



MODULE-1
EARLY RESISTANCE AND BRITISH
CONSOLIDATION
TOPIC- PAZHASSI REVOLT

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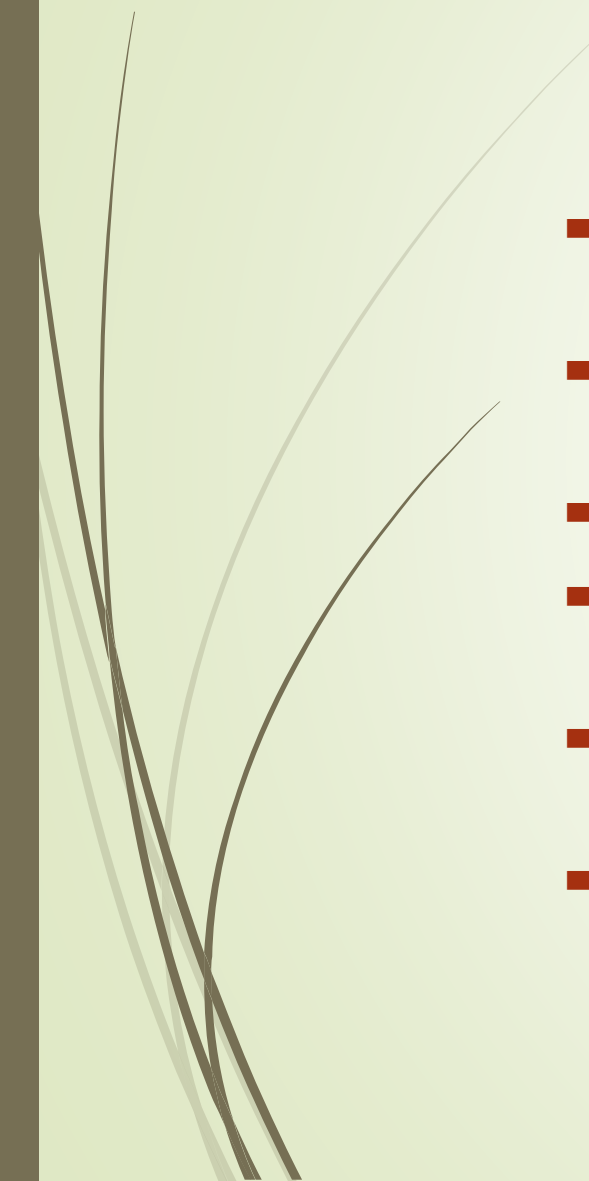


RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

- ▶ With the establishment of British supremacy, the history of Kerala subjected to changes.(by the Treaty of Srirangapattanam 1792)
- ▶ The period after this can be considered as a period of challenge and response. The British challenge of domination had an equal response from the native chieftains and people.
- ▶ When the British tried to establish their supremacy over the land, resistance against their domination broke out in various parts.
- ▶ The early native resistances were mainly led by the disposed local princes, feudal chieftains, aggrieved peasants, tribal communities and others.
- ▶ The revolts of Pazhassi Raja in Malabar, Paliath Achan in Kochi, the Kurichiyas in Wayanad and the Moplahs in Eranad and Valluvanad are examples of such resistance movements

REVOLT OF PATINJARE KOVILAKAM RAJAS

- Earliest resistance movt was led by some members of the Zamorin's family
- Following the withdrawal of Tipu the ruling Zamorin returned from Travancore & formally celebrated his Ariyittuvazhcha in 1792
- In the discussions with the Commissioners Zamorins minister demanded the restoration of the former territories to his chief but the company rejected the demand
- Zamorin entered into a political settlement with the company
- But this agreement was not approved by the members of Patinjare kovilakam branch of Zamorin family
- They asserted their independence the senior prince of the family was seized by Captain Burchall at Cherupulasserri but he died
- His brother & nephew were arrested but they were released on the surety of Kizhakke Kovilakam Rajas

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- Released princes made a vain attempt on the life of Swaminatha Pattar, the minister of Zamorin, who was collaborating with the British
 - They proceed to south with a view to mobilizing people in the rebellion against the British
 - Unni Mutha Muppan, a Mappila chief & some others joined the princes
 - Kunhi Achan, the Palaghat Raja, whose claims to the management of his kingdom had been rejected by the commissioners also helped Princes
 - English forces under Captain Burchall pursued them to Anamala Mountains & from there they escaped to Travancore
 - 2 rajas subsequently returned to Malabar & agreed to live peacefully at Calicut on a pension of Rs 10,000

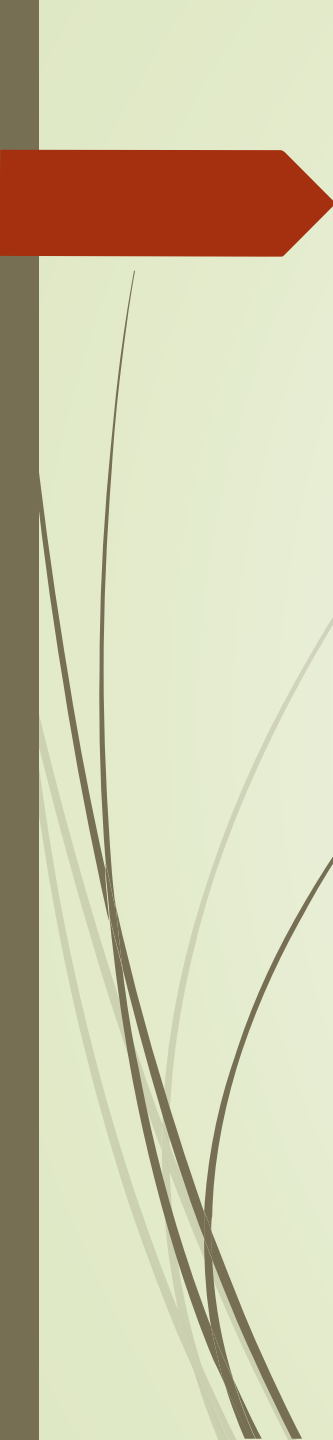
PAZHASSI REVOLT (1793-97)

- ▶ The most serious and widest revolt against the British in South India was of Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja who is pictured by the British as Kottiote Raja and is popularly known as Kerala Simham.
- ▶ As he belonged to the Patinjare Kovilakam branch of the Kottayam royal family (Purakizhnad) which had its headquarters at Pazhassi, the rebellion is called as the Pazhassi revolt.
- ▶ The most important source material to study the revolt of Pazhassi Raja was the Thalssseri Rekhakal (Thalasseri consultations) of the English East India Company.
- ▶ In addition to this, there are lot of secondary sources also to study the revolt of pazhassi. **William Logan's Malabar Manual** gives a detailed description of the rebellion in the British point of view and his "**A collection of treaties, engagements and other papers of importance relating to British affairs in Malabar 1841-1914**" gives the original documents such as proclamations and declarations of Pazhassi
- ▶ **KKN Kurup's "Pazhassi Samarangal**

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- T P Sankaran Kutty Nair's "A Tragic Decade in Kerala History"
 - P K K Menon's "Freedom Movement in Kerala"
 - Novel "Kerala Simham" by K M Panikkar
 - Play "Pazhassi Raja" by Kappana Krishna Menon
 - In addition to all these, we have **diaries, revenue reports, political and military collections, Confidential Records etc.** in the Archives and India office library



Relations of Pazhassi with East India Company


- In the early days Pazhassi had maintained **cordial relations with the company.**
- During the **second Anglo-Mysorian War** when Mysoreans attacked Tellicheri. **Pazhassi sent 2000 Nair soldiers against Sardar Khan** in order to help the English. They even captured an outpost at Muttungal(Badgara).
- By **1782, Kottayam, Eranad and Kadathanad** became free from Mysorean authority.
- By the **Treaty of Mangalore in 1784(Second Anglo-Mysore War)**, all territories were **given back to them by the English.**
- But, afterwards **Kottayam Ravi Varma, the elder brother of Pazhassi Raja** contacted **Tipu and agreed to pay Rs.65000/- as tax to Mysore.** But Mysore demanded **Rs.81000/-** which was heavy burden to the peasants. Thus the peasants opposed this and started struggle.
- In this struggle **Pazhassi was with the peasants and he gave leadership to the struggle and organized the natives.**
- The most important event which **exasperated Pazhassi even more** was that his **brother who paid visit to Tipu in 1786 for peace talks and compelled to sign in a treaty with him which caused for ceding Wynad to Tipu Sultan.**



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- Pazhassi was **not ready to leave Tipu to enjoy Wynad and decided to make problems to Tipu.**
 - **He started a guerilla warfare that constantly harassed Mysore troops in Wynad and neighborhood.**
 - **In this time, he entered in to a treaty with the English against Tippu and by 1790 he assumed the leadership of Kottayam.**
 - In 1790, the British recognized Pazhassi Raja as the head of Kottayam instead of the original Raja who was in refuge at Travancore.
 - But by the Treaty of Seringapattanam signed between British and Tipu in 1792, Malabar was ceded to the British.
 - Afterwards British began **to work for establishment of their supremacy in Malabar.**
 - From here onwards a **completely different relations had started in between Pazhassi and the British and he started to resist British imperialism from 1793 onwards till his death in 1805.**
 - **He fought two wars to resist British intervention in the domestic affairs of his kingdom.**



The First Pazhassi Revolt (1793-1797)


- The **primary cause of the first revolt organized by the Pazhassi Raja was the mistaken revenue policy of the British.**
- The Mysoreans had collected their revenue directly from the cultivators through their officials. But the British reversed this policy and framed out the collection of revenue to the different Rajas for lump sums. This policy of the British had lot of implications.
- The assessments of the local Rajas were harsh and beyond the capacity of the peasants to pay.
- Pazhassi was not on good terms with his uncle Vira Varma, Raja of Kurumbranad. In 1793, Vira Varma surrendered Kottayam to British and convinced the British commissioners to let him collect tax in Kottayam.
- At this time, British had adopted a hostile approach to Pazhassi Raja who had consistently refused to accept British suzerainty and decide to make the obedient Vira Varma as the head of Kottayam.



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- Vira Varma, on the one hand undertook to collect tax in Kottayam directly, and on the other hand instigated Pazhassi to oppose the British.
 - Early the lease was for one year, but in 1794 it was renewed for a period of five years.
 - More than all these, the British assessment of revenue was more callous and beyond the capacity of the peasants to pay. The peasants resisted its forcible collection by the agents of the British and thus challenged British authority.
 - Pazhassi Raja took up their cause and opposed the extortion of the peasantry.
 - Pazhassi decided to challenge the British by organizing an open rebellion.

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- He prevented the British from collecting revenue in Kottayam and threatened to cut down the pepper vines. He stopped all collection of revenue from Kottayam on 28th June 1795 and openly challenged the British authority.
 - He gave asylum to one of the Iruvazhinad Nambiar whom the Supervisor had declared a rebel. Two Mappilas who had committed robbery in the house of a Chetti were at this time sentenced to death by the Raja .
 - The Company's officials ordered the Raja's arrest on a charge of murder. But they failed to carry out the order.
 - The Company decided to collect tax in a more serious way. British troops were stationed at Kottayam bazaar and Manathana in 1795 to help the Kurumbranad tax collectors.
 - But the officials could not carry out the work of revenue collection due to the resistance and tactics of Pazhassi Raja and his men.

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- ▶ In April 1795 a contingent of British troops under Lt. Gordon made an attempt to seize the Raja in his palace at Pazhassi, but on entering the palace they found that Pazhassi was not there
 - ▶ So they plundered the palace of Pazhassi and carried away all the valuables.
 - ▶ The Raja sought asylum in the Puralimalai jungles in Wynad and adopted guerilla system of warfare.
 - ▶ The British troops stationed at Wynad were forced to withdraw.
 - ▶ In June 1796 he stopped all traffic on the Kuttiyadi Ghat.
 - ▶ The British now entered into negotiations with the Raja and permitted him to return to this palace at Pazhassi.
 - ▶ But due to a misunderstanding between the officials of the Company and the Raja, Pazhassi Raja withdrew again to the Wynad jungles along with his followers.
 - ▶ On 18th December 1796 the British Commissioners issued a proclamation forbidding the people to co-operate with the Pazhassi Raja.



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- At the same time, Raja established contacts with Tipu's men beyond the border and sought the help of Mysore in driving the English out of Wynad.
 - Some of the Kurumbranad Raja's men also crossed over to the Raja's side. In January 1797 a series of revolts took place in which several Englishmen lost their lives.
 - The British forces were overpowered by the Kurichias and Nairs. They assembled in groups, erected barriers, cut off British communications and refused to pay taxes.
 - The Rajas of Kurumbranad and Parappanad, who were loyal to the Company joined hands with Pazhassi. The eastern branch of Zamorin's family too allied itself with Pazhassi Raja.
 - The Moplahs of Malabar led by Chempan Pokker and the Gounders of Coimbatore joined the rebels.
 - Pazhassi Raja also sought help of Mysoreans driving out the English from Wynad.
 - The geographical peculiarities of Wynad and the strong support he received from the tribals prevented the British to take any effective action against the Raja.
 - The situation was so critical that Duncan, the Governor of Bombay, was forced to admit that the 'great evil in this unhappy contest arises principally out of Pazhassi Raja's extra ordinary success which renders it dangerous to the company's interests and disgraceful to our national character'.

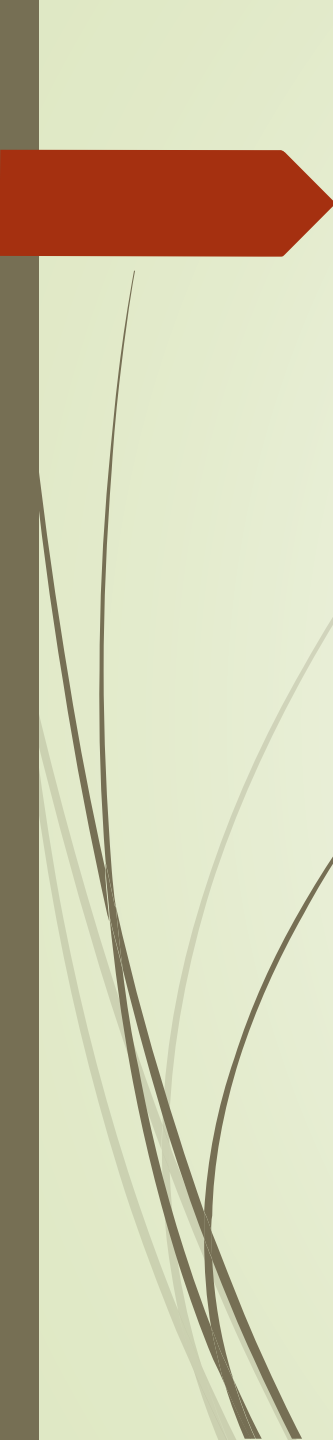
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- In March 1797, a British force under Col. Dow marched without opposition to the Periya Pass and he was to be joined by another contingent under Lt.Mealey.
 - In battles fought on three consecutive days from 9th to the 11th March, British forces were overpowered by thousands of Nairs and Kurichias who had rallied under the banner of the Pazhassi Raja.
 - Col.Dow decided to withdraw his forces from Wynad, but on their way they were attacked by the Pazhassi troops.
 - On March 18, 1797, a contingent of 1,100 men under Major Cameron was ambushed and cut into pieces while making their way through the Periya Pass.
 - The situation was thus so difficult to the British.
 - Jonathan Duncan, the Governor of Bombay came to Malabar and worked out a compromise with the Raja.
 - As per the agreement signed in 1797, the agreement with the Kurumbranad Raja was cancelled and the rebellion was brought to an end through the mediation of the Chirakkal Raja and Parappand Raja.



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- By the agreement, the British decided to withdraw their forces from Wynad.
 - Pazhassi called off the rebellion and he accepted a pension of Rs. 8000/ per annum and agreed to live in peace with the Company.
 - The company also agreed to restore the treasure captured from the Pazhassi palace.
 - As per the treaty Company has given back the confiscated Pazhassi palace.
 - Peace was thus restored for the time being, but it was only a truce.
 - It was only a temporary settlement and did not last long and soon to be violated.


Pazhassi Revolt II (1800-1805)



- The peace agreement between Pazhassi and the British East India Company only had a short life.
- Pazhassi was provoked by the British move to take possession of Wayanad which had been ceded to them by the treaty of Srirangapattanam.
- Wayanad was a traditional possession of Kottayam Raja and that Pazhassi is in control of this region since 1793.
- Pazhassi saw this move of Company as an encroachment on his country's ancient provinces.
- The Raja retaliated by collecting a large force of Nairs and Kurichias which was now supplemented by Mappilas and Pathanas, later being exsoldiers of Tipu who became unemployed after Tipu's death.
- Raja was served by several loyal lieutenants as Kannavath Sankaran Nambiar, Kaitheri Ambu Nair, Edachenna Kungan Nair and the Kurichia leader Thalakkal Chandu.
- Raja himself was a brilliant strategist and he gave special training to these troops in the technique of guerilla warfare so as to carry on the fight effectively against the English in the jungles of Wynad.


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- ▶ British Government at Madras appointed Major General Arthur Wellesley as British army commandant of Mysore, South Canara and Malabar.
 - ▶ He planned a double pronged move from Malabar Coast and Mysore into Wynad and began preparations for it.
 - ▶ General Wellesley came to Tellicheri and planned his military strategy against Raja.
 - ▶ Wellesley devised minute plans of operations.
 - ▶ Net works of roads were constructed. Military outposts were set up at strategic places to counter the guerrilla tactics and from these outposts he could send light detachments in all directions to hunt out the guerillas

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- But raja realized the fact that Wellesly had left to Deccan on a military mission and marched across Kuttiyadi pass and below he made a junction with Unni Mootha Mooppan, a Walluvanad Mappila leader and his men.
 - Soon several great nobles like Kampuratt Nambiar of Iruvazhinad, Peruvayal Nambiar and Kannavath Sankaran Nambiar also joined Raja with their men.
 - Pazhassi started his resistance in the monsoon of June-July 1800.
 - His troops came down the Ghats and attacked Mr. Brown's spice plantations at Anjarakandi and some of the British outposts.
 - Wellesley send a large force under Colonel Sartorius to recapture rebel held Kottayam, but the plan could not be carried out as there were not enough troops in Malabar.
 - Wellesley advised Commissioners to stop all communications with Wayanad so as to starve Raja.
 - But shortage of troops made all his plans in vein.
 - In 1801, a large British troops of over 10,000 men under Col. Stevenson entered Wynad from Mysore.

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- They blocked all passes that linked Wynad with Malabar and then converge on the Raja's palace at Pazhassi.
 - By that time the rebel went underground.
 - The British troops achieved a large measure of success in their hands.
 - Raja became a wanderer in the jungles accompanied by his wife and close followers.
 - His followers were hunted down and prominent leaders like Chuzhali Nambiar and Peruvayyal Nambiar were captured.
 - Peruvayal Nambiar was hanged at Kannavam.
 - British also threatened brutal penalty and confiscation of property for all those rebels who failed to surrender in six weeks time.
 - But a pardon was also issued for surrendered rebels



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- Most of Raja's chief supporters including Kannavath Sankaran Nambiar were arrested. British troops under Lt. Edward captured him on the hill near his house at Kannavanam.
 - Kannavath Sankaran Nambiar and his son were hanged and their property was confiscated.
 - The murder of Sanakaran Nambiar was a serious blow to the Pazhassi struggle.
 - The British believed that war was over and went ahead with exploitation program.
 - In January 1802 Major Macleod, the Collector issued orders disarming the district and threatened those who kept arms with death penalty.
 - He also doubled the rate of tax and ordered a reassessment of tax of whole Malabar in a mere forty days.
 - In October 1802 the rebels under the leadership of Edachena Kungan Nair and Thalakkal Chandu captured Panamaram fort and massacred its seventy strong garrisons.


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- ▶ Wellesley was enraged at this rebel attack and dispatched 500 men to retaliate.
 - ▶ But by then the victory at Panamaram thrilled the rebels and they afterwards controlled all passes in Wynad.
 - ▶ Edachena Kungan went to Pulpally shrine and issued a proclamation to people to join Raja's war and volunteered 3000men.
 - ▶ They were posted at Valliurkavu at Mananthavadi,Edappally etc.
 - ▶ 100 men under Kungan's brother were posted at Periya Pass and 25 men at Kottiyur Pass.
 - ▶ Rebel outposts were setup at the route from Dindimal to Valliurkav.
 - ▶ Edachena Kungan led an attack on a British detachment headed from Mysore to Manathavadi, but unfortunately a British troop detached one of the block made by the rebels and many of the rebels were caught as prisoners and many of them were murdered.





The British were frustrated by Kottayam people's total lack of co-operation. Soon the rebellion spread into Chirakkal.

- Raja's army by the end of 1803 was ranging as far as Kannur and Thalasseri.
- In March 1803, a rebel force marched to Calicut and captured Sub-Jail and killed all guards and seized their firearms and ammunition. They also released prisoners, many of whom were joined with the rebels.
- Following this incident Major Macleod resigned from his post.
- In 1803, Wellesley left for Europe after three years of inconclusive war with Raja and accept the post of Duke of Wellington.
- In 1804, Thomas Harvey Baber, a young and energetic British officer was appointed as the Sub-Collector of Tellicheri and he was entrusted with the responsibility of crushing the Pazhassi forces.
- The Company officials organized a new body of 1,200 policemen called Kolkar to deal with the small body of Pazhassi troops in the various parts of the country.
- With the help of Kolkars Baber could suppress several local uprisings in the Chirakkal area.

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- ▶ In April 1804 he ordered the people in each locality to be non cooperation with the rebels and told to give full information about the movements of the rebels.
 - ▶ In this situation, Raja was forced to withdraw all the men into jungles of Wynad.
 - ▶ The Madras army under Col.Macleod pursued them into the jungles and crushed all opposition.
 - ▶ On 16th June a proclamation was issued offering rewards for the apprehension of the Pazhassi Raja and his close lieutenants.
 - ▶ The Kolkkars were entrusted with the task of capturing the rebels.
 - ▶ Many encounters took place in between Pazhassi's troops and the Kolkkars. Thalakkal Chandu, the Kurichiya hero was captured in one such encounter.

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- ▶ The British made a strict blockade to Pazhassi in the jungle. Baber chased the Raja to the Jungles. On 30th November 1805, the British troops surrounded Raja and his men at Mavilathodu.
 - ▶ After a severe battle of 15 hours, Pazhassi forces were routed and the Raja was shot dead.
 - ▶ Local tradition says that the Raja committed suicide by swallowing the diamond in his ring.
 - ▶ It has been also said that Pazhassi emptied his pistol to his own chest in order to escape capture by the British.
 - ▶ Baber was so touched by the gallantry of the Raja that he carried the dead body of Raja in his own palanquin to Manathavady and cremated it with customary honor.
 - ▶ Baber wrote" thus terminated the career of a man who has been enabled to preserve in hostilities against the company for nine years..."
 - ▶ He reported to the principal Collector of Malabar in his letter dated 31st December 1805," although a rebel, he was one of the natural chieftains of the country and might be considered on that account rather a fallen enemy".

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- The death of Pazhassi Raja symbolized the collapse of the resistance movement. The other leaders either committed suicide or were killed in encounters or deported.
 - In true sense Pazhassi revolt was a popular struggle or people's war for national liberation.
 - In this struggle all classes of people irrespective of caste or religion took an active part in it.
 - Baber characterized Pazhassi Raja as 'an extra ordinary and singular character'.
 - The revolt of Pazhassi marks an important stage in the history of resistance movements against the foreigner's domination in Kerala.
 - This struggle was for defense of freedom and the object of resistance was liquidation of foreign rule and nothing else.
 - The Pazhassi episode marked the beginning of an era of resistance against the British in Kerala