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# ‘In the Lunatic Asylum’: Activities of Ramakrishna Mission in Kerala

In a meeting of the disciples of Bhagvan Shri Ramakrishna in 1898, Brahmachari Shuddhananda asked Swami Vivekananda: What would be the Ramakrishna Mission’s role in the regeneration of India? Swami replied: “From this *mutt* (monastery) hundreds of men of character will go out, who will deluge the country with spirituality. This will be followed by social, political and other revitalizations. Consequently, there will come about a great transformation in Indian society”.<sup>i</sup> Thus spiritual awakening and consequent secular regeneration, according to Vivekananda, constitute the foremost objective of Ramakrishna Mission throughout the country.

Before his *mahasamadhi* Shri Ramakrishna had formed a *Sangha* of his disciples (order of monks) with Swami Vivekananda as its leader. The purpose of this *Sangha* was to nurture spirituality, i.e., the spirit of the unity of men and God. This is an inward search for Reality or Truth, which is nothing less than search for the love of God in all men; for God is incarnate in man. At the same time what Swami Vivekananda had done was to make an outward program of humanitarian and cultural activities with the cooperation of laymen to reflect the inward spiritual search initiated by Shri Ramakrishna.<sup>ii</sup> These two indispensably complementary aspects, the inward search and outward programs, represented the Ramakrishna *Mutt* and Ramakrishna Mission respectively. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the activities of Ramakrishna Mission in Kerala in a historical perspective with emphasis on various social and intellectual programs undertaken by the Mission in different parts of the state.

Referring to his plan Swami Vivekananda said: “I want to start two institutions; one in Madras and one in Calcutta to carry out my plan; and that plan briefly is to bring the Vedantic ideals into the every-day practical life of the saint or the sinner, of sage or the ignoramus, of the Brahmin or the Pariah.”<sup>iii</sup> Hence Swami Ramakrishnananda was deputed for the propagation of the message of Ramakrishna Paramahansa in South India. He arrived in Madras in 1897 and later visited Bangalore, Mysore, Trivandrum and Cochin for the preaching the ideas and principles of his Guru Shri Ramakrishna. In 1907 an *ashram* was set up in Madras under his supervision as the headquarters of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in South India. Subsequently, another *ashram* was established in Bangalore in 1909, which was placed under the supervision of Swami Nirmalananda, who played pivotal

role in the establishment of Ramakrishna *ashrams* and its activities in different parts of Kerala.

### **Establishment of Ramakrishna Ashrams in Kerala**

The first Ramakrishna *ashram* or *mutt* in Kerala was established at Haripad. It was Swami Nirmalananda who laid the foundation stone for the *mutt* on 11 September 1912 and inaugurated it on 4 May 1913.<sup>iv</sup> The land for the *ashram* was donated by Venkata Krishna Iyyer, who later became a *sannyasi* of the Ramakrishna monastic order. From its inception onwards the *ashram* gave emphasis on social service for the progress of the lower caste people, especially the untouchable. On the occasion of Ramakrishna Jayanthi in 1914 an outcaste boy was admitted as *brahmachari* in the *mutt*. In 1923 the *ashram* witnessed the initiation of eleven disciples as *sannyasins* in the monastic order of Ramakrishna.<sup>v</sup> Thus the first *ashram* made an excellent start of the social and religious programs of the Mission. The second Ramakrishna *mutt* in Kerala was inaugurated at Thiruvalla on 9 May 1913 by Swami Nirmalananda. Nevertheless, as early as 1910 a Shri Ramakrishna *Sangha* had been functioning in the town, which took initiatives for the formal opening of this *ashram*?<sup>vi</sup>

The construction of an *ashram* at Nettayam in Trivandrum was started in 1916 with the foundation stone laid by Swami Nirmalananda, but it was inaugurated only on 7 March 1924. A plot of five acres of land was donated by a generous person Arunachalam Pillai for the *ashram*, which is called Shri Ramakrishna Brahmananda *Ashram*. Besides, propagating the spiritual message of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, this centre gave emphasis on health care sector.

The Ramakrishna *Mutt* of Trichur is located at Puranattukara. The relief camp set up during the time of floods in 1924 eventually became a branch of Ramakrishna Mission with the *ashram* founded on 3 May 1927. The founder of this *ashram* was Swami Thyagisananda (his pre-*sannyasa* name was V.K. Krishna Iyyer), who was a lawyer turned teacher before taking the spiritual vocation. He had been associated with Vivekodayam Samajam in Trichur as its principal organizer, which started functioning in 1917. This *mutt* has given special attention to social, religious and educational progress of Harijans in the nearby colony. It is remarkable that Ramakrishna shrine in this Harijan colony has Harijan *poojaris* to perform *pooja* rituals. It is a revolutionary event that brought the outcaste to the level of upper caste, a religious and social event for establishing equality of men as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda.

Sri Ramakrishna Advaita *ashram* in Kalady was founded under the initiatives of Swami Agamananda on 26 April 1936. Like other *ashrams* this one focuses its works on

social issues, education etc. The backward colony at Mattoor near Kalady had 500 members, all very poor and badly in need of help. The *ashram* from its own resources built some low-cost dwellings in the early seventies and gifted those houses to the neediest amongst them. Education was also a major field of service of the *ashram*.

In the Malabar region, which was under British rule before 1947, the first *ashram* was opened at Quilandy on 30 March 1915 by Swami Nirmalananda. Local people like K.P. Krishnan Nair, Kelappan Kidavu, and Ittirappa Menon worked for the establishment and functioning of the *mutt*. Activities of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram at Calicut in the beginning were a part of the programs of the *mutt* at Quilandy. However, as early as 1913 there was a Ramakrishna Vedanta Sangha functioning at Calicut to disseminate the ideas of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. In 1928 Swami Nirmalananda had been invited to visit Calicut and address the members of this *Sangha*. In 1937 Swamiji visited twice the Vedanta Sangha and realizing the dedication of its members, he proposed the establishment of an *ashram* in Calicut. This *ashram* came into existence in 1941 under the spiritual guidance of Swami Nirvikarananda

Other Ramakrishna *ashrams* were founded at Alappuzha in 1923, Ottappalam and Vallikkode in 1926, Kayamkulam in 1927, Palai and Kulathoormuzhi in 1930, Muvattupuzha in 1931, Adoor in 1932, Puthukkad in 1934, Vyttila in 1947, Mattakkara in 1969, Kaloore in 1982, Vaikom in 1994, Cherusseri in 1998, Cheroree in 2002, and Palemad in 2010. Besides these *ashrams*, Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Charitable Trust at Purameri opened in 1991, Vivekananda Kendra Vedic Vision Foundation at Kodungalloor inaugurated in 1997, a number of study center at different places etc. promote the vision and activities of Ramakrishna Mission in Kerala.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Activities of Shri Ramakrishna Mission**

While the *ashram* is the residence of the *sannyasins* and centers of spiritual training for *brahmacharins*, the Mission with its keystone in the *ashram* functions as the hub of social and educational services. Activities of the Mission are generally concentrated in the field of anti-caste programs, Harijan services, education, medical care and publication. However, it appears that many *ashrams* have preferences in the matter of undertaking various services. Shri Ramakrishna *ashram* at Purnattukara in Trichur, Shri Ramakrishna Advaita *Ashram* at Kalady, Shri Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram at Calicut and Sri Ramakrishna Brahmananda *Ashram* at Trivandrum are prominent mission centers in Kerala.

## 1. Social Reform Activities

The Caste system and its discriminatory rules and practices remained awfully rude in Kerala. Swami Vivekananda had noticed the caste issues in Kerala and he made a stringent criticism:

Was there a sillier thing before in the world than what I saw in Malabar country? The poor Pariah is not allowed to pass through the same street as the high-caste man, but if he changes his name to a hodge-podge English name, it is all right; or to a Mohammedan name, it is all right. What inference would you draw except that these Malabaris are all lunatics, their homes so many lunatic asylums, and that they are to be treated with derision by every race in India until they mend their manners and know better.<sup>viii</sup>

It is discernible that the observation and criticism made by Swami Vivekananda indicated the utmost necessity of spiritual and secular efforts to fight against caste evils in Kerala. He pointed out the necessity and significance of freedom and equality of men: “No man and no nation can attempt to gain physical freedom without physical equality, nor mental freedom without mental equality.”<sup>ix</sup> Therefore, declared Swami Vivekananda: “we do stand in need of social reform.”<sup>x</sup>

Following the message of Vivekananda, social reform constituted a major field of work for the Ramakrishna Mission in Kerala. Social reforms in Kerala were mainly a fight against evils of caste system, against “don’t touchism” to borrow the term from Swami Vivekananda. He visited Kerala in 1892 following his stay in the kingdom of Mysore. It appears that Swami was a guest of Dr. P. Palpu, a Keralite belonged to Ezhava caste, who was the Municipal Medical officer of Bangalore.<sup>xi</sup> During their meeting Dr. Palpu told Swami Vivekananda about caste issues in Kerala before of his tour to “Gods Own Country”. He arrived in Shornur by train, then travelled to Trichur by a bullock-cart and stayed night in the house of D.A.Subramanya Iyyer, an officer of Education Department of Cochin State. Then he went to Ernakulam via Cranganore. He met Chattambi Swamikal at Ernakulam. His next destination was Trivandrum, where he stayed for nine days from 13 December.<sup>xii</sup> During his travel in Kerala Swami understood how worse the social condition of Kerala due to “don’t touchism” created by caste barricades and upper caste domination. Swami asserted that physical and mental freedom from the evils of caste system was indispensable to the regeneration of our society and country.



Right from the beginning of Ramakrishna Mission in Kerala with the establishment of the *ashram* at Haripad, various programs for the removal caste discriminations and attainment of freedom and equality constituted a significant field of its social work. During the first anniversary celebrations of the Haripad *mutt* in 1914 a *misra-bhojanam* (inter-caste dining), the first of its kind in Kerala, was organized as part of its fight against caste discrimination. However, after the feast people belonged to *savarna* caste were reluctant to take the plantain leaves used by the *avarna* people. Then Nirmalananda Swami, who was also present in the function and noticed the *savarna* reluctance in cleaning the place, came himself forward to take the leaves and clean the floor.<sup>xiii</sup> It was an exemplary act of protest against caste prejudice and discriminations that persuaded the people assembled there to follow the act of *swamiji*. It was a glorious method of man-making as envisaged by Swami Vivekananda for the modernization of Indian society. Following the Haripad *misra-bhojanam* other *ashrams* also organized this innovative method of fight against evils of caste practices. It eventually became a method of social resistance adopted by later social reformers.

It is remarkable that in 1915 on the occasion of Ramakrishna Jayanthi celebrations organized by the *ashram* at Haripad, Swami Chitsukhananda (Venkita Krishna Iyyer) arranged a procession, which was to start from the premises of Subramanya temple of Haripad with the participation of both high caste and outcaste people.<sup>xiv</sup> It was a procession to spread the message of the equality of all people irrespective of caste differences; an event to bring the *avarna* to the public space, especially in the precincts of a temple, which was forbidden to them by caste rules. As mentioned earlier the admission of an outcaste boy as Brahmachari in the *ashram* in 1914 was remarkable act towards the beginning of giving equal opportunity disregarding caste difference. Swami Vivekananda's said: "the Brahmin and the Sudra and the Pariah must have equal opportunities of knowing the great truths of the *Vedanta*."<sup>xv</sup>

Ramakrishna *ashrams* in many places became centers of worship for the *avarna* people. The birth day celebrations of Swami Vivekananda created an opportunity to bring together lower caste people in public space. In fact, such a celebration held in Palai in 1925 attracted the *avarna* masses into Shri Ramakrishna Mission and it helped the establishment of an *ashram* there in the land donated by Kunjan Chettiar in 1926.

## 2. Educational Services

Ramakrishna Mission gives much emphasis on the education of people, especially of the lower castes and the Harijans. During an interview Swami Vivekananda was asked: “What will you propose for the improvement of your masses? Then he said: “We have to give them secular education. We have to follow the plan laid down by our ancestors – that is to bring down all the ideals slowly among the masses. Raise them slowly up, raise them to equality. Impart even secular knowledge through religion.”<sup>xvi</sup> On another occasion, he wrote to Swami Shuddhananda “our work should be mainly educational, both moral and intellectual.”<sup>xvii</sup> It “must be devoted to character-building and man-making.”<sup>xviii</sup> Thus it is important to “educate our people so that they may be able to solve their own problems.”<sup>xix</sup>

All Shri Ramakrishna *ashrams* in Kerala work for the educational progress of all sections of people, especially of the depressed masses. Nevertheless, among them certain *ashrams* like Shri Ramakrishna *Ashram* in Puranattukara possesses a unique place in the field of educational services. The 1936 report of the *ashram* shows that being a rural center situated in Puranattukara, its educational work was directed chiefly to the progress of the depressed classes or *Harijans*. The upper primary school at that time had 300 pupils, of them more than half were *Harijan* children. The *ashram* also had Gurukula or hostel having about 30 inmates; three-fourths of whom were Harijans.<sup>xx</sup> Besides giving religious instruction and secular education including teaching three languages - Sanskrit, Hindi and Malayalam - special care was given to develop aptitude and skill for manual work in the students. It was reported that the aim of the management was to make the school for *Harijans* what the Tuskegee Institute was for the African-Americans in the USA.<sup>xxi</sup> On 16 January 1934 Gandhiji had laid the foundation stone for the hostel building and temple and he stayed in the *ashram* campus in a residence named ‘Anandakudirum’.

The report of the *ashram* for the year 1946 says that it was developed into an ideal centre for rural reconstruction with various departments like the high school (sanctioned in 1940) called Vidyamandir with primary and lower secondary sections, industrial school, hostel for boys called Gurukul, hostel for girls called Matrimandiram, library, co-operative society etc. The high school had 684 students on its rolls at the end of the year. Out of 27 students appeared for the public examination, S.S.L.C, 13 came out successful, which was great achievement as far as a school for Harijans was considered. The industrial school had a total strength of 46 students in 1946. Weaving, spinning etc. were taught in the school. There were 23 looms and 25 charkas in good working condition in the school. The trained students

received wages ranging from five to twenty-five rupees per month. There was a total production of cloth which worth about Rs. 26,000/- in 1946 and expenditure by way of wages given to students was Rs. 6078/-<sup>xxii</sup> Thus this industrial school helped students to acquire training in a trade receiving some financial support in wages, while it facilitated the *ashram* to generate some revenue for its services. It is noteworthy that the Adatt *Harijan* colony near the *ashram* has always been given special attention by the mission for the educational and social progress and spiritual enlightenment of *Harijan* children. At present the school has been upgraded to a higher secondary school for boys. The education and accommodation for the girls have been now under the care of Sarada Devi *mutt*. Vivekananda Vignanabhavanam consisted of a library, reading room; Sanskrit study centre etc. located at Poonkunnam in Trichur town is another contribution of the Mission.

The Ramakrishna Mission *Sevashram* at Calicut also focuses its activities on education. While undertaking relief measures during the time of cholera in the 1940s, the *ashram* started an orphanage in 1944 as there came six children, the number increased to 30 orphans in 1945. In the same year the *ashram* bought a lower primary school for the education of these children, where one *Harijan* named Narayanan, who passed T.T.C. was appointed the head master. In 1952 the school was upgraded to upper primary school and in the next year it became a high school. In 1958 the new high school building was inaugurated by then Chief Minister E.M.S. Namboothiripad. The famous children's poet Kunjunni Master was a teacher in this school at Meenchanda, in Calicut. This school has been upgraded to a mixed higher secondary school.

Sri Ramakrishna Advaita *Ashram* in Kalady is another important centre of Ramakrishna Mission in Kerala in the field of educational services. It has schools upto higher secondary level, hostel for tribal and *Harijan* students, typewriter and computer training centre, crèche etc. In 1937 the *ashram* started a Sanskrit school that eventually developed as high school. The tribal hostel for boys was started in 1964 with a building grant from Government of India. According to the report, in 2005-06 the hostel has more than 134 boys from scheduled caste and tribes and 28 paying members from forward communities. In 2005 the type writing centre had 43 trainees. The crèche had 30 kids of *Harijans* parents who go for daily work.

### **3. Health Care**

Health care is another area of Ramakrishna Mission's activities in Kerala. Most of the *ashrams* started *ayurvedic* or allopathic dispensaries to provide basic medical care to common people, especially the poor and depressed ones. However, Ramakrishna



Brahmananda *Ashram* in Trivandrum has a praiseworthy role in the field of health care. In 1937 a dispensary was established at Sasthamangalam in Trivandrum in the name of the Ramakrishna mission by Ravo Bahadur K. Raman Thampi, who was formerly director of the Medical Department of the Government of Travancore. He purchased a small house with two rooms for this purpose; one room was used for dispensary and the other used as Ramakrishna shrine. It was the beginning of the Ramakrishna Ashram General Hospital, which was landmark in the history of health care system under private initiative. Under this hospital, later on, six mini health centers were opened: Nettayam, Oonnanpara, Cheriyaconni, Anacode, Kizhar, and Vavode to extend medical services to the most poor and the neediest.

#### **4. Prabuddha Keralam and other Publications**

Although messages of Shri Ramakrishna were started publishing in printed Malayalam as early 1910, the necessity of a regular publication was revealed on the occasion the visit of Swami Nirmalananda to Thiruvalla *ashram* in 1915. Hence, Swami suggested the publication of *Prabuddha Keralam* magazine and entrusted his disciple Velukutty Menon to bring out the work. On 17 October 1915 the first issue of the magazine was released in Kollam (Quilon).<sup>xxiii</sup> Swami Niranjananda (pre-*sannyasa* name N.S. Pandala) became the editor of the magazine. In 1918 its printing and publication were shifted to Trivandrum under the editorship of K. Padmanabhan Thampi, who later accepted *sannyasa* and became Swami Paramananda. For short period from 1933 to 35 it was published from Ottappalam, and again brought to Trivandrum in 1935. Meanwhile the Kalady *ashram* had been publishing a magazine called *Amrathavani*. As both these publications possessed common objectives – to spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda – the authorities of the Mission decided to amalgamate *Amrthavani* with *Prabuddha Keralam* for more effective spiritual and intellectual enlightenment of Keralites. From 1955 onwards new *Prabuddha Keralam* with an opening message “Amrthavani” was brought out from Kalady.

In 1964 a special issue of *Prabuddha Keralam* as part of Vivekananda centenary programs was printed and published from Puranattukara *ashram*, Trichur. Swami Ishwarananda was the editor of the magazine in the beginning phase of publication Puranattukara. Subsequently, Puranattukara became the center of printing and publishing *Prabuddha Keralam*; still it goes on regularly and perfectly enlightening the Kerala society with 5,500 subscribers. At present the editor of the magazine is Swami Sadbhavananda.

In addition to *Prabuddha Keralam*, the Puranattukaram *ashram* brought out a large number of books in Malayalam dealing with teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, *Karma yoga*, *Raja yoga*, *Bhakti yoga*, *Jnana yoga*, education, speeches of Vivekananda, *Vedanta*,

Christianity and other subjects and books for children. The Kalady *ashram* also published several books on similar themes. Digitalized publications are also available nowadays in the *ashrams*. These publications had an important role in the spiritual and intellectual enlightenment of the public.

### **1. Disaster Relief Activities**

Another field of service, though not very prominent, was taking care of the people during the time of natural disaster like flood that often occurred in Kerala. The origin of Ramakrishna *ashram* at Puranattukara itself was in fact linked with the flood relief activities of the Mission in 1924. The *ashram* in Quilandy was the centre of Ramakrishna Mission's relief work during period of the 1924 floods in Malabar. In the 1940s when there was cholera and famine the Quilandy *ashram* again stood in the frontline for relief services in different places of Malabar. Other *ashrams* also undertook such relief activities as and when they were required in different parts of Kerala.

### **Swami Ranganathananda: Gift of Kerala to Ramakrishna Mission**

This study on the role of Ramakrishna Mission in Kerala is not an exhaustive one, but it may look unfinished without a note on Swami Ranganathananda, who became the President of Ramakrishna Mission in 1998. Sankarankutty, his pre-*sannyasa* name, was born in Trikkur village near Trichur in 1908. Attracted by the teachings of Vivekananda, he joined the *ashram* in Mysore in 1928 and initiated as a *sannyasi* in 1933. He was appointed the President of the Karachi centre of the Mission in 1942 and remained in there until 1948. During this period L.K. Advani was a frequent visitor of the ashram to listen his discourse on the Upanishads and *Bhagavat Gita*. Advani said that Ranganathananda was a "great influence" during his formative years. According to Advani, at Karachi Mohammed Ali Jinnah had once listened to Ranganathananda's lecture on Islam and said, "Now I know how a true Muslim should be."<sup>xxiv</sup> After his return from Karachi he served as a secretary at the Delhi centre of the Mission from 1949 to 1962, then as Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata until 1967. He was elected to the post of vice-president of Ramakrishna *Mutt* and Mission in 1988. And in 1998 he became the President of the Mission.

He travelled throughout India spreading the true message of *Vedanta* and *Sanatana Dharma*. Like Swami Vivekananda .he visited foreign countries – the USA, European countries, Australia, Singapore, Russia, Iran - to spread the message of Indian spiritual culture and ideals of *Vedanta*. There are about 50 books authored by Swami. *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* and commentaries on the messages of Bhagavat Gita and Upanishads

are his outstanding contributions. Though Ranganathananda was chosen by Government of India for Padma Vibhushan award in 2000, he declined the award as it was conferred on him in his individual capacity and not for the Mission. But Swami accepted the Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration in 1987 and the Gandhi Peace Prize in February 1999 as both were conferred on the Ramakrishna Mission.

## Conclusion

Swami Vivekananda's visit to Kerala exposed its social conditions founded on caste discriminations to the rest of India and he underlined the urgency of social reform and education to nurture humanitarian values. It is noteworthy that the message of Vivekananda and reform programs of the Ramakrishna Mission promoted the work of social reformers of Kerala. The *misra-bhojanam* at Haripad and Shri Ramakrishna Jayanthi procession comprising outcaste from the precincts of Subramanya temple at Haripad were prelude to the *misra-bhojanam* and temple entry *satyagrahas* organized by later day social reformers of Kerala. Educational activities undertaken by Ramakrishna ashrams at Calicut, Trichur and Kalady and the health care programs of the *ashram* at Trivandrum are exemplary services of the Ramakrishna Mission to humanity.

In fact, the principal objective of the Ramakrishnan Mission was to achieve social liberty and equality for all and to foster true spirituality and humanistic values in all. Services of the Mission demonstrate love of men and love of God. It reflects what Swami Vivekananda wrote to Alasinga on 27 October 1894: "I believe in God and I believe in Man. I believe in helping the miserable, I believe in going even to hell to save others..."<sup>xxv</sup> He wrote to Swami Akhandananda, on 15 June 1897: "It is the heart, the heart that conquers, not the brain. Books and learning, yoga and meditation and illumination- all are but dust compared with love. It is love that gives you supernatural powers, love that gives you Bhakti, love that gives you illumination, and love again, that leads to emancipation."<sup>xxvi</sup> It is this ideal of love of men, particularly of the poor, the depressed and the outcaste that formed the foundation of the Ramakrishna Mission. It is again this ideal of love that leads to the attainment of unity of all men and women in true religion. Finally to put in epigrammatic sense, the Ramakrishna Mission helped the social, intellectual, spiritual empowerment and enlightenment of the common people, particularly the depressed ones of the population of Kerala.

- <sup>i</sup> Cited in Swami Prbhananda, *The Early History of Ramakrishna Movement*, Chennai, 2005, p. 354
- <sup>ii</sup> Swami Ranganathananda, "Swami Vivekananda: His Life and Mission", *Vivekananda Centenary Souvenir*, 1963, Trichur, 1963, pp. 27-28.
- <sup>iii</sup> Interview with Swami Vivekananda, *The Madras Mail*, 6 February 1897, in Sankari Prasad Basu, ed., *Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian News, 1893-1902*, Kolkata, 2007, pp. 552-53.
- <sup>iv</sup> Rajeev Iringalakkuda, *Swami Vivekanandanum Keralavum* (Malayalam), Thiruvananthapuram, 2012, pp. 34-35. Some of the information about early Ramakrishna *ashrams* in this discussion are drawn from this book.
- <sup>v</sup> V.K.A (Vedanta Kesari Archives), Report of Ramakrishna Mission Work in Kerala, 1924-25, , p. 314.
- <sup>vi</sup> Rajeev, *Swami Vivekanandanum Keralavum*, p. 37.
- <sup>vii</sup> A few *ashrams* like the one at Dharmmadam founded by Swami Nirmalananda, one in Kajiranpara, another one at Aroor etc do not function nowadays.
- <sup>viii</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. III, Kolkata, 2009, pp. 294-95. See also the same work, vol. IV, p. 342, where it has been said: "In Malabar a Chandala is not allowed to pass through the same street as a high caste man, but let him become a Mohammedan or Christian, he will be immediately allowed to go anywhere." Malabar historically refers to Kerala, though under the colonial rule it was a district under Madras Presidency in North Kerala,
- <sup>ix</sup> Editorial, *The Madras Times*, 27 August 1895, , in Sankari Prasad Basu, ed., *Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian News*, vol. II, p. 397
- <sup>x</sup> Vivekananda interviewed, *The Madras Mail*, 6 February 1897, in in Sankari Prasad Basu, ed., *Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian News*, vol. II, p. 551.
- <sup>xi</sup> Despite his higher education and professional qualification as physician, he could not get a job in Travancore because of his lower caste status.
- <sup>xii</sup> For details of Swami Vivekananda's visit to Kerala see His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Vivekananda*, vol.1, Kolkata, 2011, pp. 325-340. V.M. Korath, "Vivekananda Swamikal Keralathil" in *Vivekananda Satakprasasthi*, 1963, Trichur, 1963, pp. 120-26
- <sup>xiii</sup> Rajeev, *Swami Vivekanandanum Keralavum*, p. 35
- <sup>xiv</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36
- <sup>xv</sup> Report in *the Hindu*, 12 March, 1897 in Sankari Prasad Basu, ed., *Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian News, 1893-1902*, vol. I, Kolkata, 2007, p.300.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Vivekanada interviewed by the correspondent of *the Madras Mail* in the train during his journey from Chingelpet to Madras, 6 February 1897, Sankari Prasad Basu, *Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian News, 1893-1902*, vol. II, Kolkata, 2007, p.549.
- <sup>xvii</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 7, p. 508, Vivekananda to Shuddhananda, 11 July 1897.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Vivekananda's Speech "The Future of India" in *The Madras Mail* 15 February 1897, Sankari Prasad Basu, *Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian News, 1893-1902*, vol. II, Kolkata, 2007, p.569.
- <sup>xix</sup> Vivekanada interviewed, *the Madras Mail*, 6 February 1897 *ibid.* p. 551.
- <sup>xx</sup> Thrissur *Mutt* details from V.K. Archives, Report, February-March, 1936, p. 470.
- <sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid.* The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama was founded and developed by African-American educator Booker T. Washington for the blacks in the USA in 1881. At present it is the Tuskegee University.
- <sup>xxii</sup> V.K. Archives, Report of Sri Ramakrishna *Ashram*, The Vilangans, 1946.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> An unpublished manuscript, "Sreeramakrishna Prathanavum Prabuddha Keralavum (Mal)", available at Puranattukara *ashram* has been used for discussing the history of the magazine.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Swami Ranganathananda, wikipedia
- <sup>xxv</sup> Cited in *The Life of Vivekananda*, p. 557.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol 6, pp. 400-01