CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

From very ancient times Kerala has been a place of influence of various religious and philosophical streams. Apart from these, religions in India like Buddhism and Jainism, major world religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, also came and took roots in this soil. Mavelikkara too had undergone a religious colonization. Buddhism has contributed tremendously to the evolution of the culture and life style of the people here. Thereafter the existing religions Hinduism, Christianity and Islam assumed dominant role. Hinduism is the incarnation of various beliefs, customary rites and rituals selected from other sources and there also exists another significant religious sect that observes its own distinct customs and rituals.210

The name of this sect is Yuyomaya of Mavelikkara. They have also been able to play a significant role in the moulding of the social life of the people here. Functioning as the fundamental aspects and conditions for nourishing love, these institutions have exerted decisive influence in the historical evolution of Kerala, in the evolution of art forms, and in the progress of literary and cultural values. When Buddhism disappeared from this land, the Hindu, the Christian, the Muslim and the Yuyomaya sects assumed prominence.

Temples

The word “Kshethram” means that which preserves (thrananom) from all dangers (Kshethom). The temples in all places remain as the manifestation of the firm and sincere faith in God, ethical values, and cultural eminence of the people there. They are brilliant symbols of religious harmony and communal co-operation. A temple is a structure reserved for religious or spiritual activities, such as prayer and sacrifice or analogous rites. They are also believed to be the dwelling places of a God. These may also be called by other names like mandir, ambalam, kavu, koil or kovil, devasthanam and devalaya depending on the region in the Indian sub continent and its local languages. A temple as an institution was an Aryan gift to south India and that the so called Kerala School is responsible only for covering the product of the Dravidian tradition.

Divisions of temples in Kerala

- A temple (gramakshetram) in every village,
- A Desa kshetram in every desam with in a village
- Private family temples, where paradevathas (family deities) are worshipped.

Sacred groves (kavu) are community temples usually in the form of non-permanent or ecologically viable structures. There are divisions within such as veedu/Tharavadu/kavu/Kazhakom.

211. Soundara Rajan K.V, Temple Architecture in Kerala, p.21
• Transplanted deity temples (kutiyiruthukal).

The supreme administrative authority of a temple is the Thanthri. Thanthri has a vital role in a temple. It is he who takes each and every decision concerning the rituals in a temple. Thus he is the real head of the temple.212

Revival of Hinduism and the New Brahmanical temples

Vedic Brahmins probably settled in Kerala between in 700-800 CE and they had migrated from the West coast (Tulu nadu) during the time of Mayura Sharman, a Kadamba king. Large colonies of Brahmins from North India were invited to settle in Tulu and Kerala. In 792 C.E, King Udaya Varman of Mooshika dynasty settled 237 Brahmin families in Kerala. One tradition has it that outstanding Brahmins came with these immigrants. They defeated Buddhist leaders in public debates and established the intellectual supremacy of Hinduism. Later scholars like Guru Prabhakara and Shankaracharya reinforced this supremacy. This led to the promotion of Vaishnavism by Kulashhekara kings of the Chera Empire.213

Royal patronage to Brahmins brought about radical change in the social, political and cultural landscape of Kerala. A society which was largely egalitarian was revamped by the Varna caste System. Ethnic groups which existed much earlier like the Nair, Ezhavas and hill tribes were compartmentalised to fit this new social order. A virtual

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212. ibid. p23
213. Thanthra Vidya peedam Souvenir, 2009, p.8
monopoly over education and erudition made it easier for Brahmins to accept and assimilate old deities like Sastha, Ayyappa and Kali, Jain, Buddhist pantheon into the Hindu Pantheon. Sanskrit became more popular. Brahmins in Kerala adopted the tantric form of temple ritual worship.214

General form and lay out of temples in Kerala

Traditional Hindu temples in Kerala are simple structures made of wood, brick, laterite and granite. The only sign that marks the presence of temples is a tall, ceremonial flag staff. The main sanctum hosting the deity or deities is the sreekovil. It is usually a single storeyed building of a circular or square plan. Inside the temples, use of oil lamps in contrast to electrical lights lends an air of serenity and mysticism. The walls of the sreekovil are rarely left bare. They are covered with intricate, beautiful murals or wood carvings. The buildings base is usually of granite and the walls are of laterite stone masonry covered with copper tiles. These sloping roof buildings cope very well with torrential rains that are a hallmark of Kerala climate. Evolution of temples in Kerala is closely linked to social, cultural and political history. It will be clear that Kerala temple architecture is remarkable for the clarity of its overall forms and its skilled wood carvings, and wall paintings will continue to be seen as unique in many ways. The buildings are linked to other Indian monuments in terms of organization, stone carving patterns, column design, foundation patterns, and universal iconography.215

214. web site httpillen wikipedian . org (wiki introduction to temple s accessed on april 3rd
215. Ronald M.Bernier , Temple Plan in Review, Temple Arts of Kerala , p.77-79
The traditional architectural style of Kerala is based on Vastu. Now vastusastram is related to philosophy, principles, concepts, rules and regulations, rituals etc. The vastu sastram is related to the philosophy of Aham Brahmasmi and according to this concept the site for construction is a small model of the Brahmanda or Universe. There are several concepts related to the Vastusastra. The main concepts are the concept of universe, vastupurusha, mandala, Prakriti, purusha.\footnote{H.Sarkar, Monuments of Kerala,ASI, Government of India, 1992, 62}

**The concept of the universe** - The energy source of the earth and its living beings is the sun. There are about ten gods standing guard for the protection of the Universe. Ashtadikpalakas - Indira in the east, Agni in south east, Yama in south, Niryathi in the south west, Varuna in the west, Vayu in the north west, Soma in the north and Easana in the north east. These ashtadikpalakas are the natural powers behind the stability and well being of the Universe.

**Concept of Vastupurusha** – It is the soul which is spread all over the universe or brahmanda. The pictorial representation of the Vastupurusha is in rectangular shape. Commonly in Kerala the Vastupurusha lies with head towards the east Easana angle, legs at niyathi angle without any movement.

**Concept of Mandala** – The square plot which completely includes the Vastupurusha is known as the Mandala of Kerala vastusastra. A mandala has well defined boundaries which show a three dimensional object as two dimensional pictures. This Mandala
is divided by three types of lines which are called sutras. In this they are Veins and Nerves of the Vastupurusha. The joining points of these lines are called Marma or Nucleus.217

**Concept of Prakriti, Purusha** – The house has two parts which are Prakriti, and Purusha. Prakriti means environment and Purusha means built in space. This concept hints that the natural equilibrium of the environment should not be disturbed and that nothing in nature should be harmed.

**Rules and Rituals** – The important rules related to the Vastusastra are Padavinyasam, Veedhinirnayam, Karnavedham, Sutravedham, Marmavedham etc. The important rituals related to the Vastusatra are garbhanyasam, silanyasam and vastubali. According to tantra samuchaya the construction of the temple should be on the banks of a sacred River, Sea coast, top of the hill, valleys gardens, cities.218

**Components of a temple**

**The Pancha Prakara Layout Scheme**

The Bhakthi movement and resurgence of Hinduism also marked the revival of temple construction fully realizing the need to create a place of worship that would attract devotees, the pancha prakara scheme became the standard form for temple architecture. As the term indicates the five (pancha) enclosures (prakaras) around the sanctum were

217. Vastusastram, Dr.Asha Latha Tampuran, Edited by Panmana Ramachandran Nair, Kerala samskara padanagal, published on November 2011, published by Current Books, Kottayam 738-746
218. Kesthra sankalpam, Kannippayur Krishnan Namboothiri, 735-737
the innermost closure which includes Sree Kovi the central building housing the principal deities. This is the most important part of the temple where the idol of a God or Goddess is installed. It is of various forms -square, rectangular, elliptical, circular etc and may have one or two storeys. The front part of sanctum sanctorum is called sopana. In many temples the sopana has stone idols of guards of the god called Dwarapalakar. The top of the sanctum has a pointed bronze structure called Tazhikakkudam or Sthoopika. A space outside the sreekovil occupied by protective deities in the form of a small stone platform, is Balikallu. In Malayalam it is called Pradakshinavattom. It is located first outside the sanctum. There are many stones located here which represent ashtadikpaalakas who are the guards of the main deity and are generally called balikallu. Namaskaramandapa is a raised platform for prostrations by the devotees. It is located directly in front of the sanctum.

Nalambalam or chuttambalam is an area around the sanctum. Its function is to protect the temple as it covers the temple on all sides. They are less broad on the surrounding three sides and are called chuttambalam. Valiambalam is the covered space around the sreekovil for rituals and prayers. Thidappalli is the small temple kitchen. Mulayara is a special room for the storage of grains, fruits, utensils and firewood. Madhya Haara or VilakkuMaadam on the outside wall of chutambalam is a collection of stands for lamps and is called vilakkumadam or the galaxy of lamps. Sheevelipura is the place used for Kazhcha Sreebali. Agra mandapa is a pathway
leading to Nalambalam. *Valiyabilikallu* is a large decorated stone platform for sacrificial offerings. *Dwajasthamba* is a ceremonial flagstaff and its platform is located outside. Kovils of minor deities are the subshrines within the temple compound.

Koothambalam is the theatre hall of Kerala temple is located either as a part of inner prakara, on the south east corner facing north or as a separate hall outside the innermost prakara either facing into temple or facing north. This has a stage raised from the rest of the floor and a back stage area. This is the site for the performance of Kathakali or Chakiyar koothu recitals. Thus the *koothambalam* plays a role in educating visitors on the rich legends of the Indian cultural fabric. Gopura is a formal high building marking the main gateways. It is the outermost protective covering of the temple. The outer wall is called prakara. Oottupura is the dining hall and Purammathil is an outer wall. A well is a must in a temple. Its position is in the north east, either with in the inner circumambulation or at the chuttambalam. Its water has to be used for abhisheks or preparation of Nivedya. Nearly every temple has a sacred pond or Theerthakulam and Kulapura outside the temple wall if there is no river nearby.219 (Fig.4)

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Kandiyoor Shiva Temple, Mavelikkara

This is the most ancient and famous Shiva temple in Kerala. It is situated to the north of the Pulimoottil Bridge between the Michel junction and Thattarambalom at Mavelikkara. This temple is also known as Dekshina Kashi. The chief deity in this temple is Lord Siva, installed in the aspect of ‘Kirathamurthi.’ There is a tradition that the chief deity in this temple was installed by Rishi Migundu, father of the famous rishi Markkandeya. In 823 AD, with the establishment of this temple, a new mode of measuring time came into existence, namely the Kandiyoor Abthom. Cherukara Kuttathi, a Devadasi (a traditional woman-dancer in a temple) at the Kandiyoor temple was married by the Raja of Mattom Kandiyoor. In the Sanskrit poem Shivavilasom, written in the latter part of the 14th century, the author Damodara Chackyar points out that the Kandiyoor temple was the common possession of the Devadasis. The Devadasis in this temple were Cherukara Unniyadi, Muthut Ilayachi, Unnichakky and the “Unulies” at Kurungattu. From these illustrations, it is indisputably obvious that the influence of devadasis was once predominant at Mavelikkara. The temple is situated within an area of about seven acres.

Each of the four large walls surrounding the temple compound consists of a gate tower. Such beautiful figures as Gajendra mokshom and Krishnavatharom are brilliantly engraved on the wooden ceilings of the gate-tower at the East. The Sreekanda

prethishta in this temple is Kirathamoorthi ie, Shiva in his terrible aspect, after the funeral of his consort Sathi.

Around the Nalambalom, (Building around the sanctum-sanctorum), there are eleven supplementary temples which were built at different times. Five of them are shiva temples. It is very rare that five temples are situated at the same place in which Lord Siva in his different manifestations are installed. Parvatheeswaran, Shree Shankaran, Akhorashivan, Erhanashivan, and Mrithyunjayan are these different manifestations. Apart from these, there are many subsidiary deities too are installed here, such as Vishnu, Nagarajavu, Gopalakrishnan, Shasthavu, Annapoorneshwari, Subrahmanyan, Ganapathi and Brehmarekshassu. The installation of the flag-post made of gold was performed in the Malayalam Era 1103 Makarom, 15. Many significant inscriptions can also be seen here. The first inscription put up at Kandiyur Abthom 123 states the details of the things that were donated to the temple and the names and addresses of the persons who donated them. The inscription erected in the Malayalam Era 393 is about the information regarding the innovation of the temple. But the inscription put up in the Malayalam Era 396 simply mentions the performance of the Sreekandabishekam. Religious festivals and ceremonies such as Navarathri, Ashtomy, Shivarathri, and Thaippuyyom and Makarasankramom are conducted with great pomp and splendour. On the day of Thiruvathira predoshom and Saturday, the devotees observe bhajanom (worship with fasting) and, on the day of Karkkidakavavu, a large number of

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devotees gather on the bank of river Achankovil, and perform sacrifice. The Kandiyoor mattom padappattu described

“Kandiyoor Virarayudaya vammabanmar
Mandiyanavathu Kanduvaannayethiyor
Ennalilal Mavelikkarakarum
Tandamircherum puthiyakavullaorum
Karacha Ellatha Tazhakarakarum”

(In the Kandiyurmattom padappattu there are references to the onappada and Kandiyur.)

In the poem ‘Unnuneeli Sandesom’ composed between 1350 AD and 1365, there are remarks about the Kandiyur temple and the village. The temple provides splendid description of the heavenly beauty of the Kandiyur village, the financial prosperity of Odanadu and the brilliant attractiveness of the natural scenery at Mavelikkara which is also known as Onattukara. At present, the temple is under the jurisdiction of the Thiruvithamcore Devaswom Board. (Fig.5)

Chettikulangara Bhagavathi Temple

Chettikulangara Bhagavathi Temple is the most remarkable temple in central Thiruvithamkur. The temple is situated in an area between the Thattarambalam road at Kayamkulam and the north of Bhagavathippady which is in the south of Panachamoodu. The temple reflects the genuine cultural features of Mavelikkara,

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223. Cheppukattu Nelakandan Kandiyoor Mattom Padappattu, p. 105, 106
224. Kattakada Diwakaran, Kerala Sancharam, 2005, p. 264
the religious harmony among the people, their unity, love, devotion and the agricultural prosperity in the inlands. The favourite vazhipadu to the Jegadambika the chief deity in this temple is the festival of Kumbhabharani, with the accompaniment of the Kuthiyottom and the colourful spectacles along with them.225 The Kumbhabharani celebrations are performed once in a year, and a large number of people participate in it, including tourists from abroad, interested in various artistic renderings and the natives226. Recently the name of the temple has been suggested for the recognition of UNESCO.227 The temple is about 1200 years old.

The origin of the temple

When the village-elders at Chettikkulangara went to participate in the festival at Karazhma Devi temple at Koyppally, a village near Chettikulangara, they were treated unfairly and sent back insulted. Feeling deeply hurt, these village-elders conducted pilgrimages to the various temples in different places and finally reached Kodungallur Bhagavathi temple and there they observed ‘Bhajanom’. The Bhagavathi, the chief deity in the temple was impressed by their intense devotion and appeared to them in a dream. There are many stories, about the presence of the Bhagavathi in the Chettikkulangara temple. The village elders returned to Mavelikkara with the blessings of the Bhagavathy. Just one week after their arrival, one night, the boatman of the ferry-boat at the Karippuzha canal was about to return home, when a woman standing at the other side

225. Mathrubhumi, Kottayam Edition 2008, March 11, p11,
227. (UNESCO-United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation )
of the canal asked him to bring the boat there. He did so and took her to his shore. When they reached the shore, the woman suddenly disappeared. The next day, while the thatching of the roof of an old Illom which was in the south of the present Chettikulangara temple was being done, a woman reached there and asked for ‘gruel’. Having had gruel in kuzhiyila the woman moved to the north and then disappeared into the blue, after transforming hereself into a brilliant sphere of light as it was witnessed by a Nampoothiri woman in the Illom. Later it appeared in the astrological calculation that the occurrence was a sign of the advent of the Bhagavathi, and the brilliant sphere of light was none other than the Bhagavathi herself soon after the Bhadrakali being.228

The chief deities in this temple are Bhadrakali, Ganapathi, Nagayakshi, and Nagarajavu. Balakan, Yakshi, Murthi and Kannamballi, Bhagavathi are the subsidiary deities installed here. On the day of Makayirom in the Malayalam month of ‘Makarom’, the festival of Paraikkezhunnellathu begins along with the performance of the ceremony ‘Kaineettappara’. The celebrations last for nearly one month.

During the Navarathri festival, the expert musicians conduct excellent concerts on the day of ‘Vijayadasham’. The ceremony of ‘Vidyarambham’ is also performed with great devotion and piety. On the day of ‘Kumbhabharani’, splendid spectacles

228. Ad .M.N Krishna Kumar, Chettikulangara temple, Mudra Mahotsav 2002
are arranged and brought from 13 villages and dedicated to the Bhagavathi. Along with this the ceremony of Kuthiyottom is also performed. After the Kumbhabharani, the grand festival of Ethirelpu is conducted for thirteen days, under the auspices of 13 villages. The conducting of the festival on each day is executed by each of these villages in the respective order. On the day of Aswathi, children from different villages reach here to dedicate the marvellous spectacles made by them to the Bhagavathi. These spectacles reflect the brilliant artistic skill and craftsmanship of children there. On the same day the ceremonies of giving farewell to the Bhagavathi and her send off to Kodungallur is also performed with the accompaniment of Polavilakkukal and Vaithari. 229

When the Bhagavathi comes back to Chettikkulangara some good omens appear and then the thanthri gives consent to open the temple. The right of executing the Vetivazhipadu is still possessed by the family of the boatman who brought the unfamiliar woman, to the shore. Strangely enough, his is a Christian family. The right to performing the rites and ceremonies in the temple belongs to the ‘Sredevi Vilasom Hindu religious convention’ which is an organization consisting of the 39 persons selected from the 13 villages mentioned earlier. This organization came into existence in 1957. 230 The president of the organization at present is

229. Alleppy district Gazatter, P. 601
230. The information was obtained on the basis of interview with smt. Ammini, Santhakumari, Asariyathu House and Harikrishnan, Sredevi Vilasam hindu convention Chettikulangara.
B. Harikrishnan. Thousands of devotees at Onattukara firmly believe in the infinite power and glory of the Bhagavathi, the Divine Mother, dwelling in the Chettikkulangara temple. They assure that those who offer sincere worship to the Bhagavathi shall receive, ‘panchamahayogangal’ from her. The idol of the Bhagavathi installed in the temple represents the three aspects of the Mother the Sathva, the rajas and the Thamas. At dawn the mother is worshipped as Saraswathi Devi, in the afternoon as Mahalakshmi, at dusk, as Durga, and at the time of ‘Athazhanivediom’ as Bhadrakali. (Fig.6)

**Lord Krishna Temple, Mavelikkara**

The Lord Krishna temple is second in antiquity only to the Shiva temple at Kandiyoor Mavelikkara. The Chief deity Lord Krishna is the Bharadevatha of the Madathinkoor dynasty. According to historical evidences, the last king in the Madathinkoor dynasty gave the ownership of the temple to Maharaja Marthanda Varma. The ‘Sthambhavilakku’ put up in those times, still remains as an object of reminiscence of the pomp and splendour of the monarchic rule.

The area of the base of the Sthambhavilakku is 3600 sq.cm, and its height is 10m. At the top of the Sthambhvilakku there is a beautiful sculpture of the Garudavahanom and at the bottom, the figure of a tortoise is engraved. In each of the four sides of Sthambhvilakku, there remains the statue of a soldier wearing the attire prevalent in fashion until recently. As the Sthambhvilakku had been established as a symbol of victory there is a belief that if one lightens the wicks in the Sthambhvilakku, one will win civil cases. In the temple-compound, there are also little shrines for the
deity Ganapathi, and the Navagrehangal. The ‘Moonnupooja’ festival is celebrated for ten days on the occasion of Thiruvonam in the month of ‘Meenam’. The major offerings to the deity in this temple are deshavatharam, thrukkaivennauttu and the garudavahanom ezhunnellathu.231 (Fig.7)

The Narasimhamurthi Temple, Mattom

Mattom Narasimhamurthi temple is situated at Thattarambalom. The chief deity in this temple, Narasimhamurthi, was the ‘thevaramurthi’ of the Raja of Onattu. This temple was built as a part of the Narayingamannur palace that was the first royal palace at Onattukara. The chief installation in this temple has been conducted by invoking the deity Narasimham into the idol Vishnu. Narasimhamurthi represents the terrible aspect of Mahavishnu after the destruction of Hiranyakashipu, the father of Prehlada, his devotee. Every attempt of Venadu to conquer Odanadu failed, the cunning and crooked Ramayyan Dhalva tried to destroy the idols of the Bharadeva installed in three major temples.

These were the idols of Sree Krishnan, Gopalakrishnan and Narasimhamurthi in the temples at Eruva, Kandiyoor and Mattom respectively. After destroying the idols in the temples at Eruva and Kandiyoor, the Dhalva reached Kandiyoor. When he was about to destroy the idol, the temple-priest embraced the idol to protect it from being destroyed. The Dhalva killed the priest and then destroyed the idol. There is a belief

231. Mavelikkara SreeKrishna Swami Temple Ullsava Pathippu, 2009 , p1,2
that the presence of the temple-priest is still there in the temple as a brahmarekshassu. The sanctum sanctorum of the temple is built in circular shape with its entrance facing eastward. The chief deity in this temple is Narasimhamurthi, known as Chathurbahu. The major ceremonies in this temple are Moonnupooja and Sheeveli. In the poem Unnineelisandeshom there are detailed descriptions of this temple.\(^{232}\)

**Lord Krishna Temple, Keerthipuram Kandiyoor**

This temple, with its entrance facing the temple of Narasimhamurthi, is situated on the bank of the river Achankovil, and near Kandiyoor, which got the appraisal, “Thamar Mathum maruvumidom” due to the presence of this temple here. There is also a popular belief that the wealth and prosperity of this place is because of the dwelling of Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, with the deity Mahalakshmi in this temple. On the occasion of Karkkidakavavu, a large number of people reach here for performing “Pithrutharpanam” (a ritual for the dead) and also give ardent worship to Lord Krishna.

**The Bhagawathi Temple at Thattaramblam**

This temple is situated facing eastward at Thattarambalam. The chief deity in this temple is Durga Bhagavathi. The greatness of this temple was well-known from the 14\(^{th}\) century onwards, and it was in the period the well-acclaimed poem

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\(^{232}\) Interview with Ad. K.R Muraledharan Upadeaska Samthi President
Unnuneelisandesham was composed. There is a tradition that this temple was built by the Raja of Odanadu for the goldsmiths, who were brought from Tamilnadu to worship.

Since the chief deity in this temple is installed in the aspect of Saraswathi, the goddess of art and knowledge, ‘Navarathri’ (a Hindu festival of nine days’ duration in October) is celebrated with great significance. On the day of ‘Vijayadashami’, the devotees reach here to have their children, initiated into the alphabet.233 (Fig. 8)

**Sri Mahadevor Temple, Thripperumthura**

Shri Mahadevor temple, Thripperumthura, is one of the most ancient temples at Chennithala. It is situated one kilometer away northward from Puthuvilappady Junction at Mannar road, Mavelikkara. The place-name Thripperumthura signifies that the area in which the Thripperumthura temple exists at present was once a sea-shore; the term ‘thura’ means sea-shore, and that of ‘Perunthora’ means ‘a large sea-shore’ where a large number of people dwelt in or visited frequently. Once the sea had spread an extent to eastward of Harippadu, but later, it changed its course a long distance northward.

The Thripperumthura temple is a very ancient one. Even in Unnuneelisandesham, the renowned anonymous poem, there are significant references to this temple. The myths regarding this temple are many and interesting. The Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas

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233. Kshetra Ullasava pathippu, 2008, p, 16
were the most prominent and powerful royal dynasties in South India. The capital city of the Pandyas was Madhura.  

Thiruvatavur, a native of Thiruvatavur at Madhura was the charioteer of Arimardana Pandhyan, the Raja of the Pandhyas. This is the person who later became famous as Manikyavachakor, the devotional poet. Manikyavachakor built the Thripperumthura temple. The Raja of the Pandhyas sent Thiruvatavur to Thripperumthura for purchasing the warhorses brought from the gulf countries, for sale. When he reached, the ships of the Arabs had not reached there yet. Thus, he was forced to stay there. At that time, there was a small temple at the spot where the Mahadeva temple exists at present. Thiruvatavur, a staunch devotee of Lord Shiva, made an ardent worship to him and thus attained a splendid vision of him. Lord Shiva blessed him by giving the name Manikyavachakor.

In ancient times, the ownership of this temple and its compound belonged to Natuvilemathom Swamiyar. After his time, it was handed over to Idappallithamburan, who ruled the area. Later its authority was entrusted with Aaikkattu Kaimol who had taken over sovereignty and rendered administration in this area. Later all there areas were conquered by Maharaja Marthanda Varma and after this the pomp and splendour of the Aaikkattu family gradually began to decline. The sanctum sanctorum of this temple, built in circular shape, consists of three circle shaped rooms of which the

outermost room contains the middle room, and the middle room the innermost. In the
innermost room are installed ‘Shivalingom’ and the deity Shreeparvathy, facing eastward
and northward respectively. In the middle room, Shree Ganapathy and Paramashivan in
his Dekshinamurthi aspect are installed adjacently. The outermost wall of the sanctum
sanctorum is decorated with beautiful and gorgeous sculptures.235

There are very attractive wooden engravings on either side of the ‘sopanam’
(stepping stones) of the sanctum sanctorum where the deity Shivan is installed, and
that of the sanctum sanctorum in which his consort Parvathy is installed. The engraved
figures have large canine teeth and they carry maces and other weapons in their
hands. A beautiful Shivalingom built in stone is put up at the north of the
‘namaskaramandapom’ surrounded by statues of snakes. The attention captivating
‘Kalmoni’ erected in front of the sanctum sanctorum, the huge ‘Sthambhavilakku’,
the ‘Neivilakku’ etc. are also remarkable. In this temple, the festival is celebrated in
the month of ‘Dhanu’ and the ritual ‘Kodiyyettom’ is performed as the commencement
of the festival. This ceremony is conducted at night in this temple; the festival is
celebrated for eleven days, while in other temples its duration is only ten days. On the
10th day the Bhagavan takes a ‘Palliyurakkom’. Ayyaththara, a ritual famous all over
Kerala, was also performed here with great significance. Another prominent
celebration is that of the Shivarathri. As in other temples of Shiva, here also the
Shivarathri celebrations are conducted with great and mirth. The Bhagavatha

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235. P.M Madhavankutti Nair, Chennithala Muthal Muthukulam vari, N.S.S Karayogam Pathippu ,p,8
Sapthahayajnam, and the ‘aazhipooja’ (worship of the burning fire) that is performed on the 41st day of the Mandalom season, also deserve special mention.

**Shree Mahadevor Temple, Chala**

Chala Shree Mahadevor temple is situated at Mannar road, 1 km southward from Kallummoodu junction, Mavelikkara. The term ‘chala’ means ‘the place where buying and selling are performed’. This is the place where the traders gathered for selling the foreign goods arriving by sea at Thripperumthura. A house is situated next to this temple, and its name is Vaniyomthoppil. The meaning of the word ‘vanien’ is trader which is derived from ‘vanikkku’; the term ‘vanibhom’ means trade. Thus, Vanimthoppu was the ‘thoppu’ where the ‘vanionmar’ settled. The sanctum sanctorum is round-shaped, and adjacent to it there is a small ‘Kovil’ where the idol of Ganapathi is installed. The ‘valiyabalikkallu’ and ‘balikalppura’ are the special features of this temple. The temple was built for the Vaishyas to worship. The Vaishyas are one of the four castes which traders belong to. But, in modern times the renewed version of rituals is performed here. The Vaishyas were the people engaged in trade in the era of ‘chathurvarniom’. They mostly belonged to the Shaiva religion, and hence are staunch devotees of Lord Shiva. This is why the idol of Shiva is installed in the temple.236

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236. Mahakavi Muthukulam Sreedhar Sathabdhi Samaranika, Kala poshini grandhasala, Thripperumthura, P.8
**The Bhagavathi Temple, Mullikkulangara**

The Mullikkulangara Bhagavathi temple is situated at Mullikkulangara junction, Tekkekkara panchayath, Mavelikara. According to tradition, the elders of families such as Manthieth, Kulathur, Velithadathu, etc., went to the Kodungallur temple, performed a ‘bhajanom’ there, invoked the Bhagavathi, and brought her to Mullikkulangara. The deity was first installed at Alummutilthara. But, later a temple was built and re-installation was conducted with the performance of appropriate rituals. The sanctum sanctorum of the temple is square-shaped and in front of it remains the beautiful statues of ‘dvarapalakanmar’ (gate keepers).

Namaskaramandapam, chuttuambalam and namaskarappanthal are also outstanding features of the temple. Lord Shiva is installed in a specially built sanctum sanctorum outside the ‘chuttambalam’. Deities such as Rekshassu, Yogieaswaran, Marutha, Yekshi, Sarppangal (serpents), Moorthi, and Velichappadu are installed in subsidiary status. The festival is celebrated on the Day of ‘Ashwathi’, and splendid spectacles consisting of chariots and horses contribute tremendously to the pomp and splendour of the festival. The ritual ‘Shivarathri’ and the day of ‘Bharani’, the Bhagavathi’s ‘thirunal’ (birthday), which falls in the month of ‘Medom’ are also celebrated with great enthusiasm. ‘Rekthapushpanjali’, ‘Pantheerazhi’, ‘Kuruthi’, ‘Kalamezhuthum pattum’ etc. are the favourite offerings to the Bagavathi.
The Patayanivattam Bhagavathi Temple Vallikkunnam

This temple is situated at Vallikkunnam Panchayath, Mavelikkara. As its name indicates, the temple was once famous for ‘patayani’. It is believed that the ‘patayani kolangol’ jumped up and down with violent excitement and then sank into the pond, and this pond is still famous with the name ‘Mudiyil kulam’. The Patayanivattom temple is one of the rarest temples where vanadurga, Bhadrabhagavathi, Ganapathi, and Lakshmi are installed, in the same ‘chuttambalam’. ‘Anpolivazhipadu’, udayasthamanapooja, thalicharthu, therolinivediom, paranivediom etc, are important offerings.

Deivappuraikkal Bhgavathi Temple

According to historical records, this temple is over 800 years old. Tradition says that a group of Brahmins migrated to this place, installed Badhrabhagavathi as their deity of worship, and performed rituals regularly. In the temple, there is a beautiful sanctum sanctorum for the Bhagavathi to dwell in, and there are also the ‘Jeenova’ and the ‘thirumutti’. In course of time, Ganapathy, Darmashasthavu, Durgabhagavathy, Brashmarekshassu, Yogeeswaran, Yekshiyamma, and Matonswami were installed as subsidiary deities. The ‘kottarappura’, situated at the ‘thirumuttom’ of the temple, is reminiscent of the antiquity and glory of this temple. ‘Thottompattu’, ‘Kuththiyottom’, ‘Pooppoda’, ‘Kalamezhuthu’, ‘Kolomthullal’, Thirumudippechu’ and ‘Sarpparadhana’ are important rituals.
The Bhagavathi temple, Karthyayanipuram

The Karthyayanipuram Bhagavathi temple is situated at Vallikkunnam panchayath, Mavelikkara. The temple has a tradition of about 800 years. At this temple, the chief deities of worship are Durgabhagavathi and Bhadrakali. The festival is celebrated on the day of ‘Anizhom’ (the 7th constellation) in the month of ‘Kumbhom’. Once in a year Shree Rama, her holy consort visits Karthyanipuram to meet his lovely spouse. On his way to Karthyayanipuram he visits many temples, and at last reaches Karthyayanipuram from the Kavumba temple, with a splendid procession. In this temple the festival is celebrated in the month ‘Medom’. ‘Anpoli, Udayasthamanapooja, Thalicharthu, Parayetuppu’, etc. are the important rituals performed here.

Apart from the temples described so far there are also many other famous temples at the Mavelikkara taluk. Some among them are Ponnaramthottam Bhagavathi temple; Maruthakshi temple, Mavelikkara; the Bhagavathi temple, Kottarkavu, the Bhagavathi temple, Puthiyakavu; the Dhanvanthari temple, Prayikkara; Karazhma Bhagavathi temple, Lord Krishna temple, Wachikkadu; the Ayakkesseril Mahadeva temple; the Dharmashasta temple; Irattakkulangara; Lord Krishna temple, Chathankulangara; the Bhagavathi Temple, Vathikkulangara; Lord Krishna temple, Pallarimangalam, and the Vasoorimala Bhagavathi Temple.
The Christian Religious Institutions

St Thomas, the Apostle of Jesus Christ is considered the father of Christianity in India. Much information is available about the Christian churches and the various Christian denominations.\(^{237}\) In 52 AD, St. Thomas, the apostle, landed at Malankara, a place adjoining Mussiris and converted several Brahmins and people belonging to other castes. He founded seven churches on the Malabar Coast Malankara, Palayur, Kottarakkavu, Kokkamangalam, Quilon, Niranam and Nilakkal.\(^{238}\) With the arrival of Colonialism by the 17th century, many European missionaries reached Kerala. The Church Mission Society of London made many conversations from among the untouchables and the Syrian Christians.

Unlike Kerala temples, there is no uniform or standard layout for Christian churches of Kerala. Rather, most of the churches have different sorts of architecture according to various sects and their traditions apart from experimentation with new designs. Still most of the churches, particularly non-catholic Syrian Christian churches of Kerala, do share several common features. Evolution of the church architecture of Kerala springs from two sources, the first from the work of Apostle St. Thomas and the Syrian Christians and the second from the missionary work of European settlers.

\(^{237}\) Joseph C. Panjikaran, Christianity in Malabar with special reference to the St. Thomas Christians of the Syro Malabar rite in Orientalia, Vol VI, 1926, p. 103-105
\(^{238}\) PJ Thomas, Malayala Sahithyavum Kristinanikalum, Kottayam, p63, 64
The Church had a gable roof extending to the chancel, the most sacred part of the church and the sacristy by its side. The tower over the chancel soared higher than the roof of the nave similar to the sikhara over the garbhagriha in a Hindu Temple. The residence of the priest and the parish hall were located on one side of the Church and the cemetery was on the other side. The Christian worship centres occupy a prominent place in the history of Mavelikkara which comprises the overall characteristics of the cultural heritage of Kerala. The most famous and ancient Christian church at Onattukara is the St. Mary’s Orthodox Cathedral Puthiyakavu, Mavelikkara. This divine abode has remained as an indifferent witness to the many remarkable events that occurred in the soil of Mavelikkara.

**St. Mary’s Orthodox Cathedral, Puthiyakavu**

Puthiyakavu Church is the most ancient Christian Church at Mavelikkara dedicated to virgin Mary. Its history deserves further illustration. The Christians who fled from Nilaikkal migrated to places such as Kadambanadu. From there they spread to Kayamkulam and Mavelikkara. Most of those migrants went for worship to the Church at Kayamkulam. Since they experienced difficulty in travelling a long distance to reach the church for worship, the Raja of Kayamkulam gave them consent to build a church
at Kandiyoor, Mavelikara. Then the Raja of Kayamkulam attacked the Raja of Mavelikara and Christians in this region supported the latter. Hence the Raja of Kayamkulam took revenge on them by destroying their newly-built Church at Kandiyur. Then the latter allotted them a plot where the Puthiyakavu Church was built. It was built in 943. In Jornoba, a travel book, which describes the details of the churches built before the 16th century, the author Guviah provides a long list of ancient Churches. Among them, 19 names were those of Orthodox Churches which included the Puthiyakavu Church, Mavelikara. The French traveller Aquaetin who visited Mavelikara in 1757 AD has recorded that one of the prominent Jacobite Churches at Kayamkulam is the St: Marys Orthodox Church at Mavelikara.

This ancient Christian Church has a lot to tell us about the epoch-making events in the course of the history of Mavelikara. Ahathulla Bava reached Kerala for rendering holy services for the Syrians here. The Portuguese authorities imprisoned and killed him by drowning him in the sea. The sculpture delineating the murder of the Bava can still be seen at the Puthiyakavu Church. It is sculpted on the table put under the pedestal on which the Holy Scriptures one kept. A peculiar religious ceremony conducted at the Puthiyakavu church is the devotional “Raza”. Conducted on the festival day, when the ‘Raza’, passes through the streets of Mavelikara, all people irrespective

239. Orthodox Sabhayum Perunnallum, Malayala Manorama, Jacob Mathew, 2009, p, 3
240. Mathew Varghese plamoottil, Mudra Maholsave, 2002, p, 71
of their caste and religion pay their respects and reverence to it. This is the most
consummate example of the Hindu-Christian unity in the soil of Mavelikkara.242 (Fig.9)

The C.S.I Church, Mavelikkara

Another famous Christian Church at Mavelikkara is the CSI Church. The founder
of this Church was Rev. Joseph Peet who visited Mavelikkara in 1838 for missionary
activities. Mavelikkara, writes Peet “is a big town in the Travancore state”. The
people give recognition to the town as the centre of the government of Travancore
and the eye of Travancore. It can still be seen at Mavelikkara, the Raja’s palace, the
ponds, the remnants of a big fort and the avenues lined with pine-trees on both
sides243 The design of the construction is in British style, modelling on the British
art of building construction. There is a beautiful belfry as part of the church building.
More than 800 people can sit inside the building. Its total length is 93 feet and breadth
including the width of the wall of 3 feet is 42 feet. The entrance of the building has 8
feet of height and breadth. This is the lowermost storey of the belfry. The belfry has
three storeys’ of which the lowermost has the largest circumference while the
uppermost has the smallest. The total height of the belfry is 65 feet. The entrance to
the ‘Mathebeha’ with an arch is 15 feet high. The roofs of the main hall and the
Mathebeha are supported by very attractively built pillars. The church was built at two
stages. The first stage was over in September 1845, with the installation ceremonies.

242. prof. V.I. Niyan , Mavelikkara Padiyolayum Mattu Chilakariyangallum ,Keli, 2006
243. Dr Chervalli Sasi , Odanadinte Ulluthuduppukkal, 2007, p.30
The second stage was completed in 1850 with a re-installation. At this stage the building of the church was finished. Mr. Peet did a lot of good things for the welfare of the devotees at Mavelikkara. The slab installed at the entrance of the church with the mystic syllable ‘OM’ inscribed on it remains as a symbol of religious harmony. Recently, Rev. Peet’s bungalow was converted to the Peet Memorial Training College.244

The St. Joseph Malankara Catholic Church Puthiyakavu

The St. Joseph Malankara Catholic Church came into being on 7th March 1932. The founder of the church was Geevarghese Mar. Ivannios, a member of the Panikker family Puthiyakavu Mavelikkara. The sacramental ceremonies of the St. George Chapel were performed in 1968 when Rev. Fr. Joseph Kaippillil was the vicar. It was renewed in 1977 when Rev. Fr. Cheriyan Panikkar was the vicar.

St. John’s Orthodox Syrian Church Pattichira

The Valiyavazhikkarakkar is one among the many sections of people belonging to the parish of the ancient Kadisha church at Kayamkulam. Though people at places such as Mattom, Pattichira, and Chettikulangara were all associated with Valiyavazhikkara in those days, the overall circumstances were not favourable for them to worship their God. Thus, circumstances made it inevitable to build a new Church. As a result of the sincere and persistent effort of people in the parish like Mathan Chandippillai Muthirakandathil, Uthuppan Koruthu, Kollanethu Vadakeethil Paili

244. Malayala Manorama, Mavelikkara news Bureau , march 10,p3
Geevarghese and Kollanethu Chacko Pothan, the St. John’s Orthodox Syrian Church was built. The first sacramental ceremonies were performed by Abdulla Razan for Mar Yuhanon Mamdana. By and by, many families took membership in the parish and the number of the members of the parish increased gradually. An agreement was signed on assurance that any instruction from Mar Divannyasyos the Metropolitan bishop, would be obeyed without protest. Accepting the conditions in the agreement, a section of the people from Mattom took membership in the parish. At present; more than 400 families are members in the parish. This parish has taken initiation in the establishment of many educational institutions. It always assumes a decisive role in the educational activities of Mavelikkara.245 (Fig.10)

Marthoma Parish Church Thazhakkara Mavelikkara

In 1895, the reformers in the Old Syrian denomination conducted a Holy Mass at the altar in the Puthiyakavu Church on the day of forana, their day of worship. This was performed under the auspices of Fr. Stephanose Malpan and following the new order of worship. Thus, the Marthoma Parish Church came into being. The foundation - laying of the new Church was conducted by His Holiness Theethose the Second, the metropolitan bishop, and the sacramental ceremonies were performed by both Theethose the second and Abraham Sapheger, another Metropolitan bishop. The cross in the churchyard was put up in 1941 on the occasion of the centenary celebrations. 246 (Fig.11)

245. pathichira Suriyani palli, Souvenir, 2002, p, 8
St. Thomas Marthoma Church Kurathikkadu

This Christian church is situated at Kurathikkadu, Mavelikkara. In 1836 AD, reformers such as Fr. Abraham Malpan and 10 prominent priests left the Malankara denomination and took active participation in the renovation activities of the Old church at Kurathikkadu. But some among them attempted to convert the parish to a Jacobite parish. Those who had disagreement with this complained to Theetheose the first, and consequently many problems arose. Without delay, a law suit was filed on the issues in the Municipal court at Mavelikkara. The court prohibited both the parties from entering the church till judgment. After the prohibition a memorandum was submitted to Theetheose the second for building a new church at Kurathikkadu. Thus, the Marthoma church came into being at Kurathikkadu in 1904. After 17 years of trial, the court delivered its judgment on the case, and it was in support of the parish. Thus, in September 2004, the new church came into being. At present, 215 families are members of this parish.

St. Stephen’s Church, Kattanom

The St. Stephen’s Church, Kattanom, is the biggest Church of the Orthodox denomination under the authority of the cathedral at Mavelikkara. The old people believed that Kadamattathu Kathanar had an association with this Church. This Church brings home the details of a lot of historical events. In this parish, about 1000 families

Mavelikkara Tekkekara grama panchayath,vijaneyam ,2005,p,131
are firm believers in the divinity of the ‘pallithambran’ (St Stephanos) who lies buried. The old church was rebuilt recently.\textsuperscript{247} (Fig. 12)

**St. George Orthodox Church Mullikkulangara**

This Church belongs to the Malankara Orthodox denomination. The Nadalaikkal family at Mullikkulangara built a “*Kurishuthotty*” at Mavelikkara. The foundation-laying and the sacramental ceremonies were conducted in 1957, under the auspices of Mathews Mar. Ivanios Parettu, the bishop of Kottayam diocese. The reconstruction of the ‘Kurishuthotty’ was conducted in 2001, and the sacramental rites were performed by the Catholic Bava. The festival in memory of Geevarghese Sahada conducted annually, is the most important celebration. Besides the prominent Churches described so far, there are many other Christian Churches at Mavelikkara, which provide their own contributions to the cultural heritage of Mavelikkara. The Christian societies divide it into different denominations. Nevertheless the meritorious cluster of these Churches stands before us as a brilliant symbol of unity and harmony. They have always been a matter of awe and wonder in the minds of the people of Mavelikkara\textsuperscript{248}

**The Mosques (Masjid)**

The Islam Religion spread its roots in Kerala during the period of Malik Ibn Dinar. Islam spread in Kerala through the migration of new groups from Arabian

\textsuperscript{247} Erection of church at Kattanam, Central Archives T.V.M.Bundle No 212, year 1895
\textsuperscript{248} St. George Orthodox Church Mullikkulangara, Ettunoyambu Perunal pathippu 2009, p1
Peninsula and the gradual conversion of native population in the permissive social set up of Kerala. The mosque architecture of Kerala exhibits none of the features of the Arabic style or those of the Indio – Islamic architectures of the imperial or provincial school in North India. The models for places of worship were only Hindu temples or the theatre halls and these models had to be adapted for the new situation.249

The early mosques in Kerala consequently resemble the traditional buildings of the region. In plan the mosque comprises a large prayer hall with a mihrab on the western wall and covered verandah all around. Generally it has a tall basement similar to the adhistana of the Brahmanical temples and often the columns are treated with square and octagonal section as in mandapa pillars. The walls are made of laterite blocks. Wood was used extensively in super structure for the construction of ceiling and roof. The roof in many cases is covered with sheets of copper incorporating fenials in the ridge, completing the form of temple sikhara with the stupa. Perhaps the influence of Arabic style in Kerala construction is seen in a subtle manner in the secular architecture of Muslims. In Mavelikkara, more Muslim communities could be seen in Vallikunnam, Bharanikkavu and Mavelikkara areas in Mavelikkara Taluk. It

249. Roland E. Miller, Mappila Muslim of Kerala, 1976, p 42
is seen that all these people are connected with one or other business. All types of Muslim institutions are seen here.

The Muslim Jama-ath Mosque of Mavelikkara (Congregation)

The Jama-ath Mosque is situated near the Municipal Park of Mavelikkara, The first Muslim family reached, here during the rule of Maharaja Sree Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma. These people were the attendants at the Royal Palace of the Maharaja. The first Mosque was constructed here in the year 1955 by Janab Haji Hasan Yaccob Sett, a social and cultural activist who was a native of Kayamkulam.

The Jama-ath Mosque at Kanjipuzha

The Kanjipuzha Jam-at Mosque is situated at Vallikunnam Panchayat of Mavelikkara Taluk. The land for constructing the mosque was donated by Cheruthoppil family. In this way the Kanjipuzha mosque was built. Kanjipuzha is the place in middle Kerala which secured special consideration in connection with Islam Religion. Because of this people from other areas used to call Kanjipuzha as ‘Thekkan Ponnani’ (South Ponnani). Other Mosques present at Vallikunnam like Kaduvinal Jama-ath, Kanjipuzha East Muslim Jama-ath, the Muslim Jama-at of Choonadu Town etc. are also important mosques around this place. Subah at dawn, Suhar at noon, Asser in

250. Information Obtain by M. Abdhul Bashir, Secretary Muslim Jama Aath, Mavelikkara
251. Kanjippuzha muslim jama Aathcharithram, K.A rassakk Sahithi Mathrirbhumi study circle, 2008
the evening, Maghrive and Ishi are the five obligatory daily prayers of Muslims. Muslims celebrate two important festivals, i.e. Id-ul-Fithar, Cheriya Perunnal which marks the conclusion of one month long fast and Id-ul-As-ha which renews life.251

**Yuyomaya Sect**

Yuyomayans of Travancore form a unique and interesting Christian sect in Travancore. Its headquarters was in Kannetti in Karunagapalli Taluq. At one time this sect created a great stir among the Christians of North Travancore. The history of the sect is very interesting.

About two centuries ago a Tinnevelly Brahmin with his family had settled down in the Kunnattur Taluq. One of his descendants with his wife and six sons received baptism in 1861 in the C.M.S. Church at Mavelikkara at the hands of Rev. Mr. Peet. The father died in 1863. The conversion of a family of Brahmins to Christianity naturally produced at the time a great sensation among the Syrian Christians and Missionaries in Central Travancore; but it was nothing as compared with what the eldest of the six sons popularly known as Vidvan Kutti (the learned youth) was to create a few years hence, by the declaration that he was commissioned ‘as the servant of all’ to prepare men for the Millennium referred to in the Visions of Danel the prophet and John the disciple of Jesus Christ252.

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A Syrian Christian ‘Kudarappallil Thommen’ had sometime in the latter half of 1874 A.D., a vision which Vidvan Kutti interpreted as meaning the immediate advent of the end of the world, which event all Christian Societies believe may happen at any moment. There was nothing extraordinary about Thommen till the date of this vision; but thereafter he often fell into a trance and saw visions. Losing consciousness often during moments of intense religious frenzy he would utter incoherent and enigmatical sentences which Vidvan Kutti alone undertook to interpret. The news spread like wildfire through the land; and hundreds of men and women, from among the Reformed Syrians, the Protestants and the Jacobites and also such low castes as carpenters, goldsmiths and even Pulyans flocked to hear the visions of Thommen and their interpretation by Vidvan Kutti. Vidvan Kutti’s younger brother, Jacob by name, and a certain Luke, a Syrian Christian of Niranam, both gifted with remarkable powers of speech in Malayalam, were nicknamed by the followers of Vidvan Kutti as ‘the sons of thunder’, for they distinguished themselves as the most eloquent preachers of the new plan of salvation. Philipose, another brother used to impress the audience with the soul-stirring compositions of Vidvan Kutti. Thus powerfully supported, Vidvan Kutti began a movement, which starting as a revival preaching of the need of practical religion (the earliest name of the movement was only Unarvoo Sabha, the awakening society) ended in the formation of a new sect of Christians, different in doctrine and

253. Yuyomaya sabha sathabadhi Samarnnikka Committee, 1982, p 3
ritual and to a certain extent in social customs also from every other Christian sect in the land. The letters that the successful revivalist addressed on the importance of his God-given commission, to the Metropolitan of the Reformed Syrians, the Patriarch of Antioch, the Pope of Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury brought no response; but the enthusiastic followers, that flocked from far and near to hear his words of wisdom and eloquence, increased fast as days passed on. The movement may be said to have started as a new sect on the 16th of October 1875. The chief tenet of this new Church was that the personal Government of the Messiah was to commence on the 1st of October 1881. Hence they were popularly known as the five and a half years party or more widely the six years party.

Actively believing in the immediate advent of the Millennium, i.e., the personal government of the Messiah as the ruler of the believers, men and women danced with fervent zeal in response to the soul-stirring prayers, songs and addresses of Vidvan Kutti and his co-workers, and open confessions of the most heinous sins were the order of the day. Vidvan Kutti and his brothers and some among the followers were given suitable offices in the creed as prophets or Bodhakars (awakeners); they toured from place to place mostly in the tract lying between Kottayam, Kayamkulam and Mavelikkara. Kannetti, the residence of Vidvan Kutti and a forgotten village till that period, became the headquarters of the new sect and the scene of several well-attended mass meetings.
What powerful hold the teaching of Vidvan Kutti had upon his flock may be inferred not only from the open confessions already referred to but also from fact that several well-to-do believers, relying upon the advent of the Millennium in 1881, sold all their belongings and spent the proceeds in the exercise of their religion. In obedience to a call from their leader, respectable Syrians despoiled their children without hesitation of all ornaments, and their wives of even the sacred Tali (neck ornament- the seal of marriage alliance) which no Syrian wife will part with so long as life lasts. Such was the fanaticism instilled into their mind by the dispensation. On another occasion Vidvan Kutti ordered, probably with view to making his men never boast of high birth and to impress upon them the brotherhood of man, that for a certain period every male member of his following should earn his livelihood by actual house-to-house begging with a cocoanut shell in his hand and singing after the manner of ordinary beggars a song that he composed for the purpose. His followers did obey him and in spite of threats and entreaties from unbelieving relatives whose vanity was wounded by this procedure, they did beg and earned their livelihood by begging for a few days as commanded by their leader. (Fig.13)

The successful career of Vidvan Kutti met with its first reverse on the failure of his prophecy that as a preliminary to the advent of the Messiah there would be, for a space of three days and three nights, darkness such as had never been seen before.
The date of prophecy came; but the sun shone all the same in the firmament as clearly as before. This was a rude shock to the believers and Vidvan Kutti’s followers fell off in hundreds from that evil day, and his society gradually declined. He however explained that the darkness that he prophesied as the preliminary to the advent of the Messiah, was not physical darkness but spiritual darkness the want of faith and spiritual light which his followers displayed in abandoning him and his creed, and thus his prophecy was really fulfilled. The ingenious explanation did not however much help to stem the tide of his waning popularity. The society which had between 12,000 and 15,000 followers dwindled to about a third of that number. Then came the 1st of October 1881, the long-looked-for date when Christ was to begin his personal government on earth and man was to be freed from the thousand and one ills that he is heir to. Again Vidvan Kutti failed. He however explained that the spiritual government of a spiritual ruler would be discernible to the eye of the faithful alone; and that the carnal man would perceive no change in the order of nature. This too was of little avail. His followers left him as they came in crowds. The several ‘Mutts’ that had been constructed as prayer-houses were converted into shops or private houses, and about the close of 1891 the society did not perhaps muster more than 500 followers.

Yuyomaya sect is different from other important religious sects. Yuyomaya sect does not have any common places of worship. Yuyomayans were strict vegetarians and teetotallers. Their language is known as Eerinjiquanova.
religion which was established by Ramayyan later came to be known as Yuyaralisan, who was born and brought up as a Brahmin, studied all Vedas and scriptures and later adopted Christianity. This sect has got afresh the people belonging to yuyomaya sect staying in the nearly areas of Mavelikkara. The people of Yuyomaya sect do not have any Church or temple. Worship, marriage, coronation etc are all done in their houses.  

The century of the Yuyomaya sect was celebrated on 10th January 1982 at the auditorium of Mahatma Boy’s high school at Chennithala. The speech made by Aathura Das Swamikal in the above Assembly is reproduced below

“In Kerala a small sect called Yuyomaya Society is leading a pure and satisfactory life without the knowledge of many people in the world. Yuyomaya Society is of course a Society of Kerala. In this Hindu Social rituals and Christian principles are organized. The people of this sabha do not wear ornaments; do not drink liquor; renounce usage of fish and meat. Among them wealthy as well as poor are there. The meaning of believing in God is the belief without any special indebtedness to any religion. There is no separate priesthood or a separate place of worship. Attenders (Sevakar) are there to transmit their faith and belief to others who work without any desire of reward. They are called missionaries or Ministers. There are no religious rituals accepting salary and rewards or there is no arrangement for giving speech by accepting payment among them”.

They used to assemble in each house, conducted prayers and used to help. Ceremonies after death are being conducted at their own place. Without any falsehood, delightfulness or desire for power they are self satisfied. Hearing their names it is felt that they belong to a section of Christianity, but they are following eternal religious doctrine. Our government has declared this society as a special religious section. They do not have any sectarian thought as forward, backward or minority community. Vidwan kutty has established Yuyomaya sect to mould a very good Human Society. The people belonging to Yuyomaya sect stay in the nearby areas of Mavelikkara. The Name of God worshipped by them is called “Yaye Yoyo”.

The names of Months of Yuyomaya sect are as follows:

1. Avirmodhan 2. Ekathmakam
5. Chattalan 6. Thejomayan
7. Pyyooshan 8. Yogyam
9. Sauryan 10. Mangalam
11. Madhuram 12. Hrutham

The names of days in the week as per Yuyomaya rules:-

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<th>Day</th>
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<td>Sabdam</td>
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<td>Yathnam</td>
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The order of worship is as follows. Prayer well is conducted after keeping appam and water on the table. After reading ‘Maha Santhosham’, the daily Gospel Summary, they start great worship of ‘Yayeyo Yoyoma’. After this they will chart (chant) ‘Nithya Vandana Vachanam’. Only the minister will chant “Sreeparamaikka Purusha Sooktham” and end the worship. The marriage custom of Yuyomaya religion is very peculiar. There are two gothrams in this religion, Christa Varna gothram and Christa Lakshmi gothram. No marriage will take place between the same gothras at any time. Marriage is conducted as per Nithya Vivaha rules with the bride and groom doing Parigrahanam with each other and entering into Nithya Vivaha agreement. In continuation to this the priest will chant the hymns which are supposed to be chanted by him only. Thus the marriage will be solemnised. 255

The believers of Yuyomaya sect are purely vegetarians. Their belief is that those who eat vegetarian food, their body will become pure. If we eat pure food, then only the body remains pure. They also believe that since human beings themselves are Gods abode there is no need to have a separate place for worship. This sect enlightens that excess wealth; gold adornment etc. will cause to grow desire to grow in us. In Kerala’s culture the roots of religion are very fragile. If we examine from previous

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255. Interview with Rajan Kanniyathara who belongs to youomaya family
centuries onwards we cannot see any religious group having a uniform (united)
definition about religious ideas. The reason is, instead of believing in a common
principle each group worships as per their its belief. All religions are manifested
with the aim of salvation of the people. The aim of every religion is purity of life and
attainment of salvation. “The foundation stone of life is purity or sacredness” is
definitely the belief in God’s existence. There is no doubt that the man who believes
that God is protecting or punishing him will have devotion and fear of God.256
Yuyomaya Serpita
Ashrams at Mavelikkara

The ashrams at Mavelikkara remain as an embodiment of the cultural and the spiritual heritage, and the service mentality of the Hindu community.

Narasimha Kushmanda Sidhashram

This ashram is situated at Kallumala, Kattanam road, Mavelikkara taluk. The founder of this ashram is swami Narasimhakushmandam a Hindu monk. In his whole life he upheld the principle “One caste, one religion, and one God the humans”. Swami Narasimhakushmandam was born at Iraniyol taluk, in the Malayalam Era 1068, and his birth star was ‘Pooram’ (the 11th lunar) The Guru’s birthday is celebrated in the ashram with great pomp and splendour.257

Siddhashram of Chenniithala

The Siddhasram is situated at Chennithala in Mavelikkara. Madhava Panicker who was known, as Dharmananda Swamikal was born on 2nd of Malayalam month Chingam in Malayalam Era 1087 in Pavoor house at Kallinel, a place situated on the east of Mavelikkara. From childhood onwards certain special qualities were observed in Madhava Panicker by certain dexterous intellectuals, certain features observed were devotion, truthfulness, compassion, universal love, lack of hatred (animosity), cooperation and co-existence etc. After his marriage to Mangathu Gowrikutty Amma of

257. Narasimha Kushmanda Siddhashram, Puram ullsava Souvnir, p. 3
Thripperumthura at Chennithala in Mavelikkara, Madhava Panicker shifted his residence to Thripperumthura and during the period 1951-52 he established Siddhashram at Chennithala. The public were maintaining a unique and pious belief in the Ashram which was welcoming all the people equally without any caste or religious differentiation and also in Swamiji who was the organizer of this Ashram and its activities.(Fig.15) It was always a joy for the devotees to see asterism in the month of ‘Meenom’. In his youth he was a soldier in the army of Nairs. But later he abandoned the post and engaged himself in pilgrimage. After a while he took over the position of headmaster in the Karazhama Sanskrit school, Koippally. Later he founded the Narasimha day. The annual celebrations are conducted on the day of ‘Pooram’ in the month of ‘Meenom’ it being the Swami’s date of birth.258

Shree Shubhanandashram, Cherukol

This Ashram is situated at Cherukol in Mavelikkara taluk. This ashram was founded by Brahmashree Shubhanandagurudevan. He was the consummate example of an enlightened master who gave humanity the fruits of his enlightenment with tremendous devotion and in a manner which is full of novelty and vigour. Pappankutty, the name of the Guru before he became a monk, was born in the Sambava community, as the son of the married couple Ittiyathi and Kochuneeli in the month of ‘Medom’ in the Malayalam Era.(Fig.16) Being born in the Sambava caste, he was deeply aware of the discrimination

and marginalisation the low-castes experience in society. Therefore he embraced the life of an ascetic early in his life for the welfare and upliftment of those undergoing the hardships of the caste system. In 1919 the organization “Athma bodhodayasaghom” was formed. Shubhananda guru exhorted that ‘athmaodhom’ (spiritual or divine knowledge) is the essence of religion, and its realization liberates the humans from ignorance and degradation. That Holy spirit who has observed all his activities as offerings to god, that divine spirit, Karma Yogi, retaining his own sacred memory in the mind of his devotees attained Maha Samadhi (Salvation) on 28th February 1976 on Pooradam Nakshatra day. The activities of the Ashram established by Swamiji are still continuing in a good way. Especially Mr. Nandakumar, the secretary of the Siddhasram is working hard innocently for the growth of the spiritual culture of Siddhashram. Siddhashram which became world famous due to the divine power of his Holiness Dharmananda Swamiji.259 (Fig.17)

GROVES (KAVUKAL)

The groves found everywhere in Kerala are a proof of the understanding of our ancestors about the benefits provided by nature to mankind. Though connected with

259. Mathirbhumi, Kottayam edition 2010 April, p.8
religious belief and temple worship, these groves influence all spheres of social life. Since the interference of man in religious belief, customs and rituals is limited to a certain extent, these groves are centres for worshiping Serpents. These groves give shelter to plenty of animals including reptiles and birds. Another peculiarity of the groves is the ponds found near these groves. These ponds are the dwelling centres of aquatic animals. These water flows play a vital part in keeping the water levels of the wells and ponds in the surrounding areas intact. Like this, these groves play an indirect role in the maintenance of water sources. The atmosphere of these groves abundant in oxygen makes the people tranquil. Therefore these groves are considered as centers of worship and meditation. The serpent poojas and ‘Kaviladiyanthiram’ (religious ceremony) being performed symbolically give the hint that these groves are to be protected as sacred places. Kavus and ponds are seen in plenty. The idols of Nagaraja, nagayakshi, yogeeswaran etc. are installed in most of the groves. Serpents and rituals exist in connection with groves The Indian culture eulogize trees in the Sankalpa of Thrimurthis, Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesa.

The hymns recited during poojas explains the relevance of protecting the trees. In Kerala there are a few rare temples where planting of tree saplings is done as symbolic of tree worship and encouraging tree maintenance. There is a practice of bowing in front of trees in prayer and asking forgiveness and taking permission from
the tree before felting them. This practice is still continuing. All these activities are creating awareness in us that the trees should be respected and protected. The pertinence of the groves present in Mavelikkara Taluk of Alappuzha District has great importance. The important groves are Ivalakkavu, Mulakkal Kavu, Edasseril Kavu, and Kannannur Kavu. Among them Ivalakkavu is the most famous grove. The speciality of Thazhakkara Ivalakkavu is the practice of Vriksha Pooja (tree worship) and Sarpa pooja (serpent worship). This temple is the one and only temple in Kerala where trees are worshipped and rituals are performed in their honour. The root basis of this tree worship is the firm belief of the generation of Ivala that our cultural heritage itself is based on nature. Behind the Vana Durga temple separate rectangular shrines are constructed for the trees. The annual vriksha poojas are being conducted where centuries ago (or millennia) the ancestors brought invaluable wealth of trees from Kannavam areas of Kozhikodu and planted in this place. Twice in a year i.e.; on Makayiram Nakshatra of Malayalam month Medam and Aayilliam Nakshatra of Thulam month the members of Ivala family and the locals join together to perform Vriksha Pooja which is being conducted in continuation of Sarpa Pooja.260 (Fig.18)

The Vriksha pooja rituals start with chanting of Vriksha Pooja hymns hundred and one times going around the lighted traditional lamps (Nilavilakku) later the worshippers line up in front of the shrine to offer flowers. Subsequently the high

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priest distributes tree saplings to the participants as ‘Prasadam’, while the special guests plant the saplings in the temple courtyard; the members can plant the saplings in the compounds of their houses. In continuation to this there will be an award distribution, ‘Vriksha Mitra’ award to the deserving persons or institutions. Conducting thulabharam with plants is another specialty of Ivala Vana Durga temple. These sights will create lot of interest in the people who love nature and trees. A silent green revolution of the masses that worship nature whole heartedly and love nature, is taking root in Ivala of Thazhakkara. (Fig.19) The genealogy of Ivala family which is extending like the branches of trees is also prepared. The important idol of this temple is Vana Durga. The words of Sri Madhavan Nair, secretary of this temple, about the origin of Ivala temple is as follows. A youth from Kannamathu of Kozhikodu District who was an exponent in arms and dexterous in all types of fine arts, along with his Brahmin wife reached the serpents’ abode Ivalakkavu, travelling through Panayannarkavu. They planted the saplings of rare trees they brought from their native place there. They installed their Upasana Murthy (the Goddess they worshipped) ‘Mookambika’ as ‘Vana Durga’ here. Along with Vana Durga they also installed Rakshas of Pulliyampally, Pithrukalari Murthys and Yakshi’ – Gandharvas.261

Besides these there are separate shrines for Ganapathy and Moolasthanam. The important poojas performed here are annual ‘Vriksha Pooja’ and ‘Sarpam Thullal’

performed once in seven years. Sarpam thullal is a very expensive ritual. The ceremony is of seven days duration. For making ‘Kolam’ (decoration of the floor with figures of Gods and deities) powders of rice, turmeric, accacia leaves, coals etc are used. All these arrangements are being done observing penance. Using different type of powders, the figures of ‘Nagaraja’, ‘Nagayakshi’, Sarpayakshi, Ashtanagas etc are drawn and pooja is performed. ‘Piniyalukal’ (those who sit in the Kolam and later being possessed) will sit in front of the Kolam and later getting possess they will remove the Kolam.262

With this, the pooja would end. This pooja is being supervised by the ‘Pulluvas’ the staunch devotees of Nagas (Serpent Gods) Ivala family was the ministerial family of the Thampuran of Odanadu or Manthri Kudumbam). These family members are the heirs of Ivala Temple. Mani Nagas and Kari Nagas are present here. The relation between the Naga and the trees gives a divinity to the trees also like the Nagas. There is a strong relation between the trees and the people here like soil to the roots. In the middle of the continuous exploitation of nature and felling of the trees by the modern man, these people still cherish the beauty and importance of nature and try to preserve it. They deserve praise and regard for their love of nature and efforts to preserve it.263 This Kavu is seen just opposite to Mavelikkara Municipal office Sarpa pooja or serpent. Worship is conducted there even today. Unnithans of Edasseril family were the ministers of Madathikoor kingdom. Edasseril Kavu is their family

262. K.K.Kunjikrishna Pillai, pulithittakudumba Charithram,Nagarajavum,Nagayakshiyum , Kanniya sarppangallum, 2006, p61
263. Asok an Eravankkara, Ivalakkkavile Iswaryadevatha, Muhurtham, 2010 p28

204
grove. Ramayyan Dhalva became the Dhalwa of Venadu and chief of Army in AD 1737. After his marriage to the sister of Edasseril Sankara Marthandan Unnithan, Ramayyan Dhalva has got a kinship in Mavelikkara. The idols of Nagaraja and Nagayakshi are installed in this grove.

**Chennithala Palliyodam**

The *Chennithala Palliyodam* belongs to Chennithala at Mavelikkara. *Chennithala Palliyodam* is the boat coming from the most far away place among the Palliyodams that take part in the Aranmula Jalothsavam (water festival). The Palliyodam which reaches the pampa through Achan Kovil River and Kuttanperur River has great significance. The Palliyodam which starts on the previous morning rowed throughout the day and night, reach Aranmula on Uthrittadi day for participating in the Uthrattadi boat race at Aranmula.264

Sixty four rowers are there for this Palliyodam. This boat has about 30 m 0.5 cm length. Width is 1 m 86 ½ cm. Entering palliyodams with observance of fast, 64 rowers indicate 64 arts. Four people who sit on the stern represent the four vedas. Eight men who sit on the Aniyam are guardians of the eight corners (Ashatadikpalakar). Seven men in the middle are singers of boat songs. They represent the seven basic notes in music. The Valla Sadhya (the boat-feast) offered to Aaranmula Appan after reaching Aaranmula. Sixty four of food items served in the feast. The journey of this

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264. Chennithala puthan palliyodam 45 Pirannallu samarnika, 18-8-1988, NSS.Karayogam chennithala,p22
Palliyodam is marked with singing of different types of boat-songs. These songs are from the literary works like Kuchelavrutham, Bheeshma Parvam first and second part, Nalacharitham, BanaYudham, Panchali Swayamvaram, Santhanu Gopalam I & II, Uthrattathi Charitham, Aaranmula Stuthikal, Ramayanam, Kiratham and Bala Leela (Paravazhipadu will be offered on the land to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Panchavadhyam and singing boat-song in a festivity mood this boat will be travelling along the river. The songs the boatmen sing are all in praise of gods and goddess. Chennithala’s snake boat at the time of setting out to Aaranmula the boatmen provoke the blessings of Lord Siva with the following sing.

‘Kalamereppazhakiya Chalakshethram Than-nil mevum
Kala vairi Bhagavane Namichidunnen
Sankara Karunya Moorthe Parvathi vallabha Deva
Thinkal mouli Bhagavane Kathukollene

Later the boat visits Cherukol temple for darsan accepting betel leaves and tobacco from the villagers (Karakkar) with fan fare. Then the boat resumes its voyage to Aaranmula. On the way accepting the offerings, they sing boat songs. At the end they will reach the holy place of Aaranmula Bhagavan. At the time of reaching the temple, the following couplets will be sung:

206
“Pahi Narayana Krishna Pahimam Bhaktha Valsa
Pahi Govinda Mukunda Palicheedane
Thiruvaranmula Vazhum Narakannasana Ninte
Thiruppadam Akatharil Karutheedunnen”

Chennithala Palliyodam after participating in Uthruttathi Water festival. They will reach Valiya Perumbuzha Kadavu (bathing ghat), The Palliyodam will be kept in the Malippura near Valiyaperumbuzha Kadavu 265 (Fig. 20)

The diversity and profundity and evolution of the religious faith of the people of Mavelikara are highlighted through the historical facts mentioned above.