CHAPTER III
SOCIO-CULTURAL SYMBIOSIS AND
INDIGENISATION OF FAITH

The social atmosphere in Kerala in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was an unfavourable one for Padiri’s activities. The Brahmin community (also called Namboodiris) occupied a dominant position in Kerala during the period under reference. Being the most privileged class, as well as the priestly class, the Namboodiris had enormous power in society. They controlled and even checked the monarch. They enjoyed all kinds of facilities in the land and had even the power to punish their tenants. They were also exempted from all taxes of the land that the other citizens had to pay.

During this period there prevailed a stratified hierarchical social system known as ‘caste system’ in Kerala. This social stratification was based on four canonical castes at the national level, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysias and the Shudras. But in Kerala it had predominantly three main

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1 Joseph Thekkedath, History of Christianity in India, From the Middle of the 16th c to the end of the 17th c 1542-1700, Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1982, p. 20. Also see, K.V. Krishna Ayyar, A Short History of Kerala, Pai and Company, Ernakulam, 1966, pp. 128-129.

2 George Koilparambil, Caste in the Catholic Community in Kerala, St. Francis De Sales Press, Ernakulam, 1982, pp.1-2. Caste is a stratified system in which each segment has its identity with a common name, origin and strictly specified inter-group relations. Each group was traditionally following an occupation and enjoying a particular position in the social hierarchy. The groups are usually localised, but keep social distance between them.
divisions – the *Brahmins*, non *Brahmins* and *Paniyalers*. With the emergence of the *Brahmin* supremacy agriculture was expanded and scattered villages were formed. For the life in these villages, it was necessary for the villagers to have groups of separate professions and in course of time these separate professional groups became separate castes and sub-castes and gradually their profession became hereditary. The lower castes formed the majority of the people. They had no right of personal safety and freedom of any kind. If a low caste man dared to approach the high caste, severe punishments were given. Despite being the majority in society as well as being the cultivators and others, were considered as the lowest in the society.

Caste system was supported by slavery and it divided society into many water-tight compartments. Slavery, based on the caste system was an accepted practice in feudal society.

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3 The *Brahmins* (also called *Namboodiris*) were the priestly class, the *Kshatriyas* were the ruling classes where the *Paniyalers* were the other working classes including the peasants.

4 In early period, there were social divisions like *Panan, Parayan, Tudiyan, Kitamban* etc. The division was not on the basis of caste system but according to their settlements. Later, with the establishment of *Brahmin* supremacy the professional groups turned out to be separate castes and each sub-caste was formed from the various professional groups of hereditary nature. Thus, division of labour became the basis for this proliferation of castes and sub-castes in Medieval Kerala.


6 Indian society was divided into four castes in the Vedic period. Anyone who does not belong to one of these castes is an outcaste. The religious word for caste is Varna. Each Varna had certain duties and rights. The highest Varna was of the *Brahmins*. Members of this class were priests and the educated people of the society. The Varna after the *Brahmin* in hierarchy was *Kshatriya*. The members of this
Slaves walk gently with fear in mind that even the earth does not feel their tread. These people are meanest of all creatures so that even grass would not make way for them. These two legged animals lived to plough, plant and harvest and do all other agricultural work for others.\(^7\)

The practices of untouchability and unapproachability kept the lesser human beings in ignorance and servitude for generations. Caste system in Kerala became more rigid with the complexity of numerous sub-castes.\(^8\) This social organization and the peculiar feudal system\(^9\) that class were the rulers and aristocrats of the society. Then there, were the Vysia. They were the landlords and businessmen of the society. After them in hierarchy was the Shudras. These people were the peasants and working class of the society who work in non-polluting jobs. Below these castes were the outcasts who were untouchables to the four castes. These untouchables worked in menial jobs like cleaning, sewage etc.

\(^7\) T. K. Raveendran, *Asan and Social Revolution in Kerala*, op. cit., p.6. As per the Caste System the first three castes had all social and economical rights which the Shudra and the untouchables did not have. The first three castes were also known as ‘twice born’. The intention in these two births was to the natural birth and to the ceremonial entrance to the society at a very late age.

\(^8\) There were many sub castes in the society. Sub castes were again divided into more sub castes and it formed a hierarchical social structure in Kerala. Namboodiris also have sub castes like Podhuwal, Panikkar, Kartha, Unnithiri, Marar etc. Kanakkan, Pulaya and Paraya were some examples for the sub castes of Paniyalars.

\(^9\) Dr. T.K. Raveendran, *Institutions and Movements in Kerala History*, Charithram Publications, Trivandrum, 1978, p.49. The expansion of agriculture and the growth of Brahmin settlements in Kerala paved the way for feudalism in Kerala, because Brahmins were the owners of land. The feudal system existed in Medieval Kerala society led to Uralar System or Karalar System. According to this system Devaswam and Brahmanswam lands were under the Namboodiris. Namboodiris or the owners of the land were known as Uralar. Karalar were the intermediaries between the Uralers and Paniyalers. They were not the actual cultivators. They took up the land for cultivation on the basis of rent. Paniyalers were the labourers of feudal system in Kerala. Karalers collected the resources from the Paniyalers and consolidated it and gave a part of it to the Uralers.
prevailed in the country made the *Brahmins* more powerful and dominant in the land\(^\text{10}\).

Feudalism or *Jenmi* system was one of the most important characteristics of medieval Kerala society. This allowed the *Namboodiri* community to maintain ideological and social dominance over society. Along with these social institutions, Kerala society followed a number of extraordinary customs and practices like *Devadasi* system\(^\text{11}\) and *Marumakkathayam*\(^\text{12}\) or matrilineal system. *Devadasis* were dancing girls attached to the temples, and they enjoyed a prestigious position very much


\(^{\text{12}}\) A. Sreedhara Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 258. Also see, K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *A Short History of Kerala, op. cit.*, p.61. A. Sreedhara Menon, *Cultural Heritage of Kerala*, D. C. Books, Kottayam, 2008, pp.230-231. A.L Basham, *The Wonder That was India, op. cit.*, p.94. Basham says that, in the early days of the Chera’ rule inheritance was through the male line but about the twelfth century a matrilineal system became regular, according to which the heir to the throne was the son, not of the king, but of his eldest sister. This system called *Marumakkathayam* continued in Cochin and Travancore until very recent times, both for royal succession and the inheritance of estates. Perhaps it existed in Kerala at an early period, but was dropped by the upper classes for a while under Brahmanical influence, to be revived later.
sought after by women of royal and aristocratic families. Devadasi system emerged as a peculiar system in Kerala as the result of feudal system. In the early stages they rendered meritorious services to the cause of the temples and it was considered a sacred task and the women belonging to respectable families accepted it as a prestigious one. Although this ancient custom started with the best intention of serving a religious purpose, in course of time they lost the noble ideals and degenerated into a class of women with loose morals\textsuperscript{13}.

\textit{Marumakkathayam} is the matrilineal system of inheritance and polyandrous marriage. This system of inheritance existed among the \textit{Nair} society during the period under reference\textsuperscript{14}. It involved inheritance and succession through the sister’s children in the female line. \textit{Marumakkathayam} encouraged joint family system connecting all the descendants of a common ancestor in the female line. Besides these, some other typical customs associated with matrilineal culture were also developed in Kerala.

\textsuperscript{13} A. Sreedhara Menon, \textit{Cultural Heritage of Kerala, op. cit.}, p.244. It existed in Kerala till Rani Sethu Lekshmi Bai of Travancore abolished this institution from all the temples in the state by a Statutory Proclamation in August 1930.

\textsuperscript{14} A. Sreedhara Menon, \textit{A Survey of Kerala History, op. cit.}, p. 258. Also see, K.V. Krishna Ayyar, \textit{op. cit.}, p.61. A. Sreedhara Menon, \textit{Cultural Heritage of Kerala, op. cit.}, pp. 230-231. \textit{Marumakkathayam} was a kind of inheritance through the sister’s son. Under the system of \textit{Marumakkathayam} or matrilineal system, \textit{Nair} women followed and practiced polyandry. According to the system women became the heads of the families.
During this period there developed a custom among the Brahmins that allowed only the eldest son to marry from their community to avoid the breaking up of the property of the owners of Brahmaswam lands. So they adopted a peculiar custom known as ‘sambandham’. It was a form of marital system followed by Nair and Namboodiri communities in Kerala. Sambandham was a kind of polyandry. Polygamy was also prevalent among the Nairs, the Ezhavas, and the Kuravas, the Pulayas, etc. Fraternal polyandry was also practiced in Kerala during this period especially in South Kerala. The Christians have strictly followed monogamy.

Smarthavicharam was another significant custom that also prevailed during this period. Smarthavicharam was a ritualistic trial of a Namboodiri woman and her partner who were accused of unlawful sexual relations. If the accused woman was found guilty she and the man found involved with

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15 A. Sreedhara Menon, A Survey of Kerala History, op. cit., pp.258-259. Samantha literally means relationship. Only the eldest son in the Namboodiri family married within the caste and all others had sambandham with women belonging to the Nair, Ambalavasi or the communities of equal or higher rank. Sambandham was an unusual type of marriage between Nair women and Namboodiri men. This system provided a close alliance with the Namboodiris and the concessions given by Namboodiris were skillfully utilised by Nairs. This system helped Nair community to strengthen their positions and hold over landed property. The younger sons of Namboodiri community followed Sambandam with the Nair women. The women and the children of this communion had no right in the property of the husband. Hence the property of Nair family was inherited by sisters and the children of the sister. The family property of Nair community was known as tharavad and this system of inheritance was known as Marumakkathayam or matrilineal system in Kerala. Eventually sambandam system led to a decline of moral standards and extensive practice of polyandry. Also see; K.V Krishna Ayyar, op. cit., p. 61.

16 A. Sreedhara Menon, Cultural Heritage of Kerala, op. cit., p.235.
her were excommunicated. The permission of the Maharaja was necessary for the conduct of Smarthavicharam. This custom was continued in the eighteenth century also and later it was banned by the government\(^{17}\). Thus eighteenth century Kerala followed lots of customs and practices in the society.

The missionaries of different Orders who were active in Kerala from fifteenth century were highly educated, not only in theology but in other disciplines as well. They observed the social and political conditions of Kerala and strongly stood against all the evil practices in society. Social inequalities, like caste system, untouchability, unapproachability, slavery, and the practices like Devadasi system, Sambandham and polyandry, were subjected to close scrutiny and stiff opposition by the missionaries. The missionaries were surprised by these contradictions that existed in the Indian society prevailed earlier. These inequalities induced them to spread education along with evangelization in Kerala.

Missionaries played a crucial role in bringing about an awakening in the country which led to a cultural upheaval. The religious revival, spiritual awakening and enlightenment that began in Europe reached the fertile soil of Kerala, through the advent of western missionaries. A conscious effort for change, an increased intellectual awareness and an exciting enthusiasm in the field of culture set in during this period. The

\(^{17}\) The practice is nonexistent today and the last one reported took place in 1918.
inflow of invigorating new ideas in Kerala awakened the people from their
deep slumber of superstitious beliefs.\textsuperscript{18} The spirit of European Renaissance
penetrated the intellectual life of Kerala society through the missionaries.
These novel and rational ideas paved the way for moulding a modern state.

Education was considered by the missionaries as an effective tool in
aiming for a casteless society. So the missionaries met the educational
needs of the downtrodden sections of Kerala society as their primary
responsibility. The new phase advocated by the missionaries opened its
doors to all people without discrimination, on the basis of caste or creed
and the educational opportunities provided by the missionaries to the social
‘outcasts’\textsuperscript{19} enabled them to acquire knowledge and necessary skills.
Education widened their horizon for freedom and they became more
powerful\textsuperscript{20}.

Together with the practice of western education, the introduction of
printing technology by the Portuguese missionaries further strengthened
the waves of changes in society. It also provided an unprecedented boost in
the development of educational and cultural fields.\textsuperscript{21} In 1577 they

\textsuperscript{18} Dr. Samual Nellimukal, \textit{Keralathile Samoohya Parivarthanam}, (Mal), K.S. Books, Kottayam, 2003,
p.98.

\textsuperscript{19} Outcastes were the low class people in Kerala who were out of the four castes like \textit{Brahmins},
\textit{Kshatriyas}, \textit{Vysias} and \textit{Shudras}

\textsuperscript{20} Dr. Samual Nellimukal, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.98-99.

\textsuperscript{21} George Veliparambil, ‘Early Printing and Origin of the Press in Kerala: Contributions of Christian
Missionaries’, in K.J. John, ed., Fr. George Veliparambil, Convener, L.M. Pylee Felicitation Committee,
Cochin, 1981, p.162. Also see, Marcellinus, O. C. D. \textit{Keralathele Sathyavedha Charitram}, Koonanmavu
established a printing press at Cochin fort\textsuperscript{22}. In 1577 John Gonzalves, a Paulist lay brother made the necessary types in Tamil\textsuperscript{23}. The Paulists (Jesuits) printed a theological treatise at Fort Cochin, in ‘Malayanma Speech’ [Tamil]\textsuperscript{24}. Besides the printing press at Cochin, the missionaries opened a number of printing presses in different parts of Kerala with a view to spread the Gospel in every nook and corner of the country\textsuperscript{25}. They printed books on catechism\textsuperscript{26} in order to teach the children, so that the work of the missionaries became easier and far reaching. In 1578, Fr. Henriquez started a printing press in Punnakayal in Thirunelveli.
Among the books published during this period *Doctrina Christam en lingua Malabar Tamil* or *Thambiran Vanakkam* is the most important one\(^{28}\). It was the translation of a Catechism Book written by Francis Xavier in Portuguese into Tamil by Fr. Henrique Henriquez S.J. and Manuel San Pedro\(^{29}\). In 1579 another book was printed at Cochin fort. It was named as *Doctrina Christiana*. It was a translation of the Portuguese work published by Fr. Markose George in 1566. The translation of this work was also done by Fr. Henriquez\(^{30}\). But in the early years Malayalam books were not printed in these presses. All the early works were printed in Tamil\(^{31}\). In 1602 Fr. Albert Lersias S. J. established a press at Vaippinkotta. In 1605 this press was transferred to Kodungallur when Bishop Rose transferred his capital from Angamaly to Kodungallur.

In South India Ambazhakkadu was the most important printing centre in the seventeenth century. These efforts of Portuguese missionaries paved the way for a cultural awakening in Kerala.

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\(^{28}\) Fr. Joaode Faria S.J., printed books in the ‘Quilon Press’. The book titled *Doctrina Christam* printed here means *Thampuran Vanakkam*. This is considered as the first book printed in Kerala. Also see, Fra, Paulino a San Bartholomaeo, *op. cit.*, p.182.

\(^{29}\) Paul Manavalan, *op. cit.*, p.208.


The Dutch also had great interest in studying the culture and history as well as the flora and fauna of Kerala\textsuperscript{32}. The greatest contribution of the Dutch to Kerala culture was the compilation of the monumental botanical work *Hortus Malabaricus* which deals with the medicinal properties of Indian plants. It was published from Amsterdam in twelve volumes. The work was completed under the enthusiastic patronage of Admiral Van Rheede. Thus the Malayalam types, for the first time, were printed in Amsterdam in the *Hortus Malabaricus* in 1678.\textsuperscript{33} Hence, these efforts of the missionaries made the eighteenth century an age of reawakening and enlightenment in the history of Kerala and it led to an enlightenment, in the social atmosphere and a new culture began to evolve. This can be

\textsuperscript{32} K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op. cit.*, pp.107-112.

considered as one of the most important impacts of the work of Christian missionaries in the socio-cultural context of Kerala.

During this period, Christians of Kerala played a major role in the commercial activities of the country\(^\text{34}\). They enjoyed royal patronage and they contributed much to the economic prosperity of the land from a very early period.\(^\text{35}\) But the Christian community was divided into three

\(^{34}\) The letter no.2 of 1523 by Mar Jacob to King João III of Portugal in G. Schurhammer, n.13, p.13. Also see, L.W., Brown, *The Indian Christians of St. Thomas*, Cambridge University, 1956, p.15. A Syrian Bishop, Mar Jacob, wrote to the Pope that he had taken his Christian companions to meet the Portuguese in their factory and fort at Cochin. *This I did many times until I had brought them to love them and then they agreed and swore to me, never more to sell the pepper to the Moors to bring it alone and dry in the factory, as indeed they are doing, as thou can see the shrinkage……And further, I have won all these Christians of this country for thy service, so that when thou shall be in need of them, thou shall find in it over twenty five thousand warriors.*

\(^{35}\) A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2007, p.44. The endowments granted to the Terissa Church of Quilon by the ruler of Venad, Ayyandikal Thiruvadikal in A.D. 849 contain the charter of privileges which were granted to the Christian traders of Quilon. According to this Copper Plate the land donated to the Church was on the Sea Coast. The Christians were exempted from paying certain taxes and were given the right of entry of the market. Crimes committed by the Christians were to be tried in their own Christian courts. The church was also given the right of administration of customs house in Quilon. *Vanniar, Ismavar, Thachar, Karazhar, Vellalar,* and others were to work for the Terissapalli. Also see, K.J. John, ed., *op. cit.*, p.7. A papal legate from Rome, John De Marinholi, happened to visit Kollam in AD.1348 on his way to China. He gives a description about the Christians of Kerala.

religious sects, two Catholic sections and one Jacobite section respectively, in the sixteenth century. The fact is that before the arrival of Portuguese there were only Syrian rites which remained with the Babylonian Church (known as the Syrian Church) which the Portuguese considered as Nestorian. So the Portuguese tried to change the allegiance of the Syrian Church from Persia to Rome.

Portuguese aimed at eradicating Nestorian heresy from Malabar which had actually begun with the Inquisition at Goa in 1560. With the rise of Portuguese power in Kerala, a part of the Catholicized Christian community of Malabar repudiated Rome. Those that did not, but followed the Catholicized Syrian Liturgy came to be known as Syrian Catholics and those who followed Latin Liturgy came to be called Latin Catholics. Another major section of the Church who repudiated Rome remained as

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38 There is a distinction between heresy and schism. Heresy is a rejection of a doctrine that a church considers to be essential. Some Protestant Churches also believe that they also represent the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and consider the Catholic and Orthodox Churches schism is a rejection of a communion with the authorities of a church. The Council of Nicaea distinguished between schism and heresy.
the Jacobite Church.\textsuperscript{39} Therefore while one group came under Padruvado\textsuperscript{40}, the other came under the Propaganda mission\textsuperscript{41} and the third was under the new Jacobite faith\textsuperscript{42}.

Christianity in Kerala passed through a schism\textsuperscript{43} in the Church. The term was used to denote the split within the Church. The word ‘schismatic’ points to a person who creates a schism in the church. So these words have been used to denote splits in the Christian Church in particular. In the church of Kerala a schism started with the arrival of Portuguese and it became more severe with the ‘Oath of Coonan Cross’\textsuperscript{44}.

\textsuperscript{39} K. J. John, ed., \textit{op. cit.}, p.18. Roman Catholics were known as \textit{Pazhayakoottukar}- old division and the Jacobites came to be known as \textit{Puthenkoottukar}- new division.

\textsuperscript{40} A da Silva Rego, \textit{op. cit.}, p.7. Also see, A. Mingana, \textit{Early Spread of Christianity in India}, Manchester University, 1926, p.3. Vatican had granted to the Sovereign of Portugal extraordinary powers and privileges over the Portuguese Diocese in foreign lands. The Portuguese king also had the power to make ecclesiastical appointment in their Asian Dominion. Hence the Padruvado had profound influence on Portuguese missions. Besides they considered it their mission and duty to spread Catholicism and establish Papal supremacy in all the countries that came into their fold.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{43} A schism is a division of people usually belonging to a religious denomination. The word is most usually applied to a split in what had previously been a single religious body such as East-West Schism.

\textsuperscript{44} Oath of the \textit{Coonan} Cross 1653 was a religious revolt against the religious impositions, imposed by the Synod of Diamper. In 1653 the Jacobite Patriarch of Babylon sent a Bishop named Ahathalla to Kerala in response to a request made by the Syrians. But he was arrested on his way by the Portuguese and the news spread that they were planning to take him to Goa to be tried by the Inquisition Court. A meeting was held by the Syrian Christians who later stormed the Portuguese head quarters in Cochin demanding the immediate release of Bishop Ahathalla. Subsequently another rumour spread that he was drowned by the Portuguese. This incident made the Syrians to cut off their relations with the Jesuits and refute the supremacy and authority of Rome. Later the furious Syrians gathered in thousands in front of an ancient cross in Mattancherry, tied a lengthy rope to it and took an oath holding it. The Solemn Oath
After the ‘Oath of Coonan Cross’, the rivalry was mainly between the sects known as *Puthenkuru* and *Pazhayakuru*. But during the period of Arnos Padiri, from the first half of 17th century, the rivalry between the Propaganda Mission and the Padruvado was most fierce. The Portuguese missionaries were keen to sustain power over the Kerala Church. Hence the Kerala Church came to be ruled by the Padruvado on one side and the Propaganda mission on the other.

When Arnos Padiri arrived in Kerala, he had to face more problems associated with the Church rather than the political and social issues. At that time there were three Bishops for the Kerala church - Bishop John Reberio who succeeded Bishop Garzia of Cranganore, Marthoma III who succeeded Marthoma I and Anjalose Francis who succeeded Parambil was that they would never obey the Latin Arch Bishop and the Jesuits. This event came to be known as the ‘Oath of the Coonan Cross’. The Syrians then marched to Alangad and consecrated their leader Arch Deacon Thomas as their Metropolitan.


K.J. John, ed., *Christian Heritage of Kerala*, op. cit., p.19. The people who continued their allegiance and faith to the Church of Rome came to be known as ‘Pazhayakuru’ (old loyalists) and those who denounced the authority of the Roman Catholic Church as ‘Puthenkuru’ (new loyalist).

46 A da Silva Rego, op. cit., p.7. Also see, A. Mingana, *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, op. cit., p.3.

All three of them were in bitter rivalry with each other. In 1701 AD Anjalose Francis was appointed as the *Vicar Apstholica* of the Propaganda Mission.

Bishop John Reberio was appointed in 1704 AD as the Metropolitan of Cranganore. This led to a conflict between Francis Anjalose and John Reberio over their jurisdiction. Francis Anjalose lost the right, gave up his Bishopric and started leading the life of an ordinary priest. Ultimately Bishop John Reberio established authority over the Syrian Catholics of Kerala. But since Bishop John Reberio had no permission to enter the areas under the Dutch administration, the Syrian Catholics met at Kaduthuruthy and besought the appointment of Fr. Francis Anjalose in the Dutch area. Propaganda Mission once again sent Fr. Anjalose to the Churches where the Padruvado had no right for missionary activities.

In 1709 AD Mar Gabriel, the East Syrian Metropolitan came to Kerala. He met Bishop Francis Anjalose, and agreed to follow Catholic

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50 Ibid. Also see, Fr. John Pallath, O.C.D, trans, *Pawrasthya Bharathathile Christhumatham*, Jyothir Bhavan Publications, Kalamassery, 1988, p.204. In those days Padroado Bishops were not ready to consecrate Anjalose Francis as Bishop. At this time Padroado had two Bishops in India, one at Goa and one at Cochin, who were Portuguese and Jesuits. They also refused to enter a Dutch region and consecrate a Propaganda Carmelite Metropolitan. Hence Anjalose Francis had to invite Bishop Simon, the Catholic Patriarch of Babylon to consecrate him and he became the Vicar Appastholica.


faith and settled down at Changanassery. After the death of Bishop Anjalose, Mar Gabriel began to exercise administrative powers over some of the Churches. But the Kerala Churches were not ready to accept Mar Gabriel as their Bishop and a conflict ensued. The events that followed culminated in yet another division in the Church of Kerala.

At the time of the arrival of Arnos Padiri the socio cultural conditions as well as schism in Kerala Churches were unsuitable for his missionary works. But the intellectual arena was better and receptive with the introduction of printing presses and the new education system launched by the missionaries. To Arnos Padiri the first and foremost task as a missionary was the elimination of schism created by Mar Gabriel and his followers among the Catholic Church. With this aim he travelled extensively from one church to another, especially in the southern areas.

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53 Ibid.
54 D. Ferroli, Vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 323-328, 330. Mar Gabriel was mentioned by Arnos Padiri in his letters as the schismatic bishop. The letters of Arnos Padiri say that Mar Gabriel was at first deceived, but by little by little they found out that Gabriel was not to be trusted. Arnos Padiri writes in one of his letters, --I too having first got leave to quit the Arch Bishop, travelled south in order to fight against a foreign Bishop, who under sheep’s clothing, endeavored to leave these poor Christians into schism. - - - - Fra Innocentius invited the schismatic foreigner Gabriel by name, of whom I spoke above. Should he listen to his advice he promised him the government of the Arch diocese. At the same time Gabriel should write to the Jacobite Patriarch, asking him to send here a Bishop and some Syrian schismatic priests. The letters have fallen into our hands. Also see, Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden, S.J, Letter from Veilur, 1713, October 4, Archives of the Assumption Church, No.323d, Cologne. A. Adappur, Sakshara Keralathinte Navodhana Moolyangal, (Mal) op. cit., p.47.
56 Dr. J.J. Pallath S.J, ed., op. cit., p-10. For four years Arnos Padiri was the companion to Arch Bishop of Cranganore. He travelled and worked at Diamper, Kadathuruthy, Kuruvilangad, Chetuva, Mutttete,
Arnos Padiri served strictly as a missionary priest in different parishes of Kerala, including Cranganore, Udayamperoor and Kuruvilangadu. He also served at Chettua and Muttete as a parish priest. Padiri believed
that it was his duty to prevent the dangerous split in the Catholic Church of Kerala. Arnos Padiri says:

On a feast day I wanted to say Mass in the Church of Corlangatti, (Kuruvilangadu) but I did not get leave, so I had to be satisfied with saying it in a small chapel. Noticing how fierce the opposition was, I decided to leave the place, in order not to exasperate our enemies even more. Here the Carmelites, who have been sent by Propaganda, favour the party who desires to receive the Schismatic Bishop. Perhaps Your Reverence will be surprised that I should speak like this; but all here-Christians, Jews, heretics and even foreigners-know how they try to create confusion in this Diocese. Hence I did not hesitate to speak out, lest, if there be some loss among these Christians, it may not be attributed to the Jesuit Archbishop. And so it was a matter of the utmost difficulty to frustrate their efforts. The more so that Fr. Innocentius of St. Onophrius was saying everywhere that the pseudo Bishop was a Catholic and had his patent letters from the Congregation of Propaganda. This spurred on the Keralites who are by themselves much inclined to the Armenian Prelates to join the Schismatics.

The letters of Arnos Padiri clearly show the tense situation of Catholic Church during his period. However, the charismatic and dynamic personality of Arnos Padiri helped him to achieve his aim of eliminating

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63 Ibid., p.323. Also see, Prof. Mathew Ulakamthara, op. cit., p.60. Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden., S.J. Letter from Veilur, 1713, October 4, Archives of the Assumption Church, No.323d, Cologne.

64 Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden, S.J., Letter from Veilur, 1713, October 4, the Archives of the Assumption Church, No.323d, Cologne. Also see, D. Ferroli, op. cit., p.324.

65 Ibid.
schismatic practices in the Kerala Church. Arnos Padiri was a peace lover who could handle the most tense and tricky situations with great diplomacy and tact. Sometimes he sought the help of the Dutch Governor Ketel. In all possible ways he tried to realize his aim of expel schism from Kerala Church.66

Arnos Padiri prevented the Kerala church from further division and split. The very diplomacy and dynamic personality of Padiri helped him here also in this effort, enabled him to continue his missionary activities in Kerala, uninterrupted. By and large the Dutch were against the Catholic missionaries and Padruvado.67 That is why Arnos Padiri stayed at Ambazhakkadu68, which was under the supremacy of the Zamorins. Later he moved on to Puthenchira, which was also under the jurisdiction of Zamorins and there was the residence of the Metropolitan of Cranganore, Bishop John Reberio for four years69.

66 D. Ferroli. *op. cit.*, p.327. Arnos Padiri writes, *A priest was endeavoring to get into the parish of Muttete. Since he was far from edifying I opposed him and by means of a few gifts, I succeeded in sending him off and in re-establishing peace.* Also see, Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden, S.J., *Letter from Veilur, 1713, October 4*, the Archives of the Assumption Church, No.323d, and Cologne. Mathew Ulakamthara, *op. cit.*, pp.64-65.


68 Joannes Ernestus Hanxleden, S.J. *Letter from Veilur, 1713, October 4*, the Archives of the Assumption Church, No.323d, Cologne. Also see, D. Ferroli, Vol.2, *op. cit.*, p.319. Mathew Ulakamthara, *op. cit.*, p.67. Ambazhakkadu is an important place in the cultural history of Kerala. Dutch were against Catholics. So Jesuits lost freedom in Cochin and they went to Ambazhakkadu which was under Zamorin of Calicut. They had a Seminary, printing press, library and a Church in the name of St. Francis there. In 1790 Tippu Sultan crushed all these.

Arnos followed a policy of tolerance among the different sects of Kerala church. Though the Dutch were against Jesuits and the Jesuits were considered to be ‘counter reformers’, he could establish relations with the Dutch Governor Ketel and he worked for four years with a Padruvado Metropolitan. Arnos Padiri’s devotion was so ardent that he was ready to face all kinds of problems in the Church of Kerala with immense confidence and patience.

At this juncture the French and the English landed in India. It added to the political threat which the native kingdoms had been already facing from the Dutch. Realising the changing political situation in Kerala the Dutch changed their policy towards the Catholics. They began to follow a policy of religious tolerance, and gave permission to build Churches and Seminaries. This change of attitude by the Dutch Government encouraged the Catholics and the Jesuits to continue their missionary activities in Kerala. The new religious policy of the Dutch helped Arnos Padiri also considerably in his pursuits. He was free to travel around, spreading the message of the Gospel and erasing the schism within the Kerala Church. He realized that the Christians in Kerala were in the midst of a conflict because they were divided into different groups owing to various reasons.

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70 Ibid.
72 Mathias Mundandan, op. cit., p.68.
Hence Arnos Padiri had to handle the tense political, social and religious situations in Kerala professionally and it was effective in the society.

Another serious difficulty identified by Arnos Padiri was ‘Nestorianism’. Arnos Padiri called Nestorians as ‘heretics’. This term has been frequently used in his letters. Arnos Padiri says in the letter:

The schismatic bishops who come here are some times sent by Babylon; some time they impose themselves, no matter where they come from; sometimes also they were simply lay persons who pose as bishops….. There are some times Nestorian errors. It is now certain that it was a Jacobite Bishop who some twenty years ago, conferred Episcopal Orders on a fourteen year old Keralite who as pseudo- bishop now presides over the schismatic. The schismatic’s recite some verses in which they declare that Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon was worse than errors of Nestorius. All have therefore given up Nestorius. The ignorance of the schismatic is quite manifest. With very few exceptions the common folk hardly understand anything. They have only aversion towards the Pope. They obstinately cling to the customs of their ancestors. They, however hold that the consecration of leavened bread alone is valid. In the southern part the schismatic do not have the practice of auricular confessions. But in the north on very rare occasions they have auricular confessions.

73 Nestorians were called heretics because they did not accept the Pope as the Head of the Universal Church.
Various factors like the division of Christianity into different sects, the rivalry between the Propaganda mission and the Padruvado, the growth of schism in Kerala Church, nestorianism and the unique political and social atmosphere that existed in Kerala, were heavy obstructions that confronted Arnos Padiri.

In addition to the above factors, the unorthodox teachings and the in-fight for power were serious problems that led to the deterioration of faith of the Christian community during that period. The young Arnos took up the challenge of consolidating and strengthening Christian faith under this situation. Wherever he went, he tried to generate faith among the people. His thoughts and actions were directed towards bringing the people to the fold of true faith. His determination was to draw the people closer to the ‘Word of God’. To fulfil this ultimate objective he was ready to face any serious threats and problems. Realizing the conflicts and confusion prevailed in the Church of Kerala and the split in the Christian community and also the segregation of the Kerala Christians from the Hindu culture, Padiri had to develop a new vision for missionary activities.75

To achieve the target of faith formation, Arnos Padiri absorbed the culture and language of the community, so that he could understand the pulse of the society at large. He genuinely loved the culture and language of the community and used them as effective media for faith formation. It

is an irrefutable fact that his works in Malayalam language enriched the culture and united the communities, in a joyful experience of communication. The result of Fr. Hanxleden’s activities in Kerala was the harmony of the two significant cultures.\textsuperscript{76}

Arnos Padiri introduced indigenization of faith as the solution to heal the wounds caused by the Decrees of Diamper\textsuperscript{77}. So, instead of establishing religious hegemony, he stood for religious harmony. His aim was a socio-cultural symbiosis of various communities and creeds. Vernacular literature became the effective media of his vision - indigenization of faith- and through this attempt he set the beginning for a cultural awakening in Kerala society.

The early Christians in Kerala followed the Hindu customs and practices. They wore dress like \textit{Brahmins}, used Hindu ornaments. With no difference in dietary habits, customs and practices the same literature was followed by them. There were no serious differences between the early Christians and \textit{Brahmins} in appearance as well as in faith. It is also said that Vasco Da Gama, the Portuguese navigator who discovered the sea route to India, mistook Hindu temple of Kali for a Christian Church and worshipped the idol of Goddess Kali as Virgin Mary and assumed that the

\textsuperscript{76} Dr. N. Sam, et. al., ed., \textit{Arnos Padiriyude Kavyangal}, (Mal), Current Books, Kottayam, 2002, pp.53-54.

\textsuperscript{77} Synod of Diamper was in 1599. Diamper is the modern Udayamperoor which exists about 20 kilometres south of Cochin.
inhabitants of the country were a kind of primitive Christians. It was at this juncture that Portuguese, the first European power who established political supremacy in the land, developed an ecclesiastical policy in Kerala. Hence the Synod of Diamper aimed at giving a new identity to Christians by adopting western ideas and culture. As a result, Decrees of Synod of Diamper introduced new dress code and living style for Kerala Christians. They wanted to establish a Christian culture in Kerala, different from the Hindu customs and practices. So the Synod and some clergy tried their best to dispense with the elements of non-Christian culture from Christianity. To some extent, the Kerala Christians were culturally and structurally separated from Hinduism or from Indian culture and the concept of westernization was heavily applied to the Christians of Kerala. There was a move on the part of the clergy to avoid Hindu literature and they considered Indian literature, customs and practices as

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79 P.A. Syed Mohammed, Chief Editor; Kerala Charitram, compilation of Kerala History Vol.2, The Kerala History Association, Kochi-11, pp. 423-424. The Synod of Diamper was a great step of Archbishop Alexis Menezes towards Latinisation of the Kerala Church or to bring the Syrian Church under the order of Rome. The Synod of Diamper was held on 20th June 1599 AD. In addition to the local people, the gathering at the Church of Diamper included 153 prelates and priests, and 670 leaders of the Christian community. Alexis De Menezes, the Archbishop of Goa presided over the Synod which was attended by 823 delegates of whom 153 were ‘Kattanars’ or priests, 20 were Deacons and 600 were representatives chosen by each parish. They discussed and settled a number of issues in the Church. Menezes gave priority to the corrections and modifications of impugnant passages in the book of Syro-Chaldean liturgy respecting the sentiments of the Syrian Christians.
orthodox and conservative and many literary pieces were blasted by the church with this aim\textsuperscript{81}. However, the Synod could not underwrite the essence of the Indian culture. They could not realize that the soul of Christians in Kerala was strongly attached to the Hindu culture. Arnos Padiri realized the danger of separation of the Christian community from Hindu culture\textsuperscript{82}. That is why he introduced indigenization of faith and acculturation as new methods to solve the crisis caused due to the attempts at Latinaization of the Kerala Churches.

Arnos Padiri could not agree with the decrees of the Synod of Diamper. He became a devoted promoter of cultural synthesis in Kerala; a unique blend of Hindu and Christian culture in India. He wrote poems in vernacular language with this aim. This innovative attempt opened up a new stream in the history of Kerala literature.

As a step towards the indigenization of faith he wrote poems in simple colloquial language to make it more memorable among the local people. The use of colloquial words like \textit{umma} (mother) \textit{ummade} (of mother), \textit{kuntham} (spear), \textit{chank} (throat in Thrissur and heart in other parts of Kerala), \textit{mutthi} (kissed) and \textit{nulli} (pinched) \textit{chathavar} (the dead), \textit{pennu} (woman), \textit{pankappadu} (suffering), \textit{chakuka} (die), \textit{chathu} (died), \textit{chora} (blood), \textit{alivu} (kindness), \textit{pranan} (life), \textit{njarambu} (vein),


\textsuperscript{82} Dr N. Sam. et. al., eds., \textit{Arnos Padiriyude Kavyangal}, op. cit., p.53.
mannuvettykilakkuka (plough), kashu (coin or money) irakkuka (beg) vela (job), Thomma (Thomas), Thamburan (God), neeru (water), seela (cloth), oruthi (a lady), kuppayam (shirt), punnu (blistering), pizha (punishment), unthi (pushed), pattakkaran (priest), cheithanmar (devils), udayon (God), kurudan (blind), palli (church), panthirandu (twelve years), shanka (doubt), pambu (snake) are common in Arnos’ poems. This shows that he was not only professional in the language but was expert even in the colloquial languages and slang of the period. Thus, he wrote poems effortlessly in the language of common people and they became popular in the land.

Arnos Padiri’s style of writing involved the usage of words from the vernacular as well as Sanskrit language. The words like devan, (God) devi (Goddess), devassumariyam (Mariyam who delivered the son of God) deavasuryan, devasevakar (servants of God), deham (body), dehi, vanaprastha (life in forest) sanyasa (ascetic life), Paraparan (God) and chinmayaroopini (synonym of Goddess), abdhi (ocean), swami (God), thapasi (hermit), easwaran (God), swaroopan and charuswaroopan (the most beautiful one), varidhi (ocean), thiruvadi (God), devasu (son of god), janakan (king), bhaktavalsaladeva, (God who protects his devotees) devakalppitham, (decided by God), bhootham (evil spirit), mangalam (good end), vapussu (body), muni sreshttan (hermit), puthran (son), veda (religious text), guru (teacher), nrippan (king), bharya (wife), rajapathni
(queen) *veda nirupaman* (the one without sin), *parpara* (God), *sakalagunanitha* (one who has all the qualities), *athma* (soul), *moksham* (salvation), *Parvam* (chapter), *Krishna varnnam* (black colour) *sanmargam* (morality), *bhoopathi* (king) *pathivratha* (chaste woman), *karma* (duty) *vashka* (live) *ambaram* (sky) *bhakthi* (devotion) *nayakan* (leader) *urvi* (earth) *anadidayanidhi* (the one with unending compassion), *sarvapathinampathi* (the God of all Gods), etc. were usually used in his poems. He highly used many synonyms for certain words especially ‘God’ and ‘king’ in his works. All these words are purely Indian and these were unfamiliar to Christian culture. But Arnos Padiri smoothly and rightfully used these words in his poems to express his ideas more clearly to the readers. Thus, he successfully presented western and Christian ideology in an Indian way.

He followed the style, metre, treatment, technique, tone, etc. of Malayalam poetry, especially those of poets like Ezhuthachan and Poonthanam. A researcher can find out a number of similarities between these poets and Padiri’s writings. For example he used the term *parvam* to denote chapter. This type of chapterisation is seen in the *Mahabharatha*. Arnos Padiri gave titles *Marana Parvam, Vidhi Parvam, Moksha Parvam, Naraka Parvam*, for chapters in his poem *Chaduranthyam*. Besides he gave titles like *Umma Parvam*, and *Genoa Parvam* also to his poems.
Ezhuthachan used to write a number of synonyms of God in his poems, and this style was followed by Padiri also in his poems especially in Chaduranthyam. In Narakaparvam he has written many synonyms of God as nikila loakapathi, (the king of whole world) sarvesaneakaprabhu (the God of Gods) salgunaprajapathi, (possessor of all qualities) akhilajanapathi (the God of all people), sarvaikapathi (God of Universe), vedapathi, (one who knows Veda), sarvajnanan (omniscient), nirupaman (the one without sin), andonagunanidhi (the ocean of endless qualities), avyayan (immortal), akaranakaranan, sarvapathinampathi (God of all Gods), sakalanadhan (the God of everything) etc.

Arnos Padiri also used symbols and usages from Indian classical literature, Ramayana, Mahabharatha, and Shakunthala. Padiri accepted images, and themes also from Indian literature to make his ideas more familiar to the people. He synthesized Western and Indian concepts in a plain and methodical way. Above and beyond, the Western themes and foreign terms were appropriately made vernacular in his poems without losing the essence. Besides, Arnos Padiri contributed a lot of words to Malayalam literature. He familiarized Latin, Syriac and Greek words in Kerala and later they were used frequently in his writings in Malayalam. Words like mamoadeesa (baptism), keppa (Peter), parudeesa (heaven), Nazareth, Nazarene (a person from Nazareth), and place names like Judea, Bethlehem, Arojalem (Jerusalem) and Israel, etc. were synthesized with
Malayalam language. Thus he enriched the language by contributing towards a novel vocabulary.

In this way, through indigenization of faith and with the literary efforts, the concept of indigenization\(^{83}\) was introduced first in India, by Arnos Padiri with the aim of establishing religious harmony in Kerala. The vision of cultural synthesis was developed as indigenization of Christianity and is reflected in all the poetical works of Padiri.

To conclude, it needs to be highlighted that Arnos Padiri understood the history of Kerala in depth and he studied the political and social tribulations in the society like a scholar in history, culture and religion. As a missionary, Padiri studied the history of Christianity in Kerala and he measured schism in the Church as an unpleasant problem in the Christian community. The missionary poet was a peace lover and so he stood to take away the schism and protect the church from further splits. In addition he realised that the alienation of Kerala Christians from the Hindus, would certainly create troubles in the society. In such a tense and confused situation Padiri chose the nobler way to develop a novel vision for missionary activities.

\(^{83}\) Indigenization means adapting Christianity to the cultural background of the place or Christianity merged into the cultural ethos of place. (External changes in the expression of faith without affecting the faith itself)
Consequently through his literary endeavour Arnos Padiri introduced the concept of indigenization of Christianity in India. His vision of a cultural synthesis was the backbone for the indigenization of Christianity in Kerala. His works *Genoa Parvam* and *Chaduranthyam* especially focus an integration of cultures and to promote the spirituality of the people living in Kerala.

Common language was mainly used to make his idea familiar to the common, uneducated people. Padiri also followed the familiar tone and style of the people in his literary works. He accepted Indian themes, concepts, and images and blended them with Christian ideology. Together with this, western ideas and themes were also translated into vernacular by this missionary scholar. Though these activities were against the decrees of Synod of Diamper, Arnos Padiri applied his vision for the progress and growth of the interrelationship, in the society with determination.

To a great extent, new treatment in the literature and missionary activities were successful in Kerala. Padiri’s literature clearly proves that the mission of Padiri was the synthesis of two cultures together. Arnos Padiri tried to promote the spiritual life of the people as well through his literary activities. Thus, he produced a corpus of Christian devotional literature which was similar to Hindu devotional literature and he
synthesized Hindu philosophy with Christianity\textsuperscript{84}. Thus, he opened a new way of missionary work with an aim to promote a counter culture around the Word of God and it culminated in a revolutionary cultural awakening in the land.

Through his writings Arnos Padiri promoted the messages of Christ in a nobler and tolerant way in Kerala. The letters took the “Gospel”, the “Word of God” to every part of the country. Precisely, because of this, the contributions of Arnos Padiri to the true and authentic identity of the Christian community in Kerala remain unique even today. In particular, he contributed devotional poems to Malayalam literature, and by his literary attempts he was successful in the indigenization of Christian faith in a novel way. Arnos Padiri opted for devotional poems through the then popular \textit{bhakthi} poems in a more or less the style and treatment of well known \textit{bhakthi} poet Poonthanam Narayanan Namboodiri and others.

\textsuperscript{84} P. Thankappan Nair, ‘Fr. Hanxleden - Pioneer Indologist’, in Dr. J.J. Pallath S.J., ed., \textit{op. cit.}, p.54.