



# CASTE & TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

# CASTE MOVEMENTS

## South India

### NADAR MOVEMENTS

- In **South Tamilnadu**.
- An untouchable caste of toddy tappers and agricultural labourers.
- Originally called **Shanans**.
- Developed a mercantile upper stratum and began calling itself **Nadar**, a term previously confined to the Shanans owners of land and Palmyra trees.
- Its assertion of **Temple Entry Rights** led to serious **riots at Tirunelveli** in **1899**.
- **Nadars:**
  - emerged by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a **prosperous group of traders** in towns of **Ramnad** district.
  - raised community funds for educational and social welfare activities.
  - claimed Kshatriya status,
  - imitated upper-caste customs and manners and;
  - organized a **Nadar Mahajan Sangam** in **1910**.
- The Sanskritization model seems fairly appropriate here. But such upward mobility hardly affected the lowly toddy trappers of Tirunelveli who still went on being called by the old caste name of Shanans at a time when their successful brethren in Ramnad had appropriated the more prestigious title of Nadar.

### PALLIS MOVEMENT

- In **northern Tamilnadu**.
- A lower caste claimed Kshatriya origin from 1871.
- Began to call themselves **Vanniya Kula Kshatriya**.
- Started imitating Brahmanical mores like the taboo on widow – remarriage.

### NAIR MOVEMENT

- In the state of **Travancore**.

#### Causes of the Movement

- Social and political domination of the Namboodari Brahmans and the non-Malayali Brahmans (Maratha Deshastha or Tamil in origin)
- **Internal problems of Nairs:**
  - Traditional **taravad** (matrilineal joint family) unsuited to modern economic conditions.
  - Many taravads held relatively small bloc of lands and were severely affected by rising prices.
  - Western education made many Nair social customs appear embarrassing and retrograde, particularly the rule of Nair women having to appear bare-breasted before Namboodari visitors and to enter into temporary liaisons (**sambandham**) with them.

- **Threat from the Syrian Christians** who comprised numerous landlords and prosperous traders in north Travancore and were pioneers of journalism.

**Note:** urban literacy in Travancore in 1901 stood at 36% - a figure higher than Calcutta.

### Course of the Movements

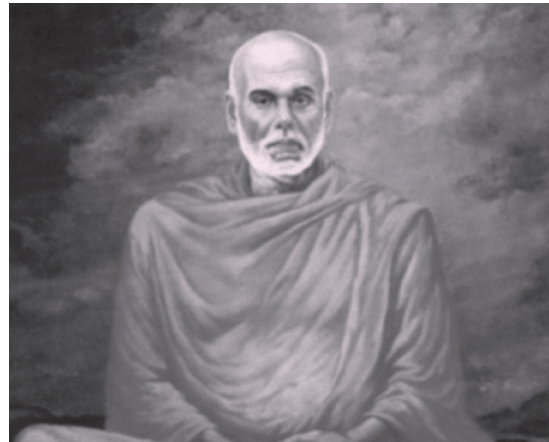
- Kerala's first modern novel, *Indulekha of Chander Menon* (1889), attacked Namboodari social domination and taravad constraints on romantic love.
- **C.V. Raman Pillai**
  - Historical novel *Martand Verma* (1891) attempted an evocation of lost Nair military glory through its hero **Ananda Padmanabhan**.
  - was the principal organizer of the **Malayali Memorial** of 1891 attacking Brahmana predominance in state jobs.
- **K. Ram Krishna Pillai**
  - Edited the *Swadeshabhimani* from 1906 till 1910 and put forward the demands for political rights.
  - Expelled from Travancore.
  - Had connections with *T.M. Nair's Justice Movement*.
  - In 1914 published the first biography of Karl Marx in Malayalam.
  - Died in 1916.
- **Mannath Padmanabha Pillai**
  - founded the **Nair Service Society** in 1914.
  - Combined caste aspirations with a measure of internal social reform.

## EZHAVA MOVEMENT

### Ezhava

- Traditionally lowly tappers and tenders of the coconut palm.
- With the expansion of market for coconut products became relatively prosperous segments.

### Sri Narayana Guru (1854 - 1928)



Sri Narayana Guru

- Leader and inspirer.
- Also known as *Nanu Asan*.

### Objectives

- To attack Brahman domination.
- Demand entry into temples.
- To 'Sanskritize' some of their own customs.

### Aruvippuram Movement

- Launched in 1888 by Sri Narayana Guru.
- Idol of Shiva installed in a temple at Aruvippuram on Shivratri festival.
- On the walls of the temple he inscribed the following words:

"Devoid of dividing walls of caste or race, or hatred of rival faith, we all live here in brotherhood".