</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fire works</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Barber shop</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Military</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Driving</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Tailoring</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Government Service</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Clerical work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Teaching</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Employed in other countries</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Others (Bedi making, painting, repair work etc.)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Respondents</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Travancore because of their low caste position. It has already been noted earlier that Dr. Palpu, an Ilava doctor from southern Kerala, was denied employment in Travancore and was forced to go to Mysore to practice medicine. The Malayali Memorial (1891) and the Ilava Memorial (1896) prepared under the initiative of Dr. Palpu pleaded with the king of Travancore to enact laws to provide the natives with a fair quota of government appointments. As the government was slow to enact laws and reserve quotas for the backward communities, the Ilavas generally remained agriculturalists and labourers.¹ A few of the educated among them sought employment in foreign countries such as Ceylon and Malaysia.

The rate of population growth in Kerala has been significantly higher than in other parts of India since 1900.² With the rapid growth of population arose the related problem of unemployment. This has been a growing problem during the last thirty years. Job opportunities increased in the Arabian Gulf countries since the 1960s.

¹There were also some Ayurvedic and Homeopathi doctors from the Ilava Community at that time. (See the table).

Diagram: 2 Place of Employment

Legend

- Arabian Countries
- Malaysia
- Other States in India
- Kerala

İlavas

Nāirs

Christians

Muslims
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
<th>Employed in A. Gulf Countries Percentage</th>
<th>Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Other Places Percentage</th>
<th>Other States in India Percentage</th>
<th>Inside Kerala Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illavas</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>18.64</td>
<td>60.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nairs</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>28.80</td>
<td>20.80</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>39.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18.18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>68.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: 12 Place of Employment of Respondents
and a good number of young people, mostly Christians and Muslims, have availed themselves of this opportunity.

Table 12 indicates that 15.25 percent of the Ilavas are now employed in Arabian Gulf countries; 5.93 percent in other countries; 18.64 percent in other States in India and 60.17 percent inside Kerala.¹ The percentage of Ilavas employed outside Kerala is greater than that of the Nairs, but Christians and Muslims have a larger percentage employed in the Gulf Countries than do the Ilavas.² Nevertheless the figures do suggest that changes are taking place in the traditional occupations of the Ilavas.

As the above details show there has been visible occupational mobility among the Ilavas of Murukkumpula during the past two generations. There was progress in the community. New employment opportunities generated a purpose for the Ilavas to get educated. In the initial stages Ilavas encountered several difficulties in the area of employment. The caste restrictions and practices

¹Among the above mentioned communities (see the Table above) 149 persons are working in Kerala. In this group Ilavas alone form 47.65 percent.

²The Ilavas are kept back on account of two handicaps. The Ilavas do not have the wider contacts that the Christians have, nor the kind of backing and support which the Muslims can expect from their fellow Muslims in the Gulf countries.
initially did not permit them to come out into the public places or work there. From the time of Marttantha Varma there was a tendency to import foreign (non-Kerala) Brāhmans for the administration of various departments in the State Government. Even towards the end of the nineteenth century, educated Iḷavas were not given employment in the State. The case of Dr. Palpu and the submission of The Iḷava Memorial (1896) are evidences of this. Later when the government became willing to hire local people it was the Nāirs (being a higher caste) who got the initial benefits. Added to the traditional caste prejudices was the problem of population increase and the development of an unemployment problem in the state. Iḷavas who were educated, however, exhibited a remarkable spirit of adventure in seeking the available avenues for employment. They broke the traditional practice of remaining in the place of their birth.

Occupational mobility enlarged the world-view of the Iḷavas and made them fit for participation in new fields of activity. It gave them a new sense of selfhood and a new satisfaction in creativity. They travelled outside the traditional territories and came into contact with different cultures. They became more receptive to new
ideas and less automatic in their reactions. The traditional land-economy changed into a money-economy. Those who went abroad brought back to Murukkumpula the money they earned and were then able to maintain a higher level of life than the traditional high caste elite in the area. As a new elite whose power is rooted in achieved status they have brought to the community modern patterns of living from their experiences abroad. This new occupational order has in turn led to further changes in the values, attitudes and religious practices of the whole Ilava community

Religion as interpreted by Nārāyaṇa Guru was not against Ilava enterprise. The occupational mobility of the Ilavas in this situation corresponds with a growing sense of economic progress and development which are characteristics of modernity. These values were not observable in that measure among the Brāhmans and Nāirs of Kerala at that time. The crises the Ilavas faced as an outcaste community and the difficulties they encountered in getting employed in Kerala are what challenged them. They used those challenges as opportunities to strive for

The people working abroad have a larger investment in the banks now. There are two banks operating at Murukkumpula
progress and bring about a total development to their community.

3. Politics

Side by side with the growth of education, political activity has entered the lives of the İlavas at Murukkumpuḷa during the last half century. The teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru and the desire of İlavas to fight for freedom and justice encouraged them to take an active interest in politics. For İlavas this was a means of exercising social freedom and bringing about social and economic progress for their community. The Guru's teaching of 'One caste' affirmed the equality of all men. As an İlava the Guru understood the privileges denied to the lower castes under the traditional hierarchical caste structure. He exhorted the people to find freedom and strength in organization and for that purpose he constituted the SNDP Yōgam in 1903, before the politicization of other Hindu castes.¹ The SNDP organization served as a stepping stone which enabled all the İlavas to participate in politics and in turn opened up for them new opportunities to interact in public.

Kumāran Āśān, the first secretary of the SNDP Yōgam, settled in Tōnnakal, a place 5kms. east of Murukkumpula, in 1919, and had much contact with the people at Murukkumpula. In his speeches and literary works he laid emphasis on social and economic freedom and upheld the importance of individual dignity.¹

Though both Nārāyaṇa Guru and Kumāran Āśān frequently visited the people in Murukkumpula real political activity only gradually picked up momentum in this rural setting. The slow political development in the area was partially due to the economic dominance the Ḩlavas traditionally enjoyed in the place and the considerable freedom they had because of their large numbers.² It is not easy for a tradition bound society to change and innovation is not sought where the felt need is not so acute. Hence the process of political development was gradual.

¹Āśān wrote Duravastha and Candālabhiṣuki while he stayed at Thōnnakkal a place east of Murukkumpula.

²While Kumāran Āśān was speaking at the Śrī Mūlam Popular Assembly in 1913 demanding Government measures to admit Ḩlavas children in all government and government-aided educational institutions, Ḩlavas at Murukkumpula were already enjoying this privilege in the local school managed by the Latin Christians.
With the sudden demise of Kumāran Ḍāśān in 1924 and Nārāyaṇa Guru in 1928 the Īḷavas at Murukkumpula and elsewhere lacked proper leadership. During this period of uncertainty the Īḷavas became slowly conscious that only a co-operative and massive effort could bring the freedom and dignity that they felt they deserved. Increased transportation facilities and a better communication system were making it possible for the people to understand what was going on in other parts of the State and Country. The 1920s was a time when communal interests picked up momentum in Kerala. The SNDP Yōgam became active in pursuing the needs of the Īḷava Community on the State level in the 1920s.¹ People at Murukkumpula organized meetings near the Railway Station and in the premises of the Īḷava temples to support the wider efforts of the SNDP Yōgam. By the time the Joint Political Congress was formed in 1933 to demand proper communal representation at the Assembly, the Īḷavas at Murukkumpula were becoming quite politically conscious and local leadership was appearing.²

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¹It was a time when SNDP Yōgam was demanding educational facilities, job opportunities and more social freedom for its members. For the freedom of movement and equal right for all castes to enter the State temples, satyāgrahās were launched at Vaikkam Temple in 1924 and Guruvayūr Temple in 1931.

²Ēḷavas did not have proper representation at the Śrī Mūlam Assembly reconstituted in 1932.
When the State Congress was formed in 1938, Ílava members from Murukkumpula such as V.G.Das, Kūnjukṛṣṇan and Rāghava Paṇickkar became active members.¹ Murukkumpula served as a meeting place for many of the State Congress leaders.² Accamma Cherian, the twelfth President of the State Congress led a procession from Murukkumpula to Trivandrum demanding the resignation of the Divān C.P. Rāmasvāmy Iyer.³ R. Śankar who was then the SNDP Yōgam secretary (early 1940s) and an active member of the State Congress, came to Murukkumpula and organized the Ílavas by opening a Śākha (unit) of the Yōgam with its office on the premises of the Śiva Temple (Puttenkōvil).⁴

The 1940s saw the emergence of two political parties in Murukkumpula: The Indian National Congress supported largely by the middle class and the Communist Party of India supported by the lower class. The World War brought in scarcity of essential commodities and acute forms of poverty. It was the lower class that suffered the most. In the interviews a number of people recalled an

²People remember the visits of Pattom Tāṇu Pillai, T.M. Varghese and C. Kōśavan. Paper Nos. 062, 074, 368.
³Paper No. 062. Cassette No.16.
⁴Reg. No.673.
incident which took place at this time where some members of the lower class forcefully took away food grains from the house of a wealthy Īlava at Murukkumpūla.¹ The Communist party grew in strength among the lower castes and the low income groups and encouraged them to form trade unions to demand more wages and privileges.² Leaders like Kāṭṭaikōṇam Sridharan and Sadānandan taught study groups at Murukkumpūla and organized the people under the Communist Party.³ They joined with the followers of the Congress Party to demand a 'Responsible Government' in the state, but the Īlava political loyalties continued to be divided along class lines. By the time elected governments came into place active political participation became the means by which all communal groups, including the Īlavas, sought to achieve their communal interests. Political action forced the State Government to recognize the Īlavas as one of the backward communities and give them favourable

¹Paper No.125.

²C.I.T.U. (Centre of Indian Trade Union) and I.N.T.U.C. (Indian National Trade Union Congress) are the two dominant trade unions now at Murukkumpūla.

³Study classes were conducted at nights extending from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Paper Nos.014 & 015.
treatment in matters regarding education and employment.\textsuperscript{1} With the Indian Constitution providing full adult franchise, elected representatives have come to replace the hereditary caste authorities in leadership roles and individuals now take their political freedom for granted and influence caste leaders to seek their interests.

The Ilavas of Murukkumpula are now a politically conscious group. They are literate and read the newspapers daily.\textsuperscript{2} They listen to the radio and some of them watch television and keep themselves informed of the current issues. Those who cannot afford to own radios or televisions can be seen reading the newspapers and discussing the political issues at the local tea shops every morning.\textsuperscript{3}


\textsuperscript{2}Malayāla Manōrama, Māthrubhūmi and Kerala Kaumudi are the newspapers popular at Murukkumpula.

\textsuperscript{3}Tea shops are open as early as 5.30 a.m. and the newspaper agent distributes the paper at 6 a.m. Tea is not usually prepared in the homes of the lower class as they cannot preserve milk overnight.
The 'Congress-I' and the 'Communist Party of India (Marxist)' are the two dominant political parties at Murukkumpula now. The local leaders of these parties are two young members of the Iļava community: Mōhana Chandran representing Congress-I and M.R. Ravi representing CPI(M). Mohana Chandran is a member of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (K.P.C.C.) (Member of the State Congress Committee). He is the son of a wealthy cloth merchant at Murukkumpula, owns a truck and a motorcycle and lives in a modern house near the ferry. M.R. Ravi the Communist leader is the Vice-President of the local Panchayat. He is the son of a lower class Iļava; his wife works in a restaurant run by her father and they live in a low-lying area with the lower class in A-2. He moves around on a bicycle. He has considerable influence on the Panchayat. The present Panchayat President Ummer is also a CPI(M) representative.

The pattern of Iļava involvement in politics at Murukkumpula reveals that they join with the Christians and

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1 The house belongs to his brother who is working at the Gulf. He has membership in many of the local organizations such as the Service Cooperative Society and the Cultural Organization.
the Muslims in nominating candidates for the various elections now. There are three general elections in which people usually participate. Elections to the Panchayat, the State Assembly and the (Lok Sabha) Parliament.

The Panchayat is the lowest level administration encompassing an area covering five villages. Each Panchayat is divided into wards and the people in each ward can elect a representative (ward member) to the Panchayat Council.¹ Murukkumpula is a ward in the Mangalapuram Panchayat which was formed in 1953.

Murukkumpula forms part of the Kallakuttam Assembly Constituency which covers about seven Panchayats. For the Parliamentary election, Murukkumpula forms part of the Chirayinkil constituency which covers an area of about fifty Panchayats.² The representatives elected at the last elections for the Panchayat, State Assembly and Parliament are all Congress-I candidates (a Christian as the ward

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¹The Panchayats are responsible to undertake the work such as construction, repair and maintenance of public roads, drainage, lighting of public roads and places and the like. Minor offences and property disputes in the ward are settled by the ward representative.

²Seven Assembly Constituencies are included here.
representative and Muslims as Assembly and Parliament representatives), showing the dominance of this party at Murukkumpula. Since the İlavas are fairly evenly divided between the Congress–I and CPI(M) parties, they must join with the Latin Christians and Muslims to elect their representatives. In this role the İlavas tend to co-operate with the Christians and Muslims rather than with the Nāir Community.

Political power is a central consideration of the İlavas at Murukkumpula. This they naturally possess because of wider association with political groups and leaders. To cite two instances, the local SNDP Yōgam was able to invite political leaders (who are also İlavas) such as Vakkam Puruṣottaman (now a Member of the Parliament) and M. Kamalam (now a State Minister) to address the gathering at the time of the temple festival in February 1985. Earlier when the new Post Office Building was opened at Murukkumpula in 1984 it was Vayalar Ravi (another State Minister and an İlava) who presided over the function. Now the İlavas at Murukkumpula have two young political leaders

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1Latin Christians generally support the Congress–I. If there is a Muslim candidate, Muslims generally vote for him.
who are influential in their respective parties. Their leadership enables the community to have a sense of political dominance over the other castes and religious communities at Murukkumpūla.

Political dominance can be maintained only when the leaders are interested in the development of the entire community and people are given a chance for participation. The Cultural Organization formed at Murukkumpūla on March 15, 1975 is an example of an effort to sustain such participation. It has an advisory committee and its membership indicates that it consists of Ilavas and supporters of the Congress Party. The Cultural Organization consists of young members of the area and enables them to utilize their abundant youthful energy and dynamism for community development. Their activities consist of social, economic, recreational and cultural

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1. Mōhana Chandran represents Congress-I and M.R. Ravi represents CPI(M).

2. Once Nārāyaṇa Guru said: Each village should have its own cultural societies and libraries and the community can derive much benefit from them in matters of education. Each member of the community should do his bit in strengthening these institutions. Sanoo, M.K., Narayana Guru, 1978, p.114. See also Annual Report, Cultural Organization, Murukkumpūla: 1984, p.1.

3. The members of the Advisory Committee are: M/s Walter D. Paul (ward Member), C. Mōhana Chandran (Congress-I leader), Nātārājan, Gōvardhanan and Šrikumār. (Annual Report of the Cultural Organization 1984).
programmes guided by an Advisory Committee.

One of the programmes they have taken up was to seek an increase in the transportation facilities of Murukkumpu Ja. For this, they sought the help of the Panchayat Member and the State Assembly representative and submitted memorandums and petitions to the ministers and government officials. As there was considerable delay in the procedure of the State Transport Corporation, the Cultural Organization conducted satyagraha and public meetings in front of the Bus Depot at Attìngal.¹ They succeeded in their attempt and since 1979 MurukkumpuJa has had increased transportation facilities.² Other achievements of the Cultural Organization include opening of the Village Office on February 19, 1979, the Sub-registrar's Office on May 21, 1982 and a Veterinary Hospital on July 10, 1984.³ These public institutions have

¹N.M. Hassan (M.L.A.) spoke at this meeting.
²There are State Transport buses now from ferry to Nedumaṅgāṭ and Trivandrum via Chempalanti. In addition buses from Chirayinkil pass through MurukkumpuJa to places such as Attìngal, St. Andrews, Kaḻakūṭtam and Trivandrum. Some fast moving trains also stop at MurukkumpuJa.
³Land transactions are possible only with the help of these offices. The annual report of the Veterinary Hospital mentions that 40 cows and 160 goats have been distributed to the people under the Integrated Rural Development Programme of the government. There are also two Poultry farms at MurukkumpuJa.
not only added more facilities to Murukkumpula but also helped the local people to get more employment. The stadium under construction near the St. Augustine Church is now giving employment to several low-income groups in the Ward.

As part of its programme the Cultural Organization arranged a devotional session at Murukkumpula on December 29, 1983 in which Guru Nitya Chaitanya Yati, the Āchārya of the Śrī Nārāyaṇa Gurukulam spoke on Guru Deva Darśanaṅgaḷ (Divine Visions of Guru). This was an occasion for the Ilavas to recall the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru. The Cultural Organization also arranges seminars and study-classes to help the coconut planters of Murukkumpula. They are now pursuing the possibility of starting a public library towards which they have already bought land near the Railway Station.

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1 This stadium is constructed under the National Rural Employment Programme of the government (NREP-1980) which offers job opportunities to the rural poor and seeks to develop and strengthen the rural infra structure. Manorama Year Book, 1985, p.504.


4 They raised sufficient funds from the Public to buy the land. They are now attempting to construct the building there. Kerala Kaumudi. September 20, 1984.
Thus political participation has on the one hand given Ilavas freedom from the traditional hierarchical caste structure where an individual's role was solely determined by his birth in a particular caste. The multi-party democratic system of modern India gives every citizen equality before law and equal opportunity to occupy the highest political position in the nation. Now the individual has more freedom and his social or economic status stands as no barrier to his rights and privileges as a citizen.

Ilavas have on the other hand also acquired a sense of communal identity in this process of change from traditional caste subjugation to modern political dominance. With their political power at Murukkumpula, Ilavas promote a co-operative way of life along with the Latin Christians and Muslims. This is beneficial to all religious communities, but the Ilavas have the dominant voice because of their number and local leadership.

Political participation is open for all, but it has been mainly Ilavas and Nairs who have found meaning in actively participating in Kerala politics. Nairs used political means to demand their rightful share in the administration of the State. Ilavas developed this same
goal, but they also found political involvement a means to exercise their freedom and reduce caste distinctions. Traditionally Īlavas had no political voice. It was some elite members such as Dr. Palpu and Kumāran Āśān who raised their voice against the traditional social structure. In the beginning the Īlavas had to depend on the Nāirs as was the case when the Īlavas joined the Nāirs in submitting the Malayāḷi Memorial. Realizing the need for independent action Dr. Palpu tried to mobilize the Īlavas in submitting the Īlava Memorial. He was partially successful, but a more active participation of the Īlavas of southern Kerala in organizing themselves as a religious and political pressure group took place only in 1903 under the initiative of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Guru.

The Guru had no active political involvement but he did not discourage Kumāran Āśān and Dr. Palpu from adopting political means to demand the rights of the Īlavas. It was during his life time that the Īlavas started state-wide agitations to remove untouchability and demand their right to enter all public temples. The Guru repeatedly told the Īlavas to find strength in organization.

It was at Aruvippuram (1888) that the Īlavas first found unity in organization. There, after the consecration
of the temple, the Guru organized them into the SNDP Yōgam in 1903. The initiative for organization and political participation thus came in the name of religion. The teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru emphasized the freedom and responsibility of the individual to liberate oneself from the clutches of samsāra and find fulfilment of his personality (mokṣa) in such a liberation. Kumāran Āśān constantly spoke in the Assembly about the dharma (responsibility) of the state in showing justice to all religious communities. In their teachings political involvement was considered not a hinderance to religious growth, but a form of spiritual exercise.

It is significant that in a place like Murukkumpula the SNDP Yōgam has its office in the temple compound, and it is the same committee that discusses the religious (temple matters) and political matters. Īḷavas at Murukkampula do not separate politics and religion.

4. Economy

Īḷavas at Murukkumpula and elsewhere were once backward and many of them worked as labourers. Those who worked as labourers depended on the Nāirs, who were mostly landlords, for their regular occupation and wages. Īḷavas
were not united and there was little interest in progress among them. Nārāyaṇa Guru was interested in the eradication of the economic backwardness of the Ilavas. In the early decades of this century, he told the people that industrialization of traditional industries like coir could be a means to achieve economic prosperity.¹

The Guru alerted the people to the fact that other countries were given the raw products of Kerala like copra (dried coconut) and coconut husk at a cheap price and in turn the people of Kerala paid a high price for the consumer goods (finished products) they manufactured out of such raw products. This happened because the people did not know the manufacturing process and were quite ignorant of the advantage of indulging in trades and industry. So the Guru said that the only way to make a flourishing economy based on such products was to mechanize after getting the technical knowhow from other countries. He also sent out able speakers with the following instruction:

(a) Speak about thrift and the development of agriculture, trade and handicrafts in the best possible way. Instill enthusiasm in the community so that everyone will feel it an unsocial act to lead an idle life.

(b) Induce people to establish industrial factories wherever required and to study and popularize industries in a scientific way.¹

To make these ideas more effective, Nārāyaṇa Guru encouraged the people to assemble at a common place once a month to discuss their problems and take relevant action.²

The teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru were directly relevant to the Īlavas of Murukkumpūḷa as a good number of them were traditionally agriculturalists and businessmen. The land owners of Murukkumpūḷa traditionally had not only coconut groves but also paddy fields.³ These fields are found on the bank of the lake and either side of the creeks. The cultivation depends on the monsoon that comes in June-August, as the plants are otherwise scorched by the sun.⁴ The soil at Murukkumpūḷa is not good for rice and

¹Ibid., pp.97-98.
²The object of organizing the SNDP Yōgam was to promote and encourage not only religious and secular education but also good industrial habits among the Īlava community.
³Rice is the staple food of the people of Kerala.
⁴The average annual rainfall is 1803 mm. The atmosphere is humid throughout the year. The temperature ranges between 30 C (April-May) and 22.5C (December-January). Manorama Year Book 1985, p.392. There was a heavy drought in 1982 which lingered for most part of 1983.
therefore the yield from paddy fields is poor. Failure of a crop affects the economy of both the land-owner and the labour dramatically, and this insecurity has led the people to more and more discontinue paddy cultivation.

While paddy cultivation is rather unprofitable, the market for coconut products is on the increase. People at Murukkumpula are raising the low-lying lands, where rice was once grown, in order to plant coconut trees. The soil at Murukkumpula is fertile for coconuts. Out of the 340 persons interviewed only 49 people (14.41 percent) possess paddy fields now. Statistics show that out of the 128 Ilavas only 27 families (21.09 percent) maintain paddy fields. ¹ This process of conversion from paddy fields into coconut gardens can be especially seen now in the coastal areas of Murukkumpula.

A major industry now at Murukkumpula that depends upon the coconut plantations is the coir industry. It provides employment to a good number of people. The thick

¹It is even lower in the case of Christians. Among them, out of the 126 respondents only 15 families (11.90 percent) have paddy fields now.
fibrous coconut husk is the raw material and the different process in the industry are

(i) Soaking the raw coconut husks in retting pits in the backwater marshes.

(ii) Beating the fibre out of the retted husks.

(iii) Spinning the fibre into yarn.

(iv) Bundling the ropes for transportation.

The transportation of husks from the collection spots to the retting field, preparing the pits and filling and covering them with plaited coconut leaves and weighing them down with mud are all done by men.\(^1\) It is the women workers who do the job of beating out the fibre from retted husks. They do so out on the banks of the lake on heavy wooden planks with sticks of coconut wood. The extracted fibre is dried and used for spinning. The actual spinning is done in thatched sheds, mostly by women and children. The younger members turn the wheel to which the fibre is attached. Then women, each with a bundle of fibre under their arm, walk backward spinning out the yarn as they go

\(^1\)The retting of the husks of the coconut is possible in the brackish water of Kaṭhinamkulam lake. The husks are covered with mud under the water and left there for about eight months. 1000 raw coconut husks costs Rs.400.00 whereas 1000 retted husks costs Rs.525.00.
(See Plate No. 7). The men then take up the task of bundling the ropes for transportation to the factories at Alleppey.¹

Murukkumpula has had several small proprietors of the coir industry where investments ranged from Rs.1,000/- to Rs.15,000/-.² As the export trade in coir products grew and foreign firms got control of the wholesale prices, the small proprietors were faced with many uncertainties. Price fluctuations caused havoc to them. Further, only those who had a large volume of business could provide work for their labourers throughout the year. This led to the formation of a Coir Workers' Co-operative Society (Ltd. No.3063) at Murukkumpula on July 3, 1950. This Co-operative Society has liberated the people from the clutches of money lenders and promoted the habit of thrift among the rural populace.³

The annual report of the society for the year 1983-84 says that it holds a capital of Rs.3,38,961.00

¹The coir is transformed into mats at the factories.
²There are some businessmen at Murukkumpula with larger investments.
with 930 shareholders. During the report year, the society made a net profit of Rs.10,056.23 after increasing the wages of the labourers by 15 percent and giving them seven days annual leave with pay and 15 percent bonus. As a result the Coir Board of the State Government has recognized this as an ideal project in the District and sanctioned Rs.15,330.00 as subsidy and Rs.30,660.00 as loan for improving the industry. Now the coir industry at Murukkumpula thrives under the Co-operative Society.

As a result of the development of the coir industry, people have become more interested in coconut plantations. Traditionally, cowdung along with kitchen ash and silt from the backwaters given every year, before the monsoon in June-August formed the manure for the coconut trees. With the discontinuation of the paddy cultivation, the rearing of cattle became difficult and the cattle manure used for coconuts became insufficient. Along with

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1In this, government has a share of Rs.1,54,800.00. The society took 893996 coconut husks during the year for production and produced 768 quintal of coir, giving job for the labourers for maximum days compared to other co-operative societies in Trivandrum District. (One quintal is equal to 1000 kilograms). A share holder deposits Rs.10/- only to the capital fund. The society has a seven member managing committee.

2Society gave Rs.56,880/- for the raw husks and Rs.320,925.60 for production expense.
this, the periodical droughts reduced the coconut yield. This affected the coir industry also. This situation gave rise to the formation of another facility known as the Service Co-operative Society (Reg.No.T 292) in 1966.¹

This multi-purpose co-operative society under the care of a governing board is a new feature in this ward. The membership fee of this service society is Rs.0.50 and the share value is Re.1.00. The Kerala Government is the biggest shareholder with an investment of Rs.50,000.00. According to the statistics, this society has 2100 shareholders now.

The Service Society renders invaluable service to the peasants by advancing agricultural loans against the surety of their agricultural produce. A few people have made use of this provision and have installed pumps to water the coconut trees throughout the year. The society also sells fertilizers to the farmers at controlled rates.² Interviews at Murukkumpula revealed that 59 out of

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¹This society has a governing board. While the interviews were conducted in November 1984, K. Sadāśivan (an Ḭḷava) was its president. K. Raviṇḍran (an Ḭḷava) was its former president.

²Planters can also buy large quantities of fertilizers on credit.
the 102 respondents (57.84 percent) are now buying fertilizers regularly from the Co-operative Society. The following table presents the change.

Table:13 Use of Fertilizers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1965</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-1970</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-1975</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-1980</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-1984</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This Service Co-operative Society is an organization of the people for mutual help and co-operation to meet their common economic requirements. According to the report given by its secretary, 800 persons were given loans from the Service Society for self-employment schemes during the year 1984. Since March 1985, this Society also provides banking facilities.
The co-operative movement in both the Coir Society and the Service Society, has opened an avenue for all income groups, irrespective of their caste or religious background, to seek employment. Any person can become a share holder by depositing Rs.10.00 in the capital fund. Such share holders own the industry, they meet periodically to make decisions and share the profit equally.

This endeavour not only stops the economic exploitation of the weaker section but also removes the gulf between the employer and the employee. A sense of equality prevails in the community and equal opportunities are provided by the society. The shareholders have the freedom to speak as they constitute the society and feel responsible as they own the business. As Nārāyaṇa Guru desired, it opens room for the participation of all people in efforts to improve their standard of living with as much reliance as possible on their own initiative. Economic progress in the life of the Īlavas at Murukkumpula is now quite notable. This process of change has not reduced the importance of the individual. Instead he is benefitted. In this progressive way of life, co-operation has promoted self-reliance and social cohesion. It has taught them the value of 'profit-sharing' and building up a 'new society' based on the ideals of equality, freedom and co-operation.
Liberation from the 'given' nature of traditional caste life to the freedom of choice in the new way of life is a sign of modernity and involves the shouldering of responsibility by the people. Nārāyaṇa Guru was interested not only in the spiritual liberation of man but also in the total development of his personality. This included a concern with economic progress and the development of the religious values included in that sense of progress. According to him Mokṣa includes the well-being of the ātman in his personal, corporate and cosmological levels. This is the modern sense of religiosity one finds in the Ilava awakening. The Ilavas at Murukkumpula feel they experience the 'One Caste Ideal' of Nārāyaṇa Guru in the Co-operative way of life they have developed.

As seen in the earlier section, the Ilavas are interested in the socio-economic development of Murukkumpula. They have found meaning not only in co-operating with other religious communities but also in working for the welfare of all the people of the Ward. The attempt to have a Registrar's office, Post and Telecommunication Office, Stadium and the like are to be seen in this context. (These public institutions not only serve Murukkumpula but also the neighbouring wards.).
This process of change is not Sanskritization which is an effort to rise up in the traditional hierarchy. The Co-operative Movement is an effort for equal rights and it cuts away the hierarchical stratification of society. Neither is the change Westernization because the change is based on indigenous leadership and local machinery. Recognition of the principle of equality, the development of indigenous leadership and the resultant new value system are characteristics of modernity.

5. New Social Order

Social changes were an inevitable outcome of the educational, occupational, political and economic changes which have been taking place since 1900 at Murukkumpula. Some of these changes have already been noted in the sections above. Further examples can be seen in the distribution of land, nature of the construction of houses, change in business activities and in inter-personal relationships.

Socio-economic institutions such as the janmi (land holding) and taravāṭ (joint family) along with the hierarchical ordering of caste groups prevailed at Murukkumpula till the close of the nineteenth century.
Traditionally most of the land at Murukkumpula was in the hands of a few landlords called Janmis. They owned the lands and permitted tenants (kuṭiyans) a limited occupancy right for cultivation. It was in the interest of the tenant to keep the janmi friendly by annual gifts, so that the lease might be renewed periodically. The landlord enjoyed not merely the power to evict the tenants from the land at his will but even the power of life and death over them. Changes came with the janmi-kuṭiyan (landlord-tenant) tenancy legislation in Travancore in 1932 (after the İlava Bill in 1925) which conferred full proprietary rights on the kuṭiyans subject to payment of janmikaram. After independence (1947) there were a series of land reforms in Kerala aimed at further redistribution of land. The Kerala Agrarian Relations Act (1960) and the Kerala Land Reforms Act (1963-1969) restricted the landholdings per family and required government distribution of surplus land to the landless. As a result several hutment dwellers (kuṭikıtappukār) came to own land and feudal serfdom came to an end.

1 Menon, A. Sreedhara., Social and Cultural History of Kerala, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, 1979, p.78.

2 Karam = tax.
The joint-family was a distinctive social feature that prevailed until recent times under the marumakkattāyam system in southern Kerala. According to this system, inheritance of the property and succession in the family was possible only through the sister's children in the female line. ¹ The oldest female, called Ammāyi, that is the Kāraṇavaṇ's wife, had great influence in the taravāt (joint-family). The junior members had no legal claim to family property and as modern circumstances developed they started revolting against the powers of Ammāyi and Kāraṇavaṇ. Nārāyaṇa Guru advocated the individual partition of property as early as 1904. Change to this system of inheritance became possible for the first time through the Īlava Bill of 1925. It was the result of a demand made by the Īlavas themselves in the Śrī Mūlam Assembly. The Hindu Succession Act passed by the Indian Parliament after Independence and brought into force in 1956 further provided equal rights for man and woman to inherit property. ²

¹Ibid., p.87.
Table 14: Land Ownership of the Religious Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>Iḷavas</th>
<th>Nāirs</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Respondents</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ownership of Land</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 cents</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5 cents</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10 cents</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>9.91</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20 cents</td>
<td>16.96</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>9.91</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 50 cents</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>28.83</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 - 1 Acre</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td>16.21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 Acres</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>15.32</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 3 Acres</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 4 Acres</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 and above</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a densely populated state like Kerala, land is held to be precious. The following table shows the pattern of land ownership of the various religious communities at Murukkumpula. As the chart shows many

---

1Density of population in Kerala is 654 persons per sq.km. Census of India 1981, Series 10, Kerala: 1981, p.1
Ilavas and Christians now possess land with more than 4 acres per individual. Traditionally landholding was the prerogative of the upper classes such as the Nairs. Now the Ilavas have more land than the Nairs at Murukkumpula.

With the decline of the joint-family system, changes have also been taking place in the structure of the houses at Murukkumpula. The houses at Murukkumpula are detached homesteads located in compounds of coconut trees.

The following table shows the types of houses the different religious communities have at Murukkumpula. Before the turn of the century permission was needed and a tax had to be paid for roofing the houses with tiles. Therefore the 'type of roof' is a direct indication of the economic position and the change in the life of the people. Construction of houses with concrete roofs is modern and costly and people with such houses assume a still higher social status. Time is valuable in modern life. Though coconut leaves are plentiful, thatching of the roofs with leaves is avoided as it involves time and man-power. Therefore, as the table shows the first change came with tiled roofs in the 1930s and later with concrete roofs (following 1960).
Table 15: 'THE TYPE OF ROOF' OF THE HOUSE§ IN WARD-I: COMMUNITY WISE PERCENTAGE FROM RESPONDENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
<th>Concrete Roof</th>
<th>Tiled Roof</th>
<th>Thatched Roof</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. Respondents</td>
<td>Percentage of Respondents</td>
<td>No. Respondents</td>
<td>Percentage of Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. HINDUS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brāhman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambalavasi</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vānika</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāir</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>22.40</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilava</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taṉḍān</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>97.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taṭṭān</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaṉṇān</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulaya</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. CHRISTIANS</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>39.32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. MUSLIMS</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.64</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* He is a Bank Manager staying in a rented building with concrete roof.
+ Percentage in tables do not necessarily add to totals, because of rounding.
The table indicates that, even though only 15 percent of the Nāirs have buildings with concrete roofs, 55 percent of them have buildings with tiled roof. This is an indication that Nāirs were prosperous before people from Murukkumpūla started working outside the country or between 1930 and 1960. Historical records also show that at the turn of the century, Nāirs had better chances of getting employed in the government offices of the State, while Īlavas were kept away as an untouchable caste. The status Nāirs traditionally had in the area is evident from the fact that they have the least percentage of thatched houses (only 30 percent) now in the ward. Although 47.2 percent of the Īlavas still live in thatched houses, that they have 30.4 percent of the houses with tiled roofs and 22.4 percent with concrete roofs are signs of the steady progress Īlavas are making in the society.

Statistics show that out of the 28 houses of Īlavas with concrete roofs, 6 houses were built during the period 1965-1975, 10 houses between 1976 to 1980 and 12 houses from 1981 to 1985. This pattern is indicative of their
Diagram: 3

Construction of Houses in Decades

Number of Houses

Years in Decades

1910 '20 '30 '40 '50 '60 '70 '80
progress. Following is a table showing the year of construction of the houses of İlavalas at Murukkumpula. It marks an increase in the percentage of house construction during the period 1931-1940. This was the time when landed property was divided according to the new system of inheritance. During this period the joint-family (taravaṭ) declined and the nuclear family rose up.

Table 16: Year of Construction of the Houses of İlavalas in Ward-I: Classification by Decades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Construction</th>
<th>Total No. of Houses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After 1980</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 - 1980</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961 - 1970</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951 - 1960</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941 - 1950</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931 - 1940</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921 - 1930</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920 and before</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table also shows a decline in the construction of houses in the 1940s. This was due to the financial strain the people had during World War. But as the people had relief from this strain in the 1950s they again constructed more houses. 46.67 percent of the Ilava houses were built after 1970. This is a period when more money became available to people through employment in the Gulf countries. It is significant to note that 21.91 percent of the Ilavas built new houses within a span of 4 years following 1980. This indicates their marked progress in recent years.

Other changes have also been taking place to the general setting of Murukkumpuļa. At the dawn of this century, this place had only a narrow road connecting the ferry to Netumaṅgāt and Trivandrum. The situation changed in a major way with the coming of the Railway line with a station at Murukkumpuļa in 1918.\(^1\) Transportation again became easier with the later introduction of the National Highway and other State Transport routes. The first bus that linked Murukkumpuļa to Netumaṅgāt was a private bus owned by an Ilava of the locality around 1940.\(^2\) The State

1The Metergage became Broadgage in September 1976.
2P.No.219. It was a 22 seater bus and made 3 trips a day.
Transport started running though the ward in 1979. Now the majority of the people depend on the public transportation systems even though a few people have their own automobiles.¹

The decline in the significance of kaṭavu (the ferry) was another change that took place at Murukkumpuḷa. As mentioned earlier, kaṭavu was once a busy trade centre with bullock carts and keṭṭuvallams coming and going frequently. Apart from the consumer goods that were brought by keṭṭuvallams, tapioca, pepper and other spices were brought from hilly areas by bullock-cart. The place was full of business and several shops thrived on either side of the road from the ferry. But as the inland transportation systems like the railway became faster and easier, business activity shifted from kaṭavu to the area near the railway station.² Recently a large number of shops have been built in the area that lies between the railway station and the Panachamukku.

¹Out of the 340 families interviewed, 26 families are found to have their own automobiles and 40 have bicycles.

²As the business activities declined at the ferry, many shops there were closed down.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shops</th>
<th>Total No. of shops</th>
<th>Ḥlavā</th>
<th>Nāir</th>
<th>Muslim</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tea &amp; Coffee shops</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable &amp; Fruit stall</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloths Store</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel/Restaurent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoring</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betel/Cigarette &amp; soft drinks</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddy shop</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber shop</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch/Electronic Repair</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware store</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stationary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underwriters</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other kinds</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In a changing place like Murukkumpula one observes new patterns of social relationship being woven out of old strands. The great social distance, physical and psychological that kept apart people of the different castes has been reduced almost to zero. Now no member of a Nāir caste orders one of a lower caste to go off the road or footpath in order not to be polluted by the latter. If once a Nāir expected an Īlava to address him as Tampurān (your Lordship)\(^1\) and show him respect and obedience by removing the upper clothes, bending his body a little and covering his mouth with his hand, now such practices are unknown to the younger generation and even the older generation hesitates to practice them in the changed situation.\(^2\) For fear of pollution, once Īlavas were not allowed to enter restaurants run by Nāirs.\(^3\) Now they own restaurants, enter the houses of Nāirs\(^4\) and dine together with higher castes.\(^5\) A few decades back Īlavas were not

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\(^1\) Paper Numbers 023, 191.


\(^3\) Paper Numbers 105, 130.

\(^4\) For example, teachers of the same school mingle with one another. While a Nāir teacher was interviewed, (Paper No.009) his colleagues including Īlava Teachers, visited him and they all had tea together.

\(^5\) At Onam festival in August-September, friends, irrespective of their background, visit each others' house. For occasions like weddings, all friends are invited for either lunch or tea.
permitted to enter within a native court of justice, but now they have advocates among them. They were, of course, jubilant when Ilava leaders, C. Kesavan and R. Sankar, became Chief-ministers of the State.

Ilava men and women were not allowed the use of upper clothes in the early decades of the 19th century. Now the common male dress is the shirt and the munțu. The older women wear white clothes and while going out, a longer cloth of finer texture called neriatu is worn over the blouse. Pants and shirt are the common dress of the professional class now.

Removal of pollution practices gained momentum not without clashes or trial of strength between caste groups on several occasions. People cited a few instances where Ilavas and other lower castes were beaten for entering restaurants and other public places. Barbers left their shops when people of lower castes first entered the shop

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1 Rāghavan is the first advocate among them. Now he has retired. P.361.

2 C. Kesavan and R. Sankar became Chief Ministers in 1951 and 1962 respectively.

3 Paper Nos. 005, 028, 029, 072, 130, 351, 357, 374. Traditionally, Ilavas and other lower castes had separate places outside the restaurant where broken glasses and coconut shells were kept for them. After use, they themselves had to wash them and keep them for others to use.
and asked for a haircut. On such occasions, Iłavas, who had the strength of numbers, conducted propaganda meetings. They were supported by Christians and Muslims, and their leaders persisted in their efforts until their demands were granted.

Changes in the social relations did not come all of a sudden. Social reformers like Nārāyaṇa Guru and Kumāran Āśān served as advocates of change. Communal organizations like the SNDP Yōgam and political parties of the modern era served as pressure groups to demand social and political rights denied to its members. Education, better means of transport and communications, employment outside the state, entry of the money-economy, cultural contacts and the like loosened the caste structure and weakened the resistance of

Lower caste people did this continuously, till some barbers started cutting their hair; others virtually closed their shops.

These meetings were supported by State Congress leaders. Paper Nos. 243, 340, 384, 369.

Muslims took the initiative in permitting Iłavas and others to enter their shops and have food with others. They were motivated to do so by their leader M.A. Khan. Iłavas at Murukkumpula had leadership from persons such as Sridharan Vaidian, Kūṟjukrishnan, Rāghavan and V.G. Das. Paper Nos. 034, 151, 243, 302, 310, and 340. 294.

The change was from the 'land-economy' to 'money-economy'. Employment in offices fetched them regular salaries.
The democratic government aiming at creating an equitable distribution of wealth, made grants to any citizen, irrespective of his caste or creed, and provided greater opportunities and freedom. In the changing social order, an individual exercises his freedom to choose his vocation and the pattern of his life.

Thus the modern order has freed the individual from the prescriptions of the traditional hierarchical society. The change in the system of inheritance and division of joint-family gave the individual a significant place in society. It has recognized the status of the individual and provided opportunities for the individual to exercise his freedom. The individual now realizes his freedom to establish a nuclear family and his responsibility to maintain it. The individual not only enjoys his personal freedom but also senses his right to participate with others in the creation of a 'new society'.

1 Such forces were generally represented by custodians of the traditional way of life.

2 It was physically impossible to observe contact taboos once people started travelling together in public transportation systems, studying together in schools and colleges, playing together in recreation centres and eating together in restaurants.

3 In terms of actual behaviour, the present situation is reflected in the freer and egalitarian manner of talk, address and general dealings characterized by the lesser frequency of commands and unpaid services.
6. Conclusion.

In this chapter we found that the Ilavas at Murukkumpula made progress in the field of education, economy, politics and social relations. This progress has freed the Ilavas from the enslavement of caste which was prevalent in Kerala in the past. An improvement in caste relations resulted from the growth of modern education. Employment was dependent on the acquisition of skill. Education granted skill and shattered the hold of caste. It gave rise to elite leadership in society. The educated demanded equal opportunities to compete for specialized occupations on the basis of knowledge rather than one's caste affiliation. The resultant occupational mobility opened up opportunities for the educated to travel and to mingle with new cultural patterns. This created in them a new spirit of adventure in stepping into the unknown world and a new spirit of openness in adopting new practices or patterns of life. In other words, as a result of education and occupational mobility the Ilavas at Murukkumpula became more enlightened about exercising their newly acquired freedom and took on a new sense of responsibility. This pattern of change where the individual breathes freedom and shoulders responsibility is a characteristic of modernity.
The Ilavas, the victims of discrimination in the past, have organized themselves to overcome oppression. This they did by organizing themselves as a religious organization (SNDP Yogam) and by rallying under the political banner. As the Thomases say: "The adult franchise started in the State during the 1940s as part of a fight for 'responsible government' gave new importance to the people of lower castes as well as women who were allowed to vote."¹ The Ilavas of Murukkumpula, as we have seen earlier, try to improve their situation now by political means. This is a result of the deeper awareness they have about their situation and the possibility of improving it. Through political participation they also enjoy equality and justice which were denied to them in the past in the name of caste. Thus political participation of the Ilavas paved the way for a linear social mobility which is rather different from the vertical mobility of Sanskritization.²

The case study at Murukkumpula shows that along with economic progress, the Ilavas at Murukkumpula have entered into a co-operative way of life. This has given them the opportunity to exercise their own freedom and participate

¹Thomasa,T.M., and Annamma., Kerala Immigrants in America, 1984, pp.96-97.
in the freedom of others. They have acknowledged that the pattern of co-operation irrespective of caste or sex is a better way for progress and the hope to build a 'new society' where equality rather than caste shall prevail. This pattern of change where people break the traditional boundaries of caste to work for the development of the individual and society is a sign of modernity.

The awakening of the Ilavas was initiated by the consecration of a Śiva temple at Aruvippuram by Nārāyana Guru in 1888. This religious awakening, as understood and motivated by the Guru, aimed not only at the reformation of the religious practices of the Ilavas but also at the liberation of man (the Ilavas and others) from the bondage of caste structure and his progress in the educational, economic, political and social areas. Our study of the Ilavas at Murukkumpuḷa reveals that they have largely attained freedom from the traditional caste structure and have progressed in all the socio-economic fields. Even though this progress has exposed the Ilavas to various forces such as Sanskritization, Westernization and Secularization, they have not left their sense of communal identity or their religion. The Ilavas now continue as Ilavas and religion remains at the centre of their life. In the next chapter we will more closely study the process of change in their religious life.
VII. THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE İLAVAS OF MURUKKUMPUŁA
THE PROCESS OF CHANGE IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE
OF THE Īlavas OF Murukkumula

In the previous chapter we saw the progress the Īlavas at Murukkumula made in the political, economic and educational fields. In this chapter we will concentrate on the place of religion itself in two domains; that of family ritual and temple practice.


In this section we will see how religion dictated the nature of family and communal relationships for traditional Īlavas, and how reformations introduced by Nārāyaṇa Guru and propagated by religious organization such as SNDF Yōgam brought changes in the traditional family.

Family and religion are the two basic institutions in any society. No group can be critically studied without examining these two institutions and the relationship between them. Among the Īlavas there are several religious rituals that are performed in the family. Religious rituals are generally slow to change. Their performance follows particular patterns and is repeated as exactly as
possible. Since a society generally does not accept new norms all of a sudden, the force for continuity found in rituals and ceremonies is often a central thread in the life of the society.

Change is inevitable in a growing community. This is true of the Ilavas as well. Religious ritual by slowing the pace of change has been playing a vital role in keeping the Ilavas united. As Fred W. Clothey says:

Thus ritual serves to make the process of change less traumatic for ritual is itself process and change. The foreign can become indigenous by its use in the ritual process, and the 'modern' can become traditional.¹

(a) Traditional Practices

The most spectacular and visible changes in the Ilava community have been in some rituals in the family. Of these the rituals of tāliketkalyānam (tali-tying), putavakota (gift of the cloth), tiraṇṭukuli (puberty-rite), pulikutti (pregnancy-rite) and savadāham (funeral ceremony)² have been selected for study. In dealing with these,

¹Clothey, Fred W., Rhythm and Intent: Ritual Studies from South India, Madras: Blackie, 1983. p.5

²Savadāham literally means 'thirst of the corpse'. (Sava means corpse; daham means thirst). The ritual is also called 'dahanam' which means cremation.
marriage, the most important rite of passage is given major attention.

The traditional marriage custom of the Ilavas consisted of two ceremonies called *tālikēttukalyāṇam* and *puṭavakoṭa*. The *tālikēttukalyāṇam* has been misunderstood as marriage by some students of religion.¹ Etymologically *tālikēttukalyāṇam* means the auspicious event of *tāli*-tying.² This rite was considered an indispensible religious rite for the Ilava girls. If any family failed to conduct the *tālikēttukalyāṇam* for its daughter before the onset of puberty, that family was socially ostracized. The assembly of the elders of the community called *kūṭṭam* decided the punishment for such offences and usually village functionaries were forbidden to serve the ostracized families.

For the ceremony of *tālikēttukalyāṇam* the senior members of the family assembled and in consultation with Kaṇiyān (astrologer) a pandal was erected. The services of the Taṇṭān and Ambaṭṭan were called forth to erect the

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¹ *Tāli* is a tiny gold ornament shaped like the leaf of a banyan (Ficus religiosa) tree, *kēṭṭu* derived from the word *kēṭṭuka* means 'tying' and *kalyāṇam* means an auspicious event.

pandal and to decorate it.\textsuperscript{1} Ambaṭṭatti, the wife of the Ambaṭṭan, assumed the responsibility for teaching the girl the rudiments of the duties of adult women. The tāli-tier generally was the son of the maternal uncle and he was called maccambi.\textsuperscript{2} He came to the house of the girl, riding on a caparisoned elephant.\textsuperscript{3} When they arrived at the gate, the girl's relatives welcomed them.

The girl was then led to the pandal by her Kāraṇavan.\textsuperscript{4} At the auspicious hour, while the instrumental music was played, the boy with the permission of the senior members assembled there would tie the tāli around the

\textsuperscript{1}Taṇṭān is the tree climber and Ambaṭṭan is the Īlava priest and barber.

\textsuperscript{2}It used to be one boy for each girl. Thurston agrees that there used to be more than one girl. Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, II, 1909, p.413.

\textsuperscript{3}Paper No.331. Kane P.V. agrees that marriage with maccambi was sadacāra. Kane, P.V., History of Dharma Śastra, I, p.461. The ride on an elephant was avoided if the boy was poor. Paper Nos.104, 219, 222, 243, 299, 364 etc.

\textsuperscript{4}For the ceremony, both the boy and the girl would be facing a lighted wick lamp called nilavilakku, a bushel of paddy called nirapara, flowers and incense placed in the pandal. The girl with the betel leaf rolled up between her fingers to fill the spaces between would cover her face indicating her shyness. Her head would be covered after making a turmeric paste mark on her forehead. A tāli tied to a thread dyed yellow with turmeric, would then be handed over to the boy by an elderly person. See Mateer, Rev. Samuel, Native Life of Travancore, 1883, p.87.
girl's neck. In this, he would be assisted by his sister or an elderly lady.

Once this ceremony was over, all the people present joined in a grand feast. The tāli-tier would stay in the house for a couple of days with his relatives, and until he left, the festival continued. The tāli-tier was then presented with cloth and money and he left for his home. The girl remained in her house and she could take the tāli off after the days of festivities. The tālikettukalyānam lasted for seven days.

In those days, no one considered the tāli-couple as man and wife outside the tāli booth. Should he (the tāli-tier) want to have her as his wife, it was necessary to perform another ceremony later on. The essential

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2 Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India II, 1909, p.413.


4 Paper Nos. 005, 017, 018,182. Similar ceremonies were held by Nairs also. Based on the study of Nairs of Central Kerala, Kathleen Gough interprets this ritual as a ceremony signifying group marriage. A. Aiyappan and J. Puthenkal argue that this was only an initiation rite prior to marriage. Puthenkal J., Marriage and the Family in Kerala, 1977, p.49. See also Aiyappan, A. Travas and Culture Change, 1945, p.160. Had he been her husband, she would have observed death pollution ritual called pula.
ceremony to accept her as his wife was to present her with a cloth (puṭava). Such a ceremony was called puṭavakota.

A feature of the Ilava puṭavakota in the past was that they were held in the bride's house. Once the boy and the girl were selected, their horoscopes were examined with the help of an astrologer.¹ When satisfied the family of the bride would duly inform the caste leader of the locality with the customary dues. The caste leader would then instruct the Taṇṭān and Ambatṭan to help the family in the various arrangements.

According to the old custom, it was not required that the bridegroom go to the house of the bride for puṭavakota.² On that day his sister and other relatives would take a loin cloth called puṭava to the bride's house. There at the auspicious hour (muhūrttam), she loudly asked the assembly: "Shall I give the putava?"³ This was repeated thrice to ascertain that there was no disagreement about the marriage. The groom's sister then assisted the bride in dressing in the new puṭava and led

³Paper Nos. 028, 262.
her out to the assembly. The guests were then treated to a sumptuous dinner and afterwards the bride was taken to the groom's house.

If the bridegroom was someone other than the maccambi, then as the party stepped out of the pandal after the putavakota, they were met by the maccambi expressing his prior claim to wed the girl. He would then be given a payment to satisfy his claim.\(^1\) The traditional marriage pattern continued till Nārāyaṇa Guru reformed the rituals of the Ilavas towards the close of the nineteenth century. Before looking into the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru and the reformed practices, we proceed now to other traditional practices of the Ilavas such as tiranțukuli and pulikuti.

Another mile-stone marking the social progress of an Ilava girl towards womanhood, (before wifehood) was tiranțukuli.\(^2\) This ceremony was celebrated when a girl attained puberty and the function lasted for seven days. On the particular day the girl's friends and relatives

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\(^1\)This was the contribution demanded and paid to the cross-cousin of the bride for forgoing his claim to the bride, who was his preferential mate. This amount was generally less than a rupee (one panam).

\(^2\)Tiranțukuli is the puberty-rite. Etymologically the word tiranțu means 'to unfold' and kuli means 'to take bath'. In southern Kerala rtumati is another word used for a matured girl. In northern Kerala, this ceremony is called vayassariyikkal, meaning to disclose the age.
would assemble and announce the event by cackling a shrill voice called kurava. The girl was then lodged in a separate room and segregated from others for fear of pollution. On the fourth day, she would be smeared with oil and given a bath by her friends and relatives. One of her Ammāvis (wife of her uncle) would be there. She was then given washed clothes (māttukacca) by the washer-woman (Maṇṇātti) and again secluded in the room. On the seventh day, she was again given a ceremonial bath. The Ambaṭṭatti would mix cowdung in the water for purification and the girl would take her bath in the mixture. The room in which the girl was secluded would then be swept and Ambaṭṭatti would sprinkle purificatory fluid to purify the house and the persons present. On the seventh day, a pandal would also be erected which would be decorated by Taṭṭan and Ambaṭṭan. The relatives and friends were given a sumptuous feast including a sweet rice pudding called pāyassam. Taṭṭan, Ambaṭṭan and Maṇṇān were given gifts.

From the time of puberty, the girl was allowed to chew betel, the privilege of an adult woman. Her movements would then be curtailed, education discontinued and the relatives would start thinking of her marriage.

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2 Paper Nos.031, 099, 017, 018, 027, 045, etc.
Another ceremony that was indispensible for an Ilava lady was pulikući celebrated during her first pregnancy. On the seventh month, the girl's relatives, mostly ladies, would go to see the girl with seven kinds of sweets. The pregnant woman would prepare sweet-rice pudding on that day. This ceremony was called vayattu pohkāla. Traditionally, this was prepared in seven pots and only raw rice (not boiled rice) was used for the preparation. Once this was prepared, the relatives and friends who assembled on that day would join for a grand feast. The rice-pudding and the sweets brought from the girl's house would be given to everyone. After the feast, the mother-in-law would give the pregnant lady an earthen jar full of oil and send her to her home. The girl would return to her husband's home only after the delivery.

(b) The Teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru with regard to Family Rituals

The ceremonies, tālikēttukalyānam, puṭavakota, tirantukuli and pulikući were expensive ceremonies for the

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1Puli = tamarind, kuṭi = to drink. This is the ceremony of drinking tamarind juice.

2Paper Nos. 002, 003. This was considered as an offering to the Sun-God.

3Paper Nos. 018, 009, 222. It indicates fullness or perfection. Some respondents emphasized the fact that the oil should be upto the brim.
Ilavas as for each important occasion the family concerned fed a large number of people in a place like Murukkumpula. Even though taliikettukalyanam could be conducted for more than one girl at a time, tirantukuli, pu tavakota and pulikuṭi were conducted separately for each girl at the appropriate times. These ceremonies carried with them elaborate arrangements as mentioned earlier. For a poor Ilava family of Murukkumpula these ceremonies were expensive and the practice of them constituted a drain on already limited economic resources. Nārāyaṇa Guru who wanted the emancipation of the Ilavas decided to reform these customary practices. According to Nārāyaṇa Guru the taliikettukalyanam was a 'mock wedding' and therefore unnecessary. He spoke on the discontinuation of the taliikettukalyanam at several places during the years 1888-1928. In the year 1904 Guru convened a conference of the Ilavas at Paṇavūr, 30 kms. north of Murukkumpula. There he said:

> It has been mentioned at my instance that since we have a regular wedding, the mock-wedding ceremony 'Talikettu' is no longer necessary. I have great pleasure and satisfaction to learn that already people of different parts of this land who love me and have faith in me have accorded recognition to them.¹

The Guru then travelled to various places preaching the above message and influencing certain aristocratic families to stop these practices. Fr. Puthenkalam mentions that at one instance Nārāyaṇa Guru persuaded a follower to call off the festivities of tālikettukalyāṇam even after the dinner was ready.¹ Though Nārāyaṇa Guru recognized the religious significance underlying the rites of passage, he found the elaborate celebration and the enormous expenses unnecessary. In 1908, the Guru wrote the following lines as a message to be read at the annual meeting of the SNDP Yōgam.

Functions like Tirandukuli and Pulikuti have almost ceased to be expensive. Advice regarding the stopping of 'Talikettu' is no doubt getting accepted; but the message has not created the same impact in all places. This practice should be completely stopped as early as possible. It is unprincipled and unnecessary.²

The traditional practices of tālikettukalyāṇam, pūtavakota, tiraṇṭukuli and pūlikuti were related to the traditional caste roles in society. These ceremonies had roles for each of the different caste-functionaries. As we have seen earlier, the Kaṇiyan (astrologer), the Taṇṭān,

the Ambatṭan (İḷava barber), the Ambatṭatti, the Maṇṇān and the like had definite roles to play and their roles fortified the continuation of a hierarchical caste structure. The traditional system also socially ostracized those who violated the caste rules. Religion was inseparable from the social life of the Hindus of Kerala and therefore religiously ostracized persons were also socially ostracised. Nārāyaṇa Guru who preached 'One Caste' ideal wanted to challenge this traditional caste structure and liberate the İḷavas from their given caste rank. He thought that greater freedom for the İḷavas in the religious and social sphere would be possible if the rites of the İḷavas were modified. He did not just throw aside traditions, however, for as innovations in ritual are accepted they are added to the tradition.

As early as 1908 Nārāyaṇa Guru spoke against polygamy and polyandry. He sent the following message to the SNDP Yōgam:

Polygamy and polyandry are being practiced in some places. Steps should be considered to stop free indulgence in these practices in future. Where 'Marumakkathayam' system is followed in the community legal provision should be made to give the wedded wife and children the right to a portion of a man's individual earning. Otherwise marriages would be meaningless.¹

¹Ibid., pp.102-103.
Nārāyaṇa Guru understood that for the stability of a nuclear family due respect and care for the members are necessary conditions. So he recommended a legal provision for the right of the wedded wife and children to a portion of a man's individual earning. To increase the sanctity of marriage, Nārāyaṇa Guru gave the following instructions on marriage ceremony:

It was to be like the 'prajapatya' form of marriage of Hindus, wherein the father or guardian of the bride joins the hands of the bride and bridegroom by putting the right hand of the former on the right hand of the latter and pouring water from his hand to the groom’s. Then the bride garlands the bridegroom and the latter ties a tali around the neck of the bride.\(^1\)

By this reformation, Nārāyaṇa Guru was anchoring the marriage rite of the Īlavas in the larger Hindu religious tradition. He recommended the 'prajāpatyā' form of marriage of the Hindus in which the father of the bride gives his daughter as a gift to the bridegroom as this was scriptural and traditional for the Hindus even though the Īlavas, a Hindu Community, had earlier been denied the privilege of following this practice. Nārāyaṇa Guru stressed the sanctity of the ceremony and the sacrament of marriage by introducing the practice of pouring holy water

\(^1\)Aiyyappan, A., Iravas and Culture Change, 1945, p.154.
on the hands. In the reformed practice he insisted on the presence of both groom and bride and specified their role in the sacrament.

Nārāyaṇa Guru wanted the Ḍlavas to reduce the expense of marriages. He advised his followers that the number of people attending the wedding could be reduced to ten consisting of the bride, bridegroom, their parents, one companion from each of the new couple, one priest and the local chief.¹

In the beginning Nārāyaṇa Guru was able to persuade only a few families to adopt these changes. Though he permitted local variations, he insisted on the Ḍlavas practicing the exchange of garlands and the tāli-tying on every wedding. He also taught women to wear the tāli even after the ceremony, indicative of their marital status.

To increase the sacredness of the marriage and to reduce expenses, the Guru instructed his followers to conduct the weddings in temple premises and to conduct the garlanding and tāli-tying ceremonies in front of the

¹Ibid., Swami Satyavrta, a disciple of Nārāyaṇa Guru advised Ḍlavas to save the money by reducing marriage expenses and give that amount for the wedded couple. Sanoo, M.K., Nārāyaṇa Guru, 1978, p. 130.
deity. Guru made this possible at 'Sāradā Temple, Varkala, 20 kms. north of Murukkumpūla and advised the SNDP Yōgam to propagate this practice.

(c) Process of Change.

At Murukkumpūla, tāliketṭukalyāṇam continued to be practised till the 1920s and five of the respondents revealed that they did undergo this ceremony in their childhood days but that they had refrained from performing the ceremony in the case of their children. When Nārāyaṇa Guru proposed the abolition of the tāliketṭu rite people had no arguments to advance, except that it was done traditionally, in support of its continuance as an essential rite. The use of the tāli was incorporated into the marriage rite as will be seen in the following section.

Tiraṇṭukulī is also no longer a public function for the Īlavas of Murukkumpūla. The respondents spoke about the influence of Nārāyaṇa Guru in this change. Tiraṇṭukulī

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1 In the case of a wedding conducted at the temple premises, they need not spend money for making a Kalyāṇa mandāpam (Kāvanam: marriage-booth). It is probable that Nārāyaṇa Guru was familiar with the Christian practice of conducting weddings in the Church.

2 Paper Nos. 028, 104, 182, 262 and 339

served the purpose of announcing to the relatives that the girl had come of age for marriage. This function is carried out now by the parents of the girl speaking of the matter privately to the immediate relatives. Menstruation is considered polluting and therefore even now the girl is segregated from the kitchen and prayer hall for three days. Some respondents revealed that they still call Ambaṭṭatti for the purificatory ceremony. However, a washerwoman is not called nowadays to change the clothes and the women relatives do not make the sound of kurava to announce the news. At present the menstrual period no longer interferes with the education of the girls.

**Pulikuti** has also become a very domestic affair now. The relatives desire the safety of the mother and the child. Hence the rite is continued as **vayattu-ponkāla**. Though the exchange of sweets and preparing ponkala are still retained, it is not compulsory that the pregnant woman herself should prepare the rice pudding.

Traditionally **puṭavakota** in continuation of the **tālikeṭṭukalyāṇam** constituted the marriage rite. Since the days of Nārāyaṇa Guru this rite has undergone a process of

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1Paper Nos. 233, 333

2Vayattu-ponkāla is the ceremony of preparing the rice pudding.
change. Marriage is a composite rite composed of several subordinate elements which have to be done in a certain order. Following is the order one finds in the reformed marriage ritual of the Îlavas:

(i) Choosing the partner.
(ii) Matching the horoscopes.
(iii) Arranging the marriage booth (kāvanam).
(iv) Receiving the bridegroom.
(v) Giving the cloth (putavakota).
(vi) Holding the hands (pānigrhana).
(vii) Tying of the tāli.
(viii) Circumambulating the marriage booth.
(ix) Giving the sweets and the feast.
(x) Entering the house of the husband.

Since Nārāyaṇa Guru's time the parents have assumed greater responsibilities at home. The choice of maccambi as the partner has become less common and the young men and women are now allowed to meet and talk before they express their choice. As in the past, their horoscopes are then matched and the girl's parents make necessary arrangements for the wedding to take place either at their home or in the temple. When the bridegroom and his party arrive for the ceremony, they are received and given drinks by the bride's relatives. While the guests are seated in the pandal the sister of the groom takes the putava to the
bride who is inside the house and helps her to wear it. The bride is then led to the marriage booth called kāvanām by her father. In accordance with the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru the father joins the right hands of the groom and the bride and holds them in his hands, one above the other, upon which the celebrant (priest) pours the holy water. The priest conducts the pūjā over the garlands and the tāli and hands them over to the bride and the groom at the auspicious time. After giving dakṣiṇā (money-gift) to the priest the bride and the groom exchange the garlands. This is followed by the tying of the tāli. The couple then steps down the kāvanām and circumambulates it three times in the clock wise direction. Then they enter the bride's house where they are given sweets in the form of plantain and milk. They share these food and drink and join the assembled guests in a sumptuous feast. Once the ceremonies to be performed at the bride's place are over the couple go to the house of the bridegroom. There the bride is welcomed by a ceremony called arattamuliyuka which is to ward off all the mishaps that may arise when a new member enters the home.¹

¹With a tālam (plate) containing turmeric and lime paste (red in colour) broken coconuts with cotton wicks lighted in it, the mother of the bridegroom circles clockwise over the head of the bride and throws the tālam away to the outside. This ceremony is called arattamuliyuka.
Ilava marriages are performed as a religious rite rather than a mere civil contract. Matching the horoscopes, arranging the kāvanam, receiving the bridegroom, giving the cloth, tying of the tāli, giving the feast and conducting the ceremony of arattamuliyuka are continuities with traditional practices. Matching the horoscopes and conducting the ceremony of arattamuliyuka are done to avoid all possible mishappenings to the marriage partners and the related families. The wedding is an occasion when all the relatives, friends and neighbours and local caste groups are invited and all kinds of bonds are reaffirmed. By feeding and treating all the assembled properly, the bride's parents show them respect and honour. Ilavas continue the traditional practice of conducting the marriage in a kāvanam. When the marriages are conducted at the temples and reception halls, a marriage booth is duly arranged there. The traditional practices of giving the cloth (puṭavakoṭa) and tying the tāli are continued in the reformed ritual of marriage with new meanings. The continuities in these practices show the conservative forces of religion. They also show the dynamism and immanence of tradition in the lives of the Ilavas.
One notable change in the present form of marriage of the Īlavas is the decline in the role of the Kāraṇavan. In the traditional marriage ritual it was the Kāraṇavan who took the initiative of proposing the marriage and conducting it. In those days marriages were 'arranged marriages' and the parents had fewer responsibilities. In such cases the likes and the dislikes of the boy and the girl were not considered and normally they agreed to the choice made by the Kāraṇavan. Traditionally the maccambi had the right to marry his niece and the Kāraṇavan enforced it. After the disintegration of joint families and the establishment of nuclear families the parents have assumed more responsibilities. When the traditional caste hierarchy was questioned by the reforms of Nārāyaṇa Guru the authoritarian behaviour of the traditional society was shaken and the individual attained more freedom. As a result the emphasis within the arranged marriage got shifted to allow for the choice of a partner by the individual. This indicates that there is of more individual responsibility in the present pattern of marriage than in the traditional tāliketṭu-kalyāṇam and puṭavakota.

Following the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru, the Īlavas at Murukkumpuḷa are gradually adopting the practice of conducting the marriages at the temple premises. The
field work reveals that from 1930 onwards out of the 92 cases, 22.82 percent of the weddings were conducted at the temple precincts of Murukkumpula. The figures also indicate that 10.87 percent of the weddings were conducted at other convenient places. This would include the marriages conducted at the Sārada Temple, Varkala and at the reception halls at Trivandrum. In the case of marriages conducted at the Śiva Temple the priest brings out the garlands and the tāli from the inner sanctum of the temple at the auspicious time. After the tying of the tāli the couple goes three times around the temple and worships the deities. These innovative changes have enhanced the religious values associated with marriage.

The traditional practices of tāli tying and giving the cloth (puṭavakoṭa) are incorporated in the reformed ritual of marriage. Traditionally giving the puṭava and receiving it by the bride marked the significant event of the ceremony of marriage. After 1930, this came to be seen by the Īlavas at Murukkumpula as only an initiation to marriage. Now considering the value of time and the possible choice of the partner from distant places, the puṭava is sometimes given to the bride a few days earlier and in some cases the bride's family is even asked to buy the required set of clothes on behalf of the groom. The tāli is now regarded as the symbol of marriage which no woman will part with as long as her husband is alive.
Kanyādānam (gift of the girl by the father), the pānigrhaṇā (holding the hands) and the exchange of garlands by the bride and groom have taken the central place in the reformed marriage ritual. These are innovatory changes and are followed by the Īlavas of Murukkumpūla. These reformatory measures have increased the importance of the father in the family and the sanctity of the ritual. Also it has increased the significance of the nuclear family. In the reformed ritual the bride and bridegroom have their parts to play. They have the freedom to choose their partners. This personal involvement helps them to be conscious of their mutual responsibilities as husband and wife. The process of change that grants freedom to the individual and encourages them to assume responsibilities is deemed a characteristic of modernity.

The reformed practice of kanyādānam and the pānigrhaṇā are in accordance with the Dharma Śāstras which are followed by the Brāhmans of Kerala. Being in accordance with the Sanskrit texts and practice of a higher caste is what Srinivas defines as Sanskritization. But this process of change among the Īlavas differs from Sanskritization in the sense that they are not attempting a positional change in the caste structure to the status of Brāhmans. Also they were not imitating all the marriage practices prevalent among the Brāhmans. Instead they were
adopting "nobler" forms of marriage according to the scriptures. By this reform the İlavs continued the Hindu religious tradition but in this they adopted a process of selection and integration. While integrating the practices of kanyādānam and the pāṇigṛhaṇa, they did not embrace other practices such as looking at the Sun or pole star, stepping on a mill-stone, or saptapadi (making seven steps) commonly found among the Brāhmans. This characteristic of continuing one's religious tradition but exercising careful selection and integration is a significant aspect of modernity.

The new order of marriage among the İlavs recognizes the freedom of the bride and the bridegroom to enter into wedded life and grow into the fullness of person-hood. This underlines the ideas of the fundamental rights of the individual, equality between man and man and a sense of society where moral fellowship of persons is upheld. This is not a negation of the values of social life but an enrichment of social bonds by means of religion. Therefore this process of reformation recognized the place of religion and its meaning in the every day life of man. This reorientation of values is another characteristic of modernity.

The growth of the SNDP as a religious organization is a significant aspect of change among the İlavs. The
branch office of the SNDP Yōgam formed at Murukkumpuḷa in the 1940s provides the facilities of a reception hall and a kitchen space at the Šiva temple premises to conduct weddings. Because of these facilities, statistics show that out of the 27 Ilava respondents whose marriages were conducted after 1950, 12 of them (44.44 percent) had it conducted at the Šiva temple.

The SNDP Šākha (branch office) since its organization has taken the initiative in modifying the Ilava marriage customs. Now, when a marriage is agreed upon by the two parties, an application is submitted to the SNDP Šākha. Based on this application the Šākha office of the bridegroom issues an official notice to the Head-office of the SNDP Yōgam and to the Šākha office of the bride indicating the following particulars of the bride and the groom.

(i) Full name
(ii) House name and address
(iii) Age and date of birth
(iv) Is it the first marriage or not
(v) If second, details of the divorce
(vi) Name and address of the guardian
(vii) Date of marriage, place and time.
It is required that the notice carry the signature of the secretary, the official seals of the SNDP Yōgam office, Union office and the Śākha office. The field study revealed that the SNDP Yōgam also issued 'Marriage Certificates' that could be used for many official purposes. Herein we find an organized way of life and the development of new institutions. This institutional effort to propagate the reformed form of marriage is a characteristic of modernity.

Following the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru the Īlavas have given up the traditional practices of polygamy and polyandry. The Īlava Bill passed in 1925 made a provision for the inheritance of property by one's wife and children. Since then the marumakkattāyam gave way to the makkattāyam system of inheritance. This was followed by the disintegration of joint-families and the establishment of nuclear families in the 1940s. As seen earlier education led to occupational mobility and some of the educated Īlava members went to foreign countries in search of employment since 1970. These changes have influenced the Īlavas and in the resultant flux stability and control systems became essential. The SNDP Yōgam with its branch offices at different places emerged to serve these purposes. This feature of the SNDP helps bring about a sameness in the practice of rituals among the Īlavas of Kerala.
The field study revealed that 50.46 percent of girls (out of 109 cases) were married between the ages of 16-20 years and 29.36 percent between the ages of 21-25 years. As for men, only 30 percent of the Ilavas married before they were 25 years of age while 38 percent married while they were in the age group 26-30 years. It is customary even now that the Ilavas marry from their own caste. Though Nārāyaṇa Guru encouraged intercaste marriages, the force of tradition is so strong among the Ilavas that it generally limits the choice of partners to the same community. Inspite of the changes marriage is still a sacrament and religion has a significant place in the social life of the Ilavas.

(e) Death Ritual: Traditional Practice

The other major rite of passage in the family is the one connected with death. The field study shows that there is relatively less change in the practice of the funeral ceremonies. The following section looks at the past and present practices as they were described by the respondents and observed in the field at Murukkumpūla. In this process, traditional practices are described in order to isolate the changes taking place. The impact of Nārāyaṇa Guru was to break the absolute unchallenged hold of tradition and help the community reflect on how to cope
with the pressures of modern life while maintaining some traditions.

Traditionally as soon as a person breathed his last, the body was washed and neatly dressed as if the person was going on an auspicious journey. The body was placed in the north-south direction with the head towards the south. The general custom among the Īlavas involved the cremation of the dead body if the deceased was the eldest in the family. But if the deceased was a junior, then he was buried. For cremation the Ambattan prepared the funeral pyre called cita with pieces of wood from mango trees or coconut husk and shell. The Taṭān helped the Ambattan in this preparation and they together erected a small pandal in front of the house. The Ambattan played the role of a priest in the entire funeral rite.

Before cremation the corpse was brought out of the house to the pandal. As last respect to the deceased, the immediate relatives performed vāykkari and kōtiyituka. Vāykkari was the ceremony involving the placing of three handfuls of rice in the mouth of the dead by the eldest heir. This was then followed by sons, nephews and grandsons of the deceased. The second ceremony was to give new clothes (kōtiyituka) to the deceased. The price and type of cloth depended upon the wealth and social status of the
persons making the gift. Apart from these functions the relatives also contributed money (kaṭṭappanam) to the family. This was to meet the expenses connected with the funeral rites.

The corpse was then taken to the pyre in a procession led by the Ambatṭan carrying a lamp and the eldest son carrying an earthen pot full of water. When the group reached the place they circumambulated the pyre. The Ambatṭan then removed all the new clothes from the corpse and the body was placed on the pyre. The funeral pyre was lighted by the heir (balikkāran) with a consecrated torch (kolli) handed over to him by the priest. After that a tender coconut was placed beside the head of the corpse as an offering. Then the balikkāran with the earthen pot full of water on his shoulder went thrice around the pyre while the priest pricked the pot with an iron instrument on each round. Finally the pot was broken on the pyre and everyone returned home without turning back or looking at the pyre.

From the second day onwards the balikkāran offered an oblation of food to the departed and the relatives partook in the rice gruel. On the fifth day the balikkāran with the help of the priest picked up the bones and
purified them in *pañcagavyam*. The purified bones were collected in one or two new unbaked earthen pots and the pots were covered with red linen. On the fifteenth day the *balikkāran* with the help of the priest carried the bones to the nearest sea or river to throw them in running water. This ceremony was called *Sañjayanam*. However, some Īlavas kept one pot of bones in their compound under a jack tree for a period of time and then floated them in water. On the sixteenth day the Ambatṭan purified the house and the bereaved members of the family from *pula* (death pollution) by a ceremony called *tali* (sprinkling the purificatory liquid).

According to tradition the chief mourner observed *dīksā* for about a year and did not take part in any festivities. During this period he grew his hair and beard and ate only vegetarian food. On the day he broke his *dīksā* a *puja* was conducted, rice balls were given to the ancestors and he participated in the feast. He would cut his hair and shave off his beard on that day to mark the end of his *dīksā*.

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1 *Pañcagavyam* consists of cowdung, cow urine, cow milk, butter milk and clarified butter. Paper No. 371. Cassette No. 43.

2 *Dīksā* observance is very rarely seen today. Some of those who observe it, reduce the length of the period to 41 days or till the *tali* is over.
For Īlavas and other Hindus of southern Kerala, the New Moon day in the month of Karkaṭakam (July-August) every year continues to be a very important day to offer ancestral worship. The Īlavas of Murukkumpuḷa whose parents are dead observe vṛta and conduct the bali (ancestoral rite) at Kaṭhinamkuḷam beach on this day.

(f) Influence of Nārāyaṇa Guru and the Process of Change in the Death Ritual

Nārāyaṇa Guru, the reformer of the Īlavas, expressed his desire to simplify the elaborate practices related to death. He used to say that people should not spend more than 10 cakrams (less than a rupee) and the practices should not be for more than ten days. Once he was asked whether he preferred cremation or burial, he said that it is better to use the dead body as a fertilizer after processing it in a crusher. This was an intentional exaggeration of Nārāyaṇa Guru to make the point that old rituals are not necessary. Towards the end of his life when he was asked whether he wished a memorial on his behalf, he told his followers to plant an oil tree (punna) so that it would give shade to travellers and oil for lighting lamps.

Nārāyaṇa Guru's comments on using his body as a
fertilizer or planting an oil tree as a memorial are to be understood as evidences of his indifference towards the traditional funeral rites. His comments can be interpreted as:

(i) There is no meaning in debating whether cremation or burial is better; both are equally good. What is necessary is to dispose the corpse.

(ii) Even in death man should be thinking of the good of others. Death should not impoverish the living, but enrich them.

(iii) It is the person who is more important than the corpse.

In making these points Nārāyaṇa Guru was advocating that attention be given to the higher values of life. While the traditional funeral practices were elaborate and impoverished the living, Nārāyaṇa Guru shifted the emphasis from rigid ritual practices to the life of the people involved. He never wanted man to be chained by religion or ritual practices. Instead he wished the freedom for man which transcends the mundane practice of religion. He once said: 'Whatever be one's religion, it is sufficient that man be good'.

Changes in the traditional funeral ceremonies of the Īḥavas are relatively minor. Since Nārāyaṇa 'Guru's
time the funeral rites of the Ilavas, however, have undergone some changes. The following pages describe the changes.

Laying a shroud (kōti) over the corpse by each of the relatives was a common practice of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula until 1950s. As the economic position of the Ilavas improved, the relatives started using costly clothes for this purpose and the number of kōti put on the corpse increased. As mentioned earlier, these shrouds which could be thirty, fifty or more in number, were taken away and shared by the Ambattan and the Tattan. As the number of kōti increased, disputes between the Ambattan and Tattan as to who should get more became common. After the formation of the SNDP Šākha (branch) at Murukkumpula, the Ilava leaders got together and discussed the possibility of settling this issue and avoiding such disputes at the funeral ceremony. An Ilava by name Appukuttan, insisted that the Ilavas at Murukkumpula should allow only the chief-mourner to place a shroud (kōti) and said that he should by his act represent all the other relatives.¹ The SNDP Šākha decided likewise and has taken the initiative since then in insisting on this new form. When an old leader of the community from a prominent family died

¹Appukuttan is a businessman at Murukkumpula. Paper No.046.
at Murukkumpula in 1966, the SNDP Sākha persuaded his relatives to stick to the new order in spite of the initial resistance of the family members.¹ Now when a death occurs in an Ílava family, the SNDP Sākha committee members go to the house and instruct the people to discontinue the practice of putting kōti.² However, they have not fully succeeded in stopping this practice as there are neighbouring places where the Ílavas practice this and the relatives coming from such places bring kōti to put over the corpse. Interviews revealed that out of the 92 respondents only 33 (35.87 percent) still practiced the putting of kōti. In a family at Murukkumpula, while the lady of the house died in 1985 (while the field-study was conducted) the SNDP leaders were found taking the initiative in the funeral arrangements.³ There only the chief-mourner laid a shroud over the corpse. This new practice is a specific instance of the process of change in a religious ritual among the Ílavas at Murukkumpula and it illustrates the way in which the SNDP Yōgam has come to be accepted as the agent of change.

¹ He was once the Ílava caste leader. Paper No.031.
² They also assist the family in the various ceremonies. Paper Nos. 027, 192, 219, 371.
³ Paper No.104.
Another practice that has been subject to change is vāykkari. In giving rice and water, the Īlavas believe that they are providing food to the departed for his outward journey. As a result, all the relatives who come to the house place some rice and pour water into the mouth of corpse. Large quantities of rice are used which spill from the mouth while the water drips to the cot and from there to the room in which the corpse is placed. In the early 1960s SNDP leaders argued that this practice was not necessary as there was already a ceremony of giving water and tender coconut at the funeral pyre. Here the SNDP as an organization of the Īlavas initiated a rational approach which helped the process of modernity. Change in this practice has been relatively slow. The first stage of change was to reduce the practice merely to giving drops of tender coconut juice with the help of a basil leaf. Now a large number of people either abstain from the practice altogether or put some flowers on the corpse. Out of the 92 respondents, 64 persons (69.57 percent) said that they do not practice vāykkari any longer. They attributed this change to the direct influence of the SNDP Sākha. It is

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1This is a practice that is not seen among the Christians or Muslims at Murukkumpula.

2Paper Nos. 192, 091, 194, 310, 014, 073.

3Paper Nos. 219, 088, 372, 373. Out of the 92 Īlava respondents 81 persons said that the change is due to the influence of SNDP Sākha.
another instance of the process of change in which some resistance is followed by general compliance with a new idea as the tradition is modified.

Nārāyaṇa Guru was the first leader to tell the Īlavas at Murukkumpuḷa to reduce the pula observance to ten days. Later on when nuclear families became common with the disintegration of joint-families in the 1930s and people settling at distant places in the 1940s it became difficult for the relatives to leave their home and spend about 16 days in a home where death had occurred. Once the Īlavas started working in government offices in the 1950s and at places far off from their home, it became difficult for them to miss work for so many days. Many now even fix the rite for a Saturday or Sunday and complete the tāḷi on the same day. There are also cases, for example children coming from Arabian Gulf countries on hearing the news of death, where saṁjayanam and tāḷi are all done on the third day. Out of the 122 respondents only 30 (24.59 percent) said that they conduct the saṁjayanam on the 15th day; 41 (33.60 percent) said that they do it on the 5th day and 32 (26.23 percent) said that they observe it on any convenient day. There are forces such as Secularization working on the younger members of the Īlava community. Some of the young respondents below the age of forty (5.74 percent) expressed disinterest in the continuation of these practices. The
forces of tradition are strong among the Ilavas of Murukkumpuḷa and the SNDP Ṣākha helps them to resist the forces of Secularization and to act in a common way in regard to ritual practice. The above figures indicate that, even though changes are not uniform, the process of change started modestly with a few comments by Nārāyaṇa Guru has come to acquire momentum as the absolute hold of tradition is broken and the pressures of modern life make the rituals inconvenient.

The observance of dīksā has greatly declined. Traditionally, if death occurred in a home, the chief mourner used to shave his hair first and then abstain from all festivities without cutting his hair or shaving his beard for one year. While the field study was conducted, three Ilavas died and none of the relatives shaved his hair. There is also a growing reluctance among the Ilavas to cook rice in new earthen pots in the traditional way during pula days. Out of the 122 respondents only 40.16 percent adhere to the traditional practice of cooking food separately for the balikkār and sticking to a vegetarian diet. It is also known from the interviews that rice-gruel (kaŋji) is prepared only on the day of death and rice with vegetable curry is served on other days. Only very few Ilavas now bury the bones in their compound near a Jack tree and light a lamp there
every evening. Some of the young respondents whose parents have died even said that they do not go for the bali (ancestral rite) on the New-moon day in the month of Karkkaṭakam (July-August). Generally they thought that flexibility of tradition and adaptiveness are signs of modernity and they were not ashamed of the changes in the ritual.

(g) Conclusion

Traditionally the Ilavas looked up to the higher castes to find a model for their own religious practices. Tālikketṭukalyāṇam, puṭavakōta, tiraṇṭukuli, pulikuti, kōṭiyituka, vāykkari and kattappaṇaṇam were also common among the Nāirs. Tālikketṭukalyāṇam followed by tiraṇṭukuli allowed the Nair girls, who followed the marumakkattāyam system of inheritance, to enter into sambandham with more than one man either from their castes or castes above them. At the same time girls of the Nambūtiri Brāhmans, who followed the makkattāyam system of inheritance, if permitted to marry, had their tālikketṭukalyāṇam along with the marriage rite. Though the Brāhman men had conjugal relationships with women, the Brāhman women, if permitted, could have only one husband. As seen earlier tradition left many Brāhman girls unmarried and the rite of tālikketṭukalyāṇam for them was performed only at the time
of death. Infant marriage was uncommon among the Brāhmans. Nārāyaṇa Guru was not appreciative of many of these practices of the Nairs and Brāhmans. Nārāyaṇa Guru in advocating change in the rituals of the Ilavas did not appreciate the marumakkattāyam system of inheritance of the Nāirs or the joint family system of the Brāhmans. Instead he advocated the makkattāyam system of inheritance and the nuclear family system. Nārāyaṇa Guru was against polyandry (as was the practice among the Nāir women) and polygamy (as was the practice among the Brāhmans). He was against infant marriage as was the custom among the Nāir girls as well as curtailing the freedom of persons to marry (as was the practice among the Brāhman girls). He recommended monogamy and emphasized the sanctity of marriage, the freedom of individuals concerned and the responsibilities involved in the wedded life. The reformed ritual of marriage among the Ilavas differed from the Brāhmans in that the Ilavas did not follow the customs of stepping on the mill-stone, looking at the pole star or conducting the saptapadi. Traditionally the wedding of the Brāhmans extended from six to ten days and a sacred fire was lit in the courtyard. The Ilavas did not adopt these practices. The process of change in the marriage ritual of the Ilavas was neither an imitation of the practices of the Nāirs or the Brāhmans nor an attempt to elevate the Ilavas to the status of the Nāirs or the Brāhmans. Instead the challenge
for Nārāyaṇa Guru was to liberate the Ilavas from the caste hierarchy, work for their social emancipation and restructure Hindu society with his ideal of 'One Caste' which could stand on an equal footing with the other religious communities such as the St. Thomas Christians. Therefore Nārāyaṇa Guru attempted a rational approach to liberate the Ilavas from the entire caste structure by introducing a process of modernization. This made it possible for the Ilavas to evaluate their own traditional practices, to give up those that did not appeal to their reason and to adopt those that gave meaning and status in their historical context.

In the case of the funeral rite both the Nāirs and the Brāhmans, like the Ilavas, had the practice of vāykkari and kōṭiyituka. The Nairs and the Brāhmans had the custom of placing small pieces of gold on the corpse before cremation. They also followed the practice of giving rice gruel (paṭṭinikaṅji), and performing saṅjayanam and tali following the death of a member in the family. The Brāhmans followed the custom of cremating all members except children who are not older than ten days. In the death ritual the Ilavas did not adopt the practice of putting small gold or metallic coin on the pyre like the higher castes of Kerala. However, they conform with the practice of the Brāhmans in cremating all the deceased. Some Ilava respondents, at the time of interview justified
this change by saying that it is more hygienic to cremate as the fire consumes the germs in the corpse. This indicates the rational justification the Ilavas attribute to changes in their ritual practices. The Ilavas were the pioneers in stopping the practices of vāyykkari and kōṭiyituka and thus they became a model for the Nāirs and Brāhmans. With their reformatory measures and the ideal of 'One Caste', the Ilavas broke off from the caste hierarchy and paved the way for a 'new society' to meet the challenges of the modern times.

Another significant aspect that governs the process of change in the rituals of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula is the consideration of economy. Nārāyaṇa Guru was interested in the eradication of the economic backwardness of the Ilavas. One of the reasons for considering the Ilavas a low caste in the traditional set up was their low economic status. Economic freedom and economic competitiveness were thus necessary for the Ilavas in the early decades of this century to raise their status in society. Therefore, the Guru's exhortation to reduce expenses even in religious rituals carried special meaning for the Ilava Community. Nārāyaṇa Guru exhorted the elite members of the community to strive by all means to improve their standard of living and to set an example to the low income groups in following the new
It can be observed that in discontinuing tālikēttukalyāṇam or transforming tirantukuli and pulikuti into domestic rituals it was the time and labour connected with the festivity that were cut down but not generally the symbols or meaning of the rituals. In the case of tālikēttukalyāṇam, the tāli-tying ceremony was incorporated into the marriage rite. Again in the case of the death ritual it was the length of pula observance that was reduced, thereby decreasing the total expenditure. At the same time, the practice of kattappanam (giving the funeral expense) in which the close relatives contribute money to the chief mourner to meet the expenses is retained. Since 1980, the SNDP Sākha at Murukkumpula collects Re 1/- per month from each family and gives Rs.101/- when a death occurs in a family as an aid to meet the immediate expenses.

This change has reduced the social distance of both class and caste. The economic disparity that brings class distinction is reduced by discouraging the expenses connected with the various religious ceremonies. The initiative of the SNDP Yōgam in providing facilities for the wedding at the temple premises has also reduced the wedding expenses.

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2 The field study revealed that most of the families returned that money to the SNDP Sākha once the period of crisis was over.
expenses. Tālikettukalyānam as described earlier was a ritual prevalent among the non-Brāhmans. The Īlavas were the first to discontinue this practice; the Nāirs followed them and this change lowered the wall of distinction between the high and the low castes. In the process of change that has been noted in this section, the Īlavas of Murukkumpula were not adopting the religious practices of the Nāirs but were taking the initiative on their own to reform it. As mentioned earlier the process of change is not Sanskritization where the higher castes are imitated, but a form of modernization in which rituals that suit new economic and social circumstances are worked out.

Another important dimension of these changes is the emergence of the SNDP Yōgam as the 'Church' of the Īlavas. The introduction of the 'marriage notices' which can be sent from one branch (Śākha) of the SNDP Yōgam to another, the contribution of Rs.10/- at the time of death in a family and the collection of subscription (Re 1/- per month) from each Īlava family have raised the SNDP Yōgam to the status of an active religious organization not usually found in a Hindu community. In sociological literature a religious organization is called a 'Church' where its members are united by the fact that they think in the same way in regard to the sacred world and its relation with the profane world and by the fact that they translate their
common ideas into common practices'. Narāyaṇa Guru was very particular to organize the Ilavas and he exhorted the members to find strength in their organization. The Guru who was friendly with the Christians, the Muslims and the Buddhists understood the significance of the 'church' for a particular community. The Ilavas at Murukkumpuḷa observed how the church unites the Latin Christians. The SNDP Sākha assumed the status of the church when it started helping the Ilavas to be united under its banner, to act uniformly in the case of marriage or death rituals and seek its verdict in all matters pertaining to the community. This role of the SNDP Sākha at Murukkumpuḷa will be discussed again in a different light in the next section where temple worship and festivals are dealt with.

The process of change among the Ilavas of Murukkumpuḷa shows that they have not totally given up the traditional practices. At the same time they show openness to change. As seen in the case of death ritual, the change was gradual, but the change was sufficient to give freedom to the individual from the traditional and authoritarian character of the older pattern. The assumption of the higher responsibility of the individual brought with it also a higher appreciation of individual dignity. This

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2 Narāyaṇa Guru met several Buddhists at Śrī Laṅka.
process did not wipe away the religious dimension of the rituals but in certain ways enhanced it. The process of modernity necessitated an accommodation of change and a reorientation of values. Nārāyaṇa Guru was an advocate of change and made the process legitimate. After him the SNDP Yōgam acted not only as an agent of change but also as a control system. Perceived as an organization of the people, it introduces change and maintains a uniformity in the ritual practices among the Īlavas which again makes change appear legitimate. Many of the changes were not suggested initially either by Nārāyaṇa Guru or the SNDP Yōgam, but their general advocacy of change legitimizes the overall process and gives it an acceptable religious atmosphere.

The pressures of modern life involving both Secularization and Westernization are evident among the people, especially the educated and those who have travelled widely. Their influence on traditional society cannot be ignored. The process of modernization as it has emerged among the Īlavas does not entail antagonism towards such pressures. Instead a process of selection and integration is being carried out. In this process people feel that the place of religion is not being ignored.

Religion in the form of family ritual has undergone major changes, but it is still seen as a dynamic
force keeping the members together, emphasizing the freedom and dignity of the individual, strengthening his social and communal bonds and sense of responsibility.

2. Temples and Festivals: Carriers of Traditions in Modern Times

Religious centres (temples) and rituals (festivals) are discussed here with a view to study the process of change in the community life of the Īlavas. Temples and festivals are carriers of the traditional life of a locality.

Temples are centres of religious activity. Temple rites and festivals reflect the values of the people in a particular locality. These ceremonies not only form an intimate part of the religious and cultural life of the people, but also act as carriers of traditional beliefs and practices. In the ever-shifting 'present' people change and so do their religious practices. Showing both resilience and adaptiveness, religious activities exhibit both the structures of more lasting forms of meaning and the changing surface of lived situations. This two fold process of preserving and adapting can be clearly seen in the temple structures and the temple festivals in a place like Murukkumpūla.
The temples at Murukkumpula are found near the backwaters and creeks. It may be that the water transportation of the earlier period indicated such venues for temple, providing people with easy access to them, or it may have been the case that waterways were considered sacred. According to Thurston the Ilavas had the practice of paying homage to a spirit called Kāyalil Daivam or the deity of backwaters.¹

(a) Kōlimaṭa Temple

Among the temples at Murukkumpula, the Kōlimaṭa, the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara and the Puttenkōvil temples are selected for study. The Kōlimaṭa temple is located on an elevated place near the creek in Ward I.² Ward III and Ward IV nearby are higher in elevation than Ward I. It is probable that these places were once thick woods and the natives were afraid of going out at night.

The chief deity at Kōlimaṭa temple is Sāštā. Other deities such as Gaṇapatī, Trimūrti, Nāgar, Māṭan, Yakṣas and Rakṣas are also worshipped here. Yakṣas are considered

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¹Thurston, E., Castes & Tribes of Southern India, II, 1909, p.410
²See the lay-out map of the temple and plate No.8.
deities of vegetation possessing life giving power.\textsuperscript{1} They are also considered mountain spirits. There is no image of Yakṣas in this temple but only a masonry platform. Devotees usually offer *kumkum* (red powder), perfumes and flowers for the Yakṣas.

Rakṣas are fierce deities whom the people worship with fear. They are believed to enter the body of women and drink their blood if not propitiated properly. They are also considered to make women barren. The temple priest, who is a Brāhmaṇ, said that a light is kept burning for the Rakṣas of the temple every evening and special pūjās are conducted on every Saturday.\textsuperscript{2}

The word Māṭan signifies 'he who is like a cow'. People believe that he is black in colour and his body is covered with hair. He is said to strike men and cattle with sudden illness and assumes any shape. In case of accidents at night, people generally say that the injured person is struck by Māṭan. In such cases he is worshipped for relief. An image of Māṭan is not generally made. Mateer reports that the natives of Travancore worshipped


Kōlimaṭa Temple

1. Gaṇapati Kōvil
2. Trimūrti Kōvil
3. Well
4. Pācaka-śāla (kitchen)
5. Rakṣas
6. Garbhagṛha
7. Dīkpalakar
8. Paṭippura
9. Nāgakkallu
10. Dīpastambha
11. Granite stone for breaking coconuts
12. Māṭan Tara
13. Yakṣas
14. Stage
15. Devasvam Board Office
16. Snake shrine (Nāgar)
17. Outer Gate.
Māṭan traditionally with offerings of fowls, goats, fruits and flowers.¹ The devotees at the Sāśṭā temple now offer only tender coconut, milk and malar (rice pop) to this image.

Nāgar (Snake) worship is a significant aspect of the religious life of the Hindu Community in Kerala.² Several temples have images of snakes on granite stones placed over a sarpakaḷḷu (a plain granite stone) in the woods.³ Snakes were believed responsible for the fertility or barrenness of women. According to Samuel Mateer, offerings are generally made in return for relief from sickness or trouble of some kind.⁴ Devotees at Murukkumpula can be seen propitiating the snakes by offering nīrum pālum (a combination of fruits, flour, milk, saffron powder and the like) every evening.

¹Mateer, Samuel., The Land of Charity, 1871, p.195.
²A Serpent kavu has been a prominent feature of the houses of almost all affluent Nāirs. Snake worship is done in almost all temples. At Maṇṇāṛaśāla Temple in Kerala there are more than 30,000 images of snakes. Menon, A. Sreedhara., Cultural History of Kerala - An Introduction, 1978, p.31.
³The snake God is believed to grant children to the family and promote domestic prosperity. Leprosy and death of a child are believed to be the consequence of killing a snake. Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VII, 1909, p.105.
The kōvil (place of worship) for Ganapati (God who is believed to remove all obstacles) is on the southwestern corner and the kōvil for Trimurti (Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva) is on the northwestern corner of the temple. The devotees worship these deities as they come to worship the deity Śāśta.

Śāśta is considered the chief of ghosts whom he restrains from inflicting harm on human beings. Followed by his retinue Śāśta is believed to go hunting at midnight. He rides with sword in hand over the hills and dales to clear the country of all obnoxious spirits.\(^1\) Anantakrishna Iyer says that people propitiate Śāśta in order to avert all kinds of pestilential diseases prevailing in the villages, to prevent failure of monsoons and to keep off evil demons.\(^2\)

It is probable that the stone images of Gaṇapati, Trimūrti and Nāgar were installed at a later date at the Kōlimaṭa temple. The worship of Māṭan now takes place with the offerings of tender coconut, milk and malar. These are indications of the process of change taking place in this temple. This temple does not have a gōpura (tower), vimāna (structure above the central sanctum), balipītha (platform

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1\) Iyer, L.K. Anantha Krishna., The Cochin Tribes and Caste, I, 1909, p.312. Also see Plate No.9.

2\) Ibid., p.314.
for offerings) flag staff or kalyāṇa maṇḍapa (hall for auspicious events). The garbhagrha (sanctum sanctorum) is on the nālukettu style (indicative of a traditional high caste temple structure) and Śāstā is represented here by a plain granite stone. According to an oral tradition, this stone was first discovered by an Ilava woman who reported it to the local Nāir chief. After consulting an astrologer, the Nāir chief built the temple at the present site. The older Nāir respondents said that the garbhagrha was originally a thatched building which was tile roofed later in 1930s. At present the temple is managed by the Dēvasvam Board of the Government with the help of a local committee consisting mainly of Nāirs.

The Śāstā temple has its annual utsava (festival) for two days in the month of Mīnām (March-April) on Pūram and Utaram nakṣatras. On the first day the caparisoned elephant is taken to the Hindu houses in the nearby places for a ceremony called parayetuppu (collection of grains for the temple expense). The Velāns (potters) bring clay figures of face, hand, leg, arm, animals and the like to

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1 There is no written record about this tradition. Several people narrated this orally at the time of the interview. Paper Nos. 009, 050, 219, 358, et.al.

2 These are astral dates. Information regarding these are from the temple notice and interview with the temple-priest. Cassette 66.
the temple for sale in the evening.¹ Devotees buy some of these and place them on the sides of the garbhagṛha after worshipping the deity.

At dusk, the caparisoned elephant is brought in front of the paṭippura and the temple-priest conducts dipārādhanā (worship: waving of the lamp in circles) in front of a clay figure of a dog (vehicle of Śāstā).² The clay figure of a dog is then carried with the elephant to the Muṇṭakkal-kāvu by the side of the creek and paddy fields. People carrying lights called tīvetṭi go in front of the procession. On reaching the place, a pūjā is conducted and devotees are given some time for worship. Then the clay figure of the dog is brought to the main gate of the Śāstā temple through the same route. The temple priest and the trustee of the temple receive the procession by placing Nirapara (a bushel of paddy) and conducting dipārādhanā (worship with light) to the accompaniment of pādasvaram (instrumental music).³ Ceremonially, the priest

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¹These are a group of low caste people living in Ward III & IV. Vēḷān is a title assumed by some Kuśavans (potters). Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VII, 1909, p.342. See plate number 10.

²The clay figure is brought to the temple by Vēḷāns every year. The dog is considered as the vehicle of Śāstā p.376.

³Sreedhara Menon says that such instrumental music expresses the all powerful nature of the Supreme God. Menon, A. Sreedhara., Cultural Heritage of Kerala-An Introduction, 1978, p.103.
gives a handful of grain to the trustee and he receives it after giving daksīna (money-gift) to the priest.

By this time young girls well dressed and adorned with flower garlands and crown will be ready with tālappoli to accompany the deity in procession. They circumambulate the cuttambalam (house or wall enclosing the garbhagṛha). Once this is over, the priest carries the clay figure of the dog to the garbhagṛha and the devotees offer their offerings.

The group of people called Vēḷāns (potters) have a prominent place in this temple festival. The clay-figures used by the devotees and that of the dog used for the temple festival are brought by them to the temple. Vēḷāns are animists and their gods are represented by stones

1 See Plate No.11.

2 Tālam is a metal dining dish. For tālappoli an earthen lamp burns in it. The lamp rests on a thin bed of rice spread inside the dish. There will also be coconut and flowers in this dish. Srinivas, M.N., Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of Southern India, New York: Asia Publishing House, 1952, p.75.

3 The word vela means work. As to the origin of velans Thurston has the following story: 'Once upon a time, when Paramēśwara and his wife Pārvati were amusing themselves, the latter chanced to make an elephant with earth which was accidently trodden on by the former, whence arose a man who stood bowing before them'. Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VII, 1909, p.343.
located under trees to whom they offer tender coconuts, rice pop (malar), jaggery and plantains.  

Rama Chandra Rao says that the oldest shrines are those that have been built over rocks and stones. Stone-worship, animal worship (Māṭan), use of the clay figures and the maintenance of a wood (kāvu) suggest that the Kōlimāṭa temple had a tribal origin. The worship of Māṭan, Yakṣas and Sāstā are significant to an agricultural people. Agricultural products such as paddy, coconut, plantain and jaggery are given by the people at the Parayeṭuppu (collection of grains) ceremony. The festival falls after the harvest in January-February and therefore people offer these agricultural products as a thanks offering. They consider it a blessing that the temple procession to Munṭakkal-kāvu goes through their paddy fields and coconut grove.

Though the oral tradition and the temple festival associate the Ėlavas and other lower castes with the Sāstā temple, traditionally the lower castes were considered untouchables by Nāirs and other higher castes, and were not allowed to take a bath in the temple pond or enter the

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1Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VII, 1909, pp.354 & 359.
temple premises. If they had offerings to make, they had to leave them on a platform near the outer gate. In the case of offerings of rice and coconuts, they were required to bring only unhusked ones, lest in husking they pollute them.\footnote{Prasādam (sacred items given out after temple worship) was not handed to them, but thrown out at them. Some respondents said that higher castes carrying rice from the temple used to throw it away when some lower castes polluted it by their touch. Others reported that the higher castes punished the lower castes for entering the temple premises or violating other caste rules. Because the population of the area is predominantly Iḷava and Iḷavas are no longer economically dependent on Nāirs, worship at this Nāir temple has declined and Iḷava temples have become more prominent at Murukkumpulā.} Prasādam (sacred items given out after temple worship) was not handed to them, but thrown out at them. Some respondents said that higher castes carrying rice from the temple used to throw it away when some lower castes polluted it by their touch. Others reported that the higher castes punished the lower castes for entering the temple premises or violating other caste rules. Because the population of the area is predominantly Iḷava and Iḷavas are no longer economically dependent on Nāirs, worship at this Nāir temple has declined and Iḷava temples have become more prominent at Murukkumpulā.

\textit{(b) Iraṭṭakulāṅgara Temple}

Traditionally prominent Iḷava families had their own temples where they conducted worship by themselves. In southern Kerala, most of these temples were Devī temples. Murukkumpulā had three such temples belonging to the Pāṇur family, the Teṅgarvilākam family and the Erayil family. Of the three Devī temples, the one belonging to the Teṅgarvilākam family gradually grew into prominence as the
Iraṭṭakuḷaṅgara Temple

1. Prākāra (Compound wall)
2. Mūrti Taṇḍa (Yogīśvaran)
3. Kitchen space
4. Well
5. Garbhagṛha
6. Namaskāra-maṇḍapa
7. Karimkali
8. Gaṇapati kōvil
9. Maṛuta
10. Māṭan
11. Al-Tara
12. Taṇṭān Taṇḍa
13 & 14. Temple ponds
15. Well
16. Stage
village temple. This is now popularly known as Iraṭṭakulaṅgara Bhagavati (Devī) temple. (See Plate No.12).

The name of the temple Iraṭṭakulaṅgara literally means 'on the bank of two ponds'. Accordingly there are two ponds in a row east of the temple one lying to the east of the other. The layout of the temple reveals that the Īḷavas, the Maṇṇāns and the Taṇṭāns have separate places of worship within the same temple complex. (See Plate Nos. 14 & 15). There are only masonry platforms where the Taṇṭāns and the Maṇṇāns have their worship. Of these the latter one is around a pipal tree and nearer to the place of worship of the Īḷavas.

Two major shrines are enclosed inside the compound wall of the Īḷava temple. One is a low thatched building with a front porch facing east. (See Plate No.13). It has wooden railings but there is no pratiṣṭā (image) and the structure has no pranāla (water outlet from garbhagṛha). People generally speak of this shrine in relation to Yogīśvaran.¹ Some informants said that according to this oral tradition Yogīśvaran was a Brahman yogī who came to Murukkumpula from Tamil Nātu, built this temple and left his body through samādhi on the spot.

¹As Lord of Yogis, it denotes Śiva but the respondents did not mention that name. There is no image inside.
The other shrine facing north has an image of Devī. The respondents said that there was a wooden structure with thatched roof which was demolished about twenty years back, to make way for the present concrete structure. This structure has a vimāna with a finial and a pranāla. There is a rectangular namaskāra maṇḍapa in front of this shrine on the north and a Gaṇapati kōvil on the east of the Devī shrine. This temple does not have a gōpura, flag staff and balīpiṭha.

Ilavas of southern Kerala worship goddess Bhagavati who was believed to have helped them in their military undertakings.¹ The goddess is considered traditionally as one who presides over the demons and causes diseases like small-pox, cholera and plague. She is understood both as inflicting the epidemics and as protecting the village from them.

The oral tradition of Ḫrattakuḻaṅgara Temple claims that their deity (Bhagavati) is a sister of Koṭunγallūr Devī, other sisters being the deity at Sārkara in Chirayinkīl, 7kms. to the north and at Āṭṭukāl in Trivandrum 25kms. to the south of Murukkumpula. The

¹Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, II, 1909, p.400. According to Sreedhara Menon, in the pre-Aryan and pre-Vedic religion she was worshipped as Korraṉai or the War Goddess by the hill tribes and predatory classes. Menon, A. Sreedhara., Social and Cultural History of Kerala, 1979, p.189.
worship of Koṭuṅgallūr Devī (Bhagavati) is the customary cultus of all castes of Hindus, with the exception of Brāhmans, in Kerala and her temple is at Koṭuṅgallūr on the coastal areas of the old Cochin province. Traditionally each Ilava temple, according to Thurston, was under an obligation to contribute yearly gifts to Koṭuṅgallūr temple.¹ This was also a popular place of pilgrimage for Ilavas. Each devotee under vow carried with him a fowl which was beheaded at the shrine during the festival in February-March. Temples at Āṭṭukāl and Sārkara are two popular Bhagavati temples in southern Kerala. The relation of Iraṭṭakulaṅgara Devī with Koṭuṅgallūr, Āṭṭukāl and Sārkara is probably to signify its prominence in southern Kerala.

Marumakkattāyam was a traditional practice of the Ilavas. This was changed to makkattāyam by the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru and the Ilava Bill of 1925. However, the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara Temple (owned by a family) in its ownership and administration follows the marumakkattāyam pattern handing over the trusteeship of the temple from Kāraṇavan to Anantaravan (kāraṇavan's sister's son: nephew). Iraṭṭakulaṅgara Temple in this way reveals the earlier customs of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula.

¹Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, II, 1909, p.104.
The annual utsava of the Irattakušṭagara temple lasts for seven days in Kumbham (February-March) ending on the Tiruvāṭira nakṣatra. A few weeks before the festival commences the temple authorities send two representatives from the temple with red linen, trident and sword to the Hindu houses to announce the festival days and to collect paddy and coconuts for the expenses at the temple.¹

The festival starts by singing religious ballads called Tōttampāṭṭu.² This singing takes place in a small pandal called mutippura erected in front of the Devi temple outside the enclosure wall on the northern side. Menon writing about Kāli worship in Kerala mentions that mutippura used to be constructed in the fields after harvest to sing the Tōttampāṭṭu for seven days.³ There a group of specialists sing this song. This song is also called Bhadrakālipāṭṭu. It lasts for seven days and narrates the birth of Kāli and the killing of the demon Dāruka.

According to Choondal Chumar, Tōttampāṭṭu originated with the Kaṇṇaki legend (narrated in the Tamil

¹Paper Nos.50, 177. Cassette No.46.

²Paper No.088. Cassette No.59. This is not written down but memorized by hearing. It is not sung at a stretch, but a portion of it on every day extending upto seven days.

epic Cilappatikāram) and flourished under the influence of
the Kāli cult in Kerala.¹ This branch of folk songs
consists of two parts, the first part dealing with the
killing of Dāruka and the second part describing how
Kaṇṇaki became Bhadrakāli. The song recitals of the lower
caste Hindus who proceed to Koṭuṅgallūr Temple from all
over Kerala on the Meenam Bharanī festival, according to
Chumar, support the traditional belief that the Goddess
Kaṇṇaki is installed at Koṭuṅgallūr Temple.² The
respondents at Murukkumpūla were not able to explain the
meaning of the Tōttampāṭṭu. The specialists who knew the
song by heart were singing portions of it each day and they
revealed that they memorized the song by hearing.³ Upon

¹According to one version of the story Kaṇṇaki gave
her anklets to her husband Kōvālan to sell them and start a
business to get rid of their poverty. He took them to a
goldsmith and asked him to fix a price. It was a time, the
Queen of Madura had lost her anklets. The goldsmith
reported the matter to the king who in a fit of rage
executed Kōvālan. Kannaki in her grief proved to the king
that her anklet was filled with jewels while that of the
queen contained pearls. Realizing the irreparable error,
the king committed suicide. Fire vomiting from her eyes,
Kaṇṇaki ran to the goldsmith, plucked off her left breast
and threw it there reducing the whole city to ashes. She
then entered Kerala and committed suicide in
Western-ghats. Chumar, Choondal., Studies in Folklore of

²According to Menon the Cilapāṭikāram mentions the
consecration of the Kaṇṇaki Temple at Koṭuṅgallūr by the
Cēra ruler Senkuṭṭuvan. Menon, A. Sreedhara., Cultural

³Choondal Chumar agrees that Tōttampāṭṭukal is
never written down but learnt orally. Chumar, Choondal.,
enquiry they interpreted the song in line with the story in 
Līṅga Purāṇa about the slaying of Dāruka by Kālī.

According to Linga Purāṇa,¹ Dāruka the demon 
attained heroism through his penance. Gifted with the boon 
that he would be killed only by a female, he killed gods 
and Brāhmans. At this instant Pārvatī entered the body of 
Śiva and reappeared as Kālī from the poison of Śiva's 
throat.² She slew the demon Dāruka. Before the 
blood-thirsty Kālī, Śiva appeared as an infant in the 
battlefield. Kālī seeing the infant nursed him and the boy 
quaffed her wrath along with her breast milk. Śiva 
assuming his original form, then danced with Kālī.³

While this song is sung in the muṭippūra over seven 
days, several other activities take place in the temple. 
Apart from the daily worship at the temple (Devi 
temple) there is a function called ilapāṭum pūjā on the night of 
the sixth day. In this function, the women of the locality 
bring a harvest- basket containing malar (rice-pop), aval

¹The Līṅga Purāṇa, Translated by a Board of 

²Pārvatī is the daughter of the mountain Himalaya 
and wife of Śiva.

³See Kinsley, David. Hindu Goddesses: Visions of 
the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition, Los 
(pressed rice), plantain, coconut, jaggery and the like as offerings to the goddess and the priest conducts the pūjā.¹

Early in the morning at 3 a.m. on the seventh day there is a celebration called Gurussi, as an offering to the Devī. For this function three spots outside the enclosure wall are cleaned and sprinkled with punyāham (holy water). At each spot certain columns are marked on the ground (Śrīyantra)² with tender coconut leaves. The temple priest who is a Brāhman (since 1984) does not participate in this. Instead an Ilava priest assisted by another conducts a pūjā by ringing the bell and waving a camphor light towards the deity. The priests sprinkle water on the materials kept there. Then a cotton wick tied to the tip of a piece of coconut stipule is lighted and placed on the spout of the kinki. Taking a cucumber and a knife and showing them to the goddess, the priest cuts the cucumber into two at one blow and drops them into the water in the basin. The juice of the fruit together with some lime paste and yellow powder (turmeric powder) are mixed with the water (the combination gives red colour). The water is then splashed with both hands towards the goddess and the basin is turned upside down allowing the entire water to flow on the ground. While the ceremony is

¹See Plate No.16.

in progress the assistant throws camphor powder called Telli into the lighted cotton wick intensifying its flame from time to time.\(^1\) A coconut is broken into two on top of the basin and a cotton wick lamp is lighted in one of the broken coconut pieces with which dipārādhana is conducted. This concludes the ceremony at that spot. This is repeated at the other two spots. There are two columns on the second spot and three columns at the third spot.

The third spot is arranged in a slightly different manner. An area is fenced on the east, north and west. A plantain tree is planted with branches of several other trees at the northern end.\(^2\) A wooden stool covered with red linen is placed in front of it and the sword of the deity from the garbhagrha is placed on it. At the open side on the south three drawings are done with the one at the centre having 20 small columns. Inside the fence at seven spots malar (pop rice) is kept on tripods made out of the midrib of the coconut leaf. The priest and his assistant conduct the ceremony as described earlier. Following this, the chief priest worships the sword and takes it in his hand while the music (Cendamălam) is played. He then circumambulates the plantain tree with the

\(^1\)The lighted cotton wick on a piece of coconut stipule represents the Goddess.

\(^2\)It gives the appearance of a shrub.
raised sword three times and cuts the tree into two with one blow.\(^1\) The sword is placed back and the priest takes the lighted cotton wick at the end of the coconut stipule, enflames it with camphor powder and throws it to the northern side over the cut plantain tree to indicate that the goddess has gone to Koṭuṅgallūr. The priest then takes the sword and hands it over to the manager of the temple. The manager receives it after giving dakṣiṇa to the priest and takes it back to the temple.

According to Thurston, the object of Gurussi is to appease the wrath of the goddess.\(^2\) Several respondents said that till about 55 years back calf, goat and fowls were sacrificed at Iraṭṭakulaṅgara temple.\(^3\) In the earlier days while blood-sacrifice was done, the pūjārī sat in the courtyard outside the temple garlanded with red flowers and wearing a red cloth. People brought goats and fowls and he sprinkled holy water on them. He sprinkled holy water on them. The priest then worshipped the sacrificial sword while the music of the drums were increased to the highest pitch. With a single well sharp placed stroke of the sword

\(^1\)It is auspicious to cut it with one blow. See Srinivas, M.N., Religion and Society among the Coorqs of Southern India, 1952, p.229

\(^2\)Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, VII, 1909, p.319.

\(^3\)Paper Nos. 371, 104, 002. Cassette No.46.
he sacrificed the animal and its blood was collected in a vessel. After killing all the animals and birds he baled out the blood towards the deity and turned the vessel upside down and that ended the ceremony. Devotees took the carcass for a feast in their homes.¹

This traditional practice is seen reflected in the present Gurussi ceremony.² This has significance for the story of the goddess Kāli killing Dāruka. Kāli is a blood thirsty deity and Gurussi recognizes her strength over the demon Dāruka. The three spots where Gurussi is conducted, represent three incidents: the killing of Dāruka, the dance with Śiva and the departure of Devī to Koṭuṅgallūr after leaving the sword and blessings in the temple.

Nārāyaṇa Guru did not like the idea of killing animals and splashing the blood to propitiate the deities. Though he spoke against it some people were reluctant to change their practices all of a sudden. Sētu Lakshmi Bāi (Regent of Travancore) (1924-1931) stopped animal sacrifices in temples by a law. The tradition-bound people


²The agricultural people had another meaning for this rite. To the goddess, who gave her vitality to nourish the crops, the devotees give blood, in the form of gurussi and tukkam, to reinvigorate her so that she will continue to give them food every year. See Kinsley, David., Hindu Goddesses, 1986, p.113.
satisfied themselves by cutting a cucumber, making a reddish liquid from lime and turmeric powder and splashing it towards the deity. Although there was a great crowd in the temple compound when this ceremony was observed in 1985, very few attended this ceremony. Clearly once animal sacrifice was only simulated there was a decline in the significance of this ceremony in the life of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula.

By the time Gurussi is over on the northern side, Tanțan tara on the eastern side gets ready for the veiicappat tullal. The term veiicappat means one who throws a flood of light on any problem and tullal simply means 'dance'. According to Samuel Mateer veiicappat tullal is a common feature of lower caste worship in Hindu society.

The veiicappat with the Tanțan priest comes before the Yogisvaran shrine and worships the deity. After that the priest places his hand over the head of the veiicappat while centa music is played. Gradually the veiicappat starts shivering and then starts his tullal in a rhythmic choreography. He gets a cane from the garbhagṛha of

2Mateer, Samuel., The Land of Charity, 1871, p.215.
3See Plate Nos.17 to 19.
Yogisvaran temple and puts it around his neck and proceeds to the Tantan tara. His tullal is continued there with the accompaniments of centamalam. The people garland him one by one and some offer fruits, flowers, grains and fowl. Then the attendant at the tantan tara boils water in a large bell-metal vessel. When the water boils, oil is poured on top of it. Velicappat then takes the boiling water and oil in his hands and pours them over his head and body. He repeats it later with the bunch of flowers of the arrack palm smearing it all over his body. In between he is given a drink of tender coconut juice and that too is poured over his body. He then turns the bell-metal vessel (vārppu) upside down with his bare hands and dances on the vessel on his bare feet. The velicappat then approaches the devotees and makes his prophecies. He listens to the prayers and petitions of the devotees and suggests remedial measures or assures them of the blessings of deity. He together with the priest blesses the devotees with bhasmam (vibhūti). Parents bring children to receive the blessings. When this is over the velicappat together with the priest goes back to the Yogisvaran shrine. The priest offers a portion of the offerings to the deity there. Then the velicappat blesses the manager of the temple and his relatives. This ceremony concludes when the velicappat worships the deity and falls back as if the spirit has left him. The ceremony is attended by a large crowd which is
anxious to see the velicappat dance and to receive his prophecies and his personal blessings.

Velicappat is free to declare what he thinks, bless or curse anyone and order any particular behaviour from any person in the region. It has already been noted that Velicappat who is from a lower caste (Taṭan) blesses the manager of the temple who is from a higher caste (Īlava). Again when the offering from the taṭan taṇa is brought to the Yōgīśvaran shrine, that is received in the temple. In those days when caste rules were practised these events had sociological significance. Such rituals continue to provide a safe means of handling latent forms of tension between the high and the low castes.

Another ceremony that is performed during the festival at Iraṭṭakulaṅgara temple is called tūkkam. There were 98 boys participating in this ceremony in 1985. These children stayed in the temple from the fourth day of the festival and participated in all pūjās on each day.

On the seventh day afternoon the children are led to the nearby temple Ėra by the priest of the temple who carries the sword and the trident of Devī and is followed by the caparisoned elephant. (Plate No.20). Once the children dress up there, the manager of the Ėra temple blesses them with holy ash which the children receive after
giving daksīṇa. The children then proceed to the Devī Temple. In this procession the temple priest carries the sword and trident, the Ambatțan holds a ceremonial umbrella and the caparisoned elephant follows them. They circumambulate the temple and the children wait for their turn to swing in the tūkkavillu (car used for hook swinging).1

As his turn comes, each boy worships Devī and the temple priest blesses him with a garland.2 Then while hooks are tied to his back a drop of blood is taken from his body before the Devī shrine, and he is led to the tūkka-villu. Two boys are hung at a time in front of the Devī shrine and the cart is drawn round the temple. When the cart comes before the Yōgisvāran shrine in the east the boys worship the deity. (Plate Nos. 21 and 22.)

If the swinger is performing this ceremony on behalf of an infant child, then while the cart stops before the Yōgisvāran shrine, the child is handed over to the swinger who carries the child a little distance before giving it back to the parents. This is called Pillayetuttu-tūkkam. Tūkkam is performed in fulfilment of the vows made by the

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1 If there are girls under vow they simply circumambulate the temple.
2 Children give daksīṇa to the priest before getting the garland.
devotees to Kāli.\textsuperscript{1} Traditionally the performer underwent strict penance for forty one days, during which period he abstained from meat, intoxicants and sexual pleasures. He worshipped the deity daily and his body was rubbed with oil every morning. On the day of tūkkam, in front of Kāli, an iron was run through the muscles on his back and he was hooked to the Villu (car) which was drawn around the temple.\textsuperscript{2} Now this ceremony is no longer a self-mortification rite as it used to be earlier.

Interviews revealed that some families considered it a privilege and a right to send one member from the family for tūkkam every year. As described earlier, the boys for hook-swinging ceremony observe Vṛta (penance) only for a few days and the practice of taking blood from the body is slowly dying out. The hook is not driven through the muscle these days but it is tied to the body with the help of an unbleached cloth which actually holds the weight of the boy.

Nārāyaṇa Guru was against self mortification of human beings in the name of religion and he preached against the ceremony of tūkkam. The forces of tradition were, however, strong and the people were unwilling to give


\textsuperscript{2}This is understood as the devotee offering himself to please the goddess. See Mateer, Samuel., Native Life in Travancore, 1883, P.93.
up their traditional practice. Blood-shed was prohibited during the reign of Sētu Lakshmi Bāi (1924-1931). As a result the people continue the tūkkam in a form where there is no bloodshed.

On the same day at night the ladies participate in a function called poṅkāla.¹ For preparing pāyassam (rice-pudding) in this ceremony, the ladies bring the necessary materials, utensils and fuel from their homes and prepare the kitchen space one after the other in rows on the northern side of the temple, facing the Kālī deity. There will also be a kitchen space for the temple priest right in front of the namaskāra maṇṭapa. At the auspicious hour the priest carries the fire from the garbhagrha and lights the fire wood in his kitchen space and sets the vessel to prepare poṅkāla. All the ladies, one by one, light the fire wood and prepare poṅkāla with rice, coconut, jaggery and water. When they finish cooking the priest comes out with punyāham (holy water) and flowers and sprinkles each preparation.² The holy poṅkāla is then distributed to all the assembled people.

¹Thurston calls this Deśakurati and describes a woman taking all the food-stuffs to the temple and making an offering of food to the deity before dinner. Thurston, E., Castes and Tribes of Southern India, II, 1909, p.401. Also see Plate No.23.

The collection of the grains while announcing the temple festival, the ceremony of ilapāṭum pūjā and the people participating in pohkāla suggests that the Īlavas at Murukkumpuḷa understand Kāli as an agricultural deity. The temple festival is also a harvest festival and the people offer paddy, coconuts, plantain, jaggery and the like as thanks offering. Kāli is considered to be feeding the people and this is symbolically represented when people participate in the pohkāla-feast and the boys preparing for hook-swinging are fed for a few days in the temple.¹

Following pohkāla, around midnight, there is a procession of the deity around the temple. This procession is led by young girls, who are well-dressed and adorned with gold ornaments and flowers, carrying tālappoli. At the end of the procession the girls give their offerings, the priest conducts the pūjā at the garbhagṛha and closes the temple for the next seven days.² Pohkāla and Tālappoli celebrate the victory of the goddess in which the devotees participate.

¹Kurup, K.K.N., Aryan and Dravidian Elements in Malabar Folklore, Trivandrum: Kerala Historical Society, 1977, p.8. (The goddess is understood as Annapūrṇa).

²On the opening day the people gather again and the ladies participate in pohkāla.
Both the Kōlimaṭa temple and the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara temple indicate the traditional patterns of worship of the people at Murukkumpuḷa. Initially both these temples did not have idols. While Kōlimaṭa temple, traditionally controlled by Nāir families, kept the Īlavas and other lower castes outside the temple wall, the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara temple, owned by an Īlava family, also kept the lower castes outside its wall. These are indicative of the traditional stratification of the society and the pollution distance traditionally honoured by the people at Murukkumpuḷa. The services of the Taṇṭān were required to obtain the coconuts and firewoods for the daily worship at the temple. The services of the Maṇṇān were required to get washed clothes for cotton wicks (considered ritually pure by their wash) to light the temple. Therefore they were given separate places of worship in the same temple complex, but outside the wall. These practices thus continue to be carriers of traditional beliefs and practices.

A process of Sanskritization is gradually taking place in the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara temple. This is visible in the installation of the Devī image and Ganapati image in the temple. The construction of the new temple structures with prañāla and vimāṇa and the appointment of a Brāhman as the temple priest since 1984 are also indicative of the
Sanskritization process. However, the services of an Ilava priest are still required for the performance of the Gurussi, as the Brāhman priest abstains from such a practice of the Ilavas. As described earlier some variations are visible in the traditional practices such as gurussi and tūkkam. These temples and the festivals thus indicate both resilience and adaptiveness as they face forces of modernization.

Nārāyaṇa Guru who wanted to reform the religious practices of the Ilavas did not like practices such as gurussi, tūkkam and tullal and the worship of deities such as Māṭan and Maṛuta. He taught the people that killing animals (in gurussi) and shedding blood (in tūkkam) to propitiate the goddess and practicing tullal are not the essentials of religion. He added that the worship of Māṭan and Maṛuta are unscriptural. He advised the people to become enlightened by wisdom. Since the force of tradition was strong and the Ilavas were not well educated, it was not easy for Nārāyaṇa Guru to stop all of a sudden all the above mentioned practices in a village temple like Iraṭṭakulaṅgara. So Nārāyaṇa Guru decided to attempt his reforms in a separate place where he could draw the people of Murukkumpula to his reformatory teachings.
The third temple discussed here, Puttenkōvil, is different from the previous ones because it represents the religious reform movement initiated by Nārāyaṇa Guru.

When Nārāyaṇa Guru visited Murukkumpūla (around 1900) the Ilavas were becoming more conscious of Sanskritic religious practices and some of them were anxious to break the caste barriers against their worship in temples owned by the upper castes. Some of the Ilavas started observing Vṛtas or vows of which Monday Vṛta has been significant. Married people observe this Vṛta for the welfare of the partner, and the unmarried do it in order to obtain a good marriage. This Vṛta requires the person to worship at a Śiva temple and take food received from there.¹ As Murukkumpūla had no Śiva temple, the Ilavas went to Kaṭhinamkuḷam Śiva temple for this observance. This temple was constructed by the ruler of Vēṇāṭ in the 13th century. The kings of Travancore regularly worshipped there and the Brahman priests continue to serve in that temple. This is the nearest Brāhman temple for the people of Murukkumpūla where Sanskritic deities are worshipped. The Ilavas considered it prestigious to worship there, but restrictions were severe.

¹ Cassette No.77.
Respondents in 1985 could still remember incidents where early in the century, Ilavas were ridiculed or insulted at both the Kōlīmaṭā and Kaṭhinamkuḷam temples. As a result of such repeated incidents, Ilavas of Murukkumpuḷa desired a Śiva temple of their own. It was a time when Nārāyaṇa Guru was consecrating Śiva temples at different parts of Kerala. The Ilava leaders asked him to consecrate a temple at Murukkumpuḷa.

In the 1920s Nārāyaṇa Guru's idea of the temple was that it should be an educational centre for the public. So when he came for the consecration of the temple at Murukkumpuḷa in 1921, he brought a disc in which was written 'Satyam, Dharmam, Dayā, Śānti' meaning 'Truth, Duty, Compassion and Peace'. The Kāli temple of the Pānur family whose deity had been represented by a granite stone was chosen as the one to be rededicated. The stone was removed and the Guru installed the disc in its place. The local leaders were not quite satisfied in not having a Śiva-liṅgam. Later the Ilavas at Murukkumpuḷa wanted a Śiva liṅgam to be consecrated along with the disc, so the Guru reluctantly asked his disciple to do that in deference.

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1 Paper Nos. 018, 028, 050.
2 The Pānur family was willing to give the temple. They also supported a priest by regularly giving rice to the temple. Paper Nos. 002, 028, 104, 193.
to the wishes of the people. The proper name of this temple is Śrī Kālakanṭhēśvara even though it is locally known as Puttenkōvil, literally meaning a 'new temple'.

Nārāyaṇa Guru wanted temples to be casteless religious institutions. He exhorted the people to discontinue the use of blood and liquor and the slaughter of animals in temple worship and festivals. He envisaged temples as a centre of illumination where people can practice virtues such as Truth, Duty, Compassion and Peace. The Guru wanted temples to have spacious rooms where people could congregate and where discourses could be conducted. He advised his followers to check the expenses connected with temple festivals and utilize the money received in the temple for the benefit of the poor. He suggested the construction of bathing facilities instead of temple tanks and wanted flower gardens in the temple precincts where people could sit and meditate.

The teachings of Nārāyana Guru did not receive an automatic response from the Īlavas at Murukkumpuḷa. The process of change over the following decades can be seen by looking at the temple lay-out as it evolved and at the festival in the temple as it developed.

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1It was a Śiva liṅgam which Guru consecrated at Aruvippuram in the year 1888.
Puttenkōvil

1. Garbhagṛha
2. Namaskāra Maṇḍapa
3. Aṣṭadikpālakar
4. Cuttambalam
5. Porch
6. Well
7. Kitchen space
8. Murukan
9. Dēvi
10. & 11. Store Rooms

12. Homam Vēdi
13. Śrī Ayyappan
14. Flag staff
15. Anakotṭil
16. Gaṇapati
17. Nāgar
18. Guru Maṇḍir
19. Sadyāklayam (Reception Hall)
20. SNDP Śāka Office
21. Room of the priest
22. Stage
23. Bāhyabhitti (outerwall)
The Puttenkōvil faces west and its structure is similar to the Śiva temple at Kaṭhinamkulam. (Plate Nos.24-26). The garbhagṛha which has a vimāna and praṇāla houses the Śivalingam and the disc placed by the Guru. The Namaskāramaṇḍapam has Nandi, the vehicle of Śiva facing the east. The cuttambalam has the idol of Murukan (son of Śiva and Parvati) on the north, a wooden platform covered with linen representing Devī on the east, the picture of Ayyappan (Śaṭṭā) on the west and a rectangular pit for conducting homam on the south. As one steps out of the porch of the cuttambalam there is the newly built flag staff. Immediately on the west of it is the ānakoṭṭil (area for the temple elephant) which is also used as a place to conduct marriages. On the south of the ānakoṭṭil is the newly built Ganapati kōvil and to its east the Nagar taṇa. On the north of ānakoṭṭil is the Gurumandir (built in 1980) which houses the shrine of Nārāyaṇa Guru in his sitting posture. To its east is a large hall used as a 'Reception Hall' with an office of the SNDP Śākha. The temple had a pond on the western side near the paddy-field which is now almost filled up. Instead of that, there is a newly built well on the north-western corner of the SNDP office. Now the temple committee is making an attempt to construct an auditorium for which the foundation stone has already been laid on January 30, 1985.
The Puttenkōvil stands as a fulfilment of the aspirations of the Īlavas at Murukkumpula. As an untouchable and polluting caste they were once denied entrance into the temples owned by the higher castes. So when the Īlavas of Murukkumpula established a Śiva temple, they followed the model of the Śiva Temple at Kaṭṭhinamkulam not only in laying out the temple structure but also the conduct of the festivals. In the beginning they had the service of an Īlava priest to conduct pūjā in their temple. It was difficult to get properly trained Īlava priests for the temple. The people preferred a trained priest rather than a lay-person to minister in the temple. Later on, after the Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936, when Brāhmaṇ priests became available, one was employed in this temple. This was not against the teachings of Nārāyana Guru. This process indicates that Īlavas have now grown into a position of social recognition where they have not only temples of the Sanskritic model but also the social freedom to employ Brāhmaṇ priests.

The temple structure includes a Gurumandir constructed not in the traditional style of a temple but following a modern pattern with concrete pillars and roof, octagonal in shape and enclosed with glass panes. (Plate No.27). This is a deviation from the temple structure of the higher castes.
The Puthenkōvil has its annual festival (utsava) for ten days starting on the Kaṛttika nakṣatra and ending on the Utram nakṣatra in the month of Makaram (January-February). The festival starts with the hoisting of the flag on the first day evening. The flag that is used in this temple is a rectangular linen, yellow in colour. Apart from the daily pūjā, the deity is taken out for circumambulation of the temple on each day of the festival. Special pūjās are conducted at the temple and the Guru shrine. Devotees bring special offerings of flowers, fruits, camphor and the like to the temple and they spend time for devotions.

An important function that takes place on the 9th day night (early morning of 10th day) is called pallivēṭṭa (royal hunt). (Plate No.28). For this ceremony one of the Ilavas observes vrta and comes to the temple at 3 a.m. He is given a holy garland from the temple by the priest. He covers his head with a towel and receives a bow and arrow from the temple. The temple-priest mounted on a caparisoned elephant carries the deity and accompanies the hunter who now represents the deity. Everyone moves in a silent procession to a temporarily made shrub with a cave.


2 This ceremony is locally called Śivēli.
This is considered to represent the deity going out for hunting. After the puja on the spot the man with the bow and arrow, who now represents the deity, shoots three arrows at the tender coconuts (placed there before hand), one after the other, making sure that the third arrow sticks to the coconut. When this is done the devotees make a loud noise of victory and the drum-beaters play the music (cenṭamēlam). The hunter carries the tender coconuts on his head and the group with shouts and rejoicing returns to the temple.

Once the group reaches the temple, the deity, who is considered tired from the hunt, is kept at a particular spot for sleep and the area is enclosed by hanging clothes on all the four sides. The priest places all the auspicious objects near the bed for the deity to see as kāṇi (the first sight) in the morning. At day break, a calf is also brought in for the deity to see. The deity is then given a bath and food and the priest conducts the puja.

Another function that takes place in the evening on the 10th day (final day of the festival) is called ārāṭṭu. The deity is taken to the lake in a solemn procession by the temple priest. At the auspicious hour the priest conducts puja at the spot. The priest accompanied by another person carries the deity together to the lake and
plunge several times in the water. (Plate No.29). After giving a bath to the deity, the priest covers the body of the deity with his hand and returns to the temporary shed. There the priest gives the deity a loin cloth (pāvāta) and conducts the pūjā. The deity is given a flower garland and then is taken on the mount of the caparisoned elephant. The ceremonial umbrella is held on top of it and the Ambaṭṭan carries the holy lamp. (Plate No.30). The trustee of the temple carries a plate with bhasmam (holy ash) and the deity is taken in procession with the accompaniments of torch, music and dance (neyyāṇṭi mēḷam). The procession with the deity is given a reception by the Hindu families along the way by offering nilaviḷakku, nirapara and katir, plantain, coconut and jaggery. Some of the Īlava families also place the pictures of Nārāyaṇa Guru along the way. When the procession arrives at the temple, the procession is received by the temple authorities and the priest carries the deity back to the garbhagrha. After conducting the pūjā there, the priest lowers the flag from the koṭimaram (flag staff). It marks the conclusion of the ten day festival.

The palḷivēṭṭa and āraṭṭu (royal hunt and bath) are ceremonies commonly found in all major Sanskritic Hindu temples of southern Kerala. These are done at the Siva temple at Kaṭhinamkuḷam and probably it is from there that the Īlavas at Murukkumpuḷa became familiar with such
ceremonies. These ceremonies, pallivēṭṭa and ārāṭṭu, have received royal patronage. At the Padmanabhasvāmi (Viśṇu) Temple, Trivandrum where the kings of Travancore worshipped, both these ceremonies are still performed with great flourish. Rev. Samuel Mateer describing vēṭṭa reported in 1871: 

"...his Highness [King of Travancore] takes a bow, and fitting an arrow in it, shoots three times into the nuts."¹ According to him this is probably a relic of great hunting expeditions which the sovereigns of southern Kerala indulged in, in former times. Similarly in the ārāṭṭu festival of Padmanabhasvāmi Temple, even now Śrī Chittira Tirunāl the last king of Travancore, walks on foot to the beach leading the procession and takes a bath with the deities in the sea.² The adoption of these celebrations at Puttenkōvil is an effort to keep the SNDP Temple in line with other temples of the State and an assertion that Īḷavas have also the same rights and privileges as the highest castes of Kerala.

The Guru pūjā and hoisting the yellow flag at the temple festival are unique features of Puttenkōvil, as are the observances of Guru Jayanti and Guru Samadhi. On the birthday of Nārāyaṇa Guru (the Guru Jayanti on August 20), the Īḷavas of Murukkumpula assemble at the temple in the

¹Mateer, Samuel, The Land of Charity, 1871, p.167.
morning and go out in procession carrying the enlarged photograph of the Guru in an open truck to the nearby places singing songs. The Sannyasa Samgham of Śivagiri Maṭṭh organizes meetings at Aruvippuram, Chempalanti and Varkala on this day. The Ilavas at Murukkumpula generally go to Chempalanti to attend the devotional discourses.

On the Samādhi-day (the Guru died on September 12, 1928), they assemble at the Puttenkovil and prepare rice gruel and participate in a common meal. This gruel is given to all the people who assemble on the occasion. A special pūjā is conducted at the temple on that day. Some respondents said that they prepare the rice gruel in their houses on that day and share it with the poor people in the locality. The interview revealed that 59.89 percent of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula assemble at Puttenkovil on Guru Jayanti and Guru Samādhi days. At Murukkumpula the Ilavas are also interested in attending the annual pilgrimage conducted at Varkala. The interviews reveal that 91.43 percent of the Ilava respondents have attended this pilgrimage.

While the Kōlimaṭṭa or Iraṭṭakūḷaṅgara temples do not have any specific welfare programmes for the community, Puttenkōvil in accordance with the teachings of the Guru

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1Now cassettes containing devotional songs of the Guru are available in Kerala. Paper Nos.372,373.
has some programmes in that direction. At times of crisis, the members of the temple committee (SNDP committee) visit such families and in cases like death they give Rs.101/- to the mourners of the deceased. Towards this cause, the Ilavas at Murukkumpūla contribute Re.1/- per month. In the year 1982, the temple committee disbursed Rs.1,515/- for this cause alone. The annual report indicates that the Sākha helped certain families at the time of the severe drought in 1982. When disputes arise among Ilava members, they seek the help of the temple committee who mediates and helps them to solve their problems.1 This is a new development among the Ilavas of Murukkumpūla.

(d) Keeping Religious Traditions while Reforming

The three temples of Murukkumpūla - Kōlimaṭa, Irāṭtakulaṅgara and Puttenkōvil temples - show different forms of religion. In these temples the observance of vṛta, the collection of paddy and coconuts at the time of temple festivals remain examples of continuity. The serpent worship (nāgar) is found both at Kōlimaṭa and Puttenkōvil. The worship of Māṭan is continued by the devotees at Kōlimaṭa and Irāṭtakulaṅgara. Following the teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru this practice is discontinued by the devotees at Puttenkōvil. Among the worshippers there are Ilavas who

1 Cassette No.5. Paper Nos. 002, 046 and 220.
go to all these temples. They include those who oscillate between the traditional practice and the reformed one. At the same time there are a few who worship at Puttenkōvil and do not go to Iraṭṭakulaṅgara and Kōlimaṭa temples. This group represents the Īlavas who advocate the reformed forms of worship.

Religious action at Puthenkōvil is not an entire reversal of the traditional religious practices of the Īlavas. Inspite of the reformation, Īlavas as part and parcel of the Hindu community live in the continuity of their religious tradition. They remain as Hindus and follow the same scriptures. But in a society that is subject to change and development, Īlavas are no exception. In bringing about the reformation among the Īlavas, Nārāyaṇa Guru played a vital and specific role. In a caste ridden society, the Guru strove for the brotherhood of all men. In contrast to the Iraṭṭakulaṅgara temple that still reveals the traditional caste-pattern of the society, Puttenkōvil stands for the caste-less ideal of Nārāyaṇa Guru. The temple accommodates the worship of higher as well as lower castes. While discontinuing ceremonies such as gurussi, elapāṭum pūja, tūkkam and tullal, Puttenkōvil embraced Sanskritic practices like pallivēṭṭa and ārāṭṭu.

It is to be remembered here that the Īlavas were denied

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1 Cassette Nos. 47, 52.
these practices once and as an untouchable caste they were kept away from the high caste temples by the Nāirs and the Brāhmans. Ilavas challenged this discrimination by establishing a Śiva temple of their own. Now they worship like the Nāirs and Brāhmans in a temple similar to the temples of the higher castes. By this they proclaim that they are part of the larger Hindu society holding the same status as any other. Puttenkōvil is thus an expression of the sense of freedom and equality affirmed by the Ilavas of Murukkumpula. Nevertheless most people still worship at Iraṭṭakulaṅgara as well and it still serves as the base temple in the society.

The role of the Ambaṭṭan is found in almost all religious ceremonies of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula. About a century back his role in the religious ceremonies was dominant and inevitable. Though he is primarily a barber of the Ilavas, he acts in the capacity of a quasi-priest at all important rites. Traditionally he was an assistant to the chief of the Ilavas in his executive functions and followed him wherever he went on caste business. He and his wife played their role in ceremonies such as tāliketṭu-kalyānam, tiranṭukuli, puṭavakota, puḷikuti, saṁjayananam and pulakuli. Traditionally they were in charge of all the

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1 The Ambaṭṭan is also known by the name Vātti.
2 He has a barber-shop at Murukkumpula.
religious and purificatory ceremonies connected with the rites of passage of the Īlavas. ¹ But now the SNDP Sākha takes the initiative and the Ambaṭṭan works under their guidance. The Ambaṭṭan continues his role in the temple festivals. He prepares the wicks for the oil lamps and keeps ready the flowers and garlands. He follows the temple priest in the temple procession holding the ceremonial umbrella at Iraṭṭakuḷaṅgara and leads the pallivēṭṭa and āraṭṭu by holding the ceremonial lamps at Puttenkōvil. Thus, as seen in the chapter, the role of the Ambaṭṭan in the religious life of Īlavas at Murukkumpuḷa is an example of continuity in spite of extensive change in the pattern of worship.

It appears ironical that an Īlava temple like Puttenkōvil has a Brāhmaṇ priest since 1954. Traditionally it was unheard that a Brāhmaṇ goes to a temple of the Īlavas. In those days Nārāyaṇa Guru trained lower caste men to perform religious ceremonies in the Īlava temples. But after the temple entry proclamation of 1936 it became possible for all caste persons to visit any temple in southern Kerala. Economic reasons compelled Brahman priests to accept employment in temples belonging to the lower castes. Nārāyaṇa Guru who preached the ideal of 'One Caste' was not against employing Brahmins in Īlava

¹ Aiyappan, A., Īravas and Culture Change, 1945, p.58.
temples. By employing a Brähman priest Īlavas also improved their social status. Now both Puttenkōvil and Iraṭṭakuḷaṅgara temples employ Brähman priests. But the uniqueness about Puttenkōvil is that along with other rites in the temple the Brähman priest conducts Gurupūjā at the Nārāyaṇa Gurumandir each day.

The yellow flag used at Puttenkōvil is a symbol that represents the Nārāyaṇa Movement. Around 1928 Nārāyaṇa Guru exhorted the pilgrims to Śivagiri (Varkala) that they should wear yellow clothes and this colour has since become a symbol of Īlavas in Kerala. Hence, instead of a red flag that is usually used in other temples, Puttenkōvil uses the yellow flag.

The Gurupūjā that started after the death of Nārāyaṇa Guru is an expression of the gratitude the Īlavas show to their leader. The observances of Guru Jayanti and Guru Samādhi are also such expressions. Though the priest conducts the traditional Gurupūjā (Sanskritic), the Īlavas see Nārāyaṇa Guru in a new role as their leader who liberated them from the clutches of the caste hierarchy and granted them religious freedom and social status. A Guru is one who removes the ignorance of a person and enriches him with knowledge. He is a source of enlightenment. The worship before Gurumandir inspires and reminds them of
their freedom and responsibility. It rekindles in them the spirit of liberation and reminds them that Narāyaṇa Guru liberated them from caste bondage. The daily pūjā and the annual religious observances and the devotional discourses act as forces of coherence (centripetal force) that bring the Ilavas together. It grants them a sense of identity (self identity and shared identity) and renews their commitment. It propagates the Ilava movement and holds the community together.

A transition toward a completely democratic organization is another feature that we see at Puttenkōvil. It has been noted that a village temple like Irattakulāṅgara is still owned and managed by a family. A significant change related to the Puttenkōvil is the emergence of the SNDP Śākha as an organization of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula. On the State level, the SNDP Yōgam is a political pressure group in contrast to the exclusively religious role played by the Saṃnyāsa Samgham of Śivagiri Maṭh. But the SNDP Śākha at Murukkumpula is a religious organization and has minimal political involvement. The Śākha committee is elected by the Ilava members in a democratic manner. The committee appoints the temple priest, gives him a salary and regulates all the ceremonies in the temple. The interest of the Śākha in the development of the temple and the welfare of the society is
conspicuous in their initiative in constructing a new Gaṇapatī-kōvil and flag staff for the temple, and Marriage Reception Hall and auditorium for the benefit of the people.\(^1\) As a religious organization the Śākha binds the Ilavas together and grants them a sense of identity and strength.

In short, institutional life and organizational principles of modern life are found even in the management of temples and celebration of festivals. New temples of Ilavas are owned and managed by the SNDP, rather than by individuals or families as happened in the past. SNDP, being an association of all Ilavas, provides the opportunity for the participation of all people along democratic lines. Equality has become a central notion in organizing religious activities. Human oneness beyond all caste divisions has been established by Nārāyaṇa Guru. The weak and the oppressed are not pushed aside or forced to remain in their own situations. Rather, they are given special attention and care by the organization of all people, the SNDP. The well-being of everyone has gained acceptance. Temple life and festivals continue not to reinforce hierarchy and special privilege but on the new

\(^1\)Even though Iraṭṭakulaṅgara temple is older than Puttenkōvil, such developments are not very much seen there. Puttenkōvil being a temple of the people, it meets their requirements.
basis of 'One Caste, One Religion and One God for Man'. The temple observances, though continued in the Hindu religious tradition, have been modified as demanded by modern times.

Beyond the action of the rituals, festivals and temple worship, there was an added dimension to the consecration of the temple by Nārāyaṇa Guru at Murukkumpūla. That Nārāyaṇa Guru chose to place a metallic disc with the inscription 'AUM, Satyam, Dharmam, Dayā, Śānti' at Puttenkōvil and repeatedly asked his followers to grow in wisdom (by vidyā) points to the higher ideals he had in mind for the reformation. He was not against the consecration of Śiva Temples for the Īlavas. So he conceded to the request of the people to install a Śivaliṅgam. But that he came with a metallic disc with an inscription on it indicates that he had a plan (not simply the intention of consecrating a temple) and had a definite purpose in his act of installation. Further in our analysis of rituals and temple worship we have noted that the reformatory measures of Nārāyaṇa Guru discarded some of the traditional practices and modernized the religious tradition. In this he was drawing a line between the essentials and non-essentials in the religious practices which he thought was necessary for the modernization of the religion of Īlavas. The criterion behind this differentiation was the importance given to reason. Hence
the Guru's attempt to introduce a rationality which, however, conformed to the spiritual rationality based on religion.

Any person begins his religious experience with the patterns he receives from his religious tradition. It enables him to mould his life to carry out his dharma in the best possible manner in his historical context and assures him the possibility of embracing the Ultimate (Transcendent Reality). Nārāyaṇa Guru and the Īlava Community of southern Kerala shared the Hindu religious tradition. But the caste order (varṇāśrama) designed for the flowering of human personality and maintenance of social order was not satisfactory (meaningful) to Nārāyaṇa Guru because he and his caste community were not treated as equals with other caste groups of Kerala. The religious and social system of his day considered them as untouchables and outcastes. This social system did not give satisfactory direction and meaning to the life of the Īlavas in a modernizing world. A change was found to be necessary to this order of society. Towards this end Nārāyaṇa Guru adopted the means of reformation to the existing Hindu Religious Tradition. He questioned the existence of the caste order and said emphatically that mankind is one. According to him Īlavas as Hindus can have significance in society only when they have an active participation in the larger Hindu Society. Knowing that
the problems were rooted in ignorance (avidyā) he exhorted the people to seek wisdom (vidyā) and emphasized the inculcation of virtues in individual and social life. He understood temples as places of learning and recognized worship at temples (places of spiritual birth) as a transcendental experience of virtues such as 'Satyam, Dharmam, Dayā, Śānti' (Truth, Righteousness, Compassion and Peace). He advocated not only regular worship but also frequent study classes (religious discourses). He repeatedly said: 'what we need today are not temples but educational institutions'. His religious reform brought with it a social awakening. The reforms of Nārāyaṇa Guru (his dharma) which he started among the Ilavas was aimed at the restoration of the whole world (samsāra) as indicated by his dictum 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man'. He wanted all of life to be made meaningful. In a world of vested interests the Guru advocated the cultivation of moral values. He considered religion as having both spiritual and social dimensions. It helps persons to march toward final liberation (mokṣa - the Ultimate spiritual destiny) and also to carry out meaningfully their dharma (maintenance of cosmic and moral order).

The reformed rituals and the worship at Puttenkōvil (instead of Iraṭṭakuḷaṅgara) often serve to bring an awareness to the Ilavas at Murukkumpula that they are a part of a particular reformed community. In worship, not
only does one experience his membership in the new community but also transcends the socio-political boundaries to the cosmic reality that in turn gives meaning and a new perspective to all the mundane realities of which one is a part. Worship and rituals can therefore catalyze change. Rituals and festivals that are performed with interest grant both identity and transformation. Ritual renews the person with moral demands in the context of his mundane life. On the other hand the meaning, significance and effectiveness of ritual is enhanced by one's historical context. Thus participation in the ritual, temple worship and festival can become means for the devout to become new persons possessed with new visions relevant in his context and meaningful in his quest for the 'beyond'.

The temple and the particular form it has enables the reaffirmation of 'roots' in the lives of the devotees. In the case of the Puttenkovil at Murukkumpla even though the new temple structure is more Sanskritic, it reassures the Ïlavas that they as a Hindu community share the Hindu religious tradition. Thus Sanskritization brings meaning in the process of modernization. The festivals remind the Ïlavas that the Divine is active in the mundane world. The paḷḷivēṭṭa and the ārāṭṭ of the Puttenkōvil serve this purpose. Further, the temple procession where the symbol of the Ultimate is processed through the streets is a meeting point of the Divine and the Mundane. Here the
Divine is conceived as blessing the world of his domain while the onlookers adore the Divine.

Nārāyaṇa Guru reaffirmed that Hinduism can take serious account of human values and secular interests and give spiritual support to them. This he made a practical experience in the lives of Īlavas, a once outcaste community. This to the Īlavas proved a modernization process. This modernization movement within Hinduism initiated by Nārāyaṇa Guru has two particular aspects:

1. A search for a new humanism.
2. An ethical and spiritual approach to the problems of life.

The awakening of the Īlavas of southern Kerala was a spiritual and radical demand for a meaningful human existence. The untouchable community (Īlavas) realized that they are not untouchables but have personalities (manhood) like any other persons belonging to the high or low castes. They were awakened to a new sense of human dignity and rejected the idea of untouchability. Their search for new humanism was a spiritual awakening within their religious tradition. At the same time the reformed religious history recognized the enhanced individuality of a person and a new sense of his social and cosmic
relatedness. For instance, when the joint family was divided into nuclear families individuals became more significant and each member had to engage in relationships with the outside world (no longer was it done for him) on his own. In this process he became conscious of his individual existence and his responsibility in the world. His self (ātman or personhood) therefore was not only an individual self but also an extension of the Universal self (Brahman). In this humanism man has a sense of his rights. He also has the responsibility to participate in the formation of a new society where there is economic development, social justice, political participation and respect for the dignity of the human person.

Man needs a positive note on which to approach the problems of his life. The sense of moral responsibility that a man has (about himself and society) enables him to be involved actively in the human struggle. The authority of his moral responsibility (an ethical and spiritual approach to the problems of daily life) is derived from his religion. In this spiritual struggle, which is transcendent and immanent, he confronts the Ultimate Reality (AUM) and finds meaning in virtues such as Truth, Righteousness, Compassion and Peace'. This becomes the summum bonum of his life and the object worthy of his worship. This the Īḷavas of Murukkumpūḷa learned from Nārāyaṇa Guru.
VIII. CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

The Ilava awakening is an unbroken continuity with the Hindu religious tradition. It is not a 'break through' or a 'take off' from Hinduism. It is an affirmation of their identity as Ilavas, a group of the Hindus of Kerala. Their religious tradition has grown from its ancient roots and now the Ilavas admire and entertain their tradition with great interest. The result of their awakening was not a conversion from one religion to another but a reformation of the same religious thought and practice. Nārāyaṇa Guru in advocating reforms sought the support of the Hindu Scriptures. His philosophy was in line with the advaitic teachings of Śrī Śankarācārya. The Guru restated the fundamental principles and concepts of Hinduism. In this he taught that mankind is one and caste distinctions are unnecessary. He emphasized the dignity of man and the need to take his world seriously. By his teaching of 'One Caste, One Religion, One God for Man' he discouraged all tendencies toward conversion and wiped away the distinction between the high and the low castes. He contextualized
religion and gave a deeper theological and spiritual insight into the common urge of the Ilavas for human dignity, development and of unity.

Along with continuity there is change in the awakening of the Ilavas of southern Kerala. We have seen in the earlier chapters that the Ilavas at Murukkumpula discontinued some of their practices that ceased to be viable in the modern context and continued others that they could find meaning in. In the ritual of marriage they discontinued tālikēttukalyānam, retained the tāli rite and incorporated new elements such as kanyādānam and pānigrhana, while in the funeral ceremonies they gave up practices such as vāykkari and kōtiyītuka. In the reformation of temple worship, the worship of Māṭan, Maṅuta and Yakṣi was given up and the worship of Sanskritic deities and modern symbols were adopted. Likewise in temple festivals they gave up gurussi, tūkkam and tullal and embraced vētta and ārāṭtu. In this pattern of change among the Ilavas one observes a process of selection, interpretation and integration. As an advocate of change Narayana Guru interpreted the meaning and relevance of
these changes. Later through the SNDP Yōgam Nārāyaṇa Guru sent out able leaders to speak and interpret these reforms which were aimed at the progress of the community. The maintenance of an unbroken relationship between the traditional and the modern while assisting the progress of the community is here seen as the process of modernity.

The changes among the Īlavas that fit with the concept of modernity have the following characteristics:

1. A Leadership of the Elite and Reorientation of Values

The process of change among the Īlavas became intensified under the leadership of elite persons such as Nārāyaṇa Guru, Dr. Palpu and Kumāran Āsān. They were all Īlavas of southern Kerala who shared the common religious tradition. They became conscious of the backwardness and low status of their community and questioned the existence of the hierarchical caste structure. Nārāyaṇa Guru interpreted the scriptures and attempted to bring about a spiritual awakening and social movement among the Īlavas.
The Guru helped the Ilavas to adopt practices that were modern, while preserving the core values of things that were traditional. In reforming the ritual the Guru attempted both simplification and revitalization of the traditional practices. He played the role of an ascetic Guru and led an exemplary life. His life was an example of openness both in his attitude to all castes of people and in his attitude to other religions. He mingled with the ordinary people and knew directly their struggles and pains. His moral and spiritual discipline with its simplicity influenced a large number of people. He recognized three immediate needs of the Ilava society, viz., removal of ignorance, eradication of economic backwardness and regeneration of the community.

Dr. Palpu, a medical practitioner, drafted the Ilava Memorial. He made both the people and the government conscious of the privileges that had been denied. He concentrated his efforts on providing educational facilities for the Ilavas of both sexes and seeking equal opportunities of employment for them along with the other religious communities. He spent his time, money and energy to fight for these causes.
Kumāran Āśān through his literary works awakened the public to evaluate the existing religious and social values. He said that a spiritual awakening of Hinduism is possible by virtue of its inherent strength. He spoke at the Śrī Mūlam Assembly for the due rights of the Īlavas and other low castes of Kerala. He advocated the need to start local industries and encouraged the lower castes in technical education. He said that the lower castes, given an equal opportunity, are capable of progressing in society. He spoke at the Assembly for proper representation of the lower castes at the State level and providing equal opportunities for all in the public services. He initiated discussions on the law regarding marriage, succession and prohibition of pollution practices.

Though these three leaders had their individual roles to play, they together awakened and organized the Īlavas under the new banner of the SNDP Yōgam. All three of them died in the 1920s, but the Movement that began in the latter half of the nineteenth century continued with new leaders such as T.K. Mādhavan, C. Kēśavan and R. Śankar. At Murukkumpuḷa, the Pāṇur family took the
leadership in giving their family temple to Nārāyaṇa Guru as a base for his reformation and later a few families initiated a movement to expand its activities. Soon the SNDP Śākha, with its committee of elected members took over the activities. The educated leaders maintained a sense of cultural continuity and worked as effective carriers of the process of modernity. They perpetuated a modified system and a different ideology and devised regulative mechanisms to sustain the process of change. At the same time they did not alienate themselves from the mass of people. Instead they maintained their affinity and compatibility. In the words of Robert Bellah, these personalities 'absorbed' change without risking either stagnation or breakdown.¹

The pattern of change among the Ḫlavas exhibits a reorientation of values. As seen earlier the traditional hierarchical caste structure subjugated the lower castes including the Ḫlavas. The leaders found the caste observances to be stumbling blocks that stood against the progress of the individual and society. The 'One Caste' ideal of Nārāyaṇa Guru was to let loose the bonds of

hierarchical caste structure and emphasize the equality of man. The elite leaders of the Ilava community by their social and religious reforms tried to create an environment where each person would feel the worth of his individuality (personhood) to act, choose, control and direct his life. For instance in reforming the system of marriage, the Ilava leaders spoke against both polygamy and polyandry. They held that the individual whether man or woman is important, he or she is not to be taken for granted and human life is to be respected. In the Ilava movement man was seen as a responsible social being who has a moral responsibility towards other members of his family and society. This position has various nuances. It may not have always worked in the same way in their attitudes towards castes conventionally higher than themselves and towards castes lower than themselves. The principal implication of it is the freedom and the equality in temple worship and attendance at religious rites. Here the attitude toward groups traditionally below themselves was open, positive and clear cut. In other respects too, in principle, the same attitude applies, although the expression of it has to be concededly more gradual.
2. A Rationalistic and Democratic Approach that Determines the Direction of Change

The process of change put a stop to the traditional practice of having a privileged class at the top dominating over a vast majority of submissive followers. It has democratized the religious and social structure of the Ílavas. Now their organization is constituted by the people and for the people. Speaking about the process of modernity, Robert Bellah says: "The direction of change was not to be decided by reference to any fixed or given authority in the past, but only through reason and discussion..."¹

In the case of the Ílava awakening the leaders met often to discuss and evaluate the courses of action soon after the temple at Aruvippuram was consecrated in 1888. A committee was then constituted which discussed and determined its activities. Later when more temples were consecrated, the SNDP Yogam was formed in 1903 and it encouraged an even wider participation of the people. The process of change thus became a movement of the people. In

¹Bellah, Robert. N., Beyond Belief, 1917, p.66.
the case of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula it is the SNDP Šākha, a committee elected from the people and by the people, that determines the activities of the community.

A rational attitude results in the readiness of the people to give up customs or attitudes that do not appeal to them. If a rational attitude is not the basis of change, superstition will creep in even in the reformed practices. Again if rationality is not the basis the people will be reluctant to give up customs and will continue to practice the same until the change appeals to them. The case of the Ilavas at Murukkumpula who asked for the consecration of a Śiva Linga at Puttenkōvil is an example. At that time, the local people could not envisage a temple with only a disc containing the sacred words engraved on it. So while accepting the innovation of Nārāyana Guru, they asked for the installation of the Śiva Linga. The Guru who wanted only the disc to be placed in the temple did not object to the popular demand. Instead he listened and allowed them to have a Śiva Linga in addition.
3. An Expression of Freedom and Responsibility among the Members

In the process of change, the Ilavas revolted against the authoritarianism of the traditional caste structure. The Ilavas as a community were enslaved as an untouchable group. In their awakening they broke their traditional dependance on the higher castes and moved towards the freedom of the community. Traditionally the Ilavas were considered ritually impure and therefore they were kept away from the temples and homes of the higher castes. Practices such as untouchability, unapproachability and unperceivability were all done in the name of ritual purity and religious practices. Again only Brāhmans could consecrate temples and conduct pūjā therein. The Ilavas questioned the superiority of the higher castes and broke the monopoly of the Brāhmans by consecrating temples of their own and appointing Ilava priests to minister there. Further they questioned the concept of ritual purity by speaking against it at the Śrī Mūlam Assembly, and organizing agitations before the caste temples at Vaikkam and Guruvāyūr. They pressurized the
government to bring legal measures against the practice of pollution distance. The Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 was the result of this struggle.

While the Ilavas sought religious and socio-economic freedom they were also shouldering higher responsibilities. In breaking the caste hierarchy, they became conscious that on the one hand they were losing their traditional dependence on the higher castes and on the other hand were assuming responsibilities in order to fortify their freedom. In consecrating the temples they had the responsibility of administering them, training Ilava priests to minister there and keeping the devotees united. In dividing the joint-family into nuclear families, the individual members felt the responsibility of maintaining mutual care and service in the family. In seeking freedom from caste occupations, the Ilavas felt the responsibility of learning new skills to seek employment and to start industries. In this process of change, Nārāyaṇa Guru exhorted the rich to care for the poor and the educated to educate the uneducated. Thus along with
freedom each individual felt a responsibility to participate in the formation of a new society where there would be economic development, equality, social justice, political participation, and respect for the dignity of the person. The new order freed the individual and opened avenues for a more individualistic, egalitarian and cosmopolitan society.

4. A Social Mobility based on Equality and an Overall Development

The Ḩlavas who wanted freedom from the enslaving caste structure desired equal status not only with other caste Hindus but also with other religious communities. When the Nāir community demanded the rights of the natives of Kerala through the Malayāḷi Memorial, the Ḩlavas supported it; but soon they became conscious of their own need for freedom and submitted an Ḩlava Memorial. The fact that the Nāir, Ḩlava and the St. Thomas Christian leaders such as Paṭṭam Tānu Piḷḷai, C. Kēśavan and T.M. Varghese respectively (leaders of the State Congress), soon thereafter moved together and spoke from the same platform
was an expression of equality that the Īlavas were seeking in southern Kerala.

The traditional worship had its own characteristics which kept them closed within the caste boundaries. Their temples had only masonry platforms or pīṭha for their deities and their temple festivals consisted of animal sacrifice, tūkkam and tullal. The Īlavas got liberated from these caste boundaries by adopting more rational forms of worship and developing temples of their own. In this they sought equality with higher castes of Hindus and this found expression even in employing Brāhman priests in the Īlava temples.

Nārāyaṇa Guru accepted the process of Sanskritization as far as it involved the worship of deities according to Hindu religious literature. But he rejected Sanskritization as far as it imposed a caste system and the hierarchical stratification of society. Likewise, Nārāyaṇa Guru accepted the process of Westernization as far as it helped humanization and the progress of the society but he rejected it as far as it
imposed foreign culture and created a new caste within the indigenous society. Nārāyaṇa Guru in reforming the religious rituals attempted a process of modernization by reforming the traditional practices. He simplified and revitalized some of the rituals and helped the Īlavas to adopt practices that are modern.

According to Eisenstadt, "there is no single road to modernity".¹ The overall development of the Īlava community is visible in the social, religious, educational, political, and economic spheres. In the reform movement, Nārāyaṇa Guru did not segregate religion entirely from the socio-economic environment. He saw social justice as part of the religious life and honouring the dignity of the individual person (man and woman) as religious action. He recognized spiritual objectives in the socio-economic change. Issues of an economic, social and political nature were brought repeatedly to the surface and they were evaluated from time to time along with questions of religion.

5. A Network of Institutions that Propagate the Movement and Hold the Community Together.

The development of organized living that holds the community together is another aspect of the process of modernity that one finds among the Ilavas of southern Kerala. The organization of the SNDP in 1903 marked the beginning of this venture. Subsequently the SNDP Yōgam turned its attention to the establishments of temples, educational institutions and charitable organizations. The Yōgam also focussed its attention in the field of politics.

Education is a modernizing agent. It confers on the lower castes a respectability which is otherwise difficult to achieve. Education disrupts the harmony of a traditional society as the young educated people question the accepted practices of the society. It provides the society with elite leaders who speak on the importance of education and the need to reform the traditional practices. Nārāyaṇa Guru spoke on the importance of education for the emancipation of the Ilavas; Kumāran Āṣān
fought for the right of the Ilavas to study in government schools and the SNDP Yōgam started several educational institutions mainly for the benefit of the Ilavas.

Politicization is part of the process of modernity and an alternate form of social mobility. We have already noted the significant role the Ilavas have in the political life of Kerala. In the present political set up every person, irrespective of wealth or status has one vote. The Ilavas form the largest religious group in Kerala and hence they are powerful. We have noted that they had a significant role to play in the Joint Political Congress and the State Congress. Political power was necessary to introduce the principle of caste quotas for jobs in the administration and seats in technological, medical and science courses and later to secure the licences and permits necessary for trading and undertaking other economic enterprises. Since Independence, the SNDP Yōgam has been a political pressure group trying to attain greater status and political opportunities for the Ilavas.
As we have noted earlier there are other institutions such as the Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Samgham, the Śrī Nārāyaṇa Gurukulam, the Śrī Nārāyaṇa Cultural Mission and the Śivagiri Pilgrimage. These are functionally different institutions and they specialize in their specific functions. The habits and attitudes of the Ilavas have also found expression in the institutionalized celebrations such as Guru Jayanti, Guru Samādhi and Guru-Pūjā. All these institutions give variety, division of labour and stability to the movement. They modify the existing traditions, prevent breakdown or regression and create room for new and better traditions.

Thus the general pattern of the process of modernity among the Ilavas of southern Kerala is a process of continuity and change. It has the characteristic patterns of change such as (i) a leadership of the elite and reorientation of values, (ii) a rationalistic and democratic approach that determines the direction of change, (iii) an expression of freedom and responsibility among the members, (iv) a social mobility based on equality and an overall development and (v) a net work of
institutions that propagate the movement and holds the community together. These characteristics prevent stagnation and breakdown and sustain the process of modernization. As the tradition of today was the modernity of yesterday, so the modernity of today will be the tradition of tomorrow.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acre</td>
<td>Measurement of land. 1 Acre = 100 cents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advaita</td>
<td>Non-duality; name of a major philosophical school set forth by Śri Śankara in the eighth century.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agarbatti</td>
<td>Sandalwood wicks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluvancēri-Tamprākkaḷ</td>
<td>Chief of Nambūtiris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambalavāsi</td>
<td>A caste group attached to the temple and below the Brāhmans in rank.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambaṭṭan</td>
<td>Barber. He has the role of a quasi-priest in all rituals of the Īḷavas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambaṭṭatti</td>
<td>Wife of Ambaṭṭan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammāi</td>
<td>Wife of the Kāraṇavan (eldest male of a joint family).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aṁśam</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antarāḷa</td>
<td>Inner passage way in a temple complex.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arattam Uḷiyuka</td>
<td>A ceremony done with a lamp in a plate (tālam) to ward off all mishaps of a new member (bride) entering the house (of bridegroom).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artha</td>
<td>Material well being. The second of the four 'ends of man' in Hinduism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aṭiyān</td>
<td>Servant; bonded labourer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avarṇās</td>
<td>Lower class among Hindus; opposite of savarṇa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avidyā</td>
<td>Ignorance; that which distorts man's view of reality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ayyappan - Name of the deity at Sabarimala.

Ayyanár - A folk/rural god in Tamil-Nāṭu.

Ācārā - Traditions.

Ācārya - Spiritual leader. Ācāram = custom, ritual

Āltara - Ritual floor around a pipal tree.

Ānakkōṭṭil - Shed for the temple elephant.

Ārāṭṭu - Ceremonial bath of the temple deity, conducted on the last day of temple festival followed with procession.

Ārāyar - Members of the temple committee.

Āśram(am) - Religious order, hermitage, school.

Āśramās - The four stages in the development of the life of man: student, householder, forest dweller and ascetic.

Ātman - The permanent self realized on both the cosmic and individual levels

Bāhyabhitti - Outer wall of the temple-building

Bali - Sacrifice, religious rite, ancestral rite

Balikkāran - The Chief mourner. When there are more people they are together called balikkar.

Balipīṭham - Platform for offerings.

Balippura - The shed (booth) where bali is performed.

Bhadrakāḷipāṭṭu - A song in praise of the goddess Bhadrakāli

Bhagavati - Goddess.
Bhikṣu  - A Buddhist monk.
Bhakti  - Devotion (to the deity)
Bharaṇi  - Earthen jar.
Bhasmam  - Holy ash, Vibhūti.
Brahman  - The usual name for Ultimate Reality.
Brāhman  - The highest caste made up of priests and scholars.
Brahmasvam  - Property belonging to Brāhman janmi
Cādjan  - The dried leaf of the palmyra tree
Centa  - A musical instrument; drum.
Centamēlam  - Music of the instrument Centa
Chaṭṭampi  - Class leader.
Chāver  - Suicide squads; literally means 'dying men'.
Chowki  - Custom-house.
Cita  - Funeral pyre
Crore  - 10 million
Cuttambalam  - rooms and wall around the inner sanctum of a temple.
Dakṣiṇa  - Religious fee offered to the priests performing rituals.
Daḷava  - The title used in Travancore to signify the office of the Chief Minister till the early 19th Century.
Dānam  - Gift.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darbha</td>
<td>Kuśa grass; a leaf used for Hindu religious rituals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darśana</td>
<td>Philosophy; literally 'a view' of reality.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dēśam</td>
<td>A territorial division.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dēśavāli</td>
<td>A local chieftain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dēvasvam</td>
<td>Property belonging to temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dēvī</td>
<td>Goddess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma</td>
<td>Cosmic, ritual and moral order, a comprehensive term denoting duty, religion, morality, law, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma-pālaka</td>
<td>Protector of Dharma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharma Śāstra</td>
<td>Hindu canonical books on Dharma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dīkṣā</td>
<td>Consecration/religious initiation; in the text it means a religious observance of growing hair and beard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dikpālakar</td>
<td>Guardian deities of the eight points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipārādhana</td>
<td>Worship by waving the lamp in circles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divān</td>
<td>Chief Minister of a princely State. He is also called Dalava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eṭṭarayōgam</td>
<td>Council of eight trustee at Padmanābhaśvāmi Temple, Trivandrum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaṇapati</td>
<td>An elephant headed deity, eldest son of Śiva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garbhagṛha</td>
<td>Sanctum Sanctorum of a Hindu temple; literally 'womb-house'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gōpura</td>
<td>The entrance tower of a temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Translation and Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grāmam</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurumandir</td>
<td>House of the Guru-shrine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru</td>
<td>Spiritual leader, religious teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru Jayanti</td>
<td>Birthday of a spiritual leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru Samādhi-</td>
<td>A house built on the burial place of a spiritual leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandiram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurussi</td>
<td>Ceremonial sacrifice before the deity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hariharaputra</td>
<td>Son of Siva and Visnu i.e. Ayyappan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harijans</td>
<td>The name literally means &quot;Man of God&quot; (Children of Visnu) coined by Mahatma Gandhi to the untouchables; or the members of the lowest castes among Hindus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hōmam</td>
<td>Oblation by burning the materials in fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iḷayat</td>
<td>Family priest of Nāirs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illam</td>
<td>House of a Nambūtiri Brāhman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irumuṭikeṭṭu</td>
<td>A bag having two cells carried by the pilgrims to Sabarimala.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilapāṭum pūjā</td>
<td>Worship with harvest basket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jātha</td>
<td>Procession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janmī</td>
<td>Landlord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janmikaram</td>
<td>Rent due to the landlord from the tenants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jñāna</td>
<td>Knowledge, saving wisdom or divine vision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kacca - A piece of cloth

Kaikoṭṭi-kali - A group game in which girls clap their hands and dance.

Kalari - Gymnasium or Military Training Centre.

Kanam - A system of land tenure under which the tenant holds land by paying a fixed sum to the Janmi for a specified period.

Kani - First sight in the morning.

Kaniṅkka - Money offering

Kaṇiyān - Astrologer caste.

Kanyādānam - Gift of the girl (bride), part of the marriage ceremony.

Kaṉji - Rice gruel

Kara - The subdivision of a village.

Karam - Tax.

Karaṇāvan - Senior male member of a joint family (generally matriarchal family)

Karayōgam - Branch office of the Nair Service Society in a locality.

Karma - Action; also the law by which actions receive their due reward in successive modes of existence.

Kaṭavu - Ferry.

Katir - Efflorescence of the Coconut tree.

Katirmanḍapam - Marriage booth

Kaṭṭacōr - A large ball of rice.

Kaṭṭappaṇam - Gift of money to the bereaved family
Kaṭṭil - A special cot
Kāvaṇām - Marriage booth also known as katir-maṇḍapam
Kāvu - wood
Keṭṭuvaḷḷam - A small version of dhow, masula boat.
Kiṇṭi - Spout vessel
Kīrtan - Devotional hymn
Kolli - fire-brand
Kōṭi - Unwashed cloth.
Koṭimaram - Flag staff in a religious place.
Kōṭiyiṭuka - Putting a new cloth, part of death ritual
Kōvīl - Temple
Kōyiladhiṅkārikaḷ - The officer in charge of the temples
Kṣatriya - Warrior caste
Kumkum - Red-powder
Kurava - Shril sound made by the women on auspicious occasions.
Kuṛi - Dot put on the fore-head, Tilak mark
Kūṭāram - Tent
Kuṭikīṭappukār - Hutment dwellers in the land of a landlord.
Kuṭiyāṅs - Tenants.
Kūṭṭam - Assembly of elders in a local area.
Kuṭṭipandal - Small pandal
Lakh - 100,000
Liṅga - Representation of Siva.
Lōk Sabha - Lower house of the Indian Parliament.
Maccambi - Son of the maternal uncle
Madhuramkōṭukkal - Giving the sweets; part of marriage ceremony.
Mahārājā - Great king.
Makkattāyam - Patrilineal system of inheritance
Malar - Rice pop
Malayālam - Dravidian tongue spoken in Kerala.
Mangālasūtram - Auspicious thread tied around the neck of the bride in marriage ceremony.
Mangālasūtra-bandhana - Tying of the tāli (Mangalasutra).
Maṇṇān - Washer-man, caste name
Maṇṇāppēti - Fear from Mannan, an untouchable community.
Mantram - Prayer, Vēdic formula
Mārga - Conventions; literally means 'path'
Marumakkattāyam - Matrilineal system of inheritance
Maṛuta - A deity said to have control over the spirits of small pox.
Maryāda - Customs, limit, boundary.
Māṭampimār - Nair nobles
Māṭan - A god worshipped out of fear.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maṭham</td>
<td>Monastery/Hindu religious institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattukacca</td>
<td>Washed clothes given by washer woman (called Maṇṇātti) for purification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māyā</td>
<td>Mysterious veiling power of the world; 'Illusion'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mēlkōyama</td>
<td>Over lordship; taxation right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mōkṣa</td>
<td>Spiritual salvation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhūrtam</td>
<td>Auspicious hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muṇṭu</td>
<td>Loin garment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mūrti tara</td>
<td>Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muṭippura</td>
<td>Small pandal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nādasvaram</td>
<td>Music of a group of wind/pipe instruments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāgakallu</td>
<td>Stone for snake worship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāgar</td>
<td>Serpent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nāir</td>
<td>A caste of Kerala whose traditional occupation was fighting in battles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakṣattra</td>
<td>Star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nālambalam</td>
<td>Temple houses enclosing the Śrī Kōvil on its four sides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nālukeṭṭu</td>
<td>Architectural structure of a traditional joint-family having rooms on all four sides enclosing an open space at the centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namaskāra-maṇḍapa</td>
<td>A particular place in the temple where people worship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nambūtiri - A Brāhman caste in Kerala
Nandi - Mount of Śiva
Naṭūmūṭam - Central courtyard of a Nālukettu house
Nāṭ - A district; a territorial division
Naṭuvāli - A local chieftain or king.
Nēriatu - A long cloth of fine texture worn by ladies.
Neyyāṇṭi mēḷam - A type of dance with instrumental music
Nilavilakku - A wick-lamp made of brass
Nirakūṭam - Earthen pot filled with water
Niranāli - A measure of rice
Nirapara - Bushal of paddy
Nīrum pālum - A combination of fruits, cakes, flour, milk, ghee and saffron powder given for snakes as part of snake worship.
Nivarttana - Abstention.
Nivēdyam - Food offering to the deity.
Ōṇam - The National festival of Kerala which falls in August-September every year.
Paṅcagavyam - Combination of five products of the cow - cowdung, cow-urine, cow-milk, butter milk and clarified butter.
Pallivēṭṭa - Royal hunt, part of the temple festival.
Panchāyat - Literally 'the council of five', arbitrators who settle disputes and govern the community in minor affairs.

Paṇṭāravaka - Belonging to the government

Para - A grain measure in Kerala
1 para = 10 Itāṅgalī
1 Itāṅgalī = 4 Nāli

Paraśurāma - An 'avatāra'of Viṣṇu; Rāma with an axe, a brahman hero of the epic Mahābhārata who cleared the earth of Kṣatriyās and gave it to Brāhmans.

Paratavar - A fishing community of Kerala also known as Bharatavar

Parayēṭuppu - Collection of grains for the temple expense

Paṭippura - Porch

Paṭṭayam - Title-deed given to land-owners specifying details of their property

Paṭukka - Harvest-basket

Paṭṭini kaṇji - Starvation-gruel

Pācaka-śāla - Kitchen space

Pāṇigṛhaṇa - Holding the hands, part of the marriage ceremony

Pāṭṭukaḷ - Songs or ballads.

Pāvāta - Loin cloth; lower garment of women.

Pāyassam - Rice pudding.

Perumāḷ - King of Kerala

Pilāvu - Jack-tree

Pillayēṭuttu-tūkkam - 'Hook hanging' with a child in hand

Pǐṭham - Slightly raised platform
Ponkāla - Ceremony of preparing rice pudding
Potuvāḷ - Secretary of the temple
Pranāla - water spout of the garbhagrha.
Prasādam - Sacred items distributed after worship
Pratīsta - Idol
Pūjā - Worship, offerings to a deity
Pūjārī - Priest
Pula - Period of bereavement and pollution
Pulakuli - Ceremonial bath for purification connected with death ritual.
Pulappēti - Fear from Pulayas, a lower caste community
Pulayan - Lower untouchable caste working in fields.
Puḷi - Tamarind
Puḷikuṭi - Pregnancy-rite drinking the tamarind juice
Puṇyāḥam - Purificatory liquid.
Purāṇās - Sacred books of the Hindus recording the pantheistic form of religion which followed the vedic period. Purana= ancient
Puṭava 'saree' - Loin cloth; very much similar to 'saree'
Puṭavakoṭa - Giving of the cloth as part of marriage ceremony. locally this denotes 'marriage'
Quintal - A measurement
1 Quintal = 1000 kilograms
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rājā</td>
<td>King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rakṣas</td>
<td>A fierce god whom people worship with fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rāmaccam</td>
<td>A herbal root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rāṇi</td>
<td>Queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rupee</td>
<td>Major denomination of Indian currency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabha</td>
<td>Temple Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadyālayam</td>
<td>Marriage - reception hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śākha</td>
<td>Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śālai</td>
<td>Vedic school/college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samādhi</td>
<td>Term used to denote the death of a religious leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṁbandham</td>
<td>Alliance between a man and a woman; it usually denotes the union of Nair ladies with several men of their caste and/or of the higher castes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṁnyāsi</td>
<td>An ascetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saṁnyāsa Sangha</td>
<td>Organization of ascetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sañjayanam</td>
<td>Picking up bones and purifying it after the cremation of a corpse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samkētam</td>
<td>Temple Sanctury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangham</td>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saptapati</td>
<td>Taking seven steps as part of Hindu marriage ritual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarasvati</td>
<td>Goddess of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarpakāvu</td>
<td>Serpent grove for snake worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śāśṭā</td>
<td>A deity believed to be chief of ghosts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satyāgṛaha</td>
<td>Non-violent resistance, protest action (first initiated by Mahatma Gandhi as Civil Disobedience Movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savarṇās</td>
<td>High caste Hindus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shānan</td>
<td>A toddy-drawing caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sirkār</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śīva liṅga(m)</td>
<td>See &quot;liṅgam&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smṛti</td>
<td>That which is remembered; second half of Vedic knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNDP Yōgam</td>
<td>Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Paripālana Yōgam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srādha</td>
<td>Obsequies and sacrifices performed for the manes of deceased ancestors annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śrīkōvil</td>
<td>Sanctum Sanctorum of a temple, garbhagrha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śrī yantra</td>
<td>Columns marked for a religious ceremony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śruti</td>
<td>That which is heard; purest level of Vedic knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sthalapurāṇa</td>
<td>Legend of the temple-site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svadharmā</td>
<td>One's own ritual and moral duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taḷī</td>
<td>Sprinkling of puṇyāham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampurāṇ</td>
<td>&quot;My Lord&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tampurāṭṭi</td>
<td>&quot;My Lady&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taṇṭān</td>
<td>Tree-climber, caste name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taṛa</td>
<td>(a) Platform for worship (b) Tribal group of Nāirs (governing body of an area)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taṛavāṭ</td>
<td>Traditional joint family of Kerala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tatțăn</strong></td>
<td>- Goldsmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tālam</strong></td>
<td>- Literally means plate. It is used to carry a lamp and other things in a religious procession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tālappoli</strong></td>
<td>- A metal dining dish carrying a lamp, rice, coconut and flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tāli</strong></td>
<td>- A tiny neck (gold) ornament shaped like the leaf of a banian tree used as marriage badge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tālikeṭṭukalyāṇam</strong></td>
<td>- Auspicious event of tying the tāli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tālikakuṭam</strong></td>
<td>- Stipule on top of the roof of inner sanctum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tellī</strong></td>
<td>- Camphor power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tilak</strong></td>
<td>- A dot marked on the forehead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tīṇṭal-palakās</strong></td>
<td>- Sign-boards meant for untouchable castes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tiraṇṭukuli</strong></td>
<td>- Puberty rite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tirumulpāṭ</strong></td>
<td>- Person tying the tali among Nairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tīveṭṭi</strong></td>
<td>- A kind of cotton torch on a long pole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tōṭ</strong></td>
<td>- Canal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tōṭṭampāṭṭu</strong></td>
<td>- A song in praise of goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trimūrti</strong></td>
<td>- Hindu Trinity; Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuḷḷal</strong></td>
<td>- Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tūkkam</strong></td>
<td>- Hook-hanging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tūkka-villu</strong></td>
<td>- Car used for hook-swinging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uralār</strong></td>
<td>- Temple trustees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Utsava(m)</strong></td>
<td>- Temple festival</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Uttupura - Places for feeding the Brähmans at the royal/temple expense.

Varagṛha - House of the bridegroom

Varagṛha praveśa - Entering the house of the bridegroom

Varṇa - 'colour'. The name of hierarchical caste system; the four castes.

Vārppu - A bell metal vessel

Vāvu-bali - Ancestral rite on New Moon Day

Vayattu pohkalā - Pregnancy rite in which rice pudding is prepared

Vāykkari - Ceremony of putting rice in the mouth of the corpse

Vēda - Knowledge. Store of sacred saving knowledge.

Vēdānta - The philosophy based on the teachings of the Upaniṣads

Vēḷams - Potter-caste

Velicappāṭ - Literally means one who throws a flood of light

Vēḷs - It denoted chieftains. Literally it means 'spear'

Vigraham - Idol

Vihāra - Buddhist Monastery

Viḷakkumaram - lamp pillar

Villuvaṇṭi - Bullock cart

Vimāna - Structure above the inner sanctum

Vimōcana Samaram - Liberation struggle

Viṣu - A festival which falls on the first day of Mēṭam (April-May) every year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vivāham</td>
<td>- Marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vṛta</td>
<td>- Penance, a form of religious vow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yakṣas</td>
<td>- A deity of vegetation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yōga</td>
<td>- 'Yoke'. Discipline of body, mind and spirit. School of Philosophy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yōgakkār</td>
<td>- Members of the council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yōgam</td>
<td>- Council, congregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yōgliśvaran</td>
<td>- Lord of Yogis (ascetics) denoting Siva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuva-rājā</td>
<td>- Heir apparent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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