INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed the genesis of the socio-religious reform movements. South Travancore\(^1\) too witnessed the emergence of such a movements. It was the feudal set-up of the last decades of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries gave birth to social revolts. The social principles that existed in Travancore enslaved the people of various communities of South Travancore under the grip of the dominant classes.\(^2\)

The Brahmins were the only class exempt from all social and religious disabilities. They enjoyed perfect liberty of action.\(^3\) There were several

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\(^{1}\) The name Travancore is the Anglicized form of ‘Thiruvithancode or Srivalumcode’, the abode of prosperity. The state had several other names such as Vanchidesam or land of Chera kings who had their capital at Thiruvanchikulam. Dharma Rajyam denotes that it was a land of piety, truth and charity. The state was also known as Venad or Vanavanad, means the land of celestials. Velu Pillai, T.K., *Travancore State Manual*, Vol.I, Trivandrum 1940, p.1; Dr. Daniel, D., *Struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore (1938-1947)*, Madurai, 1986, p.1.


causes for this great influence of Brahmins. They claimed descent from Brahma, who created them from his head, while the low castes were created from his feet. The rights and privileges enjoyed by Brahmins constituted barrier to the general progress of the country. It led to the outbreak of the socio-religious reform movements such as Upper Cloth Movement, Temple Entry Movement, Anti-Slavery Movement. These movements helped the low caste people of South Travancore to emancipate themselves from the clutches of upper caste people.

South Travancore is situated in the south west of the Madras Presidency. It lies between 77° 05′ and 77° 36′ of the eastern longitudes and 8° 35′ of the Northern latitudes. Thovalai, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks were together called as South Travancore. As such, South Travancore had no independent history of her own and her history is merged with the history of Travancore which was an independent Princely State upto

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5 The Madras Presidency was formed in 1653. It was one of the three premier Presidencies of British India. The other Two are Bombay and Calcutta. The Madras Presidency consisted of the whole of present Tamil Nadu except Pudukottai, the whole of Andhra Pradesh except Hyderabad which was under the sway of the Nizam of Hyderabad and Malabar District of Kerala where Travancore and Cochin were Princely States. Newell, H.A., *Madras, the Birth place of British India*, Madras, 1919, p.23.

1805. Afterwards she became a member of Lord Wellesley’s subsidiary system\(^7\) and by 1810 Travancore came under the control of the British.

1. Land and the People

South Travancore is bounded on the north by the Mahendragiri Mountain, on the east by the Tirunelveli District, on the south the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea and on the west by the Arabian Sea. The extreme length from north to south is nearly 50 kilometres.\(^8\)

The hilly region of South Travancore is very extensive. Hills like Mahendragiri, Maruthuvamalai,\(^9\) Thadagaimalai, Arukani hills, Pathukani hills and many other hills found here and there. The hills are of different elevation, climate and vegetation.\(^10\) Valuable trees like Teak, Blackwood, Sandal wood, Rose wood and a variety of other trees are found in the forest. Cash crops like cloves, cardamom, rubber, coco, pepper are cultivated. Besides these tapioca,
sweet roots like maravalli are cultivated. These hills have became an abode of wild animals such as lions, tigers, horned antelopes, jackals, elephants and other wild animals like wild bears and boars. The flora and fauna of the hills present a pleasing sight and attracts large number of tourists every year.

The most important of all the hills is the Aralvaymozhi hills. The Aralvaymozhi pass served as the gate way for cultural and commercial intercourse between the people of this area and the Pandya country. This pass enabled the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Nayaks and the Muslims to invade Nanchilnadu in succession.

The hills of South Travancore prevent the pregnant clouds and cause south west and south east monsoons. They provide heavy rainfall to South Travancore and enable the peasants to cultivate their lands for about nine months a year.

South Travancore is endowed with rivers like Paralayar, Palayar, Kothaiyar and a host of small streams. Paralayar rises on the mountains north of Mahendragiri hills. The local people called it as Kuzhithuraiaru and Tamraparani. After a course of 23 miles from its source it is joined by the

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Kothaiyar. It flows through the two taluks of Kalkulam and Vilavancode and confluences the sea at Thengapattanam,\footnote{Thengapattanam was an important commercial centre under the Dutch. Coir, coconut and other products were exported from here.} once a famous trading centre.\footnote{Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, p.21.}

River Kothaiyar originates from Muthukuzhi Vayal plateau and runs through Thiruvattar.\footnote{Thiruvattar is a noted place where the famous Adikesavaperumal temple is found.} It runs through the length and breadth of Kalkulam taluk and it confluence with sea at Kadiapattanam\footnote{Kadiapattanam: This place is otherwise called Kai-Kadia Pattanam a place which demanded a ransom. The story states that once king Marthanda Varma on his way to Arat came to this place to take a bath at Vaalion Para. After taking bath the king returned with his entourage but the sea came behind the king. Hence the king cut a portion of his little finger and made a blood sacrifice. Because of this the place is called Kai KadiaPattanam. Kunjuthampi Valiathambi Kathai, Palm leaf manuscript.}, a noted historic place.

Palayar, another important river originates at Kadukkarai hills and in its course important places like Boothapandi,\footnote{Boothapandi: Situated at the extreme north east of Travancore, named after Bootha Pandian, the Pandya king. It is believed that Boothapandi was the western limit of the Pandya kings.} Suchindram\footnote{Suchindram: Situated at the banks of river Palayar. It was called so because Lord Siva attained Suchi or Mukti there.} and Nagercoil are situated. It falls into the sea at Manakudi estuary which has been a place of tourist attraction. There are other small streams that are rainfed mostly. On the banks of these rivers, coconut, plantain and paddy are cultivated abundantly. The plains also filled with paddy fields, coconut groves, and
mango gardens present a pleasing sight. Kottar,\(^{20}\) one of the important
Trading centers in the ancient past is also situated on the bank of river Palayar.

There are important tourist destinations like the cave temples of
Chitharal\(^{21}\) and Thirunandikarai\(^{22}\), Dams like Pechipparai\(^{23}\) and Perunchani,
Thirparappu falls, Mathur Aquaduct or hanging bridge,\(^{24}\) Adikesava Perumal
Temple at Thiruvattar, the Colachel Fort, the Padmanabapuram Palace,\(^{25}\)
Udayagiri Fort\(^{26}\) and the Vattakottai Fort at Kanyakumari are the major tourist
attractions.

\(^{20}\) Kottar – was an important commercial centre of South Travancore. Now a days
also it is a flourishing Trading Centre of Kanyakumari District.

\(^{21}\) It is believed that Chitharal Cave Temple belonged to the 8\(^{\text{th}}\) century A.D. It is a
Jain Temple situated 8 Kms away to the north east of Kuzhithurai. It bears
strong evidence of the spreading of Jainism in Kanyakumari District.

\(^{22}\) Thirunandikarai is situated 17 kms away from Marthandam. A temple is situated
there. It remained a Jain Temple till the 9\(^{\text{th}}\) century A.D.

\(^{23}\) Pechiparai Dam was constructed by Er. Alexander Minchin between 1897-1906.

\(^{24}\) The Mathur Aquaduct is Asia’s longest hanging bridge, 115 feet height and one
km length. The hanging bridge was constructed in 1966.

\(^{25}\) Padmanabapuram Palace was the ancient capital of the erstwhile Travancore
kings from 1555 A.D. to the later half of the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century. The palace has many
important parts that speak about the glory and constructive genius of the kings
ruled during that time. Sreedhara Mennon, A., A Survey of Kerala History,
Kottayam, 1967.

\(^{26}\) The Udayagiri Fort is one of the ancient forts in Kanyakumari district with rich
historical heritage. Since it was built on a hillock it is called Udayagiri. The fort
was built by Sri Rama Varma, the king of Venad (1595-1607). Then
Marthandavarma with the help of De Lannoy, the Dutch general reconstructed
South Travancore has a sea coast of 68 kilometres. For the most part the coast line is regular. The ancient port of Colachel\textsuperscript{27} is the only natural port in South Travancore. Kanyakumari is another minor port.

The soil of South Travancore is red. Alluvial Soil occurs very rarely. Estuarine beds are full of sub fossil shells, cynthers, poltomids, circon, monazite and melanis. Because of the availability of such kinds of soils, the noted Manavalakurichy or rare earths factory the only factory in South Travancore that produces rare earths and fetch foreign exchange to India. The prevalence of warm humidity is one of the special features of the climate of South Travancore. Small as the country is, its high mountain ranges, the valleys, the plains with plenty of trees, and its sea-cost are greatly influence the atmospheric conditions. The temperature varies according to the height of the locality from the sea level.

Rainfall in South Travancore is regular and steady; and this made the region more fertile than the rest of the Malabar coast. The mean annual rainfall in Agasteeswaram taluk is 36.4” and that in Thovalai 48.4”\textsuperscript{28}. This

\textsuperscript{27} Colachel: It was the only one port in South Travancore. In the battle of Colachel in 1741 the Travancore forces defeated the Dutch and took the commander De Lannoy as a captive. To commemorate this victory a commemoration pillar was erected at Colachel.

\textsuperscript{28} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.5.
wide difference between the two adjoining taluks is caused by the concentration of high hills in Thovalai.

During May to August the south-west monsoon brings 12.6” of rainfall, while the north-east monsoon in September-November brings 18.8” of rainfall. The month of October records the highest rainfall of 7.8”.

The distribution of rainfall helps the agricultural operations of South Travancore. Nanchilnadu, has been noted for its agricultural prosperity, and hence acclai med as the granary of Travancore. Paddy, tapioca, vegetables, banana and coconuts are the major crops, cultivated on the valleys, terraines and plains. Elevated hills are richly planted with plantation crops like tea, coffee and rubber.

The thickly populated areas in the region are Nagercoil, Kottar, Kanyakumari, Thuckalay, Marthandam, Monday Market and Karungal. Industrially South Travancore is declared as backward, although there is vast scope for industrialization. Handloom, coir and palmyra-based small scale industries are numerous; but their labour absorbing capacity is distressingly poor.

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Tamil is the dominant language of the people and many Sangam works are connected with this fold. Malayalam is the mother tongue of a sizable section of the people towards the western border. The predominance of Tamil in all the four taluks are quite obvious though there are substantial local variations. The people of eastern taluks of Thovalai and Agasteeswaram have good command over Tamil, whereas in Kalkulam and Vilavancode, a mixture of Malayalam and Tamil is used.

The people of South Travancore are predominantly Dravidians. Since this part of the land was exposed to constant incursions from the east, rush waves of migration had taken place under political and military cover. Aryan infiltration in ancient Kerala had influenced this area substantially. Tamil Brahmin habitations are more concentrated on the east, determined by political and cultural factors. Arab trade contact with the coastal villages and trading ports, solicited early Arab intercourse with natives. This had actuated the racial admixture.

In the traditional caste formation of South Travancore, Brahmins occupied the highest position. The Nampoodories were Malayalam speaking Brahmins, migrated from the northern side of Kerala and assumed superiority.

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32 Purananuru, 137-140
33 Census of India, 1903, Travancore, Trivandrum, 1903, p.226.
34 Pillay, K.K., op.cit., p.474.
over the rest of the Brahmins. They claimed that they have been installed by Sage Parasurama, the legendary creator of Kerala.\textsuperscript{35} Their dominance as a social force emerged only from the 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. Their socio-economic and cultural status got recognition by the 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{36} It encouraged them to attain dominance in the political life of the country.

Nairs formed a sizable section of the population of South Travancore. Originally they were Dravidian Naga worshippers believed to have been migrated from the Tamil country long before the arrival of the Aryans\textsuperscript{37}. Due to their protracted struggle with the native tribes, they were forced to take sword, which in course of time became their traditional occupation. The Nampoodiri connections at home and at temples accorded them social status, and got vast estates along with Pulayar slaves.\textsuperscript{38}

Nadars form one of the major communities in South Travancore.\textsuperscript{39} Their chief occupation was toddy-tapping from Palmyra trees and making jaggary cakes. They were always engaged in the more active operations of rural economy and eked out a honest living by their hard work.\textsuperscript{40}

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\textsuperscript{35} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, Vol.I, p.213.
\textsuperscript{37} Census of India, 1903, Travancore, p.375.
\textsuperscript{38} Francis Day, \textit{The Land of Perumals}, Madras, 1863, p.27.
\textsuperscript{39} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.117.
\textsuperscript{40} Yesudhas, R.N., \textit{A People’s Revolt in Travancore}, Trivandrum, 1975, p.21.
\end{flushleft}
The Nadars enjoyed a social-limbo somewhere between the Sudras and the outcaste untouchables.\textsuperscript{41} Caldwell described the Nadars “as belonging to the highest division of the lowest classes or lowest of the middle classes; poor but not paupers; rude and unlettered, but many degrees removed from a savage state”.\textsuperscript{42}

But, the Nadars were strictly prohibited from entering Hindu temples and from the use of public wells.\textsuperscript{43} Nanchilnadu Vellalas also form another and major community in this region. Nanchilnadu Vellalar or Nanchilnadu Pillamar is a class of agriculturists and land owners. They were originally natives of Pandya Nadu. From there they immigrated into Nanchilnadu in the remote past.\textsuperscript{44} Besides people belonged to certain communities such as Paravas, Kammalars and Kerala Mudalis were also lived there in large number.\textsuperscript{45} The lowest section in the society was the slave caste. Mainly the Parayahs constituted this group. The upper caste people held them in bondage and often bought and sold them like cattle.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{42} Robert Caldwell, \textit{Tinnevelly Shanars}, Madras, 1849, pp.4-5.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}, p.22.
\textsuperscript{44} Pillay, K.K., \textit{The Suchindram Temple}, Madras, 1953, p.247.
\textsuperscript{45} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.118.
Society was divided and segregated into the haves and have-nots. Caste, class, and power positions were availed of according to their economic importance. Certain disabilities such as denial of wearing upper cloth and temple entry and exaction of forced labour were imposed and enforced on the basis of the relative position of each caste. Against this discrimination in the social order there were prolonged struggles that relieved them from the pains and suppression.

2. Political History

South Travancore has a long political history. Her history is mingled with the history of Travancore kings. The earliest rulers of South Travancore, about whom we have some references, are the Ay kings. They were probably ruling over the region around the Potiyil mountains, the Southernmost section of the Western Ghats. Ptolemy states that the territory of the Ays flourished in the South of the Chera Kingdom and extended upto Kumari and the Pandya Kingdom. Robert Sewell opines that the Ays were the rulers of the hill-

48 *Travancore Archaeological Series* (Herein after abbreviated as T.A.S), Vol.I, p.188.
country of South Travancore. They had their capital at Aykudi in the potiyil hills, sacred to the memory of the Sage Agastya.

The important Ay Kings who ruled over South Travancore were Ay Andiran, Titiyan, Atiyan, Titiyan II and Nanchil Porunan. Ay Andiran is said to be the independent ruler of the region around the Potiyil Hill which is the Southernmost section of the Western Ghats. Purananuru extols him as a philanthropic who ruled over the region near the Potiyil Hill. He is described as Vel Ay and Mal-Vel-Ay in Purananuru. By his unparalleled gifts, Andiran’s name became widely known. His gifts consisted chiefly of elephants, since being the overlord of mountain tracts which were rich in elephants. He was a trained soldier. He was always obliging and was ever generous and sympathetic. He patronised the Tamil poets.

Ay Andiran had a son by name Titiyan, who succeeded him. Titiyan is described as Potiyir Celvan by the poet-King Bhutappandiyan. During his reign, the neighbouring Pandya Kingdom was ruled by king Bhutappandiyan. The sangam literatures do not make mention of any war between

49 Robert Sewell, Historical Inscriptions of Southern India, Madras, 1932, p.361.
50 Sreedhara Menon, op.cit., p.54.
52 T.A.S., Vol.I, p.188.
53 Purananuru, 130-131.
54 Tolkappiam, Ten Idylls, Eight Anthologies are Sangam Literatures.
Butappandiyan and Titiyan. But the Pandyan king must have come at least as far as Bhutappandi, a place named after him and where a temple called Bhuthappandisaramudaiyar was constructed. So it may be suggested that the Pandya king and Titiyan came to an agreement fixing Bhutappandi as the western limit of Pandyan kingdom, leaving the region to the north and west of it vested in the hands of Titiyan.⁵⁵

At the time of Atiyan, the Ay Kingdom began to disintegrate. Alakiyapandiyan is said to have invaded the kingdom of the Ays and defeated Atiyan and reduced him to the position of a tributary chief of the Pandya king.⁵⁶

The Ays after being defeated by the Pandyas, struggled in vain to regain their lost independence and their supremacy over the Potiyil region. Talayalankanattu Ceru Vanra Nedunceliyan who came to the Pandya throne during the reign of Titiyan II repulsed the latter in the battle of Talayalankanam. Thus, the battle of Talayalankanam sealed for ever the fate of the Ay kingdom. This heroic fight of Talayalankanam has been briefly described in Ahananuru.⁵⁷ Because of the battle of Talayalankanam, the Potiyil region was broken up into petty kingdoms.

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After the discomfiture of the Ay kings, certain regions of Nanchilnadu remained under Pandya rule for several centuries. The Pandya king Sendan, who ruled between 645 and 670 A.D also invaded Nanchilnadu. The only reliable basis for the inference that he undertook expeditions beyond Aralvaymozhi is that Sendan assumed the surname Vanava, the distinctive appellation of the Chera. It is also inferred from certain surviving place-names that he might have conquered parts of Nanchilnadu and commemorated his victories by bestowing his name on villages and temples. For instance, at Talakkudi, about three miles north east of Kottar, there exists the Temple of Sendanisvaramudiyar. Popular tradition connecting this shrine with Sendan a Panyan king is perhaps based on fact. Again on the southern fringes of Alakiyapandipuram, there is a temple known as Jayandanarkoyil. Further, a village in the Agasteeswaram taluk, located about five miles south-west of Kottar is called Sendanputur.

The next king who attacked South Travancore particularly certain places north of it was Sendan’s successor known as Arikesari Maravarman (670-700 A.D). He achieved victories at Kottar and captured it. The commentary of Iraiyanar Akapporul, clearly mentions this. So, it is obvious that he conquered certain portions of South Travancore which were not under

59 Pillay, K.K., Studies in the History of India with Special reference to Tamil Nadu, op.cit., p.21.
Pandya authority. He completed the annexation of Nanchilnadu with the Pandya Kingdom. Kochadaiyan (700-730 A.D) who succeeded Arikesari is said to have defeated Ay Vel, who held sway in the Western Ghats region in the battle of Marudur. The Ay king was forced to acknowledge the Pandya supremacy. Perhaps Kochadaiyan extinguished the last vestiges of the authority of the Ays in South Travancore.

During the reign of Maran Chadayan (765-815 A.D) the Ay ruler again seems to have reasserted their independence in the neighbouring region including a portion of Nanchilnadu and the Pandya king had to wage a war with Ay Vel. The latter was defeated and his country was annexed. Not satisfied with this victory, the Pandya king marched against the Ay king, Karunadan, probably the successor of Ay Vel. The result of this battle was not known but it is unlikely that the Ay ruler was completely subdued by the Pandya ruler. In this encounter, Karunadan was assisted by the Cheras, and the Pandya army was driven back as far as Karaikottai which is identified with Aralvaymozhi.

It appears the Viranarayana Chadayan who ascended the Pandya throne about 880 A.D. had also been actively connected with South Travancore. Some of his inscriptions are found in the Suchindram Temple. It is likely that

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Suchindram was one of the sacred places patronised by him. The fact that the Suchindram inscriptions of his period bear the regnal years of his reign is a clear proof that the locality was under his sway. Viranarayanasseri and Viranarayanamangalam, two villages located within a few miles of Kottar perhaps owe their names to the particular Pandya Sovereign. In 900 A.D. Rajasimha II succeeded Viranarayana. He continued to be in possession of Nanchilnadu is attested by his inscriptions which are found in large numbers in this region.\textsuperscript{62} Consequently, Parantaka Chola crushed his power.

At the beginning of the tenth century A.D. South Travancore was annexed with the Chola empire by Parantaka (907-955 A.D) His inscriptions are found in South Travancore, especially in Suchindram. He defeated Maravarman Rajasimha, the Pandya king. Parantaka captured Kanyakumari and extended his kingdom up to Suchindram as is testified by the Suchindram inscription of Parantaka Chola I, which records the gift of fifty sheep for maintaining a perpetual lamp before the God of the temple at Suchindram.\textsuperscript{63} But, it was only in the reign of Raja Raja I, the great of the Chola rulers (985-1016 A.D) that Chola authority was firmly established over the whole of the Pandya Kingdom including Nanchilnadu.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{62} T.A.S., Vol. IV, pp.120-123.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., Vol.VI, p.120.
In 999 A.D., the 15th year of his reign, Raja Raja won a great victory over the Cheras and struck a blow at Chera prestige. The Chola inscriptions discovered from the temples at Cholapuram, Cape Comorin, Tirunandikara, Suchindam, etc., testify to the Chola conquest in erstwhile South Travancore. The temple itself built by Aryan Madhurantaka, a native of Tanjore, who after serving as a military commander under the Cholas appears to have settled down in Nanchilnadu as a subordinate Chief.

In commemoration of his great victory over the Pandyas Raja Raja renamed Kanyakumari as Rajarajesvaram and Kottar as Mummudi Cholanallur. Raja Raja seems to have consolidated his southern conquest by constituting the newly acquired places into a separate administrative unit called Raja Raja Pandinadu. Kottar which was the southernmost military outpost in the Chola dominion was named Mummudicholanallur and a Chola garrison, called nilappadai, was permanently stationed there. Thus, by the end of the reign of Raja Raja Chola, South Travancore became an integral part of the Chola kingdom.

Raja Raja was succeeded by his son Rajendra I. He made Cholapuram as his capital and governed the far flung provinces through viceroids. He

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appointed his own son Jatavarman as his first viceroy at Madurai, with the title Cholapandya. The southern part of the Pandya region including Nanchilnadu came to be governed by the Chola Pandya viceroys lasting for nearly sixty five years, at the end of which period this system was finally abolished by Kulottunga.68

Kulottunga I (1070-1181) the first of the Eastern Chalukya Chola emperors, came to the throne and was closely associated with South Travancore.69 An inscription of Tirukkalukkunram refers to his victories against the five Pandyas and the capture of the region round the Potiyil Hill and also the destruction of Kottar.70 He was opposed to the sharing of power with the viceroys and hence it came under the direct control of the centre. He introduced a new system of opening military cantonments at various strategic places with a view of maintaining law and order and preventing attempts by the outlying regions breaking away from the empire. One such unit was kept at Kottar in South Travancore. An inscription at Cholapuram dated in his 9th regnal year mentions Kottar Nilappadai.71

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69 *Epigraphica India*, Vol. XI., p.293
71 T.A.S., Vol.VI, p.3.
In the region of Kulottunga, the Western Chalukyas and Hoysalas achieved several victories over the Cholas and the northern portion of the Chola empire passed under their sway. Taking advantage of this disaster, Parantaka Pandya over ran Kanyakumari easily. He is also said to have occupied South Travancore and even marched up to Vilinjam and Kandalur Salai and captured them. According to K.K. Pillay Parantaka did not occupy Nanchilnadu, but only marched his army from Kanyakumari to Trivandrum. Nevertheless it must be concluded that he captured Vilinjam and Kandalur Salai during his march through these places. Depending on the Kanyakumari inscription of Parantaka Pandya, one cannot contradict the conclusion that the Pandya king was successful in his campaign against Nanchilnadu and even against Kupaka, the Venad ruler. The loss of Nanchilnadu in the south considerably weakened the Chola power, which was soon dislodged by the Venad rulers.

The history of South Travancore during the transition from the Chola authority to that of the Venad rulers was covered by a thick mist of historical uncertainties. On the strength of an inscription on the Pandyan Anai, Nagam Aiya recorded the achievements of Kupaka ruler. This inscription also records

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72 Ibid., Vol.I, pp.5-6.
73 Pillay, K.K., Studies in the History of India with Special reference to Tamil Nadu, op.cit., p.29.
that a Kupaka ruler conquered Kottar and seized the whole of South Travancore in 1116 A.D.\textsuperscript{74}

On the causes of the eclipse of the Chola rule in Nanchilnadu, there has been much speculation. Legend\textsuperscript{75} and facts have been so inextricably interwoven that it is difficult to say where fiction ends and truth begins. Shungoony Menon says that, during the Muhammadan rule of the Pandyan Kingdom, one Nanchilkuravan, a feudatory chief under Travancore, obtained possession of Nanchilnadu and established himself as a ruler. He adds that in 292 M.E. (1116 A.D) Nanchilkuravan was not only driven out but his kingdom was annexed with Venad.\textsuperscript{76} The reference to Muhammadan rule of the region seems to be a chronological error for there is hardly any Muslim invasion on South India till 1310 A.D.\textsuperscript{77} The Nanchilkuravan episode was perhaps invented by a member of the Periyavittu Mudali family. But T.K. Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, Vol.I, p.251.

\textsuperscript{74} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, Vol.I, p.251.

\textsuperscript{75} According to legend, one Konankuravan by a spell of magic became enormously rich and usurped power in Nanchilnadu. He ruled for 35 years and was succeeded by his son Bhommayakuravan. He was followed by Nanchilkuravan. Under Nanchilkuravan, the whole of Nanchilnad came under his sway. But later on when Nanchilkuravan wished to get his son married to the daughter of a Vellata Chief named Periyavittu Mudali who occupied the highest position among the people he was treacherously killed. It is said Periyavittu Mudali who promised to give his daughter in marriage to the son of Nanchilkuravan. Played a trick on the day of the marriage and caused the death of all the Kuravas by triggering the marriage mandapa collapse by a special device. Then Periyavittu Mudali became the master of the region.

\textsuperscript{76} Shungoony Menon, P., \textit{A History of Travancore}, Madras, 1878, p.92

\textsuperscript{77} Pillay, K.K., \textit{Studies in the History of India with Special reference to Tamil Nadu, \textit{op.cit.}}, p.32.
Velu Pillai takes cognizance of the story in concluding that Vira Kerala Varma had to defeat Nanchilkkuravan before taking Nanchilnadu.\textsuperscript{78}

K.K. Pillay disapproves the authenticity of this story and rejects it as a legend.\textsuperscript{79} However, it is evident from inscriptions and other sources that Venad came to establish its supremacy over certain portions of Nanchilnadu in the first quarter of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{80} and continued to retain it with fluctuating fortunes under the Venad kings. It is not known how long Vira Kerala Varma ruled.

Sri Kodai Kerala Varma was his successor. He ruled Venad between 1145 and 1150 A.D. This king recovered Suchindrum and other portions of Nanchilnadu. The successor of this king was Sri Vira Ravi Varma who ruled over Venad from 1161-1164 A.D, extended his authority to the eastern part of Nanchilnadu also. Cera Udaya Marthanda Varma was most important Venad king who ruled from 1383-1444 A.D.\textsuperscript{81}

It was during the reign of Bhutala Vira Udhaya Marthanda Varma (1516-1526 A.D) a major war broke out between Travancore and

\textsuperscript{78} Velu Pillai, T.K., \textit{The Travancore State Manual}, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 1940, p.76.
\textsuperscript{79} Pillay, K.K., \textit{Studies in the History of India with Special reference to Tamil Nadu}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.32.
\textsuperscript{81} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, Vol.I, p.252.
Vijayanagar. The next important invasion of Travancore by the Vijayanagar forces took place during the rule of Sri Vira Kerala Varma (1544-1545 A.D.). In this battle the Vijayanagar army under Ramaraya Vithala won a victory. St. Francis Xavier played a significant role in arranging the settlement of the conflict between Vijayanagar and Venad.

After the death of Achuta Raya in 1542 A.D, Vijayanagar kingdom began to decline. Subsequently, the Nayak chief of Madurai asserted his independence. In 1553 A.D. Viswananta Nayak, who founded the Nayak dynasty needed the border lands of Travancore. The advent of the great Nayak ruler Thirumala Nayak to South Travancore in 1623 changed its political condition. He came with his forces to Nanchilnadu. As a result in 1655 A.D. Kalkulam or Padmanabhapuram became the seat of Thirumala Nayak. The other Nayak rulers who invaded Travancore were Chokkanantha Nayak and Timmappa Nayak.

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82 The Venad king had granted political asylum to Vira Narasimha (Chellappa), a rebel feudatory of the Vijayanagar king. Achuta Raya, the king of Vijayanagar deputed his Chief Minister and brother-in-law, Salaka Timma, to punish the Venad ruler and bring back Chellappa. An epic battle took place between the forces of Venad and Vijayanagar on the banks of the Tamiraparani. The Venad king was defeated and forced to acknowledge the supremacy of Vijayanagar. He handed over Chellappa to Salaka Timma together with presents of elephants and horses. (Sreedhara Menon, A., Survey of Kerala History, op.cit., p.231.)

83 Ibid., pp.231-232.

Thus during the period of Nayaks, Travancore had constant disputes with them. The Nawab of Carnatic who succeeded the Nayaks of Madurai in power also continued this dispute. With these, the early and medieval periods of her political history came to an end and it paved the way for the modern period in the annals of the history of South Travancore.

The modern history of South Travancore begins with the rule of Bala Marthanda Varma who ascended the throne in the year 1729 A.D. During the time of his accession the political conditions were unstable due to internal rebellions and the incessant inroads made by the Nayak and Nawab forces. But Marthanda Varma put a check to the invaders by seeking the assistance of the English East India Company. He even proved his ability by meeting the Dutch in the battle field at Colachel on 10 of August 1741. After that he dedicated his kingdom to the Lord Sri Padmanabhaswamy because he thought that Lord Sri Padmanabhaswamy only saved him and his forces from great disaster. He considered Lord Sri Padmanabhaswamy as his tutelary deity.

Marthanda Varma was succeeded by Rama Varma Karthigai Thirunal (1758-1798 A.D.). He was popularly known as Dharmaraja. The important historical event in his reign was the invasion of Tipu Sultan and his defeat.

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85 Ibid., pp.388-405.
Rama Varma was ably assisted by his efficient ministers Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai and Raja Kesavadas.

Balarama Varma (1798-1810 A.D.) succeeded Rama Varma at the age of thirteen. He was an inefficient ruler. The state’s finance came down to the verge of bankruptcy. To set right the financial imbalance, taxes were excessively levied and forcibly collected. This tyrannical rule made the subjects to agitate which ended in a rebellion against the state under the leadership of Velu Thampi.

Gowri Lakshmi Bai (1810 – 1815 A.D.) succeeded Balarama Varma. The reign of Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai saw the introduction of several enlightened reforms. She was ably assisted in the task of administration by Munro. For the smooth implementation of effective reforms only, she dismissed her Dewan Ummini Tampi and in his place Colonel Munro was appointed Munro was the first Resident-Dewan of Travancore. He found indiscipline and corruption in the administration. The officials those who involved in corruption were dismissed and men of integrity were appointed in their place.

Dewan took all possible steps to achieve economy in public expenditure. An efficient system of audit and accounts was introduced. The designation of the Karyakar was changed to Tahsildar as in British India.
Slavery was abolished in Travancore by a royal proclamation issued in 1812. Another far reaching reform was the assumption of the direct management of the *Dewaswoms* by the government in 1811, to prevent mismanagement. Thus during the reign of Rani Gouri Lakshmi Bai, the reforms of Munro modernized the administration of Travancore.  

Gowri Lakshmi Bai was succeeded by her sister, Gowri Parvathi Bai (1815-1829) as a regent of minor prince Rama Varma. During her reign Colonel Munro continued to be the Dewan till he laid down office as Resident in 1818. The Rani introduced several reforms calculated to establish social freedom and civic equality. The poll tax levied from several castes was repealed. Christian Missions were given all facilities to carry on their evangelising activities. Rent free land and free timber were supplied for the erection of churches. Thus the regency of Rani Gowri Parvathi Bai was an epoch of liberal administration.

In 1829 A.D. Ramavarma Swathi Thirunal ascended the throne of Travancore. His reign was considered as a “Golden age” in the history of modern Travancore. He introduced many administrative reforms like establishment of the Munsiff courts for trying small civil cases and criminal cases, codification of law on the British model, introduction of western

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education and the creation of separate department for European Engineering Education and for irrigation. Besides a good administrator, he was also an eminent scholar in Malayalam and Tamil.\(^8\) A very significant achievement of the reign was the census of the population of the state taken in 1836 with the help of the Tahsildars. The Raja was called by his subjects “Garbha Sriman”.\(^9\) He died in 1847.\(^1\)

Marthanda Varma Uthiram Thirunal succeeded Ramavarma. He ruled Travancore sss 1847 to 1860 A.D. He improved the financial condition of the state by introducing an effective system of collection of revenue. It was during his reign the agitation of the Nadar Christians for securing their womenfolk the right to wear the upper garments took place. Moreover during his reign a new canal called Ananda Victoria Marthanda Canal (AVM Canal) between Trivandrum and Nanchilnadu was laid for transportation purpose.\(^2\)

Ayilyam Thirunal who succeeded Marthanda Varma Uthiram Thirunal in 1860 A.D. attempted to introduce certain improvements in the field of agriculture. He issued a proclamation in 1865 A.D. known as the Pandara pattom Proclamation. By which the rights of the tenants were not to be evicted

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\(^8\) Ibid., pp.488-500.
\(^9\) Garbha Sriman – one who was the sovereign even from his birth.
so long as they paid the stipulated rent and other customary dues. Ayilyam Thirunal was succeeded by Rama Varma Visakham Thirunal (1880-1885 A.D.). He condemned the existing police system and reorganized it on modern lines. He separated the police system which was under a Magistrate with a view to improving the administration of criminal justice. His most important achievements were the inauguration of a Revenue Survey and Settlement, besides extending grant in aid to the elementary education and promoting the native industries.93

Sri Mulam Thirunal succeeded Rama Varma Visakham Thirunal in the year 1885 A.D. His reign witnessed many sided developments in the state. The reform of the system of land revenue administration engaged the attention of the ruler at the very beginning of his reign. The settlement operations which began in the previous reign were speeded up and the settlement proclamation was issued in 1886. A new Department of agriculture was organized in 1908.94 For the first time in the history of Travancore State attempt was made for providing representation to the people in the State Legislation. In 1888 he inaugurated the Legislative Council and in 1904 the Assembly was named after him as Sri Mulam Popular Assembly which

afforded opportunity for the representatives of the people to have a say on matters of public interest.\textsuperscript{95}

The demise of Sri Mulam Thirunal posed a problem over the ruling family since the heir apparent to the throne, Sri Chithirai Thirunal was only 12 years old. Hence Sethu Lekshmi Bai, the senior Maharani became the regent. She gained the credit of aboliting the Devadasi System in South Travancore and putting an end to the practice of animal sacrifices in the temples under the decontrol of Devaswom Department.\textsuperscript{96}

Sri Chithira Thirunal ascended the throne in 1931 and the regency of Sethu Lakshmi Bai came to an end. Since 1931 the State attained many sided progress. In 1936 the king issued the Temple Entry Proclamation at the influence of Sri C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Dewan. It was a reform of far reaching importance and was the first of its kind in India. In 1938 the Trunk Road between Trivandrum and Kanyakumari was reconstructed with cement concrete which lift an everlasting reputation even today.\textsuperscript{97}

After India’s independence, the Tamil speaking taluks Thovalai, Agastheswaram Kalkulam and Vilavancode were merged with the then Madras State as per the recommendation of the State Reorganization

\textsuperscript{95} Sreedhara Menon, A., \textit{Kerala District Gazetteer, op.cit.}, p.227.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., p.230.
\textsuperscript{97} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, pp.93-94.
Commission. Ever since November 1, 1956 the Kanyakumari District was blossomed consisting of the above four taluks.98

3. The Sources of Information

The information pertaining to write the history of Socio-Religious Movements in Travancore are drawn from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources mainly consist of the English records preserved in the State Archives at Trivandrum, the Archaeological reports, the Nittus, the L M S reports and the petitions from the Missionaries to the Dewans and the subordinate officials and the reports of various officials. The District Gazetteers, Manuals, published works by private as well as public agencies constitute the secondary sources.

Among all the records, the petitions from the London Mission Missionaries to the kings of Travancore and their subordinate officials like the Dewans, the Residents and a host of revenue officials present striking notes on the agony that the avarnas or the low castes underwent in the hands of the savarnas or the high castes. The petitions of the missionaries and the letters of correspondence of the Christian Missionaries and the Resident at Travancore helps us to know the attitude of the British towards various low castes, suppression of their rights to live as human beings and their rights to wear

98 Ibid., p.101.
dress on par with upper castes. These correspondences also bring to light, the attempts of the L.M.S. Missionaries to liberate the people from the clutches of oppression. The correspondences from the governors of the Madras Presidency mainly contain letters to pressurize the kings to deal favourably and issue necessary orders to relieve the people.

The Reports of the Christian Missionaries from various mission stations and their correspondence with the then Travancore State officials contain advices, requests, admonitions and pleadings. They reported to the government and to their superiors both in India and abroad about the prevailing customs, manners and convention of the people, the prevalence of caste distinction and other taboos and the collection of various poll taxes that were collected in Travancore. They always informed the kings and the superior officials that if they do not attempt for a social renaissance, now and then, there will be certainly reformers and reform movements in the anvil to relieve the people from the agony.

The Nittus that are kept preserved in the State Archives, Trivandrum form one of the important source materials. The Nittus are hand written manuscripts contain the orders of the government and the royal proclamations mostly in Malayalam language. The Nittus bring to light the orders that were passed by the kings then and there for the welfare of the people and furnishes valuable information for the abolition of slavery in Travancore.
The Acts and Proclamations are another primary source materials are highly informative and interesting especially about the emancipation of the slaves and permitting the other caste women to wear upper cloth of inheritance and other socio-economic restrictions.

Besides them, the letters of the Dewans to the Residents and vice versa and The Memorandum of the missionaries of Travancore are highly interesting and educative. The correspondence letters between the Dewan and the Resident, through official carry interesting information pertaining to social, religious and political conditions that prevailed in Travancore. For instance, when Cullen was the Resident of Travancore, he forwarded a Memorandum to the Maharaja for needed action. On behalf of the Maharaja, the Dewan replied “His highness would never fail to give his attention to the unfortunate class of people referred to in the missionaries petition”. But the Resident was not satisfied. The pressure of the missionaries compelled the Resident to address a Memorandum in 1849 to the Dewan. The Resident noticed that, “recommending certain measurements for improving the conditions of the slaves and for the gradual abolition of slavery in the State”.

The Assembly Proceedings of the State and the Administrative Report of Travancore provide glimpses of information to understand the numerical strength of the slaves, their emancipation proclamations and the freedom granted to the slaves.
The Cover Files, Confidential Records, Judicial Files, Note Files on Vaikam Sathyagraha, Guruvayur, and Suchindram Sathyagrahas and the Reports of the Dewan are highly useful sources to study about the caste distinction, the consequent difficulties including the prevention of the Avarnas to enter into the temples and walk on the public roads and various other restrictions imposed on them. They also speak their involvements in the movements for temple entry. These records make one to understand the social condition that prevailed not only in South Travancore but also in the whole of Travancore during the period under study.

The proceedings of Sri. Chithira Council, the proceedings of Sri. Mulam Popular Assembly, Travancore law reports, letters and speeches of Maharaja Bala Rama Varma provide interesting information for the study.

The secondary sources such as published works, journals and news paper are largely consulted for making a comprehensive analysis of the study. Though they provide piece-meal information books like C.M. Augur’s *Church History of Travancore*; Francis Day’s *The Land of Perumals*; Hacker’s *A Hundred years of Travancore*; T.K. Ravindran’s, *Eight Furlongs of Freedom*; Samuel. V.T’s *One caste, One Religion and One God*, Aiyappa’s *Social Revolution in a Kerala Village*; P. Chidamparam Pillai’s *Right of Temple Entry*; Edgar Thurston’s *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*; Hutton’s *Castes
in India; K.K. Pillai’s The Suchindram Temple, are of much use to write the thesis.

The Methodology employed in this thesis is descriptive historical narration in character. In an attempt to convince the readers and to establish authenticity footnotes are given at the bottom of each page.

Scope and Limitations

The thesis has much scope for the academics and future scholars to go further deep into the subject. The period of study is limited to the period between 1806 and 1956. This period is important in the history of South Travancore because in 1806 the protestant mission came to South Travancore and the year 1956 also important. Because in that year, the whole of South Travancore was merged with Madras State. The area of study is restricted to South Travancore.

Hypotheses

The following hypothesis is framed and answer to the hypothesis is evolved. Why the social condition of the period under study is deplorable? What were the responsible factors for the coming of the Christian missionaries? How the social reformers ignited social awakening in the minds of the people? What were the instruments that the Christian missionaries employed to get rid of the social evils? What was the role of Travancore
government in the eradication of the social evils? What were the responsibility of the Christian missionaries in convincing the bureaucrats?

**Design of the Study**

With the help of these sources, the thesis is framed into seven chapters excluding introduction and conclusion.

The first part of the introduction deals with the topographical description of South Travancore and its influence on her history. The next part of the introduction deals with the political history of South Travancore, description of sources.

The first chapter describes The Advent of London Missionary Society and its service for creating social awakening.

The second chapter explains the rise of social reformers such as Muthukutty Swamigal, Sri Narayana Guru, Ayyankali and Chattampi Swamigal.

The third chapter deals with the abolition of feudal levies.

The fourth chapter deals with the abolition of slavery.

The fifth chapter explains the struggle of depressed people for equal rights.

The sixth chapter describes the crusade against temple entry.
The seventh chapter explains the Temperance Movement.

The concluding part of the thesis presents the findings, remarks and suggestions.