CHAPTER II
LATIN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF KOTTAR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Kanyakumari is a popular district having all wealth and beauty. It has ponds, rivers, paddyfields, forests, seas, mountains, hills and this region is called “God’s region”. The land is also called “Tiru Adi Desam”: (a land at God’s feet) Srivardhhanapuri or Srivazhumkadu, means seat of prosperity and a land of treasures. The foreign travellers, christian missionaries and tourists call this place as “Lands end”, where the Indian ocean, Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal make a confluence. This land is an abode of different religions and for the people of other countries and other regions, the land is wonderful and its people are wonderful. Christianity is a part of this region and it is noted that every village in Kanyakumari district has a Roman catholic church along with the public and other institutions like post office, rest house (stone ambalam) and a small temple. It denotes that the catholic religion was much old in this region. The Roman catholic faith or the Papal christian faith was the first to be introduced in this region when the Portuguese came to this country and spread christianity. The catholic christian community is scattered all over this region and for centuries together the Roman catholic missionaries revolutionized the life of the people. The influence of the European customs, manners and practices is witnessed in almost all spheres in the society and mainly the Portuguese, the Spanish and the French customs over run the

---

4 Manoj Das, A Wonderful Land and A Wonderful People – India, New Delhi, 1985, p.482.
5 Nagam Aiya, V., op.cit., p.59.
6 Agur, C.M., op.cit., p.279.
7 Ibid.,
Next to Hinduism, Christianity has a large number of followers in this region. There has been a tremendous rise in the Catholic population in the last few decades in Kanyakumari district. In 1901, it was just 3,60,000. It shot up to 9,97,000 in 1961 and it was 12,72,549 in 1971 and it had a handsome figure of 23,42,812 in 2005. This means the Catholic population of the district has reached a milestone in this place. Also in 1931, there was a total of sixteen lakh Christian population in India and among this, one fourth lived in Kanyakumari alone. At present, the Christians form at least thirty five percentage of the total population and the Roman Catholics are at least twenty percentage. The other Christians belong to the Church of South India, Salvation Army, Indian Evangelical Lutheran Church (IELC), Syrian Christians of Malankara and Malabar rites form the other fifteen percentage. The Christian people of all denominations have a good understanding and a friendly approach towards the Muslim and Hindu brethrens.

The Catholics of the diocese of Kottar live today in 154 parishes, spread all over the district under four vicariate centres in Kottar, Colachel, Mulagumoodu and Tiruthuvapuram. In the early days, in southern Travancore, the non-caste Hindus like ezavas, mukkuvas, pallas, paravas constituted the avarnas. They were generally regarded as untouchables and considered as polluting communities. Their condition was generally miserable. These communities had poverty and ignorance. They were subjected to exploitation and humiliation. It drove these low class communities to embrace Christian

---

9 Agur, C.M., op.cit., p.279.
13 Ibid.,
14 Daniel, D., op.cit., p.27.
faith. The Christian castes who embraced Christianity were the Bharathas, Mukkuvas, Nadars, Cheramar, (Pulayas) Sambavar (Parayas), Catholic Arasas, Kuravas, Aiyyanavar, Vannar, Ezhavas, Pallans, Chekkarayar, Vetas, Muthalils, Kavathis, Marakkan, Vallayan and so on. In the coastal regions from Cape Comorin to Thengapattinam, the people as a whole were Latin Catholics. They belonged to the fisher men communities of Paravas and Mukkuvas. In the interior regions of the district, the Catholics are surrounded by Hindus, Muslims and the Christians of other denominations. On account of the natural growth in population and as a result of many years of missionary work from the time of early conversions from fourteenth century to the twenty first century, there has been remarkable growth in the number of Catholics throughout the district.

The villages of Kanyakumari are closer to one another and it is very difficult to find out, where one village ends and the other begins, because houses are constructed continuously, but the churches which are established in the middle of the village stand as an identification to note the villages and there is a grotto in each Christian village in its beginning to denote that Catholics are resided in that place, and the locality is Christian. In every Christian village, the streets are named after the saints and martyrs. The educational institutions such as schools, colleges, technical institutes, shopping centres, business establishments, hospitals, auditoriums, stadiums etc. are named after Christian titles. In Travancore, the roads and streets were developed by the colonial powers with

---

20 Ibid.,
an aim to meet their commercial, administrative, religious needs and to provide greater mobility to their military forces. In Kottar diocese, many villages and streets are named after Christian saints such as Saveriyarpuram (St. Francis Xavier), Fathimapuram, Sahayapuram, Lourdhupuram (St. Mary), Mariapuram (St. Mary), Thatheyupuram (St. Jude), Yacobupuram (St. Jacob) Siluvaipuram (Holy Cross), Anthoniarpuram (St. Antony) Thomayarpuram (St. Thomas), Rayapuram (St. Peter), Meignanapuram (City of Christian Wisdom) etc.  

The Christian missions developed seaports and fishing harbours in the district. Manakudi, Rajakkamangalam, Colachel, Pattanam, Cape Comorin were the early ports of this region which were developed by the Portuguese and used by the other European powers in south Travancore. The ancient towns of Travancore like Cape Comorin, Colachel, Kottar, Thengapattinam, Thiruvancode, Padmanabhapuram were the famous Christian centres in which much religious, commercial and political activities were undertaken successfully by the missionaries. The Catholic society of Kottar is basically rural and traditional. The people are depending by and large on cultivation of land and on fishing in the sea for their sustenance. Part of the population is also employed in cottage industries such as carpentry, weaving, husking the cashew nuts, making match boxes and making earthen vessels. A good number of people have ill defined jobs. The Catholics are found in every kind of profession and they share the same lot with the majority of the people in the district. The Catholic missionaries were bound to protect

---

24 Gazetteer of India, 1996, p.480-482.
against the corruption and oppression of the administrative authorities and they wished to seek a better political position for the christians

2.2 PARAVAS, THE EARLY CATHOLICS OF KOTTAR REGION

In the southern end of the western coast and at the start of the eastern coast from south lived a fishing community called paravas or bharatavas. Before the conversion to Christianity, they worshipped the sun and these paravas were called pahal paravas, and another set worshipped the moon were called Nila paravas. The paravas of Kanyakumari region are divided as Tamil paravas, Malayali paravas and Kannada paravas. The traditional occupations of the Tamil and Malayali paravas were fishing and pearl fishing. The Kannada paravas had the occupation of repairing the umbrellas. This traditional fisherman community was also called valayar (net users). They owned boats for catching fish called (timil) and they resided on the seashore and their women sold fish in the streets and markets in exchange of other commodities.

There are 43 fishermen villages in Kottar diocese. These villages spread in eight kilometers in Bay of Bengal and Sixty kilometers in Arabian Sea. The paravas settle in 13 of such fishermen villages and all these paravas are catholic christians. The paravas earned their daily food by diving for pearls and were largely engaged in pearl fishing and chank diving and these paravas were learnt to tune valampuri chanks. Many of the paravas were poor and illiterate and they lived on the daily fish catch, which they got

---

27 Agur, C.M., _op. cit._, p.72.
30 Patirrupattu, A Classical Tamil Work, Chapter 48, p.4.
31 Edwin Sam, _Catholic Religion in the Coast of Arabian Sea, (Tamil)_., Nagercoil, 1988, p.28.
through catamarans (country boats). Their income was very low. In Agasteeswaram taluk, the paravas are mostly makkathayis but in Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks the mixed system of makkathayis and marumakkathayis inheritance is followed.

Reports make it clear that Cape Comorin and the other parts of the parava villages on the Bay of Bengal and Arabian sea coast were part of the first mass conversion of the modern times. The time was favouring the Portuguese missionaries who had cordial relationship with the rulers of Travancore that they sought monetary contribution, jurisdictional privileges and the like from the Portuguese government of Goa. The paravas had been converted to the catholic faith in large numbers and many of their villages as a whole were embracing christianity. Western christianity under Pedroado had now come to stay in the region of Kottar. The Portuguese helped the paravas from the muslim trademen, the badagas and the hindu tribes as their leaders Pattamgattis sought for help and protection. The early conversions took place in between 1535 and 1537. Micheal Vaz, the Vicar General of the Goa ecclesiastical region, declared the inclusion of the parava community in the catholic church and made them members of the church. After conversion, Latin worship was followed in this region. In the district of Kanyakumari, the policy of Latinization was adopted in the region among the parava converts. The paravas, without a single exception, are christians of the church of Rome to which they were converted by the celebrated missionary St. Francis

---

33 Sheela Devi, R., *Social Life in Kerala During the Sangam Age*, University of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1992, p.53.
38 *Jesuit letter*, Dt. 18th December, 1544 and 27th June 1845.
Xavier and his colleagues. The parava catholics are commonly called Saveriya christianikal (Xavier christians) as they venerated St. Francis Xavier as their great teacher. Francis Xavier speaks that the paravas are a noble race, more industrious and preserving. They are called the children of St. Francis Xavier. Every parava household has a statue of the saint in the home altar for daily prayers.

2.3 THE MUKKUVA CONVERTS

In Kanyakumari, the Savalakaras were people of low caste mostly mukkuvas and paravas. In 1713, they were living in twenty four villages (leagues) from Cape Comorin to Trivandrum. Among the 24 leagues, fourteen leagues are in the present kottar diocese and ten are in the Trivandrum Arch Latin diocese. Kanyakumari, Manakudy, Pallam, Puthenthurai, Pillaithope, Muttom, Kadiyapattinam, Kottilpadu, Colachel, Vaniyakudy, Kurumpanai, Midalam, Enayam and Ramanthurai are the fourteen leagues found part with this region. At present there are forty three fishermen villages found under the religious jurisdiction of the Kottar diocese. These villages are Chinnamuttam, Kanyakumari, Vavathurai, Puthugramam, Siluvainagar, Kanyakumari, Kovalam, Kel-Manakudy, Manakudy, Kel-Pallam (Anai Nagar), Pallam, Puthenthurai, Kesavanputhenthurai, Pozhikarai, Periyakadu, Rajakkamangalam. Azhikal, Pillaithope, Melathurai, Kel-Muttom, Mel-Muttom, Jamesnagar, Kel-Kadiyapattinam, Mel-Kadiyapattinam, Chinnavillai, Periyavillai, Mandaikadu-Puthur, Kottilpadu, Maramady, Colachel, Simon colony, Kodimunai, Vaniyakudy, Kel-Kurumpanai, Kurumpanai,
Inigonagar, Kel-Midalam, Midalam, Naduthurai, Helen Colony, Enayam, Enayam – Puthenthurai, Ramanthurai, and Mulloorthurai. According to sources, the paravas and mukkuvas of these villages are the converts from the early Portuguese time. Majority of these converts were in general at very low stage of social and economic life. They were among the most utterly ignorant classes of south India having neither schools nor teachers and they were a class the most backward in point of education. They were subjected to various restrictions especially in the Travancore kingdom. They were not admitted into the temples of the high caste hindus and were not permitted to walk through the residential quarters of the nayars and namboothiri brahmins. These people are collectively called Neithal Makkal that the people who have been living on the sea coast and live by the means of fishing. Fishing provided employment to a large percentage of the population of the state Travancore. In 1911, there were 1,16,770 people engaged in fishing and various industries connected with it. Fishing industry provides an important source of food supply. After agriculture and cattle rearing, it is the only important occupation of the people of Travancore. Fish is the most primary source of food and it forms an important article of diet for more than ninety percentage of the population of the state. The income from fish comes next to the yield of agriculture in Travancore. The long coastline of this region favoured the development of fishing industry and the poor fisher folk had their livelihood. The life of the fishermen living in the coast was hard and was away from basic facilities. From 1537, the mukkuva fisher

---

44 Vareedaih Constantine, Neithal Suvadugal, (Tamil) Nagarcoil, 2005, pp.33-34.
47 Simon Casie Chitty, op.cit., pp.45-46.
folk was converted to the catholic faith by the Portuguese missionaries. There were
catholic preachers and Portuguese squadron in these coastal villages which were
permitted by the king of Travancore to look after these people\textsuperscript{50}.

The Portuguese missionaries were not sufficient to fulfill the needs of the
converts and so the preachers and the army men visited them and maintained the
churches and schools started by St.Francis Xavier and his colleagues\textsuperscript{51}. In course of
time, the churches became self-supporting and the folk had to support the local church
financially. The fishermen had to pay a certain percentage of their catch to the church as
tax. It was introduced in 1567 and worked till 1970 in the coastal parishes of Tuticorin
and Kottar\textsuperscript{52}. In most of the coastal churches, the fishermen had to pay tithes to the
church. One tenth of the fish caught in every net was given to the church. Fr.Paolino,
who was in the coastal villages, thought it proper to impose certain taxes on the
fishermen belonging to his congregation. He proceeded to Padmanabhapuram to the
residence of the king to seek his permission to collect some taxes from the people\textsuperscript{53}. The
church got income voluntarily from the offerings during baptism, and at the
administration of sacraments. A grace fees also went to dwell the funds of the church.
During marriages, a certain portion of money was given to the church as whatever the
custom of giving dowries to the bride\textsuperscript{54}. In pilgrim centres, the vows of the pilgrims and
their offerings bring a handsome income. The offerings like oil, paddy, plantain,
vegetables, fruits, livestock etc. were auctioned and the money was spent for the

\textsuperscript{50} Ladislaus Micheal, \textit{op cit.}, p.104.
\textsuperscript{51} George Schurhammar, \textit{op cit.}, pp.473-474.
\textsuperscript{52} Wicki, S.J., \textit{The Portuguese Padroado in India in the 16\textsuperscript{th} Century}, Alleppey, 1982, p.56.
\textsuperscript{54} Agur, C.M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.278.
purposes of the church. On great festivities, people make voluntary contribution to the church. In times of certain coconut harvesting in the garden and similar garden produces are also offered to the church. The clergy were also permitted to receive stipends for conducting mass, funerals, other sacraments and ecclesiastical functions. The kind and mode of contribution differ in different parts of the country and it is traditionally observed in the catholic villages.

In those days, the fishermen lived in huts on the coastal line and the land was owned by the church and not by the individuals. These houses were in fact small, untidy and unsafe to weather. Their condition was very poor, their income was uncertain and their life was miserable. The rich fishermen build houses away from the coastal line in their own property. The socio-demographic comparisons in the coastal villages are not uniform. Some villages are rich and others are poor. In Kanyakumari district most of the fishermen houses are closer to the sea and more than 75 percentage of houses are with in 500 meters from the coastline. There are huts, tiled houses and terrace houses with in this boundary. 18 percentage of houses are built from 500 metre to 1000 metre distance and 7 percentage of houses are built from 1000 metre to 1500 metre distance.

The on set of southwest monsoon during June, July and August every year is marked by heavy damage to the life and property of fisher folk resulting in mass evocation and sea erosion. Many people die due to this erosion, many are missing, and many get injured.

---

55 Ibid., p.276.
56 Ibid., p.278.
57 Edwin Sam, op.cit., p.229-230.
58 Jacob Mani, Traditional Fishermen Community in Kerala, Trivandrum, 1995, p.48.
59 Vareedaih Constantine, op.cit., p.349.
The houses are totally damaged or destroyed. Sea erosion is the greatest threat during the monsoon.  

Most of the fishermen approach money lenders or middlemen. The role of middlemen in their economic life indirectly increases their liability and indebtedness. The people were unable to avoid middlemen or money lenders. They also had many financial commitments. The catholic church believed that only by educating the people they could be free from exploitation and oppression.

The Tamilnadu government declared the mukkuva fisher folk as the most backward caste in 1989. This paved the way for more educational and employment opportunities for them. The infights among the fishermen with other communities cause much tragedy in Kanyakumari district. The communal conflict between the christians and hindus at Mandaikadu from 1-3-1982 to 15-3-1982 had heavy loss to the fisher people of Puthur. In the police firing many people died. The diocese appointed a peace committee and solved the communal riot, and on its recommendations, Justice Venugopal Commission was appointed and the matter was solved. The 1992 Manakudy infighting, 1997 Kanyakumari fishermen attack between the parava and mukkuva communities, the 1999 Thengapattinam riot between the christians and muslims caused much losses and the Kottar Social Service Society and the Coastal Peace Committee could bring peace and order in these places.

---

60 The Hindu, (Daily), Madurai, 30th July, 1993.
61 Jacob Mani, op.cit., pp.84-85.
63 Native Newspaper, Dinamalar, 18-03-1982.
64 Report, Kottar Social Service Society, Nagercoil, 2000, pp.28-34.
2.4 INLAND FISHERMEN CATHOLICS

The coastal fishermen carried the fish from the coastline villages and sold them in the interior places of the district on certain days and this profit was given to the church. In course of time they settled in some particular places and sold fish in the interior and these people were called inland fishermen. Their settlements were called sampa-theru, savalakarar theru, paravar-ul-theru, mukkuva-ul-theru and after the conversion to Christianity, these streets were called Roman Catholic Streets. Selling fish in the interior was their traditional occupation. They took fish as headload from the coastal villages and sold them in the main markets of the district. Kottar, Aloor, Vadasery, Manalikarai, Puthenkadi, Thittuvilai, Karingal, Atoor, Arumanai, Thoduvetty, Kulasegaram, Monday Market, Padmanabapuram, Mulagumoodu, Kaliyakavillai were the early inland fishermen villages of the district. Ferroli states that in 1713, there were twenty four inland fishermen villages in Kanyakumari district. Narchison makes mention that in 1765, there were twenty seven inland Fishermen settlements in the district and all were converted to the catholic faith. For many generations, they are living surrounded by people of other castes and creeds and a good percentage of them are engaged in marketing fish which they take from the sea shore to the interior places.

When catholic christianity spread among the parava and mukkuva communities these people remained as hindus. They were gradually converted into the catholic faith between 1713 and 1765. Louis Rodrigo, a Jesuit missionary who had been working in

---

65 Agur, C.M., *op.cit.*, p.276
69 *Vareedaiah Constantine, op.cit.*, p.102.
70 Felix Wilfred, *op.cit.*, p.144.
Thiruvithamcode states that the Inland fishermen were converted by two pandaram priests of the Portuguese missionary. The well rooted catholic religion in the coastal areas spread among the inland fishermen and they are the corner stone for the growth of the religion in the inland regions of Kottar diocese. At present there are more than one lakh inland fishermen living in the interior. They have built churches in their villages. These people are spread over hundred villages of the district in all the taluks of Kanyakumari district. There are twenty six inland fishermen settlements in Vilavancode taluk namely Karingal, Mathicode, Pullankuzhi(Tholayavattam), Irenipuram, Puthukadai, Villathurai, Kuzhivillai, Kaliyakkavillai, Padanthalumoodu, Marthandam, Nanthancode, Iraviputhurkadai, Unnamalakadai, Kuzhithurai(Kazhuvanthitai), Melpuram, Melpalai, Mankalai, Panachamoodu, Puliyoorsalai, Manchalumoodu, Arumanai, Ambalakadai, Chitaral (Vallamcode), Kaliyal, Kadayalumoodu and Medavilagam. In Kalkulam taluk there are thirty four inland fishermen villages. These are Pechiparai, Kulasegaram, Puliyiranki, Thettiyodu, Kesavapuram, Kuruvikadu, Puthenkadai, Attoor, MBC Colony (Eaviputhurkadai) Pazhayakadai, Palliyadi, Samiyarmadam, Mulagumoodu, Mekkamandapam, Manaliilai, Manakkavilai, Padmanabhapuram, Thiruvithamcode, Thikkamcode, Mecode-Palayam, Monday Market, Thalakulam, Iraniel, Chithanthope, Manalikarai, Appattuvilai, Villukiri, Nullivillai, Kurunthancode, Allur, Chadayanallor, Paracheri, Chunkankadai and Mankuti.

* Pandaram Priests were bare footed, who walked from one place to another and spread the catholic religion. Source, Mascreen, P.J., Devasahayam Pillai. An Indian Martyr, Quilon, 1956, p.28.


The inland fishermen villages of Agsteeswaram taluk are twenty one. They are Peruvillai, Asaripallam, Krishnankoil, Vadasery, Meenakshipuram-Nagercoil, Ramanputhur, Kottar, Illamkadai, Parakai, Thengamputhoor, Tamaraikulam, Kottaram, Mylady, Jamestown, Marungoor, Ramanathchanputhur, Thirur, Karkadu, Rajavoor, Iraviputhoor, and Suchindram. Thovalai taluk has nineteen inland fishermen villages. They are Vellamadam, Thovalai, Aramboly, Tirupathisaram, Thazakudy, Irachakulam, Putheri, Thittuvilai, Mathal, Kurathiyarai, Kesavanputhur, Ettamadai, Melkarai, Tadikkarankonam, Sitapal, Senpagaramputhoor, Bhoothapandy, Arumanalloor and Kadukarai73.

Traditionally in every parish, the inland fishermen sell fish by paying a fees to the parish church. This tax was called “Vatti”. The men had to provide fish for the parish priest and to the religious who serve them in their parish. By paying the tax “Vatti”, they obtained the right for selling fish in the region of the parish. In course of time the catholic church abolished the tax “vatti” and introduced another tax named “vari” for each family for their survival in the parish. New form of taxes on sacramental administration, special tax on festivals and the other taxes are being levied on them for the maintenance of the parish74. In the early time they had hut churches made of palm leaves and in the 18th century they constructed churches made of stone and motor. At present they have ventilated and well furnished churches in which the catholics of other communities also make involvement in prayers and administration75. They, in course of time, integrated themselves with a new environment and adopt, a new way of life. Due

73 Vareedaiah Constantine, op.cit., pp.34-35.
74 Felix Wilfred, op.cit., p.144-145.
to the growth of education, they are taken into various professions. When these mukkuva inland fishermen were declared most backward community by the Tamil Nadu government from 1989 and it offers educational and occupational privileges to them.

2.5 THE VELLALA, CHETTIYAR AND MUDALIYAR CATHOLICS

The Vellalas or Pillaimars were a chief caste found in Madurai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari regions. They were the emigrants from Pandynadu. They held high government postings in the princely states of the Pandyas, Cholas, Vijayanagar, Nayaks and the Travancore rulers, who held sway over these regions in different times. They had a high social status next to the brahmins. They had been inhabited in the southern taluks of Kanyakumari district mainly in Nanjanadu i.e, Agasteeswaram and Thovala taluks. Most of them were rich land lords and were commonly called “Nanjilnadu vellalas”. Beyond the agricultural occupation, they held positions as munchief, accountants, army chiefs, etc. These vellalas are divided as konguvellalas, vilakudi vellalas, thuluva vellalas and esasi vellalas. They also run business enterprises in the main centres of Kanyakumari district. The vellala christians spread over the villages of Thovalai, Aramboly, Ramanathichanputhoor, Rajavoor, Ramapuram, Bhothapandy etc. There are some three thousand catholics belonging to the vellala caste who reside mainly in the parishes of Ramanathichanputhoor, Rajavoor and Ramapuram. In course of time, many of their families became impoverished and some have migrated to other places in

76 Felix Wilfred, op.cit., p.144.
79 Tamil Arasu (Government of Tamilnadu), Madras 16, March, 1972, p.4.
82 Felix Wilfred, op.cit., p.145.
83 Report, Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, p.18.
search of work and fortune. They are a minority and they feel isolated and insecure in the midst of the other caste people of overwhelming numbers, who have greater political and economic advantages. Being a very small group, they are constrained to choose the life partner from close relations.\(^8^4\)

In the early times, in a bid to bring the vellalas into the church, Fr. Bernard De Sa, a Jesuit priest, inaugurated a new mission at Marungoor, about eight kilometres east of Kottar.\(^8^5\) Marungoor which means border is said to have been a prominent cantonment of the Travancore army. It was a military garrison and a defence centre against the invasion from the east.\(^8^6\) It was a time of confusion in Travancore and the temple authorities attacked the Marungoor mission and ransacked the Jesuit home. Many christians at Marungoor were persecuted, and the house was shifted to Thope and the missionaries at Thope were again attacked by them. The mission was then shifted to Colachel and eventually to Rajakkamangalam, and the ruined mission had a silent work in those days.\(^8^7\) From the earlier times there have been many vocations from the vellala caste to priesthood and to religious life. Some of the first priests of the diocese hail from the vellala community.\(^8^8\)

Asaripallam and Kel Asaripallam are the parishes where catholics belonging to the chettiyar caste live. Their traditional occupation was to extract oil from nuts and sell them in the market. They extract oil from coconut, sunflower, and vegetables. As an enterprising community they have been progressing by making use of the skills they

---

\(^8^4\) Felix Wilfred, *op. cit.*, p.145.
\(^8^7\) *op. cit.*, pp.359.
\(^8^8\) Felix Wilfred, *op. cit.*, p.145.
possess. They involve in various business also. Today there are a number of educated people among them, and they hold government jobs in various departments. Marriages take place mostly within the same community and village. Catholics belonging to the caste called Kerala mudaliar live in the parishes of Palliady, Amsi, Ritapuram and Pakiapuram. They are very few in number. The catholic-goldsmiths live in Vellicode, Christunagar, Kurusady and Meenakshipuram parishes.

2.6 NADAR CATHOLICS

The nadars are the majority people of Kanyakumari region. They were called sanars before the year 1921. After 1921, the Madras government issued an order directing them to accept the term nadar in place of sanar. These sanars were a class of hindus inhabiting in Tinnevelly (Tirunelveli) and the southern taluks of Travancore. They were a Dravidian war like adventurous race migrated towards the south from northern districts of Tamilnadu. They were a dark skinned race with low forehead, sunken eyes and prominent check bones. Tamil is the mother tongue of majority of these people and Malayalam is spoken by some of them. In 1901 their literary percentage was seven among men and their women were mostly illiterate. In south Travancore, the nadars were farmers, trade men, labourers and they were primarily tappers of palmyra. They occupied a position in between the nairs and the untouchables. They cultivated the lands of the nair landlords. They were also tax collectors, authorized

---

89 Ibid;
92 Samuel Mateer, *op.cit.*, p.41.
95 Ibid., p.398.
to collect the tax from the people. They were obliged to render ozhiyam or forced labour to the high class communities. These unprivileged people had to work in the temple lands and in the estates of the privileged classes and for this conscripted labour no wage was paid. Along with this free service they had to supply provisions to the land lords. They were economically depressed and suffered greater degradation in south Travancore. The low caste nadar people were forbidden to come near people who claimed a high caste status. They were forbidden to carry umbrellas, wear chappals or shoes and to wear gold ornaments. Their houses should not be higher than one storey and they were not allowed to milk cows. The nadar women were not allowed to carry water on their hips, as it was the custom among the higher castes. Their women were not allowed to cover the upper portions (bosoms) of their bodies. The nadars were allowed to wear a single cloth of coarse texture to be worn alike by males and females not lower than the knee nor higher than the waist. They were not allowed to enter temples and to use roads.

These sufferings of the people forced them to accept christianity.

The arrival of the christian missionaries gradually lifted their social condition. Several times with the support of the missionaries, these nadars openly revolted against their landlords. In 1865, with the effort of the christian missionaries, the Raja of Travancore permitted the women of all castes to cover the upper part of their bodies. It was a milestone in the history of the missionaries and the style of dress was declared

98 Leonard Fernando, op.cit., p.329.
100 Samuel Mateer, op.cit., pp.100-102.
incompatible with the modesty and decorum of christian women. The christian missionaries gave them educational opportunities and equal rights in the church and the society. Such facilities opened the way for remarkable progress in this community. It is noted that the early missionaries had tried in vain to convert the sanars, who were scattered from the foot of the Ghats and the later missions were successful to convert this class to the Latin christian faith.

The nadars became converts to the catholic religion after hundred and fifty years of missionary work in the coastal regions of Travancore. Slowly and steadily these people became christians and the catholic nadars spread in all the four vicariates of the diocese of Kottar. At present they are in Adharavilai, Akkakari, Alancholai, Alamparai, Alenchi, Alavilai, Alloor, Amalapuram, Amaravathi vilai, Ambalakadai, Ambankalai, Ambasamudram, Ammachdiyarkoilvilai, Ammandivilai, Amsi, Anannchicode, Ananthanadarkudiyirippu, Anchukootuvilai, Anducode, Anthoniyarpuram, Annainagar, Appatuvilai, Aral Kurusady, Aramannam, Aramboly, Arokianagar, Arokiapuram, Arudesam, Aruguvilai, Arulanathapuram, Arumanai, Asaripallam, Assisi-Nagercoil, Attakulamkarai, Attoor, Azhaganparavur, Azakappapuram, Azakiamandapam, Azhikaldesam, Bethelpuram, Bharathapally, Bhuthapandy, Carmelnagar, Chanthaivilai, Chekkady, Chellamkonam, Chemmankalai, Chemmanvilai, Chemparuthivilai, Chentharai, Cherikadai, Cherivilai, Cheruvallore, Chethokol, Chetticharvilai, Chettikulam, Chitardesam, Chitaral, Chitarianope, Choozhal, Christunagar, Christurajapuram, Chunkankadai, Claret mount, Devasahayam


\subsection*{2.7 OTHER TRIBAL CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES}

The scheduled tribes live mostly in isolated and inaccessible hilly areas of Kanyakumari and are underdeveloped and poorly integrated with rest of the regions. These tribals do not have much cultural contact with the rest of the population\textsuperscript{105}. Hunting, fishing, cultivation of the forest land, collecting honey, basket making, weaving etc. are the common activities of these people. Group life was the main character of these tribals\textsuperscript{106}. The valutheda (washermen), cheliya (weaver), nayadi (pulaya), pallos, arayar (fishermen) parayar, nulayar, pulayar are the untouchables existed in the society in a dreadful form\textsuperscript{107}. The punishments to these lower caste people were severe in the princely state of Travancore. These people were the original tribes of south India had the lowest rank in the social order and were slaves throughout their life. They have been living in Asambu, Alampara, Podigaimalai, Mahendragiri, Veerapuli, Thadagamalai, [Ibid., pp.29-54.]
Velimalai, Perumalaikankudi, Maramalaikanikudi, Kilamalai, Aarukani, Kudappukani, Ettukani, Pathukani, Thovala, Agasteeswaram, Eraniel and Kunnuthur areas. There was also slave market in south Travancore. The inland christian missionaries reached these spots and visited these tribal people. They introduced social, economic and educational programmes for the tribal upliftment. Gradually these people embrace christianity especially the catholic religion.

2.8 PILGRIMAGE PRACTICES OF THE CATHOLICS

Pilgrimage is one of the widespread accomplishments of catholic life. These are present from the early days of the christian faith and this practice is exclusively a christian phenomenon. The christians with a zeal visit the places which are esteemed sacred to their faith. The people of Kottar have pilgrimage stations in their diocese and they often visit these places. Kottar, St. Francis Xavier Cathedral is the most celebrated pilgrimage centre of the catholic Christians from 1544 A.D., as the Jesuit missionary St. Francis Xavier stayed here and did lot of services to christianity. In this church the holy relics of India’s first martyr Devasahayam pillai are buried and venerated by the people. The Aramboly Kattadimalai or Maniyadichanparai or Devasahayam mount, where the martyr was shot to death remains as a pilgrimage centre from 1755 A.D. The Puliyoorkurichi (Muttidichanparai) St.Michael’s shrine resembles as the martyr’s memorial. Also the birth place of the martyr in Nattalam is also venerated as a holy place in the diocese. The Rajavoor St. Michael’s shrine has been serving as the mission station and pilgrimage centre from 1680 A.D. St. Antony’s shrine Vettuvenni

References:

attracts the pilgrims on every Tuesday. St.Jude’s church, Swamiyarmadam was declared pilgrimage centre from 1968 A.D. The Thiruvithamcode Periyanayagi (St.Mary’s) church is another famous pilgrimage centre of the Kottar diocese.\footnote{Ibid.}

St. George shrine at Munchirai and the first woman saint of India St. Alphonsa shrine in Nagercoil are the highly celebrated pilgrimage centers of Kanyakumari district.\footnote{Then Oli, November, 2005, p.29.} The folk of the diocese of Kottar used to visit St.Mary’s church Velankanni and Adayar Madras, St.Thomas Mount Chennai, Church of our Lady of Snow Tuticorin, St. Fathima Church Valliyoor, St.Mary’s shrine Vadipatty, Santhome Madras, etc. These people visit St.George Shrine Edathuva, St. Alphonsa Shrine Bharanamganam, Christ the King shrine Vettukadu, Fr. Elias Joseph Kuriakose’s shrine Mananam, St. Sebastian shrine Balaramapuram, St.Jude’s church Killipalam and Kurusumalai at Malaiyattoor and Vellarada in the state of Kerala. The folk also visit Rome, Palastine, the holy lands associated with the scenes of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. The tombs of saints or relics of saints are prized highly by many faithful.\footnote{Sujitha Jasmine, G., Sainthood Celebrations of St. Alphonsa in Kanyakumari District, A Group Project Submitted in the Department of History, St.Jude’s College, Thoothoor, Kanyakumari District, April 2009, pp.32-38.}

2.9 IMPORTANT DAYS OBSERVED BY THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

St. Thomas day is observed on 3\textsuperscript{rd} July every year and offerings are made to the Indian apostle. St. Francis Xavier’s feast day is observed on 3\textsuperscript{rd} December, holiday is declared in the district and great celebrity is followed for ten days. The diocesan day of
Kottar is celebrated every year on 26th May, as the birthday of the diocese. Christmas and Holy Week are tuned with devotion all over the diocese115.

Every day each family as whole the parents and children kneel and pray together as a unit of the church in miniature, enhance the liturgical life and this daily family prayers enrich family ties. This prayer includes the prayers to the God, St. Mary, all the Saints along with a reading from the Holy Bible116. The faithful remembers the Pope, the bishop of their diocese, the priests of their parishes, all the men and women religious in their prayers. Daily family prayer in the christian families are customary and compulsory117. Every house in the diocese of Kottar has a home altar to kneel and pray. A picture of the sacred heart of Jesus, a cross, rosary, bible, prayer books, candles etc are placed on the home altar. These catholics do the Sunday night prayer without candles, and they have more solemn prayer on holidays and feast days. Praying of the holy rosary in the public processions and other religious functions are common everywhere in the diocese. The faithful wear the rosary and Marian scapular around their necks118.

The diocese as a whole is much interested in celebrating the historical dates, national celebrations and international days of remembrance. 12th January as National Youth day, 15th January as Thiruvalluvar day, 26th January as Indian Republic day, 30th January as Martyr’s day, 28th February as National Science day, during March international Women’s day, 15th March world disabled day, 21st March as day for the

115 Then Oli, November 2005, p.34.
118 *Souvenir, Platinum Jubilee Celebrations*, p.63.
elimination of racial discrimination, 7th of April as world health day, 14th April as Dr. Ambedkar day, 22nd April as earth day, 1st May as St. Joseph’s day as well as International Labour day, 5th May as Press freedom day, 2nd Sunday in May as Mother’s day, 15th May as Family day, 6th June as environment day, 20th June as Father’s day, 26th June as drug abuse day, 15th August as St. Mary’s day as well as Indian independence day, 26th August as Mother Theresa day, 5th September as teacher’s day, 2nd October as Gandhi Jayanthi, 10th December as human rights day etc. are observed in the diocese.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{119} Report, Army of St. Mary, Diocese of Kottar, Nagercoil, 2007, pp.5-7.