CHAPTER III

MALABAR SOCIETY AT THE ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE

During the arrival of the Portuguese, Malabar society was a complex one based on caste system. The indigenous sources for the reconstruction of the Malabar society of this period are very scanty. Against such a background the only way out is to depend upon foreign sources that consist mainly of the Portuguese documents. The Portuguese, being in the midst of a totally strange culture, were very eager to observe and note down whatever they saw and experienced in India. They sent the detailed reports of their experiences in India to Portugal, for their friends, relatives and sponsors for official purposes as well as for the sake of satisfying the curiosity of the Europeans. But these sources are not free from erroneous tendencies. For, the Portuguese, being totally strangers to the indigenous culture, were not in a position to understand the society deeply because of the difficulties with the indigenous language and ethnocentrism. Especially in the initial stage of their contact, they were not in a position to comprehend the underlying realities and principles of Malabar society; especially the caste system was totally strange for them. Against such a backdrop it is not possible to take the Portuguese documents in their face value.

When we carefully go through the documents we find that the Malabar society of the sixteenth century was organised predominantly on the basis of religion and caste. There were mainly four religions in Malabar during the arrival of the Portuguese. They were Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Judaism and among all these religions there were different sections organised on the basis of varna and jati.

1 "Narratives of the Journey of ABD-ER-RAZZAK" in R.H. Major, India in the Fifteenth Century: Being a collection of Narratives of Voyages to India, Madras & Delhi, 1992, p. 17. See also "The Travels of Nicolo Conti in the East in the Early Part of the Fifteenth Century," ibid., p. 7. See also "The Anonymous Narrative", W. B. Greenlee, op. cit., p. 86. In the present study each religious community is taken as a subculture within the Malabar society, which is taken as a unit of culture. Each varna and jati is taken as a culture pattern.
Though there were many other sections of society during this time they are not taken into consideration on account of two reasons: the lack of adequate sources and also because of the fact that some of these cultural patterns are not projected in the Portuguese documents because of the lack of ample contacts with them. In the following sections we will discuss the life and culture of the important subcultures and culture patterns of Malabar society.

III. 1. The Hindus

The Hindu society was organised on the basis of varna and jati system and it was the touchstone of Hindu society. The people were known under the banner of their varna or jati that in their turn were determined by the biological descent of a person. There were specific functions, occupations and customs for each varna and jati. As is understood from various sources there was a hierarchy of varnas and jatis and an upward mobility in this system was almost impossible. The contacts between different varnas and jatis in the same religion itself varied.

The noble people were divided into the four varna namely, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras according to the traditional concept in India. The Brahmins were said to have originated from the head of the Brahma, the Kshatriyas including the kings from the right hand of the Brahma, the Vaishyas from the stomach of Brahma and the Sudras from the feet of Brahma. The Brahmins of Malabar were considered the highest varna in the hierarchy. Curiously we do not see Kshatriyas and Vaishyas in Malabar. The Nairs were considered as Sudras.

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2 Duarte Barbosa says that there were eighteen castes of native heathen in Malabar. See Duarte Barbosa, The Book of Duarte Barbosa, vol. II, New Delhi, 1989, p. 7.

3 Here the terms varna and jati are used to signify various cultural patterns that are there in the subcultures, which are dealt with on the basis of religion.

4 Faria e Sousa, Manuel de, Asia Portuguesa, vol. IV, Póto, 1946, p. 261. Though Nairs are considered belonging to the Sudra varna, as their occupation was fighting, they are treated in this thesis as a jati.
III. 1.1. The Brahmins

At the helm of the society stood the Brahmins the fact of which is ascertained by all the available documents without any dispute. Usually the Brahmins in Malabar are called Nambudiris, a generic term that is used in Malabar to denote the priestly class, but the origin of the term is very much disputed. They were Vedic Brahmins who wore the sacred thread called Poonool and they claimed that the whole landed property originally belonged to them and to them alone. In addition to these Nambudiris, there were two other classes of Brahmins who were called Pattars and Embrandiris. The Pattars were originally from the eastern coast of India and their headquarters was in Palghat whereas the Embrandiris were of the Canarese or Tulu origin.

Brahmins were the only upper varna in Malabar. They were the only class, which ranked socially higher than the Sudras. Because they were the only born Hindu. All the rest in Malabar were converts to Hinduism. It was the Brahmins from North India who served as missionaries of Hinduism and carried Hinduism to the South. Being members of the highest varna they kept aloof from the rest of the society. A nair might approach a Brahmin but not touch him. Other lower jatis could come only within shouting distance of his sacred presence.

Brahminhood could not be obtained except through biological descent. When the Brahmin boys were seven, as Barbosa points out, "they put over their shoulder a strip of two fingers in breadth of untanned skin with the hair on it of a certain wild beast which they call Cryvamergam, which resembles a wild ass. Then for seven years he must not eat betel for which time he continues to wear this strap." When they were twelve they were invested with the cord of three strands (poonool)
that they were obliged to wear till their last breath. It was a very solemn function that Barbosa compared it with the celebration in connection with priestly ordination in western countries. After the investiture he might resume eating betel leaves but not meat or fish at any cost. For a Brahmin his poonool was very important. It was the distinguishing mark of a Brahmin. When a Brahmin made an oath, he did it touching on this cord. A severe punishment given to a Brahmin was to take away his cord which he always wore. They went naked except for their middles to hide their private members. When they went abroad they wore a cotton linen gown over their shoulders. Upon the heads they wore a white cloth. They never cut off their hairs. They had commonly round rings of gold hanging at their ears. Brahmin woman had only one cloth about her body, which covered her headstand hanged down unto her knees. All the rest was naked. They had rings through noses, legs, toes, necks and arms and upon each hand seven or eight rings or barcelettes, some of silver and gilt, if they were wealthy.

The Brahmins were respected by all. It is evident from the very fact that even the kings in Malabar paid great respect to the Brahmins. The kings would not do anything without consulting the Brahmins. They adorned all high positions in the royal courts. As respected by all, they were sent as ambassadors (emissaries) and messengers. They sometimes even ruled over kingdoms. In small kingdoms like Paraur, Idappilly, Cochin, Purakkad, and Mangatte the kings were from the Brahmin caste.

12 ibid., p. 34.
13 François Pyard of Laval, *The Voyage of François Pyard of Laval to the East Indies, the Maldives, the Moluccas and Brazil*, Translated by Albert Gray and H.C.P. Bell, New Delhi, 2000, p. 374.
14 ibid., p. 372.
16 ibid., p. 248.
17 ibid., p. 248.
18 ibid., p. 247.
19 K. M. Panikkar, Malabar and the Portuguese. Being a History of the Relations of the Portuguese with Malabar from 1500 to 1663, Bombay, 1929, p. 15. See also P. Manuel Godinho, *Relação do Novo Caminho que foi por Terra e Mar vindo da India para Portugal no Ano de 1663*, Introdução e notas por A. Machado Guerrero, Lisboa, 1974, p. 44.
A specific life style was expected of the Brahmins. The Brahmins could lose their caste by eating flesh, fish, and eggs, drinking liquor, by stealing and killing another. Therefore they tried their level best to abstain from all these things.

In a Brahmin family only the eldest son got married and that too once in a lifetime. He was treated like the head of the family and its possessions. They kept their wives well guarded and greatly honoured. When woman was seven years old and man nine years, they got married but they came together only when the woman became matured enough to bear the children. He would not allow any man sleep with his wife as was there among different jatis in Malabar. If she died he would not remarry. At the same time if the wife wronged against her husband she was slain with poison. They followed Makkathayam by which the children were judged to be belonging to the family and caste of the father and inherited the property of the father. The rest of the male members of the family would not marry. This was to avoid the division of the property of the family. Instead they would enter into carnal relations with nair women who would not deny the same as the Brahmins belonged to the highest caste. The nair women in their turn considered it an honour. But a Brahmin would not have such relations with women elder to him. At the same time a Brahmin woman would not be entrusted to the nairs or any other castes in marriage. The Brahman women were very chaste. They never had sexual relations with anyone other than their husbands. Because of this reason their descendants were not mixed. Consequently, unlike the nairs, their children inherited the property.

They used to consult astrologers to fix the hour of marriage. It was also to be seen if both boy and girl were born on the proper conjunction of the planets and moon. To know all these, they took along with them their birth dates. The Brahman
who blessed the marriage was known as Odicon or Curical. Just four days before the marriage, they made a sacrifice in a pit of fire putting rice, butter, coconuts and similar things. They lighted candle and put a portion of the rice for Ganapati, one of their deities, so that he might not disturb the feast. The groom tied a thread, from which hanged a tali of gold, on the neck of the bride.\(^3^0\) The tali was tied in honour of the three gods and it was an indication that she was married. She wore it until the death of her husband. When the husband died she took out tali as a sign that she was now free. The priest took the hands of the bride and groom and recited certain prayers. It was followed by a banquet. They did not copulate immediately after the marriage. They had to wait for the conjunction of certain planets. When that hour came, they were put together at the door of the bridal chamber, which was half closed, and there the priest prayed certain things. Then they entered inside for consummation. On another day, one bucket of water provided with living fish in it was brought to the couples. And with one cloth, each one catching at his/her part went fishing in the bucket as though they fished with net. Having caught the fish, they would take the fish with right hand and put them on the head. It was believed that those who caught a lot of fish would have a lot of children.\(^3^1\)

The Brahmins were allowed to have conjugal relations with any woman of any varna or jati beginning from the queen to the last. For others, if anyone mixed with any woman of inferior caste, if it was a man he was killed, and if she was a woman she was sold.\(^3^2\)

They belonged to the priestly class. They generally lived in their own house in their own villages or cities serving as priests in the temples. They had specific hours of prayer and rituals.\(^3^3\) Barbosa also described the temples where the Brahmins offered their rituals. Outside the temple there was a stone that had the height of a man with three steps around it. There was the most sacred part sanctum sanctorum set apart in the middle of the temple. It was very dark inside. At the centre or the most sacred part of the temple there was the idol of the god made either of gold, silver or any other metal. In front of the idol three lamps used to burn perpetually. No one

\(^{30}\) Manuel de Faria e Sousa, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. IV, p. 258.  
\(^{31}\) \textit{ibid.}, p. 259.  
\(^{32}\) \textit{ibid.}, p. 260.  
\(^{33}\) Duarte Barbosa, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. II, p. 35.
entered the sanctuary except the Brahmin who was the chief priest of the temple. He offered flowers, rose water and aromatic grasses to the deity. He did it with great devotion and preparation. The priests were very particular about body cleanliness. After bath they used to put ashes on the forehead. He entered the temple only after taking bath. They took out the idol once in the morning and again in the afternoon. They brought out the idol on their heads, facing backwards and the congregation joined him in procession with the accompaniment of music and during the procession the Brahmin-women carried lighted lamps in front of the procession. The procession confined itself to the walls of the temple. In this procession they used to carry ceremonial umbrellas. For the Brahmin priests number three was very important. Often they made rituals and prayed three times. The stone at the door on which they placed their offerings was washed thrice a day. On the same stone they fed the crows twice a day as part of their rituals. Their respect for number three came from their belief that God is three persons in one God whom they confessed to have been since the beginning of the world. Being priests they were very privileged people. They had the power of excommunication and absolution. The places of worship of the Hindus were situated towards the east. They offered their prayers turning towards the east, lifting both hands high and putting them on the top of the head; then they prostrated on the ground, stretching their body to its full length, as was their custom.

The Brahmins had certain days of fasting, sometimes three or four days together. After the death of a close relative like father, mother or elder brother, the Brahmins abstained from carnal relations with their wives, the chewing of betel, and the cutting of hair and nails.

These Brahmins, when they came to know that their wives were pregnant, cleansed their teeth and chewed no more betel, stopped trimming the beard and fasted until delivery.

34 *ibid.*, p. 36.
35 The three persons in the Godhead, according to Hinduism, are *Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara*.
36 *ibid.*, p. 37.
37 Tomé Pires, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
40 Zinadim, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
41 Duarte Barbosa, *op. cit.*, II, p. 37.
The kings as well as the people respected them very much. The most important Brahmins were with the kings of Malabar. They served the kings in all matters except in arms. As respected by all kings, even during wars, they were generally sent as couriers to other kingdoms with letters, money or merchandise. The king’s respect for the Brahmins was clear from the ceremony followed by king’s marriage. On the first night of the marriage, the king selected the most worthy and honoured Brahmin to sleep with his wife to deflower her. The king paid him well for the work he did reluctantly. When the king was on travel, one of the Brahmins stayed with the wife of the king. The author of the “Anonymous Narrative” wrote that the king had two wives and each one of them was attended by ten priests and each one of them slept with her carnally to honour the king and for this reason, the sons never inherited the kingdom but only the nephews were the rightful heirs in Malabar.

There was a person called Brahminmor (Chief Brahmin) in the palace of the Zamorin. In all matters the king used to seek the advice of the Brahminmor who was an old man. He was so venerated that as soon as he entered the royal residence or palace, the King stood up and fell on his feet, and he with much seriousness and serenity lifted him and put his hands on the head. The king took his seat only after the Brahminmor was seated on the chair.

Some of the Brahmins did menial services in the royal courts. They served the kings as cooks. For example, the cook of the Zamorin of Calicut was a Brahmin. The Brahmins carried the food for the king to the idol and after certain rituals they were taken to the king. After the king’s meal, the leftover was taken to the backyard where he clapped his hands thrice. at the sound of which a large

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42 Tomé Pires, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 68.
50 Duarte Barbosa, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 23.
number of crows came and fed up on them.\textsuperscript{51} There was also another reason for the respect they got; it was none other than the knowledge they possessed. They had a lot of books along with them.\textsuperscript{52} No Brahmin bore arms together with him, nor was he put to death for any reason whatsoever.\textsuperscript{53}

When the Brahmins died they prepared pyre and cremated the body. Along with the dead body, the wife of the Brahmin was also cremated after giving her ornaments to her friends. The head of those wives who refused to die in pyre was shaved off and while during her lifetime she never wore any jewels.\textsuperscript{54} The ashes from the cremated body were scattered on the waters.\textsuperscript{55} Among the Brahmins, if someone especially the mother, maternal uncle or the eldest brother, died, they abstained from carnal relations, eating flesh and betel leaf and also from cutting hairs and nails.\textsuperscript{56} They also celebrated the anniversary of their dead with big banquets.\textsuperscript{57}

The Brahmins were of the most affluent varna in the society. Their nobility was because of their economic position and religious supremacy. As they got the good will of the kings, they projected themselves as the topmost varna in the society. They kept their social position by imposing social taboos like rules regarding touch. The Brahmins were the most affluent and wealthy class in Malabar. They owned most of the land.\textsuperscript{58} It might be because of the land grants made by different kings.

III. 1. 2. Nairs

After the Brahmins comes the nair jati. They were the military caste, which was the strength of the kings of Malabar. Though they were indigenous military jati they did not belong to the Kshatriya caste, instead they belonged to the Sudras as they

\textsuperscript{51} Ludovico di Varthema, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{52} Duarte Barbosa, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. II, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{53} Tomé Pires, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. I, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{54} This ceremony called Sati was not common in Malabar. Faria e Sousa claims that there was no sati in Malabar. Manuel de Faria e Sousa, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. IV, p. 264. But there are writers who held that there was sati in Malabar. See John Huyghen Van Linschoten, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. I, p. 249.
\textsuperscript{55} "The Travels of Athanasius Nikitin of Tver", in R. H. Major, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{56} Zinadim, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{57} Manuel de Faria e Sousa, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. IV, p. 222.
were only converts to Hinduism. But they were considered superior to all other jatis in Malabar except the Brahmins who belonged to the varna system.\textsuperscript{59}

Generally the nairs lived in the countryside. They did not seem to have engaged in agricultural activity.\textsuperscript{60} But they used to go to the king whenever their service was needed. There were many mathematicians and astrologers among them.\textsuperscript{61} They were very loyal to the king that it was the custom of the country that if the king died, his nairs also died along with him.\textsuperscript{62} For example in the battle between the Zamorin and the King of Cochin, Narain, the apparent heir to the throne of Cochin, was killed near Edappally. The survivors of war, especially the nairs, shaved their hair off even to their eyebrows and devoted themselves to death.\textsuperscript{63} The nairs were always ready to die for their masters rather than for their parents or relatives. But their enmity to the opponents was merely professional. Even on the days of war, the enemies used to sleep in the battlefield without any fear. But during daytime they fought like real enemies.\textsuperscript{64}

Because of their loyalty to the master the nairs were used in Malabar as Jangadas i.e., as guides on journey and to guard their property. In Malabar, it was a serious matter to kill a jangada. The killing of a jangada would have serious consequences lasting for generations together.\textsuperscript{65} Nairs also served as kings. For example the Zamorin of Calicut was a nair.\textsuperscript{66}

The nairs were well educated and they had good manners. They were very shy too. The nair men had long hairs like those of the ladies.\textsuperscript{67} They moved rather cleanly. Their cloths were washed in rice water. They also applied the paste of sandalwood many times a day that they smelt sandalwood.\textsuperscript{68} They had some taboos regarding

\textsuperscript{59} R.S. Whiteway, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{60} K. S. Mathew, \textit{Society in Medieval Malabar}, Kottayam, 1979, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{61} François Pyrard of Laval, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 374.
\textsuperscript{62} Tomé Pires, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{63} R. S. Whiteway, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{64} Gaspar Correa, \textit{Lendas da India}, Livro Primeyro, Tomo I., Parte I, Coimbra, 1922, p. 355.
\textsuperscript{65} R.S. Whiteway, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{66} Pº. Manuel Godinho, \textit{Relação do Novo Caminho que fiz por Terra e Mar Vindo da India para Portugal no Ano de 1663}, Introdução e notas por A. Machado Guerrero, Lisboa, 1974, p. 44. See also Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, \textit{op. cit.}, Livros I e II, 3.ª, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{67} Gaspar Correia, \textit{op. cit.}, Livro Primeyro, Tomo I., Parte I, p. 356.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 357.
food. They could not eat on the sea. It was because of this religious reason that the two nairs, who were taken to the ship for surety, were sent out one by one by Cabral for eating outside.\(^{69}\)

As they were considered members of noble jati, they had some restriction in the society. "And upon this occasion we ought not to pass by the Nairos. These are the Gentlemen of Malabar, descended for the most part either from Royal Families, or Brahmans, and are for that reason exceedingly haughty, proud and bold. If they meet any of the common people in the Street, they cry out Po. Po. i.e. Give way, Give way."\(^{70}\)

They were well trained for war since childhood. From the very childhood their body was being anointed with oil to make them best fighters. They were well trained in the handling of their arms. There is a group among them who are known amoks. They were Chavers and very dangerous.\(^{71}\)

They always moved with arms such as round shield and a broad sword.\(^{72}\) A nair boy was called a nair only after officially receiving arms. The children were officially introduced to the techniques of war when they were 12 years. Before the arms were officially given to the nairs they could not bear arms and nor could they enter in arms competition. After completing the required training there was the ceremony of the initiation to the army of the king or the lord. On the day of the initiation of the nair to the army, he went to the king accompanied with his relatives and friends. First of all he was given 60 fanões of gold.\(^{73}\) Then the king questioned him if he was willing to guard the customs and laws of the land. If the answer was yes, he was given arms. Then putting his right hand over the head of the nair, the king prayed secretly. Then the king asking him to guard the Brahmins and the cows embraced him. Later the nair candidate declared that he adored the king. That day

\(^{69}\) Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, op. cit., Livros I e II, p. 90.
\(^{70}\) Actually the meaning of po, is go away. Philip Baldaeus. A True and Exact Description of the Most Celebrated East-India Coasts of Malabar and Coromandel and Also of the Isle of Ceylon, New Delhi, 1996, p. 644.
\(^{71}\) That is to say, those who have obligation to die for the king or the masters. They were very dangerous. For they did not have love for their life. They were always ready to die to fulfil the will of the master. ibid., p. 644.
\(^{72}\) Georg Schurhammer, S. J., op. cit., p. 490.
\(^{73}\) Fanam was a coin used in Malabar. It is equivalent to 3 Portuguese cruzados.
onwards he was a cavalryman as well as a trooper of the king. It was the Panikkar who gave training in arms to the nair boys. These panikkars were experts in the training in of arms. They gave gradual training to the boys. These Panikkars, being their teachers in arms were respected by the nairs very much. Even if the nairs were great lords or older persons, the disciples would have to venerate him whenever and wherever they met him. This was a custom of the land.74

After this ceremony he would bear arms always and everywhere. It was said that even the dying nair kept his arms close to his deathbed so that in case of necessity he might make use of them. No nair, after a certain age moved without his arms.75

The nairs always moved carrying arms like arrows, spears, and daggers and were almost nude except for the waist to the knees. They were barefooted too. They lived with the king or the lord whom they served. From dawn to dusk even leaving food and sleep they used to serve their masters. They were given, besides a dwelling place, only a small sum of 200 reals.76 Many nairs were organised under some lords of the land. For example the Caimal to whom the land in front of Cochin belonged, had 1000 nairs. The Caimal of Chiravaipu had 300 nairs.77

This training that the nairs got was an ongoing one. They had the obligation to attend the lessons of arms for two months every year all throughout their lives78 which they used to do without fail.

Among the nairs one sect was known as Caimals.79 They were nobles who paid allegiance to the new Zamorin when elected. They took oath to the King on the lighted lamp that they would be loyal and true to the kings they would serve.80 It was a Caimal who administered the kingdom for thirteen days after the death of a king till the next prince took the charge.81 He was also the chief treasurer of the kingdom.82

77 Ibid., p. 117.
78 Ibid., p. 38.
79 Originally a title used by some nairs who belonged to the aristocracy above the ordinary nairs. But they had the same customs as those of the nairs.
81 Ibid., p. 13.
Among the nairs there were velichappads. The evil spirit entered into this nair and he moved around naked with a sword, making a strange sound in such a way that even the king was afraid. He declared that he was god, and such and such things should be done. The king generally did it, as it was the will of god. If the king did not agree with that he shouted words of condemnation against him.83

They respected the elders as well as their teachers. Among the brothers themselves, they gave prime position to the eldest brother. The younger brothers seldom sat in the presence of his eldest brother.84

According to the law of the land, they could not get married. The reason might be that, if they were married it might be a hindrance to the smooth discharging of their functions as warriors. Family ties would take away his fighting spirit. At the same time he could sleep with any number of nair women. Each nair spent one day, from noon to next noon, with the women with whom he slept.85

The nair women had a deflowering ceremony. This was celebrated as a feast according to the economic condition of the family.86 When a girl was 10 years it was the age for a Malabar girl to know a man. When a nair girl was 10, the parents87 of the girl brought some nairs from outside the country to take her virginity. When he came he was received with a lot of celebrations. Afterwards he tied a tali round her neck, which she used to keep till the end of her life as a token of the liberty given to her. Without this ceremony no nair girl was allowed to know a man carnally.88 Once that ceremony was over she could have any number of men she wanted. A Brahmin woman was not used to have sex with a nair man. But nair women could sleep with a Brahmin. A nair woman had so many lovers. The more men she had more prestigious she was. Because of this reason, the fatherhood of a child was not certain.89
The nair boys did not know anything about their father because no one was concerned with it. A nair woman was considered more honoured when she had more lovers who had carnal relationship with her. When someone entered in the room of a nair lady, he left his arms at the door. The next one who saw the arms at the door would not enter the room. But there was no problem between them.  

Their heirs were their nephews. The sons of the nairs never inherited the property of their parents. It was because of the fact that the fatherhood of the child was not known precisely. They were sure only about the motherhood. Therefore the nephews inherited the property.

Killing of another nair as well as killing of a cow was considered great offence. Sleeping with lower caste women, eating with a scoundrel and speaking ill of the king were considered offences, which might invite death penalty. If any nair committed such a crime, other nairs killed him wherever they met, and they would write on the dead body the reason, which invited the wrath of the nairs so that the king might know it.

The nairs were cremated with much solemnity in their enclosures or gardens and their ashes were thrown into the running water. His heirs, especially the nephew, mourned for a year at his death.

III. 1. 3. Tiva (Tiyas)

In a letter written by the king of Cannanore, the king informed the king of Portugal that there were different jatis like nairs, tines and mucoas in Malabar. These Tivas or Tiyas were also known as Ezavas. They were considered as those

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91 Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, op. cit., Livros I e II, p. 36.  
92 Ibid., p. 38.  
93 Duarte Barbosa, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 54, 55.  
94 They were slaves of nairs and they used to treat palm trees and worked as soldiers.  
95 They were fishermen or the seafarers. ANTT.-Corpo Cronologico. Parte 1, Maço 6- Doc. 68, “Carta do rei de Cananor A El-Rei de Portugal” Cananor a 6 de Dezembro de 1507, fl. 2.
Buddhists who first rejected Brahminism but later on accepted Hinduism. Ludovico di Varthema calls them the third class of pagans in Malabar. These tivas (Tiyuns) were artisans. They used to tend the palm groves, collecting coconuts and collecting the palm wine, carry things, and fight wars. They were a kind of slaves attached to the land of the nairs. Among the tivas the nephews inherited the property, as the identity of the father of the child was not certain. The tya women refused themselves only to the foreigners. Their husbands also supported this kind of immoral activity. They always tried to keep away from jatis lower than themselves. There was also polygamy among the tivas.

III. 1. 4. Vettuvan

The Hiruvas or Vettuvan was another jati in Malabar. The meaning of the term Vettuvan is one who hunted. They planted and gathered rice. They might not approach either Nair or Brahmin within fifty paces unless they called them. Because of this they always went by private ways through the marshes. They went crying out with a loud voice to avoid accidental confrontation with the higher caste people.

III. 1. 5. Mukkuvas

The Mucoas or Mukkuas were seafarers and fishermen. The fishermen of Malabar belonged to the lowest classes. Joseph the Indian says that everyone molested the fishermen. They were not allowed to appear publicly, the violation of which would cause severe punishments. They had their own temples, as was the custom of each jati in Malabar. They were very expert seamen. Their children inherited the property. The women were so loose in morality that they would sleep with anyone. They had to pay taxes on dried fishes. They ate fish abundantly. Some of

98 Duarte Barbosa, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 60.
100 Ludovico di Varthema, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
them were very rich that they had big houses. But the kings could take possession of
them whenever he felt like. Therefore they used to bribe the officials of the king.¹⁰³

They could not live with the people of the higher varnas and castes. They always moved with their nets and small boats. They lived on the seashores and earned their livelihood by selling fish.¹⁰⁴ Among them there was another group called Valans. They were those who caught fish using nets.¹⁰⁵

III. 1. 6. Pulayas and Parayas

The pulayas (polea) were considered the lowest of all classes in Malabar. Pulam in Malayalam means spacious field. The pulayas were those who worked in pulams.¹⁰⁶ They were mainly agricultural labourers who used to work in paddy fields.¹⁰⁷ There were many poleas in and around Cochin.¹⁰⁸ As they were considered impure, the nairs would not touch the poleas.¹⁰⁹ The touch of a polea was considered as a high pollution.

The Parayas were people who lived in hilly areas.¹¹⁰ They lived eating roots and flesh of the wild beasts. They used to cover their nakedness with leaves. They usually kept away from the rest. The very sight of a paraya made a man of superior caste unclean and outcaste.¹¹¹

III. 1. 7. Tamil Chetties

The Chetties were from the Coromandel Coast. They were black and fat.¹¹² In Calicut there was a Chetty street. The presence of such a street showed that there were chetties in Calicut either as residents or floating people. They were very skilled

¹⁰³ P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., p. 296.
¹⁰⁴ ibid., p. 296.
¹⁰⁶ Fernão Lopes de Castenheda, op. cit., Livros I e II, p. 166.
¹⁰⁷ B. N.L., Fundo Geral, Reservados, Cod. N.º. 580, "Relacion de la costa de Goa al cabo de Comorones y de la gente que la abita y Reyes della y fortalezas de su Magestad, y de los Reyes del norte," dated 1617, fl. 19.
¹⁰⁸ P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., p. 296.
¹⁰⁹ ibid., p. 71.
¹¹⁰ Duarte Barbosa, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 69, 70.
traders. They used to treat commodities like jewels, pearls, gold and silver. Being wealthy merchants they had very special privileges. First, only the Brahmins and the Chetties could sit in the presence of the king of Calicut. To move from one place to another the people in Malabar used either palanquins or the runners. The former was a right of the kings of Malabar that they shared with the chetties. In a commercial region like Calicut they had special considerations. They were directly under the king. If they committed some mistakes they were responsible only to the King who would not take into account their mistakes seriously.

They went nude, wore a small headdress, and under the headdress they wore hair like the tail of an ox or a horse. They were devil worshippers. They used to speak with the devils daily. The chetty women were not very chaste like the natives of the land. In case of the death of the wife, the husband could remarry while the reverse way was not possible.

They had their own houses in the street that was assigned to them. They used to shave their beards and wear finger marks of ashes mixed with sandalwood on their chest, foreheads and shoulders. They used to bore their ear lobes, which were adorned with gold and precious stones.

They were so immersed in business that their children also entered into business as soon as they were ten years of age. They also worked as moneychangers and moneylenders. They lent money for interest.

III. 1. 8. Gujarati Merchants

There were Gujarati merchants in different parts of Malabar, especially in Cochin, Calicut and Cannanore. They were in abundance in Calicut as merchants who

114 "The Anonymous Narrative", in William Brooks Greenlee, op. cit., p. 82.
116 Ibid., pp. 257-260, 258.
117 "The Anonymous Narrative", in William Brooks Greenlee, op. cit., p. 82.
118 Duarte Barbosa, op. cit., vol. II, p. 73.
119 Ibid., p. 72.
120 Ibid., pp. 72, 73.
dealt with all kinds of commodities. They were very rich. They used to live in very big houses. They were from Cambay in Gujarat and were fairer than the men of Calicut. They used to adore the Sun, the Moon and the cows. They adored cow in such a way that if someone killed a cow, they would immediately kill that man. They were vegetarians. They did not eat anything that would die. They would not eat bread or meat nor dink wine. If anyone ate meat he would be sent out of their society irrespective of their caste or wealth. They believed in enchantments and diviners. They had grown hairs and beards. They used cotton cloth and wore veils and their hair was wrapped about as the women used to do. They wore sandals. They had only one wife and they were jealous and confined themselves to their wives who were very beautiful and chaste. Being very daring merchants they traded in cotton as well as gold.

Thus in Hinduism there was hierarchy of varnas and jatis, which were formed on the basis of the response to Hinduism, economic condition and occupation. Those who accepted Hinduism readily were counted as higher castes. The nairs of Malabar, though they belonged to the sudras were considered higher jatis. whereas jatis like tiyas because of their reluctance to accept Hinduism initially, were considered inferior jatis. The kings of Malabar who were subservient to the Brahmins, accepted this division of society and encouraged the caste restrictions put forward by the Brahmins assigning them certain taboos, regulations and customs. This resulted in the horizontal division of society.

III. 2. The Christians

There were Christians in India from the very first century of Christian era. They were called the Nazranis or St. Thomas Christians. Among the Nazranis there were two categories, namely the Vadakkumbhagakkars and Thekkumbhagakkars. Vadakkumbhagakkars belonged to the indigenous Christian community who were believed to have been baptised by St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus.

121 Ibid., p. 73.
124 Refer to footnote No. 125.
The Thekkumbhagakkar are believed to be the descendants of Thomas of Canai, a Persian Christian merchant who immigrated to Malabar in the fourth century A.D. Besides them, when we come to the fifteenth century we find another group of Christians who had belonged to the nazranis but now got latinised.

III. 2. 1. St. Thomas Christians

The St. Thomas Christians or the Nazranis are believed to be the descendants of indigenous Brahmins converted into Christianity by St. Thomas, one of the Apostles of Jesus Christ. But the origin of St. Thomas Christianity from a homogenous caste is not true to reality; at least according to the concept St. Thomas Christians had during the sixteenth century about their own origin. They were baptised from the native as well as foreign stocks that belonged to the nobility. Any way it is certain that many Brahmin families got converted to Christianity receiving baptism from St. Thomas. There are families like Sanguri, Palamitum (Pakalomattam), Kalli, and Kaliave (Kalikave) that trace their conversion to St. Thomas. They were called nazranis, as they were the followers of Nazraen.

Among the St. Thomas Christians there were two factions: The Thekkumbhagakkar or the Southists and Vadakkumbhagakkar or the Northists. The former were around 30000 men during the sixteenth century. They were the followers of one Thomas of Canai, a Christian merchant migrated to Malabar around the year A.D. 345. He is said to have been from Armenia. He married and settled

126 The researcher terms them as Quilon Christians as they were settled in Quilon.
130 The Syriac term Nazraen means the one who is from Nazareth i.e., Jesus Christ. They are also called St. Thomas Christians as they were converted to Christianity by St. Thomas, the apostle. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, Anthropology of the Syrian Christians, Ernakulam, 1926, p. 1. Tomé Pires, op. cit., p. 73.
133 Armenia in Portuguese documents is a confusing usage. Many Portuguese authors have used it in different sense like ‘one from the Middle East’ or ‘a Nestorian’ etc. According to Assemanus Armenian actually meant ‘Syrian’ where as Kollaparampil gives another explanation that the East Syrian bishops
in Cranganore. The king who found favour with him gave him a lot of privileges along with land to build a Church in Cranganore. They did not mix with the other faction of the St. Thomas Christians called *Vadakkumbhagakkar*. These Christians lived in places like Cranganor, Cartume, Cottete, Diamper and the other places. They also followed the same Rite in liturgy as the other St. Thomas Christians who were known as *Vadakkumbhagakkar* or the Northists. Both claimed superiority over the other because of their pure origin.

Though the St. Thomas Christians were converted to Christianity, they lived in the same Socio-cultural background in which they received their faith. It might be because of their geographical isolation with the rest of Christendom. *Nazranis* would have appeared as one of the several Hindu castes to an external observer. In the social hierarchy they stood next to the Brahmins. "...They were almost on a par with the Brahmins and were respected and obeyed by all. They were at the top of the social ladder. Many were the subordinate castes in their service and under their protection." The St. Thomas Christians were privileged people. In 1544, Mar Jacob, the Chaldean Bishop of the St. Thomas Christians, entrusted the Portuguese some of the copper plates with a lot of writing and told that they contained the privileges given to the St. Thomas Christians by the Lords of the Land. The Bishop asked the Portuguese to keep the same in case of his death. The special privileges granted to the *nazranis* by kings Veera Raghava Chakravarti and Sthanu Ravi Gupta through the copper plate grants which survive even today, pointed to their privileged position.

They alone could ride on elephants, a privilege exclusively set apart for the princes and they alone could sit in the presence of the king, a privilege reserved only for the ambassadors. The king of Cochin used to give them special privileges. Some historians gave the reason for this special consideration. The Christians of St. Thomas

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had a king of their own called Beliarte. When the last king also died, the kingdom was affiliated to Diamper and when the last heir of Diamper died, the kingdom was annexed to the Kingdom of Cochin. It was because of this reason that the king of Cochin had more right over those Christians. The king of Perumpadappil had given them so many privileges, which no other castes in Malabar had. They were privileged to move accompanied by eighteen different musical instruments, carry light during day time for accompaniment, move accompanied by the armed men and so on. None other than the Christians of St. Thomas and the king of Perumpadappil could use those privileges. If a thing belonging to a Brahmin became impure because of the touch of a man of lower caste, the very touch of a St. Thomas Christian would purify it in such a way that there was no more contamination afterwards. The Archdeacon of St. Thomas Christians was the first among the 72 princes of the king of Perumpadappil. The king of Perumpadappil was called a king only after the Archdeacon crowned him.

They were esteemed greatly by the Hindu kings because of the privileges left up on them by different kings. They belonged to the nobility. The St. Thomas Christians were respected and honoured more than the nairs who were the nobles of the kingdoms. In the Kingdom of the Hills of Pande (Serra de Pande) the St. Thomas Christians were called the “sons of Kings” (Filhos de reis). The nazaranis of India held very high positions in the society. They were considered aristocrats and equal to the Brahmins. They also held patronage over the low castes like the Kammalas. The Rajah and the Prime Minister alone had authority over them. They had the right of maintaining a bodyguard and a standing army of their own. The insignia of royalty and nobility such as padipura, pakal vilakku, ana ampami, akampadi, pancha vadya and muthukkuda were their special privileges. Their bishops had royal dignity and honours. The bishop and his archdeacon had the authority to hear and judge all cases except criminal cases. These were granted to them by the ancient Rajas of Malabar in four Tumra Sasanas or Chepeds. One of these four original metal plates is

142 B.N. L., Fundo Geral, Reservados Cod. N°. 36, fl. 5.
143 ibid., fl. 5v.
144 Frei Paulo da Trinidad, op. cit., Parte II, p. 322.
145 Royal proclamations engraved on copper plates.
preserved at Kottayam Pazaya Palli, and another at the Mar Thoma Seminary at Thiruvalla.146

The St. Thomas Christians lived in between Cranaganore and Mylapore. In Cranaganore there were a lot of St. Thomas Christians who lived among the Hindus, Jews and the Muslims.147 The Christians of St. Thomas inhabited in large number in areas like Cranaganore, Cochin, Quilon, Travancore and also on the Coromandel Coast.148 Wherever they lived, they were subjected to the Hindu kings, paying their taxes, obeying their officers, and observing their laws as long as it did not affect their religious precepts.149

The nazranis engaged themselves in professions like agriculture, commerce and military service. Their principal occupation was agriculture. They were the cultivators of pepper.150 The monopoly of pepper production was with the St. Thomas Christians151 because they owned enormous landed property as a result of various land grants. The Hindu rulers as well as Brahmins who wanted the presence of St. Thomas Christians for purifying the polluted things because of caste restrictions, made the land grants to the St. Thomas Christians.152 For agricultural purpose many St. Thomas Christians used to stay in interior areas.153 There were also merchants among them.154 There were a few St. Thomas Christians who engaged in pepper trade. We see a letter from a native Christian called Mathias from Kayamkulam. He said that he helped to load the Portuguese ships with merchandise.155 They also engaged in foreign trade.

146 K.J. Mathew, “The Role of the Kerala Church in Indian Culture,” in Jacob Vellian, ed., op. cit., p. 119.
147 Manuel de Faria e Sousa, op. cit., vol. IV, p. 386.
149 António de Gouveia, op. cit., p. 163.
151 A. N. T. T., Corpo Cronologico, Parte I, Maço 24, Doc. 3, fl. 2.
152 It was believed that the touch of a St. Thomas Christian over polluted things would purify it. The Brahmins, used to call St. Thomas Christians when something in their house got polluted because of the touch of some lower jatis. Pius Malekandathil, Portuguese Cochin and the Maritime Trade of India: 1500-1663 (Unpublished thesis submitted to the Pondicherry University for Ph.D.), Pondicherry University, Pondicherry, 1988, p. 79.
153 António de Gouveia, op. cit., p. 158.
There were very prosperous merchants among them who frequented the commercial places of Suria in Egypt, Persia and Arabia.\textsuperscript{156} There were many St. Thomas Christian merchants in Quilon.\textsuperscript{157} Many St. Thomas Christians were good men of arms. They were strong, fat and very healthy and the best men of war in the whole of Malabar; some of the kings used to take them to fight the wars.\textsuperscript{158} Besides, as they were very rich they used to lend money for interests, which the Portuguese considered as a grave sin.\textsuperscript{159}

The \textit{nazrani} men went naked except down the waist. From the waist to the knee they used silk dress. On the upper arms they wore gold or silver ornaments or armlets. Like the nairs the St. Thomas Christians grew \textit{kudumi} on the head and a metal cross inserted on top of it showed their identity as a Christians. But the old, the widowers and those who made pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas did not grow their hair. The \textit{nazrani} men, like the nairs, used to pierce the ear lobes as a sign of their nobility. They used to move with swords, shields and lances, which they left only at the door of the church.\textsuperscript{160}

The \textit{nazrani} women wore modest dress either in white colour or dipped in indigo in such a way that it covered the whole body but the head. While going to the church or visiting a \textit{kathanar} they would cover themselves with a big veil that left only their faces open. They used to wear all kinds of ornaments for the ears, arms, neck and feet but not for the nose.\textsuperscript{161}

In a family, the head and the supreme person was the father. Grown up children would never sit in the presence of their father. Women had separate quarters. Even husbands and wives would not eat together. Wives would never address the husband by name. Grown up boys and girls would not mingle with each other or talk together. In the presence of the elders, the children never talked.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{156} Manuel de Faria e Sousa, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. IV, p. 386.


\textsuperscript{158} Frei Paulo da Trindade, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 328. See also António de Gouveia, \textit{op. cit.}, p.164.

\textsuperscript{159} A.N.T.T., \textit{Corpo Cronologico}, Parte I, Maço 83, doc. 71, fls. 1v, 2.

\textsuperscript{160} António de Gouveia, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 164.


\textsuperscript{162} George Mark Moraes, \textit{A History of Christianity in India}, Bombay, 1964, p. 176.
The main food of the nazranis was rice together with curries. They rarely took meat as they were among the Hindus who abhorred eating it. The St. Thomas Christians whom Vasco da Gama met in Melinde did not eat the meat of cows. They believed that it would make them ill. They ate fish in abundance, as it was easily available. They prepared various food items using honey, jaggery, palm sugar, milk and butter.

St. Thomas Christians followed the customs of the Brahmins in Malabar. The social position was determined also by the customs and way of life of each group. We can see a lot of common elements between the socio-cultural ceremonies and customs of the Brahmins as well as the Christians of St. Thomas in Malabar.

Immediately after the birth of a baby, it was fed with honey, a custom prevalent among the Hindus of Malabar. Among the Brahmins this ceremony was known as Jatakarmam. The women were not allowed to go to the Church for forty days after the childbirth if the offspring was a boy and for eighty days if it was a girl. This was a Hindu as well as Jewish custom observed, as the women were considered impure after childbirth. On the fortieth or eightieth day of birth, depending on the sex of the child, mother and child were taken to the church for dedication. According Joseph the Indian, the children were baptised forty days after birth unless the situation demanded otherwise. Though children were rarely baptised before forty days of their birth, there were cases in which baptism was administered after months and years. During baptism, the children were given baptismal names- names from the Old Testament as well as the native ones. Before Baptism the priest used to bless some legumes and put them in the mouth of the child.

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164 António de Gouveia, op. cit., p. 164.
166 See the Canons of the Synod of Diamper convened in 1599 by Archbishop Menezis to westernise the St. Thomas Christians according to the pattern of the Council of Trent. Scaria Zacharia, The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599, Edamattam, 1994, p. 204.
167 Ibid., p. 113.
168 Ibid., p. 204.
169 A.N.T.T., Cartas dos Vice-Reis da India, N°. 55, fl. lv.
When the child became eleven months old, it was given boiled rice. This custom was there among the Brahmins of Malabar. When the children became eight, they were sent to the Kalaris for training in arms and fencing. They continued this training under a master called panikar until they were twenty-five. The students respected this panikar very much. The panikars could be either Christian or Hindu. If a Christian panikar was available no nazran would go to a Hindu panikar. If Christian panikars were not available they would go to a Hindu Kalari. This training was common for the nazranis and nairs of Malabar. These panikars whether Christians or Hindus, were respected by all throughout Malabar. The adult nazranis always carried with them weapons like swords and shields, which they left only in the porch of the church when they went inside for worship. In wars the strength of a king depended upon the number of the nazranis in the army.

The nazranis had their own places of worship, which resembled the Hindu temples in external form except for a Cross on its foundation. The cross that they had was what was called St. Thomas Cross, which was either painted or engraved. It was kept in all the churches on account of the veneration to it. It was the only mark that distinguished between a Hindu temple and a Christian Church. This is evident from the fact that Vasco da Gama, just after his landing in Calicut went to a Hindu Temple under the impression that it was a Christian Church. In churches there used to be wooden carvings of animals and birds like elephant, tiger, man lion, peacock, Indian cuckoo, parrot, swan and so on. But in Quilon there were churches like those of Europe and on the altars and walls there were painted crosses. There were no other images. On Sundays the people gathered together and attended sermons and other offices. The parish churches which had an elevated sanctuary, Kodimaram which was a flagstaff and oil lamps showed their close relationship to the Hindu temples.

172 Antony Vallavanthara, ed., op. cit., p. 163.
173 António de Gouveia, op. cit., p. 162.
177 K. J. Mathew, “The Role of the Kerala Church in Indian Culture”, pp. 119-121 in Jacob Vellian, ed., op. cit., p. 120.
The social customs and manners of the *nazranis* were most evident in the marriage celebrations that lasted for almost a week. The marriage customs were very similar to Hindu Brahmin custom. Nobody other than the Brahmins and the Thomas Christians could follow them. The marriages were arranged, as it was considered as a bond between two families. The parents of the boy and girl fixed the marriage. The maternal uncle had a prominent say and role in all functions. They used to get married at an early age, as was the custom in Malabar. Marriages were usually conducted in bridegroom's church or in some instances, if they were in some far away places in their own houses, sometimes even without the presence of either a *kathanar*\(^{179}\) (*Cassanars*) or witness. They recognised even the marriage between the close relatives.\(^{180}\) There was no specific ecclesiastical ceremony in the Church in connection with marriage. Tying of the *tali* was sufficient for the validity of the marriage.\(^{181}\)

Generally marriages were conducted on Sundays. Though the daughters did not have the right to inherit the property of the father,\(^{182}\) on the occasion of marriage dowry was given to the family of the groom. The amount should be given on previous Sunday of the marriage and it should be in odd number of Rupees and should be tied up in a cloth. One tenth of the dowry is given to the Church. There was no additional tithe of any sort.\(^{183}\) The marriage celebrations began on the eve of the marriage when the bridegroom (*Manavalan*) and bride (*Manvatty*) underwent ceremonial bath in their respective houses after which the bridegroom and bride with the consent of the relatives underwent *anthamchartal*\(^{184}\) and *mylanchiyidel*\(^{185}\) respectively. Both were ceremoniously fed with sweets after securing the consent of the community once in their respective houses and once after marriage in groom's houses. Before leaving for marriage, the groom was blessed by the *Guru* to whom he gave present (*dakshina*) of

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\(^{179}\) The priests of the St. Thomas Christians were called the *Kathanars*.


\(^{182}\) António de Gouveia, *op. cit.*, p. 163.


\(^{184}\) Shaving of beard by the traditional barber.

\(^{185}\) Decoration of hands using turmeric and a herb called henna.
cloth or money. A best man usually the husband of his sister always accompanied the groom.¹⁸⁶

The most important ceremony of marriage was talikettu.¹⁸⁷ Tali was a small gold ornament in the form of a leaf, usually brought by the best man of the groom. It was ornamented with a cross of 21 beads to distinguish it from Brahmin tali. The bridegroom tied the tali around the neck of the bride using a thread drawn out from the bridal veil known as mantrakodi. The married women always wore the tali until their death. On their death it was either buried with them or else deposited on the church treasury.¹⁸⁸ Manavalan covered the head of the Manavatty with mantrakodi as a sign of future protection.

Marriage was an occasion to display the privileges granted to them by various kings. For example, Vellayum Karimpadavum was a privilege, which meant a privileged seat made of wool underneath and the white cotton cloth spread on which the chief guest sat in the marriage pandal.¹⁸⁹ During marriage they followed some customs, which they had inherited, from the Hindus like making figures behind the doors, nellum neerum veezhthal, making circles into which they put rice.¹⁹⁰ All these were to make the marriage fortunate, successful and fertile.

The groom and bride began to cohabit only after the ceremonies called Adachuthura and Nalamkuli, which were conducted on Wednesday evening. In adachuthura, the mother-in-law of the groom asked the bridegroom who was in the bridal chamber with his best man to come out of the chamber, which he denied. After repeated requests, when he was assured of certain articles which she would give him and when she had sung his glories in the vathilthurappatu the bridal chamber was opened. Nalamkuli was a ritual bath done on the fourth day of the marriage. Next morning they went to groom's house. They never went to the church before nalamkuli. Usually they went to the church only on the next Sunday.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ C.A. Innes, op. cit., p. 204.
¹⁸⁷ Tying of tali.
¹⁸⁸ Placid Piodipara, op. cit., p. 49.
¹⁹⁰ C.A. Innes, op. cit., p. 179.
¹⁹¹ ibid., p. 204, 205 see also Scaria Zacharaia, op. cit., p.179.
Following the custom of their Hindu counterparts, marriage was considered as an indissoluble bond among the St. Thomas Christians. Divorce was unheard of among the *nazranis* of Malabar as reported by Joseph the Indian. The couples were separated only through death. But the Synod of Diamper lamented over the existence of polygamy among the *nazranis*. It might have been concubinage, which was very common among various sections of the people of Malabar society.

The *Nazranis* had many superstitious practices and beliefs, which they shared with their non-Christian counterparts. They believed in horoscopes, good and bad days for celebration, killing of babies born on bad days, taking of two grains back when they measured a bushel of grain and so on. Even the *Kathanars* used books of charms and sorcery. It is said that all *Kathanars* had copies of such books, which were used for finding out good or bad days for marriage and other omens.

The *nazranis* fasted on certain days and certain periods of the year. On fasting days they took bath in the early morning. Their Lent was so rigorous that they would never eat more than once during the day before the sun set. They began it on the first Sunday of Lent. And they never ate fish, or eggs, or milk products, or wine, nor would they go to their wives during the entire Lent. During the Lent they went to the church daily and prayed three times a day—by morning in standing posture, the other late evening and the other at mid night praying prostrating on the floor. With the same rigorous manner they used to fast before advent. On the days of the saints also they fasted though it was not obligatory. Many used to fast in honour of Our Lady from the first of August till the Assumption of Our Lady, and from 1 September till the Feast of Nativity. There was also a fasting called that of the Apostles which used to start on the first day of the feast of Pentecost for 50 days continuously though it was not out of obligation but out of devotion. There was also *Moonmunoyambu*, which was for three days. People used to enter in the church during Lent when the *Kathanars* were praying Divine Office chanting. They used to put their palms between the palms of

the Kathanar and used to kiss their hands as a sign of peace and obedience. This was called the giving or taking the *casruri*. But it seems that they ate meat on Saturdays and Wednesdays. \(^{196}\)

They celebrated feasts like Resurrection, Nativity, Trinity, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Epiphany, *Puthunjayar* and *Dukrana* \(^{197}\) in which even the non-Christians used to take part. \(^{198}\) The lamps and ceremonial umbrellas, which were used in the feasts, resembled those of the temples. There had been giving and taking of paraphernalia to and from the temple. \(^{199}\) The heathen musicians and pagans used to attend and participate in the liturgical worships and feasts. Similarly the *nazranis* used to participate in Hindu festivals like *Onam*. \(^{200}\) They did not find any danger to their faith in this exchange of visits as the Christians and the Hindus had the same socio-cultural background.

At the same time the Christians of St. Thomas had their own worshipping patterns. They used to go to the church after taking bath wearing clean washed cloths. \(^{201}\) Before entering the church, they used to wash their feet. They prostrated in such a way in the church that the forehead touched the floor. \(^{202}\) In the Church they made the sign of the cross from right to left contrary to the Portuguese custom of making the sign of the cross from left to right. \(^{203}\) They did not have auricular confession. In the Eucharist the host was made using salt, oil and olive. The chalice was never lifted. The Eucharist was divided into different parts. \(^{204}\)

They worshipped Christ. They also had faith in Holy trinity. God was called *Tamburan*, which the Christians call even today. The Hindus also called their Supreme God as *Tambram*. \(^{205}\) They had sacraments as in the West but it was not

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\(^{197}\) *Dukrana* is the Commemoration of St. Thomas the Apostle.

\(^{198}\) Antony Vallavanthara, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

\(^{199}\) C.V. Cherian, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

\(^{200}\) Scaria Zacharia, *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599*, pp. 24, 42.


\(^{203}\) António de Gouveia, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

\(^{204}\) A.N.T.T, *Cartas dos Vice-Reis da India*, N°. 55, fl. 1v.

\(^{205}\) Antony Vallavanthara, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
The Photo of the Altar of the First Church in Ramapuram (c. 1450).

Cooman Cross in Mattancherry
administered in the same manner as it was in the West. This is evident from the comment of Gouveia that the *nazranis* did not have the sacraments of confirmation, reconciliation and the Last Sacrament (Extreme Unction). The reason for this was that the Sacraments of baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist were administered together in Malabar on the day of baptism according to the Oriental Tradition. They did not have auricular Confession. Instead they expiated their sins by throwing incense to the furnace in the middle of the church and by diverting with hands some of the smokes to their chests. Instead of Extreme Unction what they had was a blessing of the body. If someone among the *nazranis* became sick his/her whole family would come and stay inside the church and anoint him or her with the oil of the lamp kept in the church. Even the sick Hindus anointed themselves with this oil.

Their liturgical day began in the evening. Their feasts used to begin from evening to evening and not from mid night to midnight. They did not do any forbidden works on Sundays to keep the sanctity of the day. On Sunday soon after the sunset they worked as it was already Monday. The liturgical day, like all the oriental churches, began with vespers. The office was sung not only by the priests but also by the faithful. The night prayer called *Lelya* was at 2 hrs in the morning according to the Chaldean tradition. It was followed by the *sapra*, the Morning Prayer. The faithful also participated in *Lelya* and *Sapra*. It might be because of this reason that the synod of Diamper complained that the people stayed in the church during night. During the liturgical offices, they gave peace to another, first touching the hands of the senior-most priest in the Church and kissing his hands.

Qurbana or the Holy Mass followed the morning prayers. Holy Mass was not celebrated on days other than Sundays and Feast days. It was forbidden to celebrate Mass without the presence of an ordained minister. They used the fermented bread for the Eucharist. The wine was made of the raisins imported from Muscat and

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Three Anaphoras or Eucharistic Prayers were used—that of Adai and Mari, that of Nestorius and Theodore of Mopsuestia. The communion was distributed in double species separately. All those who went for the Holy Eucharist used to receive Holy Communion without confessing prior to the Mass, contrary to the custom in Europe.

There were chathams among the St. Thomas Christians which were occasions of feasting and banquets. Chathams were conducted on the anniversary of death. On that day people gathered with feasting to commemorate the dead.

The nazranis had priests, deacons and sub deacons. The former was called Cassanar or Kathanar and the latter two were called Chamazes or Semases. The Kathanars were dressed in a pair of drawers and a shirt loosely worn over it. They did not have tonsure but at the top of their head they kept a little hair. They were ordained when they were quite young, i.e. to say when they were 17, 18 or 20 years of age. The minimum age for Ordination was 14 years. They were ordained quite young because of other reasons. Sometimes the succession of the Bishops in Malabar used to be interrupted because of various reasons. Then it might take years for the arrival of another Bishop from Iraq. It used to interrupt ordinations. Against such a backdrop, for the uninterrupted service, even young candidates were ordained before the Bishops left. Most of them got married after their ordination. The wives of the priests were respected very much in the church. They used to wear a cross at their neck over their dress to distinguish themselves as wives of Kathanars. The priests always kept conjugal chastity and widowers did not get married. Even on days when priests celebrated Mass, the husband and wife could live together. All were careful to pray the divine office in Chaldaic language, in high pitch singing. None

212 Ibid., pp. 271, 73. See also B. N. L., Fundo Geral, Reservados, Cod. N°. 4534, fl. 241.
213 The banquet followed by prayers in commemoration of the dead.
215 António de Gouveia, op. cit., p. 159.
216 Antony Vallavanthara, op. cit., p. 172.
218 António de Gouveia, op. cit., p. 159.
would miss it. But apart from that they never found to be obliged to pray.²²⁰ People used to participate in the Eucharistic celebration on Sundays. It was not out of devotion that they went for Sunday Mass, but it was out of necessity that they went for it.²²¹ This means that the people were practising the faith that they got from the forefathers.

There was rigorous formation for the priests in Angamaly. The medium of formation was Syriac which was the liturgical language of the nazranis. Scripture and other branches of knowledge especially based on Syriac Fathers were taught there in Angamaly. The students had to learn reading and writing. The Prophets and Old Testament were given more importance. The Hebrew and Syriac manuscripts of the Bible were used for this formation.²²²

Most of the Portuguese authors accused the St. Thomas Christians priests and bishops of Simony. It is said that the Bishops used to live in open simony for conferring Holy Orders, consecrating altar stones, blessing the Churches, absolving from excommunication whereas the priests did the same in Baptism and Communion.²²³ It was not considered something absurd in Malabar because there was no monthly allowance for the priests as was the custom in Europe. The priests had to live with what they used to get from the people. To make their living they also used to engage in secular services. They served the kings as collectors, paymasters and tax gatherers.²²⁴

The St. Thomas Christians had a hierarchical set up of their own. It consisted of one Metropolitan and three Suffragan Bishops. They used to come from the monasteries of the North of Iraq, especially that of Mar Eugene which was under the jurisdiction of the Chaldean Patriarch. But the priests were from Malabar itself. There

²²⁰ Frei Paulo da Trinidad, _op. cit._, Parte II, p. 327.
²²¹ António de Gouveia, _op. cit._, p. 160.
²²³ António de Gouveia, _op. cit._, p. 160. See also Frei Paulo da Trinidad, _op. cit._, Parte II, p. 327.
²²⁴ António de Gouveia, _op. cit._, p. 160.
was unhindered succession of priests from certain families. Besides, there was an Archdeacon who was from Malabar itself. He had different roles. He had to look after the temporal affairs of the Church. Therefore he controlled the economic affairs of the Church. Sometimes he played the role of the Vicar general. In the absence of the Bishops, he was the administrator. He was the leader of the St. Thomas Christians in the socio-cultural affairs. He had legislative, judicial, executive, and non-ecclesiastical powers. The Spiritual Head of the Church was the Patriarch of Babylonia. It was this Patriarch who sent Bishops to India and was commemorated in the Liturgy. The nazranis never commemorated Pope in their Divine Liturgy. It was not out of antipathy towards the Pope, but because of the lack of direct contact with the Pope because of geographical inaccessibility and political disturbance created after the rise and spread of Islam.

Being the head of the Christians, the Bishop used to administer justice to the faithful. But there were people who were qualified as bad Christians who took complaints to the king. But in many cases, from the king both parties might not get any benefit. Therefore they generally approached the bishop who under common consensus from the parties chose four, six or eight Christians of ability and understanding before whom the parties spoke freely putting forward their points. After listening to them the bishop and his colleagues gave verdict, signing a decree for which no further appeal was possible.

They had a very high social status. As the social customs dictated the social status, being converts from the noble castes the nazranis followed untouchability keeping away from the inferior castes. They did not touch the inferior castes. They used to shout on the way so as to avoid the people of lower castes coming on their way. This was because they were in the company of the Brahmmins and Nairs who had specific regulations regarding the touch of inferior castes. If they had touched the

228 Antony Vallavanthara, op. cit., p. 170.
229 António de Gouveia, op. cit., p. 163.
lower castes the contact with the higher castes would have been impossible and the Christians would have lost their reverence, the king and the higher castes had for them. They could kill those belonged to the lower castes that crossed their way within the prohibited distance. But the nazranis on such occasions if the matter would not come to the knowledge of the nairs did not follow the barbarous untouchability.230

Before death, the nazranis made the last will and when they did not have sons the property went to a close male relatives, but never to their daughters even if they were in extreme poverty.231 The wives after the death of their husbands were paid back their dowry and they could leave and marry again after one year.232

They buried the body of their dead, not always in the Church but in some instances in unconsecrated places like their garden or household. When someone died many Christians gathered together, ate together for 8 days, and prayed for the dead.233 The ceremonies in this regard were initiated by a Kathanar as in the case of the Brahmins it was done by a Brahmin priest.234 In connection with solemn burials Chatam or Sradham235 was conducted.236 They also had some superstitious baths known as Pulakuli in connection with death.237

The missionary activity of the St. Thomas Christians before the arrival of the Portuguese was rather negligible. Although they received non-Christians, they were not interested in the conversion of the lower caste people because of the caste system that existed in the society.238

230 ibid., p. 168.
231 ibid., p. 163.
233 ibid., p. 174. See also Ludovico di Varthema, op. cit., p. 61.
235 A solemn dinner offering from which the rich and the poor participated alike.
236 António de Gouveia, op. cit., p. 167.
237 C.A. Innes, op. cit., pp. 204, 205. See also Scaria Zacharaia, The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599, p. 179.
III. 2. 2. The Quilon Christians

It seems that in Quilon, the St. Thomas Christians already got latinised because of the presence of some European missionaries prior to the Portuguese. It is said that Frey Jordão, a Dominican reached together with his companions in Malabar in 1320. He spent a few years in Quilon as a missionary among the Christians there in Quilon. He was later on nominated as the Bishop of Quilon. He is said to have Latinised Quilon. Another argument in support of the presence of European missionaries in Malabar is the mention of a European papal delegate by name John de' Marignolli, who stayed with the St. Thomas Christians of Quilon for almost 14 months between 1338 and 1353. He mentioned that these St. Thomas Christians were proprietors of pepper gardens. He also said that he used to get a perquisite of 100 gold fanams every month and they gave him one thousand fanams when he left that place. Secondly, there was mention about a church, which was there in Quilon prior to the Portuguese, dedicated to the Our Lady of Sorrows. This was not a name heard in Malabar. This church claims to have three altars, which was not common among the St. Thomas Christians. On the middle altar there was a golden cross where as the two side altars had crosses made of silver. Thirdly, it was said to have been revealed by the natives that there were two saints in that church in two chapels. Among the St. Thomas Christians there was no custom of using the images of saints in the Churches. Therefore it can be concluded that some of the St. Thomas Christians of this area came under the Latin Missionaries who happened to be there and when the flow of missionaries stopped they were left unattended by the St. Thomas Christian prelates. That is why it was said that many Christians of 30 and 40 years of age were baptised by the Portuguese, as they did not have the memory of baptism among them.
In Quilon there were Christian chiefs who were called Modalial, which means headmen in Tamil. They were owners of pepper. John de’ Marignolli, is said to have stayed with them.243

The Christians of St. Thomas, being members of another religious community had a different faith. But their faith was expressed through the same socio-cultural background, which they shared with the Brahmins and other high caste Hindus of Malabar. Very often they followed certain customs, which were contrary to the very basic principles of brotherhood and love of the Christians. But because of the socio-cultural requirements they had to follow such things as untouchability for the smooth cohabitation with other high caste Hindus. The St. Thomas Christians had a high social status because of their noble origin and the privileges conferred upon by the local Rajas. In Malabar, as the social status was preserved through the customs and manners, they had to keep some of the superstitions and inhuman practices which were not befitting Christianity.

III. 3. The Muslims

The Portuguese used the term Mouros to signify the Muslims. It seems that Islam reached Malabar as soon as it developed in Arabia, in the seventh century. After the decline of the Roman maritime domination, the Arabs became the masters of Indian trade. Most of the rich Arab merchants received Islamic faith in the very beginning of the origin of Islam. Being zealous missionaries, these Arab merchants when they reached Malabar preached the message of Islam in Malabar.244

In Malabar there were two groups of Muslims, namely the foreign Muslims who used to trade with India in areas like Cannanore, Dharmadam, Pandarane, Calicut, Cranganore and Quilon and the native Muslims who were born for the foreign Muslims from the native women.245 The native Muslims of Canara were called the Naiteás and those of Malabar Coast were known as the Mapillas. The Mapillas belonged to the mother in accordance with the matriarchal descend of

244 P.K. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., p. 298.
245 ibid., p. 302.
They were distinguished from the foreign Muslims in dress, customs and way of life. Being converts from Malabar, they spoke Malayalam and wore the dress of the nairs and followed the matriarchal system, which was very common in Malabar. The foreign Muslims in Malabar were from places like Arabia, Persia, Gujarat and many other nations.

Islam spread in Kerala because of different reasons. There was the story of the conversion of Cheramanperumal to Islam. Another factor that encouraged the spread of Islam in Malabar was the temporary marriages which allowed the Arab and Persian seamen to marry in the ports where they went for trade. In Malabar they generally married the low caste women. The children born of such marriages were brought up in Sunni Islamic faith. From the very childhood they were trained as tradesmen and seamen. As they knew Arabic, Persian and local languages they became brokers also. Yet another cause for the conversion to Islam was that as soon as the low caste people became Muslims, their social status went up as they went out of the traditional hierarchy of castes. This attracted the lower castes to Islam. The kings also gave liberty for the Muslims to mix freely with the natives especially the noble classes. This was an added impetus for conversion. Besides, boys were taken from Malabar to Mecca so that they might be made Muslims. The relationship of foreign Muslims was not always cordial with the Mapillas. There was still competition between them.

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247 Frei Paulo da Trindade, *op. cit.*, Parte II, p. 244.
252 *ibid.*, pp. 35-39.
253 Frei Paulo da Trindade, *op. cit.*, Parte II, p. 244.
254 Puente, D. Joseph Martinez de la, *Compendio de las Historias de los Descubrimientos, Conquistas Y Guerras de la India Oriental y Sus Islas desde los Tiempos del Infante Don Enrique de Portugal Su inventor, hermano del Rey D. Duarte; hasta los del Rey D. Felipe II. De Portugal, y III. De Castilla*, Madrid, 1681, p. 133.
Thus different colonies of Muslim merchants both Arabs and non-Arabs, originated in Malabar port towns. They continued their peaceful means of propagation of Islam and lived in harmony with the natives.256

The development of Calicut as one of the important emporia of trade was due to the Muslim merchants. They were very rich and they dealt with a lot of commodities. They mainly traded in spices especially pepper, cardamom, ginger, certain drugs, cinnamon that came from Ceylon, cloves from Malacca and other aromatics.257 They had the monopoly of Red sea trade.258

Initially during the visit of Ibn Batuta we see that the Muslims were said to be respected by all. But they were not allowed to enter the houses of the Hindus, and the natives did not eat with them. Gradually their social position went up. The Muslims occupied a position next to the nairs of Malabar.259 As they brought wealth to Calicut, the rulers respected them and this in its turn led to the uplift of their social position.

By the end of the fifteenth century we see that the Muslim merchants became very influential in Calicut. There were two main officers who were responsible for the trading activities of Malabar. They were Pardesi who was the leader of the foreigners and the leader of the Mapillas. The pardezi meant all other foreigners outside Malabar even if they were from the nearest kingdoms.260 In the beginning of the sixteenth century we see that the overseas trade was in the hands of the Pardesi merchants and the coastal trade in commodities like food stuffs, cotton and so on was in the hands of the Mapillas. They, in their turn, exchanged these consumer goods with Christians and Nairs who produced ginger and pepper in the hinterlands. Sometimes they engaged in small-scale trade with Ceylon and Malacca.261

256 P. K. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., p. 302.
257 Frei Paulo da Trinidad, op. cit., Parte II, p. 244.
260 ibid., pp. 229, 30.
261 ibid., p. 231.
They had Mosques and Friday celebrations. The Mosques were built in the traditional style of the Hindu temples using wood.262 There were Mosques in various ports of Malabar like Cranganor, Darmapatam, Pandarane, Jarpatam, Quilon, Canjarcote, Chale and Calicut. Islam developed around these mosques. Many of the cities of Malabar were built with the help of the Muslims.263

If one among the Muslims committed some serious offences, he was killed with the permission of the Chief of the community. Then the dead body was taken, washed, vested, prayed over and it was buried in the cemetery.264

People tried to keep a distance from the Muslims. No one entered the house of a Muslim without his permission.265 The Muslims were very eager to keep their religious precepts. They used to go to Mecca for pilgrimage. Most of the pilgrims were from noble classes.266

III. 4. The Jews

It is very difficult to trace the origin of the Jews in Malabar. According to various authors, their origin varied between the reign of King Solomon and the eighth century A.D.267 The traditions of the Jews of Cochin maintained that the just after the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem in the first century, ten thousand Jews sought refuge in India and they were received by the Hindu rulers who allowed them to settle wherever they wanted. Somehow most of them opted for Cranganore.268 From the copper plates, which are in the custody of the white Jews of Malabar, it is clear that they had a very high position in the society, as they were prosperous

263 Zinadim, op. cit., pp. 40, 49, 50.
264 Ibid., p. 51.
265 Ibid., p. 51.
267 Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, Noticias dos Judeos de Cochin, Mandadas por Mosseh Pereyra de Paiva, Novamente publicadas com uma introdução de Moses Bensabat Amzalak em Lisboa, 1923, pp. 9, 10.
268 Kerala and Her Jews. This is published by the Jewish community in Cochin basing on a paper read by Mr. S.S. Koder before Kerala History Association in 1965, his article in the Souvenir printed on the occasion of the inauguration of the Nehru Memorial Town Hall, Mattancherri in 1968 and Miss Fiona Hallegua's thesis "The Jewish community of Cochin-its twilight years" for her Master's Degree in Sociology written in 1984, pp. 2, 3.
merchants. For long nothing was known outside India about the Jews of Malabar. Benjamin of Tudela has mentioned about the black Jews of Malabar. Europe actually came to know about it through the travels of Marco Polo as well as Vasco da Gama.

Jacob d’Ancona during his visits found that the Jews were in very good position in Malabar. They were looked after well by the kings of the land by extending all kinds of help. In the thirteenth century he visited Singoli, which was identified to be Cranaganore where there were around 1000 Jews. He witnessed that it was a very good trading post where Jews were exempted from paying tolls and tributes. They were respected by the kings very much because of their knowledge of the world, fluency in different languages and arts from which they reaped much profit. He testified that the Jews of Cranganore observed the precepts of their faith.

Wherever they lived, they were very much favoured by the kings. It might have been because of the fact that they were very good merchants and they brought much wealth to the lands where they lived. Some of the privileges granted to them by the kings of the locality were those including permission to ride on elephants, to have a herald to go before him to announce his name, to carry a lamp during day time, walk upon carpets spread on the floor, and to have trumpets and drums before him. There were so many Jews in the kingdom of Cochin. The king of Cochin was called the ‘king of the Jews’. The Jewish presence in different parts of Malabar like Calicut, Mount Eli, and Quilon is attested by different travellers of this period.

These Jews had believed in some omens. If the Torah fell down in the presence of a traveller it was believed that it was a bad omen and that person would be asked to fast for one day. They believed that the one who let the Torah fall down

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272 *ibid.*, pp. 80, 81.
274 Jacob D’ Ancona, *op. cit.*, pp. 80, 81.
276 *Kerala and Her Jews*, pp. 5, 6.
would die in the following year. Because of that they all used to spend the day in prayer and fasting. This shows the Jewish mode of fasting and penitence. It seems that they were not well aware of all the precepts of their religion because the Jews enquired Jacob D' Ancona of the things that were forbidden on the Day of Atonement.

He also testified that during this period there were 380 Jewish families in Quilon who used to engage in spice trade. The Jews were buried here in cemeteries. In Quilon there was a cemetery for the Jews where there were many graves in which there were white stones with inscriptions in black.

During the pre-Portuguese period there was a flow of European Jews to Malabar. But after the death of Joseph Rabban, there was division in the Jewish society. Many of them fled to Cochin in the latter half of fifteenth century. In 1524 there was an onslaught of the Jews by the Muslims under the pretext that they were interfering in the pepper trade. During these riots, the houses and synagogues of the Jews were burned. The destruction was so grave that in the beginning of the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese reached Malabar, there were only a few Jews in Cranganore. Those left there, were in a pathetic condition. Because of the special consideration the king of Cochin had towards the Jews, he gave them a place to build Jewish town in 1567 and Cochin synagogue in 1567 near his palace. They were well respected in Cochin that the king used to give all helps to him.

III. 5. Other Traits of Socio-Cultural Life

It was forbidden to kill certain types of animals and birds especially if they belonged to some temples. Correa, in his *Lendas da India* describes an incident which took place in 1516. Gaspar da Silva, one of the Portuguese noblemen, killed a few peacocks, which belonged to the temple of Diamper. Then one of the *Caimals* of the region intervened, warned him of the consequences, and asked them to quit the place.

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277 Jacob D' Ancona, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
278 ibid., p. 81.
279 ibid., p. 83.
280 *Kerala and Her Jews*, p. 6.
281 Frei Paulo da Trindade, *op. cit.*, Parte II, p. 244.
But as the noble man did not pay heed to the warning, there was a terrible fight between the people of the Caimal and the Portuguese. In that fight four servants of that nobleman died.  

The ash of cow dung was used for purification. They were put on the forehead, hand and the chest. They purified their roads as well as houses with cow dung. It was also applied on the floor. It was applied every day on the way between the palace of the Zamorin and the temple.  

Pipinos, oranges, lemons, citron and the other fruits of Malabar were entirely different from the fruits available in Portugal. There was neither grape nor wine. The oil was from the palm tree.  

In Malabar oath was made by putting the hand over the head of a son if he has one, if not on a cow. To prove crimes there were various means. The first means was to soak the hands of the suspected person in boiled oil or butter. Then the hand would be covered for three days. On the third day when it was uncovered, if the hand was in a worse situation the crime was proved and he was punished and if the hand was clean he was judged as innocent. If the accused was not found culpable, the accuser had to pay him the stipulated amount. A second method used to prove crime in and around Cochin was by taking the accused to a river that ran between Cochin and Cranganore in which there were a lot of crocodiles. The Brahmins made a prayer to invoke the crocodiles near the temple and they would come to the bank. The accused had to stand on the side of the river. If he were culpable, the crocodiles would attack him whereas if he was innocent, the crocodiles used to leave behind by him without attacking him. This was considered as more horrible. Yet another mode was to put the hands of the accused into an earthen pot filled with vipers. The person

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286 ibid., p. 254.
took a ring or lemon and put it inside the jar to irritate the vipers. If they bit him he was culpable and if not he was set free. This was a method used in Cranganore.  

The Hindus had different days of fasting. One of the fastings was known as Egadexi, (Ekadesi) which was on all first ten days of all lunar months. Yet another one was Giveraserii, (Sivaratri) which was usually in February. During this fasting they did not eat, drink and sleep during 24 hours going round the temple reciting the events of their Sacred Texts. In addition to that there was Tiruvadira, which was on the 22nd day of the lunar month. This was for women. On such days they ate only some fruits. Besides, following the death of close relatives one had to abstain from eating meat, fish, wine, eggs and betel leaf for one year. Moreover, there was monthly fasting. Those who did this had to wash themselves on the last day of October, wear clean cloths, visit the temple of Vishnu in the early morning of 1 November and the first ten days of December. They ate only milk and plantains and they never looked at women these days nor did they remember any other things than the names and things related to Vishnu. Coming year he had to begin the same on the first day of December up to the 10 January. He had to do this for 12 years. After 12 years of fasting for 40 days beginning from 1 November like this he was counted as a saint.  

_Tali_ that a man tied on the neck of a woman, was a sign of protection and ownership. There were vulgar woman in Malabar who used to untie the _tali_ to attract more men because of her appetite for luxuries.  

Some believed that they got polluted by the touch of a person of the lower caste. They were purified after a bath. Some ate in the leaves of bananas so that the plates might not get contaminated. There were some people who cooked for themselves so that they might not get polluted.

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287 ibid., p. 255.  
288 ibid., p. 255.  
289 ibid., p. 256.  
290 ibid., p. 257.  
291 ibid., p. 260.  
293 ibid., fl. 4
III. 5. 1. Means of Transport

There were Palanquins, which were used by the kings and the nobles. Vasco da Gama was taken to the Zamorin in a palanquin. Lower caste people carried it. There was facility inside the palanquins either to sit or lie down. On certain solemn occasions, the kings and noblemen used to travel on the back of elephants.

Another means of transport, which the people of Malabar used, was *changadam* which was used by joining together two long and narrow boats. In Malabar there were many ships. There was mention about very big vessels, which could carry even seven elephants.

III. 5. 2. Worshipping Patterns

The worshipping pattern of the Malabar people was quite different. The priests who did service inside the temple were naked except for the thighs till the knees. Besides they used a sash. They did not cover the head during worship. When Vasco da Gama and friends entered a temple in Calicut thinking that it was a church they were sprinkled with water. Then they were given sandal powder to be put on the forehead. Though they wanted to put ashes on the upper arms, as they were vested it was not possible. The *Catual* who was guiding Gama and friends, fell to the ground with folded hands over the head thrice and then they continued their prayers standing. This points to the worshipping postures of the people of Malabar.

The main god of the Hindus was Brahma who was considered as the beginning and the end. The image of this god had vulgar eyes and one more on the forehead. Vishnu was his brother. He was the god of change and transformation. He had different forms. He even took the form of pork during incarnation. He had 26

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294 Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *op. cit.*, Livros I e II, p. 43.
296 Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *op. cit.*, Livros I e II, p. 43.
297 *ibid.*, pp. 83, 84.
298 *ibid.*, p. 44.
299 *ibid.*, p. 45.
hands each having different things. He had cobra as ornament. 301 God had four children. The first one had the face of an elephant and was called Ganapati, the second had the face of a monkey, the third was Subramannya and the fourth was Patracali. 302

The gods of the Hindus were known as Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswaran. Besides, each individual had a god of his own which may be a cow, snake, monkey, sun or moon. 303 The Hindus used to adore and offer sacrifices to snakes so that they might not attack them with venom. 304

The ordinary sacrifices were with rice and chethi pu. 305 There was also the sacrifice with fire. Such sacrifices were very costly, as many aromatic drugs were to be used. 306 In July there was a solemn feast in which jatis like nairs, mason and carpenters (Asari), blacksmiths (Collan), goldsmiths (Thattan), and bronze smiths (Moosari) went with one or more chicken to a designated temple and cut the neck of the chicken on a particular stone and allowed the whole blood to be flown. Then they offered some money in the temple as sign of the expiation of their sins and they went home with the cut chicken to cook them so that it might be eaten with the toddy from coconut tree. Then there were celebrations lasting for so many days. 307

Their baths were for purifying the souls rather than bodies. They believed that venial sins were forgiven by bath or falling of water on the head. Some such sins were touch by a lower caste man, the touch of a dead body or its relatives within 15 days of their demise and the touch of a lower caste woman. 308

301 ibid., p. 220.
302 ibid., p. 221.
305 Flower of a plant called chethi which is like jasmine flower, but blossoms in bunches and red in colour.
307 ibid., fl. 4.
III. 5. 3. Festivals

There were many festivals in Malabar. Each festival was an occasion for the people to celebrate. One of the main festivals was celebrated in Malabar during the Monsoon. It was onam. It was generally celebrated in the month of August. In this feast, the king used to be present together with his Lords. Both men and women used to participate in the celebrations wearing good dress and golden ornaments. During the initial days they had different games with arms in the afternoons. The people were in groups according to their tribes. On the principal day they all came together to battle of combat with arms in which many became dead. In connection with this feast, there was fire-works in Cochin, which was very nice to see.\(^{309}\) On feasts elephants were used for processions and other celebrations in the temple. Such elephants were decorated well.\(^{310}\)

III. 5. 4. Corsairs

There used to be many sea pirates in Malabar at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese. There were a lot of pirates on the Malabar Coast especially in areas closer to Cannanore.\(^{311}\) It was quite common in places of great commerce. This points to the existence of good and prosperous maritime commerce. There were many famous corsairs in Malabar. For example Patemarca was a notorious corsair of Cochin who was always against the Portuguese.\(^{312}\) There were very big ships, which even contained 1000 botas\(^{313}\). Besides, there were small ships, which dealt with port-to-port trade. The corsairs or pirates attacked ships of all sorts irrespective of the size of the ships.\(^{314}\)


\(^{313}\) A measurement. 5 botas = 3 tonéis

\(^{314}\) This is from the letter of King D. Manuel written to the Cardinal Protector, informing him about the discovery of the new trade route to India. Dated 25 August 1499. This is from “Carta de El-Rei D. Manuel Ao Cardial Protector. 25 de Agosto de 1499.” In António da Silva Rego, *Documentação Para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente: Índia* vol. 1, 1499-1522, pp. 8, 9.
III. 5. 5. Food

Rice was the staple food of the people. But rice was not cultivated in abundance. There was lack of foodstuffs in Malabar. Rice was brought to Calicut from Bhatical. In Cochin there was a principal moor called Mame Marcar who had 20 ships, which carried foodstuffs to Cochin. Cochin also did not have enough rice because the whole land was full of palm trees. Though the people had some cultivation of rice it was not enough for subsistence of the family. The people of Malabar ate a lot of rice as well as vegetables and dried fish. The rice was cultivated in abundance in areas between Mount Eli and Goa. They served as sources for rice in Malabar. A lot of rice was imported to Malabar from Coromandal Coast.

Some of the Hindus ate fish, and meat but they seldom ate the flesh of a cow. There were fruits like jackfruit, figs (plantains) and mangoes. It was affirmed that the water in Malabar was very tasty.

III. 5. 6. Various Kingdoms in Malabar

"Among the Malabar kingdoms Cannanore, Calicut, Cochin, Quilon and Travancore were the largest and most powerful during this period, but at least twenty-five other political entities of some importance existed, most of them subject to a greater or lesser extent to one of the five units. Most significant of the lesser lordships were Cranganore and Porca (Purakkad) which were loosely subject to Cochin, Cale Coulam (Kayam Kulam) subordinate to Travancore, and Ponnani, a town on the river of the same name, and a satellite of Calicut."
MALABAR
IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES
Calicut was described as the metropolis of great Malabar and the kings of Cananore, Cranganore, Cochin and Quilon were feudatories of the Zamorin, the king of Calicut.\textsuperscript{321}

A. Cannanore

The kingdom of Cannanore extended from Mount Ely to Bergara (Badagara) and it was a very populous city.\textsuperscript{322} There was ginger in abundance in Cannanore.\textsuperscript{323} There was also a spacious harbour in Cannanore. This added to the trading infrastructure of Cannanore. The country produced pepper, cardamom, ginger, mirabolans, and tamarinds.\textsuperscript{324}

B. Calicut

Calicut was a very large and rich city, whose king was called the Zamorin who was like an emperor to whom all other kings in Malabar owed allegiance. In Calicut there lived people of all regions of India. There were more than 15000 Moors living there.\textsuperscript{325} It was a very famous port for the merchandise of India. Calicut was the best port in India: it treated all types of rich merchandise.\textsuperscript{326} The merchandise included spices like cinnamon, clove, pepper, ginger, nutmeg, benzoin, amber, musk, pearls, rubies, and all kinds of stones and precious merchandise.\textsuperscript{327} It was a very peaceful city. It was so peaceful that the Portuguese could walk through the streets secure as if

\textsuperscript{321} D. Joseph Martinez de la Puente, Compendio de las Historias de los Descubrimientos, Conquistas, Y Guerras de la India Oriental y Sus Islas desde los Tiempos del Infante Don Enrique de Portugal Su invento, hermano del Rey D. Duarte; hasta los del Rey D. Felipe II. De Portugal , y III. De Castilla, Madrid. 1681, p. 116.

\textsuperscript{322} Philip Baldaeus, op. cit., p. 622.


\textsuperscript{324} Philip Baldaeus, op. cit., p. 623.


\textsuperscript{326} "Carta de Affonso de Albuquerque , dando parte a El Rey das grandes de Calicut,e Paz, que com elle fizera por cuja cauza expulsara de Seu Reino os Mouros opristos a ella, e desprezaar as persuasos dos Reis de Cochim, e de Cananor, que a estorvavão: Que o dito Rey lhe dera Officiaes, e materiaes para a construçao de huma Fortaleza nos seus Portos; pedindo honrasse os Embaixadores, que enviava a S. A. E lhes desse prezentes para o seu Rey , Rainha etc. Que tambem se interessara na Paz." In A.N.T.T., Corpo Cronologico, Parte Primeira, Maço 14 (1 Nov. 1513- 15 Mar. 1514).

\textsuperscript{327} This is from the letter of King D. Manuel written to the Cardinal Protector, informing him about the discovery of the new trade route to India. Dated 25 August 1499. This is from "Carta de El-Rei D. Manuel Ao Cardial Protector. 25 de Agosto de 1499." In António da Silva Rego, Documentação Para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente: Índia, vol. I, 1499-1522, Lisboa, 1991, p. 7.
they were in Lisbon. The fishermen and the ordinary men used to sell things like chicken, plantains, fish, and coconuts to the Portuguese in return for money or pieces of biscuits.

The Zamorin was the richest and mightiest king in Malabar. After him came the kings of Cannanore and Quilon. He had a lot of nairs. One of the reasons for the prominence of Calicut was this military strength. In 1504 the Zamorin came to Cochin to wage war against the combined forces of the Portuguese and the king of Cochin with a force of 47000 nairs. This points to the military strength of the Zamorin. Due to this military upper hand of the Zamorin, there were a lot of Caimals as well as lesser kings to support him. For example, the kings of Tanore, Beipur, Cotogão, Lord of Cranganore, Lord of Repelim, Lord of Benalacheri, Lord of Beipur, Lord of Papuranguri, Caimal of Mangate and so on were there together with the Zamorin in his battle against Cochin. Correa says that the Zamorin of Calicut had 200,000 men of arms. The real strength of the Zamorin was the chavers he had. Whereas the King of Cochin had only 80,000 chavers, the Zamorin had a lot of them.

C. Cochin

The kingdom of Cochin was situated south of Calicut on the coast. The king of Cochin was also a Hindu and his customs were like those of Calicut. But he was poor when compared to the Zamorin and the kingdom was thinly populated. He was not an independent king. The King of Cochin was not permitted by the Zamorin to mint coins. There was enmity between the king of Cochin and the Lord of Repelim who was an ardent supporter of the Zamorin. The basic reason for this hatred was the taking of the Island Arrul from Replim by the king of Cochin.

328 Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, op. cit., Livros I e II, p. 57.
329 ibid., p. 58.
330 ibid., p. 35.
331 ibid., p. 144.
333 ibid., p. 353.
334 Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, op. cit., Livros I e II, p. 89.
335 ibid., p. 106.
Cochin had a lot of pepper producing hinterland. Though it was relatively a small kingdom, it used to supply pepper sufficient to load 20 ships every year. But there are authors like Vitorino Magalhães Godinho who claimed that Cochin had insufficient quantity of pepper.

There were a number of Caimals in Cochin. The Caimals were the lords of the land of Cochin. They were like vassals of the king like the dukes of Europe. The king of Cochin could gather around 150,000 men for war. It is not clear if they were all nairs. Among these only 80,000 had the obligation to die for the king as chavers.

D. Quilon

Before Calicut received the prime position in maritime trade, Quilon was the most important port in Malabar. At the time of the arrival of the Portuguese, Quilon was already in decline. There were a lot of Muslims as well as Hindus in Quilon. There were big houses, temples and Mosques there. There was also a Christian church in Quilon, which was said to have been miraculously built by St. Thomas, the apostle and the propagator of Christian faith in India. There were almost 12000 houses of Christians in Quilon who were continuing from generation to generation.

According to the custom of the land the kingdom of Quilon was ruled by a Queen and not by a king. It was also a centre of trade. The main merchandise in Quilon was pepper.
III. 5. 7. The Lifestyle of the Royalty

The oriental rulers were guided by custom of their land rather than their personal interests. They were not ready to break the customs of the land even in changing circumstances.

The kings had battles between themselves. They themselves took part in person in these battles. When they died in the battle they were cremated with a lot of sandalwood. All his brothers, relatives and closer ones died along with him and were cremated together. After the cremation even the small boys stayed shaving off their hair, without chewing betel for 13 days.\(^{344}\)

The Zamorin, at the time of the reception of Vasco da Gama, was vested in all kinds of luxurious articles. He used to gargle with water, which was kept in abundance, each time after chewing betel. An old man who usually stood close to the Zamorin's cot gave the betel to him. Other people used to stand with their left hand in front of their mouth as the king was there. It was a courtesy in Malabar. The king received Gama in the Indian style by bending the body thrice with joined hands. They were allowed to sit in front of the Zamorin. Then they were given water to wash hands and drink.\(^{345}\)

In important matters, the king used to take decision only after discussing with the Caimals, Lords and relatives of the king. When there arose a discussion between the king of Cochin and the Viceroy regarding the roofing of Viceroy's house, as it was a matter against the custom of the land, the king of Cochin declared that he would give an answer only after consulting with his Caimals, Lords, friends and relatives.\(^{346}\)

The kings of Malabar had a hierarchy of position. There were alliances between various kings of Malabar. Then the parties were known as 'brothers in arms'.

\(^{344}\) Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *op. cit.*, Livros I e II, p. 36.
\(^{345}\) *ibid.*, p. 46.
According to this alliance, both kings who entered into this alliance had to die for the other in wars.\footnote{ibid., Tomo III, Parte II, p. 699.}

The king as well as the nobles did *tevaram* with fasting. In this ceremony, they offered rice, coconuts, and butter burning them in praise of the golden idols, which were there in abundance in Malabar. In these sacrifices, they prayed for their own riches and also for the vengeance and death of their enemies. Many had in their houses a few demons called *Kuttichathans* to whom they offered things. They entered the bodies of others for vengeance. They were sometimes said to have transformed into animals and they did harm to the persons.\footnote{Manuel de Faria e Sousa, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 249.}

III. 5. 8. Ship Building

There were very big and small ships in Malabar. The small riverboats were known as *tone*. There were also very big ships in Malabar. For example, during the arrival of Pedro Alvares Cabral, they saw in Calicut a ship, which carried seven elephants and other merchandise. Two Muslims called Mamale Mercar and Cherina Mercar owned the ship.\footnote{Décadas da Ásia de João de Barros, CD. No. 05, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações Portugueses & Centre for the Study of the Portuguese Discoveries, Oxford, Primeira Década, Livro V, Capítulo VI, p. 2.}

III. 5. 9. Medicine

Diseases were generally considered as the result of the wrath of gods. Therefore remedy mainly was in fulfilling the vows made to gods.\footnote{Fernão Guerreiro, *Relaçam Annal Das Cousas que Fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus, nas partes da India Oriental, & em algumas outras da conquista deste Reyno nos annos de 607, 1 608, & do processo da conversão & Christandade daquellas partes, com mais hua addiçam à relaçam de Ethiopia*, Lisboa, 1611, p. 64.} In their diseases, they went to the sorcerers and not to the doctors. They believed that the diseases were caused by demons, which were inside men. Some works were done to exorcise these demons. Sometimes offerings were made to *Patracali* for this purpose\footnote{Faria e Sousa, Manuel de, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, pp. 249, 250.} to placate her.
Coconut oil was applied to heal wounds. We see that the wounded Portuguese after reaching Cochin after the flight from Calicut applied Coconut oil together with lime juice, on their wounds. And it is said that they recovered within a few days. It is clear that here the Portuguese were applying the native medicine. They knew the properties of ginger which served as a very good digestive. The people in Malabar used the ginger juice as an appetiser so that they might eat more.

III. 5. 10. Mercantile Activities

Calicut was a very important emporium of trade. There was not a single item that was not available in Calicut. It used to trade in commodities like stones, pearls, aljofar, camphor, musk, sandalwood, aloes wood, sealing wax, porcelain, Chinese luxuries, gold, cotton, vestments, copper, rosewater, coral and so on. The main commercial people in Calicut were the Moors. In Calicut there were Moorish merchants who had even possessed 50 ships. Every year at least 600 ships came in this port.

The moors of Calicut had trade relations with Quiloa, Mombaça and Moçambique because of the gold that these places had. It is said that these Muslims of Calicut had much hatred towards the Christians who were their rivals in trade. There were moors from Cairo in Calicut who used to bring merchandise from Mecca and on their return they used to take rich merchandise like spices from Calicut.

Trade had much importance in Calicut. We see that the lower caste people were neglected in the land. But when these very same people were converted to Islam, there was a change in the life style of these people. They got more freedom and now they were at the status of the touchable. What must be the reason behind it? It points to the fact that Malabar kingdoms especially like Calicut gave much prominence to trade. The whole economy rested on the prosperity of trade. The Moors controlled the

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354 Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, op. cit., Livros I e II, p. 35.
355 ibid., p. 35.
trade, before the arrival of the Portuguese in Malabar. The Moors had become very rich because of their commercial enterprise as middlemen in the trade between India and the Christian West.\(^{357}\)

There were small retail shops on the road. In these shops food materials were put in abundance for selling. There were food items like fish, plantains, eggs, and chicken. They were sold very cheap too. But there was no bread because there was no cultivation of wheat in Malabar.\(^{358}\)

The price of pepper varied from place to place. At the time of the arrival of Vasco da Gama, the price of pepper in Calicut was 70 *fanams* or 4 1/5 *cruzados* in Calicut whereas in Cranganore the price was 55 1/2 *fanams* or 3 1/2 *cruzados*.\(^{359}\)

III. 5. 11. Lower Caste People and Untouchability

The *jatis* like *Ezhavas, Pulayas, Parayas, Vettuvans, Arayan, Valan, Aasari,* and *Kollan,* as they were reluctant to accept the Brahmin domination, were degraded in the Hindu fold.

The lower caste people could carry arms only for their defence. These lower caste people used to be labourers. A lot of lower *jatis* in Malabar had received Islam as it offered more freedom. When he became a Moor, he could touch anyone, could go anywhere without any curtailment of freedom as they were now outside the law and custom of the *jati* system. The lower class people used to live in the woods or in the countryside. These lower caste people could eat only some herbs or roots from the land. But when they became Moors, they could eat whatever and wherever they liked. When they were converted to Islam they were given the cloths and vests of the Muslims.\(^{360}\)

\(^{357}\) *ibid.,* p. 76.


\(^{360}\) Gaspar Correa, *op. cit.*, Livro Primeyro, Tomo I, Parte I, p. 76.
The fishermen and other lower caste people who did the service to the boats lived in the shore of the sea where as the nobles and merchants used to live inside the land.\textsuperscript{361}

Even the children of higher varnas or jatis did not touch one who was touched by an untouchable. They did not allow the members of the lower jatis to touch on the wells or houses. No one could drink a glass of water touched by a lesser noble. Besides, there were regulations in using a cloth touched by an untouchable, eating of rice touched by a low caste man before purification, eating rice cooked by a person of the lower caste and sexual relationship with a lower caste women.\textsuperscript{362}

Polyandry was practised among some of the lower castes in Malabar. The goldsmiths, ironsmiths and moulders, had only one wife for even four brothers. This was for not getting the inheritance divided.\textsuperscript{363} The condition of the lower caste women was better than the higher caste women. The women of lower castes went out to work and also they ate with men.\textsuperscript{364}

\textbf{III. 5. 12. Dress}

The dress of the men of Malabar was one big piece of cloth worn at the waist, which covered up to the sole of the foot. On the head they wore a kind of a small turban or headdress. Besides there was another piece of cloth for cleaning the face. They moved around barefooted and they did not use covering on the feet whether it was winter or summer. To distinguish one caste from the other, they had either some distinguishing mark on the face, forehead, stomach, ears, nose or upper arm.\textsuperscript{365}

\textbf{III. 5. 13. Women}

The catholic, Jewish and Muslim women went covered. They never went out of their houses except to the church, or to assist in some funerals, the marriage of their

\textsuperscript{361} \textit{ibid.}, p. 188.
\textsuperscript{362} Manuel de Faria e Sousa, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. IV, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{363} \textit{ibid.}, p. 260.
\textsuperscript{365} \textit{ibid.}, fl. 2v.
close relatives and friends. They never ate with men whether they were with sons or husbands. There was severe punishment for those who insulted women. The women of high castes like Brahmins very rarely went out, that also for visiting the temples and to wash in the river.366

At the same time there were women who were living a very free life. The nair women and the tiya women were examples of the same. About the free sexual life, the Portuguese wrote that in Calicut a boy of 8 years already knew women earnestly. It was also said that the virginity of a girl was sold in Calicut for one fanam, which was equal to 17 reis.367


The houses of the ordinary people in Malabar were made of clay. They made large squire type bricks and dried them in water. It was used for walls. The roof was thatched with leaves of coconut trees. All the buildings were squire types with a courtyard in the middle. The woodcarvings were very attractive. A few of the houses were even two-three storied. These houses had very good porches.368

The house of the king Zamorin as well as the temples and Mosques were made of stone and lime. They were also tiled ones. But the houses of the ordinary people could not be tiled.369 The houses were covered with palm leaves. It was the custom of the land that no one could tile his house. Tiling of houses was reserved for palaces and temples of worship.370 Many houses were made of wood in Cochin.371

The palace of the King of Calicut was very big and seemed to have been built in a quadrangular shape. For, the Portuguese authors say that it was built in such a

366 ibid., fl.3.
367 Crónica do Descobriment e Conquista da Índia Pelos Portugeses (Códice Anônimo, Museu Britânico, Egerton 20, 90), Coimbra, 1974, pp. 9,12
368 François Pyard of Laval, op. cit., pp. 403-404.
369 Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, op. cit., Livros I e II, p. 35.
371 ibid., Tomo I, Parte II, Coimbra, 1921, p. 624.
way that the trees even stood inside the palace. The garden around the palace as well as different tanks of water added to the beauty of the palace. 372

The walls of the temples were painted with many images. Some of these images had their teeth projecting outside; some other images had four hands and some of them looked diabolic. Inside the temple there was an elevated part which was set apart for prayer. It was at the middle of the temple. The architectural style was in such way that there was no much light inside the temple. 373 The Churches of the St. Thomas Christians were built after the model of the Hindu pagodas. 374

III. 5. 15. Renunciation

There were many sanyasis in Malabar during this period. A sanyasi had more dignity than a king. There were peculiar ceremonies in connection with renunciation of this world for sanyasa. When one became a sanyasi, his statue was made with a straw and was burnt as if he was dead to his relatives and to himself. After having done this he was taken to a stream and his hairs were cut and he was asked to dive 72 times in water. Then his poonool was taken out as a sign that now he bade farewell to the rites of the Brahmins. Then he was given a cloth soaked in red soil. He no more vested in white cloths. Then he was also given another cloth and a cap of straw. Then he stayed for three or four days at the Order of the master. Afterwards he could not eat flesh, fish, and betel. He could not even look at women. If he accidentally saw a woman he had to cover his eyes with cap till she was out of sight. He had to eat what was given without wasting it. He had to live inside or around the temple and succeed his master. He need not make courtesy to anyone. The king and the Brahmins had to make courtesy to him. He could not touch money. His cap could not be taken by anyone while he was walking. If he did something against the institution, the

373 ibid., p. 44.
Brahmins could complain to the king. If it was proved, the king could put turmeric powder on him and thus his dignity as *sanyasi* could be taken back.\(^{375}\)

**III. 5. 16. Astrology**

There were many astrologers in Malabar. People believed greatly in astrology and horoscopes. In Calicut there were very talented astrologers who were able to foretell with the help of a single glass of water the position of the lost ships and so on. Some of the astrologers prophesied that the coming of the Portuguese was the beginning of the fall of the Moors. \(^{376}\)

**III. 5. 17. Death**

In connection with death there were a lot of ceremonies in Malabar. In case of death of a boy below seven years of age, there were no ceremonies. \(^{377}\) From seven years, as soon as one died, he was burnt on the south. South was considered as the place of the dead: for, South was regarded as the dwelling place of *Yaman*.\(^{378}\) The close relatives of the dead did not cut their hair nor shave off their beard for one year. They would not sleep with women for one year. For fifteen days they would sleep on a mat and they did not enter the temples. When those days were over, they put the ashes in the sea. Then they washed themselves and wore clean cloths. Later they purified the persons and houses with the urine and milk of cows. On all days of fasting and purification, a little rice was put in a banana leaf in the form of a vessel considering that it was the mouth of the dead. Then crows were called so that they might eat it. These crows came there punctually for this purpose. If they did not come, it was put in a tank so that the fish could eat them. On the anniversary of death, a banquet was there. In this banquet no poor people were invited.\(^{379}\)

\(^{375}\) Manuel de Faria e Sousa, *op. cit.* vol. IV, p. 262.

\(^{376}\) Décadas da Ásia de João de Barros, CD. No. 05, Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações Portuguesas & Centre for the Study of the Portuguese Discoveries, Oxford, Primeira Década, Livro IV, Capítulo IX, p. 2.

\(^{377}\) Manuel de Faria e Sousa, *op. cit.*, vol. IV, p. 262.

\(^{378}\) According to the Hindu religious concept *Yaman* is the god of death.

In Calicut and other parts of Malabar, the dead who belonged to certain jatis were buried, some inside their houses, some at the entrance of their house and others in the garden.\(^{380}\)

### III. 5. 18. Language

In addition to Malayalam, the vernacular language, Arabic was also used in Calicut. Arabic was used as the language of commerce in Calicut. For, we find that Dom Manuel’s letter to the king of Calicut was written in two languages—Portuguese and Arabic.\(^{381}\) Even the Christian merchants spoke Arabic. The Christian merchants whom Vasco da Gama met in Melinde spoke with him in Arabic. This shows that the language of the mercantile people was Arabic.\(^{382}\)

There was a common language in Malabar which was called Malayalam. Besides, certain sections had languages of their own. For example the Hindus used Sanskrit and St. Thomas Christians used Syriac language in their liturgy.\(^{383}\)

The Malabar society of the sixteenth century was a unique cultural unit having a life style of its own. The people had different affinities on the basis of religion, varnas and jatis. Religious wise the society was divided into the Hindus, Christians, Muslims and the Jews. Among the Hindus there was a hierarchy of varnas and jatis whose social position was determined. Christians, Muslims and also the Jews had different sections among them. The very social position determined the life style. Therefore each had to lead a prescribed socio-cultural life within the framework of the society. The socio-cultural framework which existed in Malabar at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese was very complex with the above unique cultural traits.

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\(^{381}\) Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *op. cit.,* Livros I e II, p. 78.

\(^{382}\) Fernão Lopes Castanheda, *Ho Livro Primeiro dos dez da historia do descobrimento & conquista da India pelos Portugueses*, Coimbra, Julho, 1554, p. xxv.