CHAPTER III

POLITY OF MAVELIKKARA

The life and culture of the people of Mavelikkara during the early centuries of the Christian era were very much similar to the life and culture in the Tamilakam. It was possible that the people of Mavelikkara followed some of the social customs and institutions reflected in the sangam works. The Tamil anthologies throw light on the physiographic divisions of ancient Tamilakam. An aspect of Anthologies that was invoked insightful response in modern researches is the concept of tinar according to which Tamilakam consisted of five physiographic divisions. Each Physiographic division had its own different culture identity. The tinar concept and its constituent elements are extensively described in Tolkappiyam, the earliest extant Tamil grammatical treatise.\textsuperscript{177}

Historians are of the opinion that in the first few centuries of the Christian Era (A.D), Mavelikkara was ruled by ‘Ayi’ royal dynasty. The territorial units from Kannyakumari in the South to Thiruvalla in the north including Sahya Mountains formed part of ‘Ayi’ Kingdom.

From the eighth century onwards these areas were ruled by Kulasekhara dynasty. During this time the geographical division of Kerala was come into being, in which Mavelikkara, holds powerful position.\textsuperscript{178} It was a small portion of land comprising

\textsuperscript{177} G. Krishnan Nadar, History of Kerala, Sangam Age, Learners book house, Kottayam. p ,46
\textsuperscript{178} Sreedhara Menon, KeralaCharitram, 1967, p, 196,
Kannetti in the south, Thrikkunnappuzha in the north, Pandalam in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west.

Under the Kulasekharas the kingdom was divided among the Kadittinel chieftains and chiefs for administrative convenience. And some sort of autonomy was given to them. These divisions were commonly known as Desam and Nadu. Each nadu was divided into various tharas. Those who were in charge of the Thara came to be known as Tharavazhi or Tharavadi. Under these Tharavadi Munnoottuvar, Anjoottuvar and Arunoottuvar were employed and were called Nattukoottangal. These Nattukoottangals had very extensive authority over the population there. The Nattukoottangal had complete representation of the people; they participated in day-to-day governance and welfare measures. The Nattukoottangal used to correct the mistakes, wrongs committed by those under their governance. In the Malabar Manual of Willam Logan, the Nattukoottams in Malabar were referred to as Lokar. Groups of Lokars were known as Nizhalkoottams or Tharakoottams.179

Under the Kulasekhara’s rule, Hinduism seemed to be very prominent in the society and it was very expressive in their relationship with the Brahmins concerned. As a result of their relationship, a number of Shaiva – Vaishnava temples were constructed in Kerala. As a part of it, in Mavelikkara, a temple was constructed at Kandiyoor by Chera King Rajasekharan (Cheraman Perumal Nayanar) in A.D 823. Kandiyoor is situated between Madathinkoor and Odanad.180

179. N.B chellappan Nair, Charithra murangunna Madathinkoor Desam, Mudra Maholsava 2007, p 17
180. Ibid, p. 18
In the Kandiyoor and Haripad inscriptions there are references to Odanadu. It is recorded that Odanadu was ruled by the Kings Iravi Varman, Iraman, Kothavarman, Iravi Keralan, Raman Aadichavarman Thiruvadi and Ravi Kerala Varman Thiruvadi. In the Unnuneeli Sandesam Kandiyoor was mentionied as Iravipattnam. It was due to the popularity Iravivarman, the ruler of Odanadu, at Kandiyoor. In the Kandiyoor Mattom Padappattu of Cheppukattu Neelakantan, there are references to Madathinkoor, one of the provinces of Odanadu. The administrative charge of the provinces was entrusted to the Arunouuttuvar sangam, the Nattukkootam. They had two administrators to the temple and help the king in military affairs. Likewise Sree Krishna Swamy Temple was constructed here for their worship. In course of time this Madathinkoor was transformed into Mavelikkara.181

During the fifteenth Century the capital was shifted from Kandiyoor Mattom to Eruva, north of Kayamkulam. Odanadu royal Kingdom came to be known as Kayamkulam royal Kingdom. In course of time the King of Venadu Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma started to conquer Kayamkulam. He got all support or help for this purpose from Madathinkoor ruler due to his relationship with him. This relationship with Thiruvithamcore made Madathinkoor ruler gift his kingdom to Marthanda Varma. As a part of expansion of his country. In the year 1734 Marthanda Varma attacked Kayamkulam. Unni Kerala Varma was the ruler of Desingandu at that time. In the year 1731 one heir apparent was adopted from Kayamkulam. The
east Kallada which was under the rule of Venadu was appropriated occupied.
Marthandavarma who has appraised of these two problems demanded to handover
Kallada which was under the jurisdiction of Unni Kerala Varma.\textsuperscript{182}

Unni Kerala Varma did not agree to this. So a fight started with Marthanda Varma,
in which Unni Kerala Varma got support from Kayamkulam ruler. Inspite of these supports,
Unni Keala Varma was completely defeated and taken prisoner by Marthand Varma.\textsuperscript{183}

This incident thoroughly disappointed the Kayamkulam ruler. Again he tried to
get Unni Kerala Varma reinstated in kingship. For this purpose Kayamkulam Raja
entered into an alliance with the rulers of Kochi, Purakkadu and Vadakkumkoor. With the help of spies Kayamkulam Raja released Unni Kerala Varma from prison. With the help of the Dutch, Kayamkulam Raja chased out Marthanda Varma from Kollam. Angry with this, Marthanda Varma attacked both Kollam and Kayamkulam at the same time. Eventhough Kayamkulam Raja could defeat the enemies, in the battle that took place in the year, at Nooranadu Padanilam; he was shot and killed at Thekkemankuzhi on the east of Kayamkulam due to betrayal.\textsuperscript{184}

There is a lot of narration about the brave soldiers of the king of Odanadu. The Nair warriors of Onattukara were very brave. Their weapons were of high quality. Most of these were moulded by the blacksmiths of Kattuvallil. The method of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{182} T.K Vellupillai, The Travancore state Manual, vol II p 275
\item \textsuperscript{183} ibid. 77, 78
\item \textsuperscript{184} Mathilakkam Records, chu, 83, Olla 33
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manufacturing these weapons was their trade secret. These weapons were very famous in Travancore. One of the most effective of these was a variety of sword known as Kayamkulamval, having sharpness on both sides. The soldiers were using one type of swords having sharpness on both sides. Chavettu soldiers were those who had taken an oath, from the king as Chaveerans by eating salt and rice as a custom and it was believed to be their last feast from the king before going to battle for the king.

In compensation for their life the king allotted viruthi and erayila for the Chavettu soldiers who were killed in battle. Erayili originated from the Tamil Word ‘erai’. This means the benefits given to the soldiers who were killed in battle. ‘Viruthi’ means the land provided to them free of tax. Chavers were formidable persons, having shaved their beards and eye brows, wearing garlands of hibiscus flowers around their necks, with drawn swords, they used to move around. Important chavers were Pathiyurthan, Kattanattuthan, Maruthurkulgaramarathan, Nooranaduthan, Vattaparampithan, Vengattamballythan, etc. These people were ordained and given special status by the king, and were honoured with titles like Valiyathan, Menon, Kaimal, Odakaimal, Than, Thankal etc.

The Dutch writer Galletti in his book, ‘The Dutch in Malabar’ describe the brave soldiers of the king, especially the Chavettu. After the demise of the king and completion of the obsequies, the heir-apprent used to take over the rule. This ritual

185. Kayamkulam sword, which used to attack the opponents in left and right has a prime place in the history of Kayamkulam. This sword, because of it, s hold in the centre could swing both ways and revolve like a stick and there by held a lethal weapon’s place in War. The black smith generations who made this weapon still live in Kattuvally near Kandyoor.

186. Eriyali-Death, Elli-land, Erayila—soldiers

187. At a particular stage the Keerika branch of Vattaparambil family shifted their support to Venad
takes place in Bharadevatha temple in the presence of Madambis. The heir-apparent would take the oath by carrying *udaval* in the left hand and gold coins in the right hand. After taking the solemn oath the priest and the public used to bless the king sprinkling rice on his head. On this auspicious occasion the king carrying a gold or silver plate filled with cooked salted rice appeared in the main hall of the palace. From this plate the king used to take and eat single rice as a carton. By that time so many warriors also came forward to join the king in performing this ritual. Those who carried out this ritual ultimately became Chavers. This ritual is called *‘Chavera Varanam’*.

The Nair soldiers of the king were very adventurous people who considered battle as a festival. They used to conduct Onappada or Onathallu in connection with Onam in the month of Chingam. These Nair warriors were utilizing Onappada as the best opportunity to display their skill in martial art (art of warfare). They considered Onathallu as the grace of men folk. Veera Kerala Varma, the brother of Kayamkulam Raja took over the battle. Though at first Venadu had withdrawn in defeat, with the leadership of the Dutch and Ramayyan Dhalva, again they became more powerful. The important warriors in the battle were Achutha Varier of Eruva and Padavettom Pathinatha Panicker. Marthandavarma killed all these warriors through betrayal. Without any other alternative he sought for conciliation with Marthanda Varma. So in September 1742
a treaty of conciliation was signed at Koyikkal of Mannar. Though he had agreed to maintain the conditions of the treaty, in the very next year he abrogated it and attacked Marthandavarma. But he was completely defeated and had to abdicate his throne. Thus in 1746 Kayamkulam state became a part of Venadu.188

As a part of expanding his authority over the country, Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma appointed Ramayyan as the Dhalva and the chief of the entire Army (Sarvasainyadhipan) of Travancore 189

Mavelikkara was one of the important working centres of Ramayyan, who held the position of Dhalva for about 19 years. During this time Mavelikkara was made the trade and financial capital of Travancore. By marrying the sister of Edasseril Sankaran Unnithan, Ramayyan Dhalva again deepened his relationship with Mavelikkara. Edasseril Unnithans were the Ministers of old Madathinkoor State. Ramayyan Dhalva had constructed a godown at Mavelikkara to store the pepper which was the biggest merchandise of that time. Mulakumadeseela Sarvadhikar (supreme in charge of a Cutchery in old Travancore) was appointed as the person in authority of this godown. Ramayyan had also built a fort using laterite stone and clay. In the year 1809 Col. Macaulay strengthened this fort. Even now this place is known as ‘Kottakkakam’ and the remains of this fort are still visible. 190

188. Anil varma, Ormakalude paddippurayil oru raja nagari, Keli Magazine, 2006, p 65
189. Malayala Manorama, Kottayam edition, October, 8 p2
Vettiyar is a place near Mavelikkara. There was a reason to name this place Vettiyar. The story of Vettiyar is also the story of revenge by Ramayyan Dhalva. Karthika Thirunal Balarama Varma was a teenager. While travelling in a palanquin along with his parents, the people belonging to Budhanoor Potti Illam attacked them. Angry with this, Ramayyan Dhalva stopped the tributary of Acchan Kovil River flowing through Budhanoor paddy field by obstructing the flow of the River. To divert the flow of the river, a new river was excavated and accordingly, the place Vettiyar was formed. The Illam of Budhanoor Potti was removed and was installed at Mavelikkara. 191

Treasury and the Kaccheri of Mulakumadiseelakaran (the incharge of a Kaccheri) were working in this building. Earlier there was no interference by the government in trade activities. Seeing that in the trade of pepper foreign traders were reaping profit, with the aim of enhancing the revenue of the Government Thiruvithamcore Government interfered in this and made it a monopoly of the Government.

Ramayyan Dhalva was appointed as the administrator of pepper cutchery (Sarvadhikari). Ramayyan constructed a godown to store pepper. It enhanced the financial growth of Mavelikkara. Ramayyan Dhalva expired in 1756 when he was in his wife’s house.192

191. R. Kulathoor Iyer , Thirvanthapuram swdesabimani Achukudathil Achadikkappettathi,1910
Two treaties that were signed at Mavelikkara became very famous. The treaty of Mannar September (1743) between Ouiin and Travancore and the continuance of hostilities with the kingdom of Travancore in south Kerala convinced the Dutch that a prolonged warfare would be ruinous to their trade and political interests. This treaty was revealing the obligation of the Dutch to Thiruvitamcore and their clumsiness. As per this Treaty, the Dutch centres in Kerala joined Thiruvitamcore.\textsuperscript{193}

Another treaty was signed in 1753. The kingdoms Venadu and Kochi which had been enemies entered into a treaty at Mavelikkara. By this agreement, Kochi has forsook the authority over the areas conquered by Venadu. Marthanda Varma did not agree to the condition that he should not attack Kochi. He agreed to the condition that as long as Kochi would not harm Thiruvitamcore, he too would not trouble Kochi. Besides this, the Dutch had agreed that they would not trouble the British staying at Anchuthengu and Vizhinjam. Not only that, they would not help anybody attacking Thiruvitamcore and also agreed to give weapons worth Rs.12,000/- without taking any profit.\textsuperscript{194}

The royal families of Venadu (Tiruvitamcore), Desinganadu (Kollam), Ilayidam (Kottarakkara) and Odanadu (Kayamkulam) had relations with one another. After the Odanadu royal family was merged with the Thiruvithamcore dynasty, the practices of adoption took place between Mavelikkara royal family and Thiruvithamcore royal

\textsuperscript{194} Dr. A.P. Ebrahimkunju, Marthanda varma, Mavelikkarakararum Keralakarayil Dutchsakthiyude addapathannam p 59
dynasty. By this a relationship was formed between Thiruvitamcore royal dynasty and Mavelikkara.195 When Hyder Ali from Mysore conquered Chirakkal Kovilakam of Kolathunadu royal dynasty and later during the attack by Tippu Sulthan on Kolathunadu the members of this royal dynasty reached Mavelikkara and camped at Mavelikkara and its suburbs. They stayed permanently at Mavelikkara. At the end of A.D 1788 there spread the news that Tippu Sultan was getting ready to attack Thiruvitamcore. To defend the movement of Tippu, the ruler of Thiruvitamcore Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma Dharma raja made Mavelikkara as his main camp in between his travels. During Navarathri festival in the month of Kanni (Malayalam month) Dharmaraja was in Mavelikkara. Navarathri festival is a special occasion when Maharajas used to participate in festivities directly. During the year 1789, 1790 and 1792 Navaratri Maholsava was celebrated in Mavelikkara.196

From Mavelikkara royal family, adoption to Thiruvitamcore dynasty took place several times. The first adoption was in 1789. From Mavelikkara Palace Bharani Thirunal Parvathi Thampuratti and Uthram Thirunal Uma Thampuratti were adopted. In 1857 second adoption took place. In 1857 during the period of Uthram Thirunal Marthanda Vrma, after the demise of Sreemoolam Thirunal’s mother, it became necessary to adopt. On 27th December 1857 the great grand daughters of Revathi Thirunal Acharya, Lakshmi Bai and Bharani Thirunal Parvathi Bai were adopted. Of the two, Lakshmi Bai did not have any progeny. Parvathi Bhai had four sons. Because

196. C. Krishnakurup, Kerala charitram Parasuramanilude, 1962, p122
of this, adoption again became necessary. Pooradamnal Mahaprabha was the younger sister of Lakshmi Bhai and Parvathi Bai. The person who married her was Raja Ravi Varma, the world famous Artist. On 31st August 1900 the daughter of Mahaprabha, Sethu Parvathi Bhai was also adopted by Sreemoolam Thirunal.197

In 1924 when Sreemolam Thirunal expired, Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarnavarma Maharaja, the son of Sethu Parvathi Bai, was a minor. So Sethu Lakshmi Bai ruled the kingdom as Regent Upto 1931. Recently, on 14th November 1994, in the lineage of Sethu Parvathi Bai, for a progeny, Bharaninal Lekha Parvathi, the grand daughter of Sethu Parvathi Bai’s sister was adopted. Like this from A.D 1788 till today for 224 years Mavelikkara royal dynasty got the luck to perpetuate the Tiruvitamcore royal dynasty.198

The Mavelikkara royal family is a branch of Kolaswaroopam which is also known as Kolathunad royal family. The Kolaswaroopam was the ruler of North Malabar. The land which was ruled by Kolaswaroopam was known as Kolathunad. The boundaries of Kolathunad were Chandragiripuzha in the north, Korappuzha in the south, Western Ghats in the east and the Arabian Sea in the West. In ancient times, the Koalaswaroopam was known as Mooshikavamsam. It was from the time of King Kerala Varma who ruled Kolathunad during the 15th Century that the Mooshikavamsam came to be known as Kolaswaroopam.

197. Dr. V.S Sharma, Tiruvithamcore Rajavamsam, October, 1992, p.112
198. Ibid., p.114
After the members of the royal family stayed in different places, they had stayed at Sreekantapuram, Thaliparamba, and Pazhayangadi and finally the Kolathiri built a palace at Adithala and shifted all the entire family to that palace. This palace is known as Adithala Kovilakam. It had eighteen inner courtyards and eighteen branches lived there, one in each inner court. Out of these eighteen branches Pallykovilakam and Udayamangalam Kovilakam survived and the other sixteen became extinct.

In course of time Udayamangalam Kovilakam was divided into four branches. They were Methala Kovilakam, Kunjikovilakam, Naduvile Kovilakam and Cheriya Kovilakam. At the time of Tippu Sulthan’s invasion of Malabar the members of the Methala Kovilakam moved to Travancore and settled at Kottarakkara, Mariyappally and Thiruvalla. All the members of the Methala Kovilakam that settled at Kottarakkara were adopted to Karthikappally in M.E.1029 when the family was threatened with extinction. It became extinct in 1030 M.E. The Thiruvalla branch of the Methala Kovilakam namely Nedumpuram faced extinction during the year M.E 1068 some members were adopted from the Mariyappally Branch of the Methala Kovilakam to Thiruvalla. The members of the Naduvile and Cheriya Kovilakam came to Travancore and settled at Aranmula in 923 M.E (A.D.1747-48). Kunjikovilakam became extinct in M.E. 665 (A.D. 1489 - 90).
In course of time, Pallikovilakam also was divided into two branches viz. (i) Pallikovilakam and (ii) Puthupallikovilakam. The Pallikovilakam got divided into five branches: Chirkkal Kovilakam, Thevanankodu Kovilakam, Adithala Padinjare Kovilakam, Chenga Kovilakam, and Kownisseri Kovilakam. The necessity of adoption occurred during that time because there were only three male members in the Venad royal family.

Ravi Varma decided to adopt two female members from Kolaswaroopam as there were no female members in the royal family for its perpetuity. So he sent Prince Adithya Varma to Kolaththunad, to approach Kolaththiri and requested to seek permission for the adoption of two unmarried female members from his family to the Venad royal family. As his request for the adoption was refused, the Prince Adithya Varma approached the Koil Thampuran of the Thattari Kovilakam, who had married a lady of the Puthuppalli Kovilakam, which was a branch of the Kolathiry Dynasty. He informed his spouse of this proposal. First he brought his family to Travancore. After this he brought all the other members of the Puthuppaly Kovilakam to Travancore. From the Puthuppalli Kovilakam Samgramadheera Ravi Varma Kulasekhara adopted two female members to the Venad royal family and honoured them as Queens of Attingal. He made all arrangements for the settlement of other members of the Puthupalli Kovilakam in the Karthikappally Koickal Palace. This family became extinct
During M.E.1030. So all the members of the Methala Kovilakam adopted to Karthikappally were settled at Kottarakkara. This adoption made by Ravi Varma Kulasekhara is known as the first adoption to the Venad royal family from the Kolaswaroopam. After this we can see adoptions from the Kolaswaroopam, whenever there were no female members in the royal family of Venad.199

During the invasion of Malabar by Hyder Ali of Mysore (A.D. 1766 and his son Tippu Sultan), the members of the royal families in Malabar took asylum in Travancore. During this period Travancore was ruled by Karthika Thirunal Rama Varma Maharaja “Dharmaraja”, who received the royal families with full honour and made all arrangements for their stay in Travancore. An agreement was executed by Ravi Varma Kolathiri of the Chirakkal Kovilakam with the British Government. As per the agreement he ruled the Kolathunadu till 1839 A.D. and after that handed over the land to the British Government. He took over the administration of the temples of Kolathunadu and became the first Chirakkal Valiyaraja.

After the defeat of Tippu Sultan, all the royal families returned to Malabar except the Chenga Kovilakam, a branch of the Kolaswaroopam. The Thevanamkode Kovilakam became extinct in M.E. 1010 (A.D. 1834-35). The Chenga Kovilakam settled in Travancore. It was divided into three branch families. One family was at Mavelikkara, the other at Ennakkad and the third one at Prayikkara. During Tippu Sultan’s invasion

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199. Interview with R. Sasidhara varma, Mavelikkara royal family, Mannor Madam Kottaram. www.mavelikkara.org
of Malabar Chathayam Thirunal Mahaprabha Ammathampuran along with her daughters came to Travancore and settled in Mavelikkara. Other families who came along with Chathayam Thirunal Mahaprabha Amma Thampuran were also settled near the palace.200

After the demise of Parvathi Rani on 15th October 1893, other Princes of the Travancore royal family were adopted. The adoption took place on 30th August 1900. Sree Chithra Thirunal Balarama Varma, the last Maharaja of Travancore was the son of Sethu Parvathi Bai. The present members of the Travancore Royal family are the descendants of Regent Maharani Sethu Lakshmi Bai and Amma Maharani Sethu Parvathi Bai. Maha Prabha Amma Thampuran and her three daughters lived together at Vadakke Kottaram in Mavelikkara. The whole family stayed at Vadakke Kottaram till 15th April 1837 and the family was divided into three branches as per the decision taken by Bhageerathi Amma Thampuran, the eldest daughter of Maha Prabha Amma Thampuran. Bhageerathi Amma Thampuran and her children shifted to Thekke Kottaram, the oldest palace at Mavelikkara. Maha Prabha Amma Thampuran started staying at Vattaparampu Kottaram and Arya and her children stayed at Vadakke Kottaram itself. Accordingly the family pension which was drawn by the Valiya Thampuran for the whole family was also divided into three parts and the eldest male member of the family used to draw the pension giving a separate receipt.201

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200. Interview with Rethnam Rama Varma Tampuran, Mavelikkara Kottaram, 18-8-2010
Before the death of Rama Varma Thampuran in 1068 Makaram, Udaya Varma Thampuran passed away in 1891AD. Raja Raja Varma was the Valiya Thampuran (Head) of the royal family of Mavelikkara. The next male member of the family was Udaya Varma Thampuran of Puthen Kottaram branch. There was a case for the ownership of the movable and immovable properties of the Thekke Kottaram at the Quilon district court between Raja Raja Varma, the eldest brother of Udaya Varma and the next senior Udaya Varma of Puthen Kottaram of Mavelikkara royal family. All the movable and immovable properties went to Sree Raja Raja Varma as per the judgment. This judgment was not contested by Udaya Varma and he did not appeal to the high court. Hence the properties went to the branches of Chamunda Amma Thampuran’s family.

The family of Arya Amma Thampuran lived together till AD 1870. She had five sons and five daughters. Maharaja gave order to divide and pay the paddy and the Aduthoon to each pensioner separately. Pooramnal Maha Prabha Amma Thampuran and her three children shifted from the Vadakke Kottaram to a small house at the east of Vadakke Kottaram which later came to be known as Mannoor Madom Kottaram. Rama Varma, the Maharaja of Travancore arranged to construct the present Mannoor Madom Kottaram and the members shifted to this Kottaram after the house warming ceremony on 10th may 1903. Maharaja Raja Varma, the poet, historian and the first Travancore Devaswom Commissioner was the eldest son of Maha Prabha Amma Thampuran.

If the political history of Mavelikkara is observed, landlords, educated youth, and men from middle class families became brave fighters under the Congress flag. Individuals from various areas in Mavelikkara Taluk participated in the freedom struggle.

Elanthodath Raman Nair of Chennithala was an important person among those who participated in the national movement. People from Chunakkara Thuruthi Vadakkethil Sri Raman Nair in 1930s had participated so many times in law breaking agitation and other agitational activities and lifted the pride of the state in the national freedom fight. Raman Nair, who went to Kozhikode for the meetings, reached Dhandi and participated in Salt Agitation along with Gandhiji and underwent imprisonment. Kalikkal Nanu Pillai, Thuruthiyil Vasudevan Pillai, Aaryattu Abraham, Kaleekkal Thekkathil Sreedharan Pillai, Chellathu Sreedharan Pillai, Kaleekkal Thekkathil Sukumara Pillai were the main fighters in the national freedom struggle. Till formation of Thiruvithamcore State Congress in 1938, the activities of the Indian National Congress in the villages of Thiruvithamcore were nominal.

Non participation agitation and the agitations of backward or minority communities took place in the 1930s. National freedom conflict existed in

202. Interview with Kochu mani (grand daughter of Elamthodath Raman Nair, Chennithala)
Thekkakara area also. Neelakanta Pillai G.P, Kesava Pillai, Padmanabhan, Kuttyil Kumaran Pillai all had participated in the agitation. Kandankali was a leader of backward castes and social activities. He participated in freedom struggle.203

Attracted to the Khadi propagation programme initiated by Gandhiji, Kumara Pillai was very active in this field. Khadi and Village Industries started at Pallarimangalam under his leadership and is still operative there. Sri Mottakkal V.K.Narayanan who had participated in the national movement from Thazhakara was imprisoned, Vettiyar Gopala Pillai, Kochu Kaleekkal Gopalan Unnithan, Araunoottimangalam Velu Pillai, Eravankara Gopala Kurup, and C.K.Krishna Pillai were the spokesmen of the national movement from these areas. Those who had participated actively in the freedom struggle, Muhammed Aboobecker Labha, P.Mathu Channar, Daniel, Changayil Nanu Nair, Pullampally Krishna Pillai, and Kulathur Thekkathil Kumaran were the main leaders from Vallikunnam.

In 1923 at Puthuppally, a village in Mavelikkara, a congress, unit was newly established under the leadership of Raman Menon. This was the first regional unit of the Congress in Central Thiruvithamcore. Raman Menon was the first President; A National School was also started according to Gandhian principles. Through brave idealistic, patriotic and freedom loving youngsters, Congress Movement spread in Mavelikkara. Most of the flag bearers of the Congress became members of

203. Chunakkara grama panchayath Samagrawiksana Rekha, 2006, p18
Sreemoolam Praja Sabha. In the leadership of the Joint Political Sabha formed by combining together Thiruvithamcore State Praja Sabha and National Political Force, Thiruvithamcore State Congress was established in 1938. So many eminent persons were there in Thiruvithamcore State Congress from Mavelikkara’s soil.

One of the most influential figures of the Thrimurthis of Thiruvithamcare politics, T.M. Varghese was a native of Mavelikkara. T.M. Varghese had participated as a leader in non participation agitation and Joint Rashtriya Sabha. He reached legislative assembly in 1935 through election. He presented resolution demanding responsible rule in the legislative assembly for the first time. As frontline warrior of the State Congress, he underwent imprisonment for many times. He was a member in the Ministry of Pattom Thanupillai (1948) and in the Ministry of A.J. John. Another Congress activist from Mavelikkara was A.P. Udayabhanu. Who was elected to the Thiruvithamcare Legislative Assembly on State Congress ticket. A.P. Udayabhanu, who participated in Quit India Movement, was the Congress Committee President of Thiru Kochi for a short period. Kochikkal P. Balakrishnan Thambi was one of the earliest leaders of the Congress. He was known as a liberal among moderates and a moderate among liberals.

T.K. Madhavan was another brave leader of the congress movement of Mavelikkara. T.K. Madhavan who was born in 1885, from his school days fought against the custom of untouchability. The Scheme for upliftment of the backward castes commenced with seeking permission for Ezhavas to enter the temples. T.K. Madhavan has started Desabhimani News paper in 1915 and became manager and editor of the
same. He was a great patron of the idea of temple entry and argued that it is the right of all Hindus.

T.K. Madhavan went to Thirunelveli and met Mahatma and informed him of the denial of freedom to travel by backward castes in Kerala. He observed sathyagraha at the Vaikom temple premises along with Kelappan and K.P. Keshava Menon. With the arrival of Gandhiji, T.K. Madhavan could attract the attention of the entire nation as a part of Vaikom sathyagraha. After the Meni Agitation in 1953, organizing the Congress workers of Vallikunnam, a convention took place. In this convention, President Shanku Pillai was the chief guest. He went to Delhi and made arrangement to bring Nehru to Vallikunnam of Mavelikkara Taluk. Nehru reached Vallikunnam after attending a function at Kollam. Giving leadership for the freedom struggle against foreign domination and C.P’s savage rule, activities started at Mavelikkara from 1938. Centralising the villages Palamel, Nooranadu, Chunakkara and Thamarakkulam of Mavelikkara Taluk, the State Congress Committee was working with Charummood as the centre, on the basis of Taluk. The President of this Committee was Chunakkara Kalikkal Thekkthil Sreedharan Pillai and the Secretary Palamel Parameswarathu P.K. Balakrishna Pillai. With the leadership of the committee so many activities were conducted here, like spreading the importance of independence through propaganda, non-participation stir, Malayali memorial agitation, importance of Vaikkom Sathyagraha, activities for the upliftment of Harijans, teaching the official language.

204. George Thazhakara, Mavelikarayum Maneeshikalum, Malayala sahitya kulum, 2003, p74
Hindi and spreading the message widely, spinning of thread by using spinning wheel (Charakha) and ‘Thakkili, weaving, boycotting of foreign goods.205 Once known as Kerala Gandhi widely, K.K.Chellappan Pillai who gave leadership for freedom struggle is a proud son of Onattukara. C.P started an official relationship with Thiruvithamcore in 1931. One resolution was passed by authorizing the State Congress Working Committee. Maharaja was not willing to accept this resolution directly. He was asked to give the memorandum to his representative instead.206

The election of State Congress was conducted and the candidature for the Legislative Assembly was first accepted by Shankara Pillai. The election at Mavelikkara was really a trial of strength. The party fielded Sanakara Pillai, brother of A.Narayana Pillai as State Congress candidate in the by election of Mavelikkara – Kunnathunadu Assembly Constituency in June 1938. R.Narayana Pillai who was the candidate supported by the Nair Service Society and anti-State Congress party, was in effect a pro-government candidate. The Government officers openly canvassed for him. State Congress used this opportunity to spread its message among the people. As expected R.Naryana Pillai was declared elected to the Assembly, but the State Congress candidate. A.Sankara Pillai was able to secure 8699 votes as against 15200 votes polled to R.Narayana Pillai.207

206. C. Narayana pillai, Thiruvithamcore Sawathathiyara Samara charithram, 1972, p.188
The Communist flow in Madhya Kerala originated for the first time from the soil of Mavelikkara, which is also known as Onattukara. The reasons for the spread of this stream of leftist ideas and its ample growth are many. Treatment shown by the land lords, the hatred born in the minds of well awakened people towards the rule of chieftains, royal rule and imperialism, and the disagreement, the Punnapra-Vayalar agitation of 1946 thoroughly shook the change-seeking and liberal minded Congress followers. These people who crossed over to the Congress Socialist Party, naturally turned to Communist ways of thinking. The Meni agitation of farm workers continued for 45 days at Vallikunnam following the dismissal of a farm worker by name Meni, the Sooranadu incidents, the declaration of the Chief Minister (TK) that a place by name ‘Sooranadu’ is not required now and the death of the labourers due to cruel torture by the police popularised the Communist ideology among the people of Onattukara.

The declaration prohibiting Congress activities was issued in the year 1944-45. Diwan Sir C.P’s rule was first broken by the people of Vallikkunnam Kambisseri Karunakaran. Perur Madhavan Pillai and Keshavan Potti, the High School Headmaster has led this local revolt. The leaders of that period had fellow-feelings very high sense of purpose, willing near to sacrifice and truthfulness. Communist Party factor of Madhya Thiruvitamcore started like this at Vallikkunnam in 1948. Mavelikkara’s

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soil is the place where many efficient Communist comrades were born. Puthuppally Raghavan, who led an eventful life and also was a revolutionary guru, started political life as a Congress activist. At a later stage he became a strong Communist. The party group was established at Vallikkunnam by Puthuppally.208

Kambisseril Karunakaran was the revolutionalist son of a revolutionist father. In the fight for social justice the splendid example for Kambisseri Karunakaran was always his father Kambisseril Kochikka Channar. Till 1948 he was an active member of the Congress. After independence, Kambisseri who questioned the attitude of Congress High Command organized a law-breaking stir at Vallikkunnam. Along with Thoppil Bhasi he joined leftist politics and became the fighter in the front row of Communist Movement. In 1952 as a candidate of leftist united front he was elected to the legislative assembly from Puthuppally constituency.

In 1954 he became a member of the Janayugam Editorial Board. Kesavan Potti was the son of Krishnan Potti of Keecheri Illam at Keerikkadu, who had participated in the freedom fight of 1941 and worked in the State Congress and communist movement and got arrested. Having participated in all agitation launched by the party, Kesavan Potti spent few years in hiding. Having deep knowledge in Sanskrit, Kesavan Potti was the driving force behind K.P.A.C. The place name Vallikkunnam of Mavelikkara Taluk became very famous through Thoppil Bhasi and Kambisseri

208. Nanma, Vallikunnam Mathirboomi study circle Supplement, Kottayam Office, 2008, p22
Karunakaran. Both of them excelled in the fields of politics, art and literature. The drama ‘Ningalenne Communistakki’ which was written and directed by Thoppil Bhasi was performed all over Kerala. A great political artist was seen in this architect of drama who knew the psychology of the masses. Thoppil Bhasi made the art form drama vehicle for popularising communism. Thoppil Bhasi stood as the central pillar of KPAC. The KPAC formed at Kayamkulam opened a new glorious chapter in the history of the art drama. KPAC has grown into a great movement which transformed Kerala’s political awareness and flair for drama.209

The intense political awareness and cultural and artistic richness of the polity of Mavelikkara are evident from the facts presented in this chapter.

209. ibid .23