CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study on ‘the social structure and stratification among the Catholics of Dakshina Kannada’ concentrates on the socio-religious life and the caste differentiation that is found among the Konkani speaking Roman Catholics of Dakshina Kannada. It is in this line the study attempts to analyze the network relations and inter-caste relations among the different castes of Catholics in Dakshina Kannada.

Theoretically, stratification can be analyzed in varied forms as class, caste, ethnic, racial, age, etc. depending on the nature of the attributes of social stratification, whether they are ascribed or achieved. This study has given much attention to the ethnic nature to examine how the caste attributes are at work in differentiating the Catholic population into different sections and the resultant social behaviour.

On the other hand the study also attempts to examine the different changing attributes of stratification system and to analyze their present condition. Hence the study discusses the dynamics of various attributes in the stratification system as
they are at work in the community chosen for study. In fact, the study has achieved its objectives to a greater extent.

The community, Konkani speaking Roman Catholics of Dakshina Kannada is culturally, linguistically, numerically and religiously a significant community in the district. It comprises about 90% of the Christian population and 8% of the total population of the district. The Catholic population is scattered all over the district and therefore it is not clustered in any specific part of the district. In certain areas it is scarcely spread and in some other areas it is concentrated in greater number.

The Catholic community is well organized as a diocese under a bishop. Structurally the diocese is subdivided into deaneries that are further subdivided into parish units, each parish under the responsibility of a religious pastor called ‘Parish Priest’. This community belongs to a major division of world religion Christianity, Roman Catholics, following the Latin Rite Roman Catholicism.

Konkani is the mother tongue of the Roman Catholics of Dakshina Kannada. However they also have good knowledge of other local languages as Kannada and Tulu. Though Konkani is used as the mother tongue, the Konkani spoken by all is not the same. The variation can be observed in terminology, usage and the accent, differing from place to place and caste-wise also.
This community runs a number of education institutions. In the past as well as in the present the Catholics in the district have realized the need and use of education. Therefore, the parents give prime importance for education as a part of socialization of the younger generation. There is a favourable attitude towards both male and female in terms of education.

Right from the beginning of the history of Catholics in Dakshina Kannada, the majority of the Catholics adapted agriculture as their main occupation. Their ancestors migrated to Dakshina Kannada as good cultivators and took to agriculture in different parts of the district. At present, though they still continue cultivation, they have also adapted to other occupations as business, professional jobs and other modern occupations. The households who belonged to the lower economic classes and were tenants in former times, now have become land owners due to the Land Reforms. Further, because of employment outside the district especially in the Middle-East, economically the Catholics have made considerable progress.

The community, Konkani speaking Roman Catholics of Dakshina Kannada is therefore a significant community in the district. It is a minority community, religious and linguistic, and their geographical distribution is unevenly spread. It has its own peculiar cultural features and therefore has a definite identity.
in the district. The discussion in the preceding chapters bring us home to some conclusions.

The Konkani speaking Roman Catholics of Dakshina Kannada district is generally considered as a homogeneous community. There are different factors and attributes that contribute for its homogeneous nature, such as religious faith that is practiced, language, and the different customs, practices and the religious festivals that are practiced. However, this homogeneous nature cannot be taken for granted. Because there are different factors that contribute for the diversity within the community. One important element that divides this community into different segments is the element of caste. Of the many indicators of caste stratification that the study highlights the important ones are – (a) The clear-cut division of the population into different sections. Therefore the Konkani Roman Catholics of Dakshina Kannada have internal subdivisions. They call these subdivisions in Konkani ‘zath’ or ‘kuli’. Based on the existing differentiation the broad categories are Bamon, Charodi, Gowdi, Sudir and the New Catholics. The differentiation and discrimination based on the ethnic origin therefore is present. (b) The caste consciousness among the different sections that is made explicit in terms of choice of marriage partners, in intra-caste marriages. (c) Caste influence reflected in areas as family structure and norms, general
conduct and behaviour, participation in church activity, leadership and devotions.

With the influence of modern life pattern the traditional caste consciousness has been transformed in many ways. The present picture gives us its latent position. However, caste practice is not weakened to a greater degree. The caste element still influences the minds of people in different spheres of life.

At the same time the modern attributes such as wealth and power find their role in determining the social position of a person. Therefore an exclusive emphasis on one set of attributes alone, namely, the caste attributes or modern attributes of social class, limits one's understanding of the complexities of social inequalities. Therefore the study includes along with the traditional caste attributes, the relative position of modern objective criteria of stratification such as wealth, power and status. The study reveals, in the past people gave prominence to rituality or religious status of the person, followed by power he enjoyed and the wealth he possessed. But in recent years the situation poses a different picture. The power or the accumulation of wealth takes the first criteria to decide one's social position, while religiosity or one's caste status takes the lesser consideration. This should not make one to conclude that caste element is disappearing or weakening. The response
rate indicates that the caste element is at work at different spheres of life mostly in latent form. The co-incident of caste and class is another significant fact. There are other factors for differentiation among themselves as language, education, income, wealth, area of residence and occupation pattern.

There are two general stereotypes carried by people of other faiths in the district. First, the Catholics in Dakshina Kannada are not real citizens of Dakshina Kannada. They are the migrants from Goa and therefore they are the 'Catholics of Goa'. Secondly, Catholics in Dakshina Kannada are 'culturally alien'. The study speaks with facts that this thinking is not correct. Catholics of Dakshina Kannada are said to be the descendants of the migrants from Goa. It is a historical fact. But the present generation is truly local. They are the descendants of the migrants to the district decades ago. The Catholics have their own cultural traditions and there are certain cultural elements that are peculiar to them. However, this has not kept them aloof from the local culture that to consider them as culturally alien. They practice many of the cultural elements of the local culture in the everyday life. Besides many of the Catholic cultural patterns are influenced by the local culture. They inherited cultural elements from Goa. But in general their culture has evolved locally, sometimes with the blend of both the cultures. Though some of their practices resemble the...
cultural elements in Goa, the culture they practice is truly local. Therefore they are not alienated from the local culture but are well integrated. Catholics have adapted many of the local customs, practices and festivals from local as they are or with some modifications.

While the Catholics are well integrated into the local culture, they still maintain a definite identity of their own from the other population in the district as 'Konkaní Roman Catholics'. In many respects Catholics maintain a separate identity of their own from the rest of the population (non-Catholics) in the district. The religious faith they share, language they speak - Konkani, organized church structure, and economic status contribute to their independent identity.

There are different caste groups among Catholics of Dakshina Kannada. However these caste groups differ in many respects from that of the caste groups among the local Hindus. Though there is discrimination on the basis of ethnic or caste origin the concept of pollution is not in practice. The association of each caste with occupation that is found among Hindus is not observed among Catholics after their conversion to Catholic faith. The inter caste marriage does not create a new caste rather the children are affiliated to the caste of the father. Another important element that is noticed in this community is that there is good scope for social mobility.
Therefore, the rigidity of the traditional caste practices does not exist among the Catholics of Dakshina Kannada.

Catholics in Dakshina Kannada live in a dual life situation - church and social. At the church level all Catholics are considered equal. This principle is very much true as far as church life is concerned. There are different Christian principles of equality that are operative in day to day life, especially in matters of religious life. Practices of religious rituals, sacraments, faith formation service, participation in different rituals, and in such other related aspects all Catholics are considered as equals. Besides factors as church teachings, indoctrination, church structure and organization, linguistic identity and Sunday services foster the sense of unity among the Catholics as one community. On the other hand, in social life there are internal subdivisions as castes and discrimination on the basis of the same.

The caste in practice among the Catholics of Dakshina Kannada today is different from that in the past. It has changed in many of its attributes and mode of life. With all the changes a strong feeling of ethnicity still persists. In recent years caste has become latent and subtle in its dynamics. The modern attributes as wealth, income, education, modern occupation etc. tend to overshadow the caste element. However, the 'caste' is not replaced by the system of 'class'. Both the systems are very
dynamic in social life. The position in both the hierarchies denotes one’s status or social position in the wider society. Though the objective criteria for social position in today’s social situation have changed as wealth, power, and status, the ethnic feeling still persists. One can analyze the mutuality of both systems, caste and class in determining one’s social position.

Catholics in Dakshina Kannada, taken as a whole, belong to the lower economic class. In the villages most of them are agriculturists. In recent years economically Catholics have made considerable progress. Now they are found in all the modern professions as doctors, engineers, lawyers and teachers.

There are different sources that help one to change or improve his social position. The important factors that help in this direction are - education achievement, modern job affiliation, non-agricultural jobs, acquisition of wealth, property and other assets, caste affiliation, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, migration to a new residential locality, political connection and political participation and gulf employment.

The general attitude of Catholics towards the other faiths in Dakshina Kannada is tolerant. Although they consider all faiths as equal in certain respects they consider themselves as superior than Hindus and Muslims. However, on the whole, the
social distance scaling shows a rather favourable attitude towards Hindus than towards the Muslims. Therefore the interaction between the Catholic community and other communities around is quite cordial and supportive. At times there are conflicting situations reported but in general different communities live together peacefully.

The dynamics of differentiation based on caste and also on the bases of modern attributes has its effects on Catholic life in Dakshina Kannada. The discrimination among sections has diminished the interest in religious matters. In certain cases the prolonged hostility has resulted in separation into different parish units or groups on ethnic lines within the parish. In recent years some are attracted also to the new sects outside the Catholic community.

The caste differentiation and the discrimination has posed difficulties for certain section as Gowdi, Sudir, and especially the New Catholics to assimilate themselves into the main-stream Catholicism. In other words they find it difficult to participate fully in the popular Catholicism that is lived in Dakshina Kannada due to the discrimination made in matters of leadership opportunity, and restriction in terms of choice of marriage partner.

Therefore though the general feeling today is that the caste is fading out, in actual life situation it is not true. It
has occupied only a latent position. Caste consciousness is very strong in many modes of life, which makes people united on the ethnic lines.

The role played by the Catholics in politics in the past was not satisfactory. But in recent years we observe more active participation of Catholics in the political system.

In the light of this discussion certain areas can be suggested or recommended for further study which will help us to understand the Catholic Community of Dakshina Kannada better sociologically.

1. The contribution of Catholic Community for the economic development of the district is appreciated. At the same time the trend of emigration to different gulf countries and western countries is quite evident among Catholics. This has direct influence on the economy. Therefore it recommends for a closer study of the trend of emigration and its effect on economic and social life in the district.

2. Catholic community has internal subdivisions as castes - Bamon, Charodi, Gowdi, Sudir, New Catholics and others. Though all these practice same religion, speak same language and come under one head as Catholics, each caste among them has some distinct cultural element or variation of its own. Therefore, an exhaustive study on this line on each sub-group of the
community, its ethnic origin and identity and its relation to the local cults and culture is important.

3. The religiosity among the Catholics is very strong down through the centuries. The values they hold in general as Catholicism, i.e. universal brotherhood and the Christian principles on justice and charity seems to be having a great deal of influence on Catholic participation in economic and political aspect of the district. An analysis of these factors may be appreciated.

4. Many of the cultural elements peculiar to the Konkani Catholics of Dakshina Kannada are dying out as the older generation slowly disappears. They are the source of information. The present younger generation, due to the influence of modern trends is very much ignorant about many of the cultural practices and observances. Therefore, there is an urgency to collect and record the data and information on the rich cultural elements of this community, which are slowly fading away.

5. The family life, pattern and norms among the Catholics are found to be similar to that of the Hindus in local. However, there are some peculiarities observed in different aspects in Catholic families. A good study on this aspect would help to understand the normative life among the Catholic families. But in recent years due to various factors as education and gulf
employment the family is in the transformative changes. This is a good area for exploration. A comparative study between Catholic families and other families and their transition is also significant.

6. The marriage, forms, and practices related among Catholics look similar to that of Hindus in local. Many of the customs are adapted to the Christian way of life in Dakshina Kannada. But Catholics have different practices also that are significant and peculiar to them. They may find their origin from three sources: (a) inherited from the past as migrated, (b) adapted from the local culture, (c) evolved something new. An attempt to explore in this field will yield good sociologically significant results.

7. Among the many social problems the Catholics face in Dakshina Kannada, 'the problem of the aged' is the real concern to the community. The number of cases where only the elderly members living in families, both or single, along with a servant at home to attend to their needs, are in the increase. Children move to different cities or other countries in search of job, get settled there, leaving the elderly parents at home. This trend will develop to be dangerous in some years in the future if no proper attention is given. A study in this area will be a fruitful one.