INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

'Travancore' is the anglicised form of "Tiruvithamkur" a word, derived from 'Tiruvithamkode', once the capital of the Venad, but now an obscure village situated thirty miles, southeast of Trivandrum. In Malayalam the name 'Travancore' is interpreted as "Tiruvithamkur" and in Sanskrit as 'Srivardhanapuri' or 'Srivazhumkode' meaning the seat of prosperity. ¹ The State was also known as 'Venad', 'Vachi Desam' and 'Tiru-Adi-Desam' during different times. 'Venad' is a corruption of 'Vanavanad', the land of the Celestials. 'Vachi Desam' means either the land of treasure or the land of bamboos. 'Tiru-Adi-Desam' is probably derived from 'Tiru-Adikal', one of the title of the Chera Kings. "Tiru-Adi" means the holy feet or the royal feet represented in the usual form by which the people addressed the rulers of Travancore. ²

The four Southern-most taluks of the State of Travancore i.e., Thovala, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode, which were predominantly, Tamil speaking were called South Travancore.³ After

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² Ibid.
India gained independence, many changes took place in the political and constitutional status of Native States.  

The states of Travancore and Cochin were integrated on July 1, 1949 and merged with the Indian Union. The present Kanyakumari district or the erstwhile South Travancore was under the domination of the Malayalis of Travancore, but the people of this region retained the Tamilian way of life and preserved their culture. They felt that their position as a linguistic minority was insecure under Travancore-Cochin. To protect the rights of the Tamil minority, the Travancore Tamilnadu Congress was formed in 1945 and in 1948 election, it won fourteen seats out of eighteen, it contested.

In 1948, when Patten Thanu Pillay became the Chief Minister of Travancore, steps were taken during his period to form “Aikya Kerala” (United Kerala). As a result, Civil Disobedience Movement was started under the leadership of Nesamony. Disturbed by this, Sardar Vallabhai Patel promised that the rights of the Tamils in Travancore-Cochin will be protected under the Re-organisation of State, despite the promise the

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4 Report on the Administration of Travancore and Cochin (1949-'50), Trivandrum, 1951, p.5.
Tamils observed August 11, 1954 as their “Freedom Day”.\textsuperscript{7}

Hartals were observed in many parts of this region and all shops and educational institutions were closed. The Government banned all political meetings and processions. Violence spread everywhere and the police resorted to firing at Thoduvetty and Marthandam, when the situation went out of control. The ministry of Patton Thanu Pillay fell in 1955.

As per the recommendations of States re-organisation Commission, the four Tamil speaking Taluks of Travancore-Cochin viz., Thovala, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode were formed into a separate district known as Kanyakumari. The Kanyakumari district, which emerged a part of the Madras State on November 1, 1956.\textsuperscript{8}

**The Land and its people**

**Location**

South Travancore is the southern most part of India, located in South West of the Indian Peninsula and forms an irregular triangle with its apex at Cape Comorin.

\textsuperscript{7} Somale, *Kanyakumari Maavattam (Tamil)*, Madras, 1961, p.92.  
\textsuperscript{8} *Dina Malar (Tamil)*, Kanyakumari 2000, Dated 31st December, 1999, p.9.
Geographically it lies between 77° and 77.36° of Eastern longitude and 8.03° and 8.35° of the Northern latitude with well defined boundaries. It has natural boundaries of its own, surrounded by Tirunelveli on the North-East, the Indian Ocean in the South, Kerala on the West and North-West Arabian Sea on the West and South-West, the Western Ghats on the east, and Ceylon on the South-Eastern direction. The total area is 1684 sq.kms., i.e., 650,024 sq.miles and the Coastal lines extend over 68 Kilometres.

The factors that influence the climate of this region are the two Monsoon winds, the South-West monsoon (From June to August) and the North-East monsoon (From October to December). The South-West monsoon season is locally known as "Saral". The average rainfall is 1,456 m.m. per annum. The temperature normally varies between 75°F and 98°F and very rarely does the temperature touch 100°F.

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12 Nagam Aiya, V., op.cit., p.68.
Rivers

South Travancore is fortunate to have many rivers Paralayar, Kothayar, Valliyar and Pazhayar, which provide sufficient water to South Travancore. The Paralayar rises in the Mahendragiri hills, passes through Tiruvattar, joins Kothayar near Thiruvattar. These two unite to form Kuzhithurayar, also known as Tambraparani, which enters the Arabian Sea at Thengapattanam, a distance of 37 miles from the origin.

Kothayar has its source at the Southern extremity of the Muthu Kuzhivayal Plateau in Kalkulam taluk at an elevation of over four thousand five hundred feet. It reaches Mottachi valley after flowing fourteen miles and falls thirty feet down and reaches the lower elevation of two hundred and fifty feet. Proceeding south, the river drops fifty feet down forming Thipparappu falls. The river Kothayar is dammed at Pechiparai, built in the year 1906.

The word Pazhayar means old river, it flows through taluks of Thovala and Agasteeswaram in Nanjilnad, and falls into the Manakudy, Nagercoil, Kottar and Suchindrum. The Pandian dam is built a few miles away from the commencement of the Pazhayar river. The river is

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15 Census of India 1961, District Census Administration Kanyakumari, p.5.
16 Dina Malar (Tamil), Kanyakumari 2000, Dated 31st December, 1999, p.10.
17 Travancore Directory, 1938, Trivandrum, p.108.
also known as Pahruliyaru. Apparently, this name Pahruliyaru, occurs in Silapathikaram, where it is stated that Pahruliyaru and Kumarikkodu were devoured by the Sea. It is believed that the river long time ago, flowed through a stretch of land into the South Travancore.\textsuperscript{18}

**Hills**

South Travancore is situated at the foot of the Western Ghats and has only a few hill ranges. Agasteeswaram taluk is fairly free from mountains. The other three taluks have only few ranges in the eastern side. At a place called Muthukuzhivayal in the mountain range of Kalkulam taluk, there is a plateau about ten miles long and six miles broad at an elevation of about four thousand four hundred feet above the sea level.\textsuperscript{19}

The most important peak in the Western Ghats is Mahendragiri. It is five thousand four hundred and twenty seven feet high. Teak, Blackwood, Ebony and Vengai trees are found abundantly in this mountainous area.\textsuperscript{20} In the east the Aramboly pass forms the main entrance to this region from Tirunelveli District. Marunthuvamalai


\textsuperscript{19} *Census of India 1961*, District Census Administration Kanyakumari, p.5.

\textsuperscript{20} Nagam Aiya,V., *op.cit.*, p.79.
(hill) is located in the South of Mahendragiri. Another mountain range is located at Soolakode, which contains numerous spurs covered with forests. Cumldhymalai is another lofty mountain, rising gradually, moving towards northwest direction from Kunnancode. Hill tribes have their habitations at the northern slopes of the mountain and cultivate rubber and spices.\(^{21}\)

**Passes**

The Aramboly Pass forms the best entrance to South Travancore.\(^{22}\) Being a strategically important place, this pass has played a great part in the military history of the place. This is situated at a distance of eighteen kilometres from Kanyakumari town.

**Vattakottai Fort**

Four miles east of Kanyakumari town, stands a little fort of Vattakottai, which is built upon a small patch of calcareous sandstone, full of marine shells, exposed most along the north face of the long curtain wall which joins Vattakottai Fort with the extensive series of fortification known as "Travancore Line".\(^{23}\)

\(^{21}\) Ibid., p.16.  
\(^{22}\) Ibid., p.43.  
\(^{23}\) Ibid., p.48.
Water falls

The most important and the biggest waterfall is the Thirupparappu falls, which originates from a height of twenty metres and falls into a stream, on whose banks the Maha Devar Temple is situated.24

Port

Colachel once formed an important natural harbour in South Travancore which attained historical significance because the battle of Colachel fought in August 1742.

Flora and Fauna

Evergreen forests and deciduous forests are the common features of the region. Many varieties of trees like Teak wood, Rose wood, Anjali, Karunthali, Manjaikadambu, Vengai, Tamarind, Jack, Mango and Banyan are found here. The plantain groves, Coconut groves, Palmyra groves, Tapioca gardens, Paddy and Grasses like Ramaccham, Andropogon sequaurosus, Inchipul (Panicum), Lemon grass and fodder grasses are quite prominent in the region. At Kuzhithurai, Ramaccham grass is more or less extensively cultivated for its

24 Census of India 1961, District Census Administration Kanyakumari, p.5.
scented roots, which is considered to be diaphoretic preservative against Cholera and used as a medicine for fever. The commercial crop rubber and other medicinal plants are also found at Marunthuvamalai.25

The Hill forests of the region had been an abode of a large variety of fauna. Elephant is the common wild animal found in these forests, Sambhur, Porcupine, Black monkeys, Tiger, Panther, Boars, Jackel and Fox are also found here. The bird life is rich and varied and it includes species like Indian Skylark, Jungle Barbers, Myna, Weaver bird, Woodpecker, King fisher, Eagle, Hawk, Vulture, Jungle owl and Robin.26

Caste and People

South Travancore is inhabited by different castes like Brahmins, Vellalas, Nayars, Nadars, Tondaman, Parayan, Kuruppu and Harijans.27

Prior to fifteenth century, there were twenty four Brahmin families living in the Northern part of South Travancore.28 They belonged to the

high caste people in the society and did not mix with other castes, who were considered inferior in birth and colour. As Hindus, they took pride in being the protector’s of Hindu religion.

The Nayar caste of South Travancore is spoken of as the Sudras. It is believed that the Sudras of the Varna model of caste did not enter this region along with the Brahmins. This caste, as historians like Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai have established, has emerged through the social reorganization which followed the ‘Sanskritization’. The people who were ready to serve the Brahmins were formed into a new caste, the Nayars, who in turn became their protectors in all respects.

Though the Nayars were subordinate to the Brahmins, they dominated the other castes. Their position during the nineteenth century was that of feudal aristocracy inflicting much hardship on the lower caste. Though the entire land of South Travancore was under the tutelage of the Brahmins, in practice, the Nayars were the owners.\(^\text{29}\) They were also the ruling class in Travancore. The special rite of

\(^\text{29}\) Mateer, S., *The Land of Charity*, New Delhi, 1871, p.35.
"Hiranya Garbha" connected with the enthronement ceremony of the Travancore kings points to this fact. The Nayars followed a matrilineal system of inheritance and joint families. The administration of the family was entrusted to the eldest male member of the family who was known as the "Karanavan" of that family.

The Vellalas occupied a respectable position, because the major portion of the paddy lands in the region were possessed by them. They enslaved the depressed communities and utilised them for farm work.\textsuperscript{30}

The word "Shanar" is originally derived from the Tamil word "Sanr" meaning toddy, but a learned Missionary derives it from 'San' (a span) and 'nar' (string) that is the noose, one span in length used by the Shanar in climbing palm-trees.\textsuperscript{31} The origin of the term Shanan is much disputed and it is found nowhere in Tamil literature in that form. As late as the thirteenth century the Shanars were known as Ezhavans and a tax called Izha-Putchi was levied by Tamil Kings on all toddy-drawers.\textsuperscript{32}

Generally 'Nadan', meaning a ruler of a country or village, is a title of the

\textsuperscript{31} Edger Thurston, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol.I, Delhi, 1909, p.13.
\textsuperscript{32} Srinivasa Aiyangar, Tamil Studies, Delhi, 1982, p.72.
Shanans, who further call themselves "Nadars" in preference to Shanans.\textsuperscript{33}

The Nadars who engaged in the Palmyra (Borassus flabellifer) forests in extracting the juice of palm-tree climbed with marvelous skill and dexterity. Their hereditary occupation is that of cultivation and climbing the Palmyra Palm and the manufacture of Coarse Sugar known as Jaggery. But most of them are agriculturists or land-owner and some are traders.

A Tamil caste, of lime (Chunam) burners are found in the Tirunelveli and South Travancore. It is stated in the Madras Census Report, of 1901, that the Sunnambukkaran are also called as Tondamans.

The Parayas are one of the aboriginal tribes of South India, also found in South Travancore. Dr. Caldwell derived the word `Parayan' from 'Parai' or 'drum' as the caste supplied drummers.\textsuperscript{34} In return for their services, some privileges are given to them by the caste people.

The Kurupus were peasants who cultivated various kinds of crops the Mukkuvas lived by fishing in the seas.\textsuperscript{35} The Ezhavas practice

\textsuperscript{33} Edgar Thurston, \textit{op.cit.}, p.134.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid.}, pp.174-175.
various trades. The Kanikars living in the hilly regions were soothsayers and mendicants. The Chetties earned their bread by oil crushing and horoscope reading.

Religion

Hindus

Religion is an indication of the aesthetic sense of the people. Hinduism, the religion of the ruling house, was the predominant religion in the state. Temples are the mainstay and backbone of the Hindu Religion. The Hindu temples of South Travancore come under two divisions; one owned and managed by private individuals and the other by the state. Several thousands of rupees are spent on these temples every year for conducting worship and festivals. In those days, even high caste Hindus could not get into these temples. There were graded limits. Even the Brahmins could not go to all places in the temples, where the High priest alone could go. Suchindrum Temple, Bhagavathi Amman temple, Agastiar temple, Sri Vaikundaswami Temple and Mandaikadu Bhagavathi Amman temple are the famous Hindu temples of South

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Travancore. The Harijans who longed to worship at these temples had to stand even a furlong away from the outer wall limits. \footnote{Nilkan Perumal, \textit{A Hindu Reformation}, Madras, 1937, pp. 60-61.}

**Muslims**

A small section of Muslims live in South Travancore. Darghas are the holy shrines where the tombs of the Muslim Saints are found and people visit these places to offer their homage to the Saints. The famous Darghas in this area are the Dharga of Peer Muhammed, a Sufi Saint and poet Thuckalay, at and of Saints' Sheik Nuruddin, Malik Muhammed at Thirvithancode and also of Shehana Amma, a women Saint at Aloor. People irrespective of the religion, Caste or Creed visit these places. Edalakudi, Thuckalay, Thiruvithancode are the important centres of Muslims. \footnote{Field Study, 30th September, 2001.}

**Christians**

Christianity is one of the great religions of the world. It emerged as a result of the birth, passion, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. \footnote{David, M.D., (Ed.), \textit{Asia and Christianity}, Bombay, 1985, p.116.}
In India, it was first introduced on the Western Coast during early times by Saint Thomas, one of the disciples of the Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{41} The Portuguese put forth much efforts in the sixteenth century to bring about Mass Conversions and later numerous Missionary Bodies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, made sustained efforts at winning over Indians to their faith, employing education and medical care as the means of developing contacts with the people.\textsuperscript{42}

In South Travancore, Christianity had a promising fortune with the arrival of St. Francis Xavier in the year 1543. Hitherto conversion was only confined to the coastal villages, since the early Missionaries found no time to penetrate into the interior, over looking the potent caste Hindu opposition.\textsuperscript{43} Having his headquarters at Kottar, St. Xavier succeeded in converting a sizable number of the fisherman community.

With the arrival of the Dutch power, Portuguese influence met with a severe jolt. Christianity entered a decisive phase in the nineteenth century with the arrival of Protestant Missionaries under British Political cover.

\textsuperscript{42} Ramaswami,A., \textit{Gazetteer of India}, Tamil Nadu State, Ramanathapuram District, Madras, 1972, p.163.
\textsuperscript{43} Joseph Thekkedath, \textit{op.cit.}, p.198.
A humble attempt has been made in this thesis to make a study on "CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH TRAVANCORE 1806 - 1907".

Period of Study

The period of study is from 1806 to 1907. The year 1806 is significant because of the arrival of Rev. William Thobias Ringletaube, first Protestant Missionary in South Travancore and in 1907, the Silver Jubilee celebration of famous Protestant Missionary, Rev. James Duthie and the Golden Jubilee celebration of London Missionary Society were celebrated in South Travancore.

Aim of the Study

This thesis seeks to elucidate the Christianity in South Travancore from 1806 to 1907. Its objectives are:

(i) To make an elaborate study about the Catholic and Protestant Christianity in South Travancore.
(ii) To present an outline history of British Residents and their relationship with the Church Mission.
(iii) To sketch the Education and Medical Mission in South Travancore.
(iv) To highlight the Social Evils and Changes took place in South Travancore.
Hypothesis

The Data for historical method have been collected chiefly from Archives and Libraries.

Sources of Information

Primary sources include the Record office, public Department Kerala state Trivandrum, Trivandrum University Library, Tamil Nadu Archives, Cannimarra Library, Chennai, CSI Diocesan Library, Nagercoil, Roman Catholic Diocesan Library, Nagercoil, Scott Christian College Library, Nagercoil and The Public Library, Vadasery.

The proceedings of the Travancore legislature, the Acts and Proclamations of Travancore Governments, Government orders, Gazetteers, Administrative Reports, State Manuals, Reports of the London Missionary Society, Jesuit Missionary Letters, British Residents Letters and Political consultations, these are under the primary sources.

Secondary Sources

Magazines, published books, Journals and Souvenirs are included under the secondary sources.

R.N.Yesudhas's *The People's Revolt in South Travancore* (1975) deals with the social conditions of South Travancore.

**Chapterization**

This thesis is designed into five chapters excluding the introduction and conclusion. The *introduction* explains the etymology of South Travancore, Land and its people, the objective, scope and Methodology of the study etc.

The first chapter titled "*Roman Catholic*". It deals with the Catholics in Tamil Country. The role of St. Francis Xavier, in
propagating the Gospel of Christ, the arrival of the Jesuit Missionaries, and their contribution is also mentioned.

The second chapter "PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY", describes the work of Protestant Missions like Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, Christian Missionary Society, the role of Catechists in their work.


The fourth Chapter "EDUCATION AND MEDICAL MISSION", elucidates the Educational contribution, aims and objectives of Medical Service of the Mission which includes the Medical Evangelist.

The fifth chapter discusses about the "SOCIAL EVILS AND CHANGES" like slavery, Devadasi system, Child Marriage, Pulapedi, Untouchability, Infanticides including the Upper Cloth movement which are dealt in detail.

The concluding chapter provides a brief account of the Christianity in South Travancore.