CHAPTER - V

RELIGIOUS FULCRUM OF KALKULAM TALUK

The Hindu religion of Kalkulam Taluk had passed through different stages. During the ancient period, nature worship was prevalent among the original settlers. In course of time, their religious practices were further refined. Yet they had no specific philosophy. They worshipped many Gods and Goddesses including local deities, spirits, trees and hills. They called these gods and goddesses as Madan, Karuppan, Pidari, Mariamman, Ankalamman, and Kaliyamman. Of these Sudalaimadan and Ankalamman were very famous.

When the monsoon failed, people thought of Mariamman and conducted certain rituals. The goddess Mariamman was one of the most evil minded and blood thirsty of all the deities of India. But when misfortune came ‘people thought it was a sign that she was out of temper and therefore they took steps to appease her wrath. The people of the mountaineous region worshipped Mother Goddess in the form of Kottavai. In Kalkulam there

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2. R.N. Yesudas, A Peoples Revolt in Travancore, Trivandrum, 1977, p.26
5. R.N. Yesudas, op. cit, p. 27.
is a village called Kotticode where Kottavai, the goddess of victory, had been worshipped.\textsuperscript{10}

**Buddhism in Kalkulam**

Even before 300 B.C Buddhism, a northern religion, began to spread all over the state of Travancore. Temples were dedicated to various deities along the coast and the *Sasta*\textsuperscript{11} temples were vestiges of the Buddhist influence. *Sasta* worship was common in Kalkulam. The Kuthumangalam Sasta temple\textsuperscript{12} in Kalkulam stands witness to the people of Kalkulam who worshipped Sasta as their God. The chief deity of the temple is Sastha. Under the Venad rulers Kuthumangalam Sastha temple was used as Registration cum Land Revenue Office. The temple was built by the Krishnavahakars. Poojas in the temple were performed by a Brahmin priest. In course of time this temple fell into disuse.\textsuperscript{13}

When Buddhism was unable to keep its prominent position for long, it left behind permanent landmarks in the form of Hindu worship by bequeathing the God *Sasta* to the Hindu pantheon.\textsuperscript{14} At Thiruvidaicode,\textsuperscript{15} a small hamlet about three miles to the east of Padmanabhapuram, a Siva Temple

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10} Kotticode Mead Memorial Church Souvenir, Thuckalay, 1982, p. 42
\item \textsuperscript{11} *Sastha* is one of the names associated with the Buddha, *Aiyaran* or *Aiyappan* is an equivalent of Sastha [K.K. Pillay, *op. cit.*, p.516].
\item \textsuperscript{12} List of Temples H.R. & C.E. Office, Nagercoil.
\item \textsuperscript{13} G.T. Vikraman Thambi, *Varalattil Mandaicadu*, Parappatu, 1988, p.22.
\item \textsuperscript{14} *TAS*, Vol. I, p. 140.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Local tradition derives the name of the temple from Tiru-beautiful or sacred, vidai-bull (Nandi) and kodu-hill top. *Ibid.*
\end{itemize}
is situated where Sasta is enshrined in the outer prakara of the temple. 16

The Bhagavathi temple situated in Mandaicadu, 17 3 k.m away from Colachel on the high-way between Colachel and Nagercoil has some connection with Buddhism. There is no authentic record on the origin of the temple. But oral traditions reveal that it was built during the reign of Cheraman Perumal, who ruled over Kerala in the beginning of the 8th Century A.D. 18

It is believed that during the 8th Century A.D many Buddhist Viharas of Kerala were destroyed, 19 and hence many Buddhist monks and nuns emigrated to secluded and remote parts and took to a life of meditation. 20 One such nun selected Mandaicadu as her place of meditation. After her death, a hermit arrived at Mandaicadu and he painted a Sri Chakkara 21 at the place of burial of the nun. Tradition says that the hermit used to mingle with children and perform numerous miracles. One day while he was performing a miracle at the place of the tomb of the Buddhist nun he disappeared mysteriously. At the place of his disappearance an ant hill appeared and it continued to grow. 22 Later a shepherd, while cutting grass, saw blood bursting out of the ant-hill.

17. Ibid., Vol. V, p. 140.
18. Ibid., pp. 17f.
21. Sri Chakkaram denotes Buddhist Dharma [P.K. Gopala Krishnan, Keralathinde Samskarika Charithram (Malayam), Trivandrum, 1974, p.185].
When this information was conveyed to the villagers, a large number of them ran to the spot and found what the shepherd said was true.\textsuperscript{23} Having realized the divinity of the ant-hill they erected a temple over the ant-hill.\textsuperscript{24} The temple, thus erected came to be called the Mandaicadu \textit{Bhagavathi Amman} Temple. Today the five forked ant-hill has a height of 12 feet. It has been given a five faced appearance with eyes and nose made of silver and fixed one face shaped structure facing the north. The increase in the height of the ant-hill every year is probably due to the application of 30 to 40 kg. of sandal paste on it.\textsuperscript{25}

The main festival of the temple is called \textit{Mandaikattu Koda} which lasts for 10 days during the Tamil month of \textit{Masi}. This is one of the biggest festivals in Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{26} People from all parts of Kanyakumari District and from the neighbouring state of Kerala participate in this festival in large numbers. The devotees shout out the following words calling for the deity’s protection.

\begin{quote}
\textit{“Saranam Tha Devi Saranam th\text{a} Devi Poonnamme} \\
\textit{Saranam Tha Devi Baghavathiyae”}
\end{quote}

The words of praise of the devotees during \textit{Mandaicattu Koda}, and the Sri \textit{Chakkara} found in the sanctum, sanctorum (\textit{sannithi}) of the temple shows the connection existing between Buddhism and the temple.\textsuperscript{27} After the decline of Buddhism, the doctrine of Ahimsa which was an essential feature of

\begin{footnotes}
\item{24} Thinamani Sudar, dated 13\textsuperscript{th} March, 1977.
\item{25} G.T. Vikraman Thambi, \textit{op. cit}, p.13f
\item{26} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{op. cit}, p.98.
\item{27} A.K. Perumal, \textit{Thenkumariyin Kathai} (Tamil), Chennai, 2003, p.240.
\end{footnotes}
Buddhism was incorporated into Hinduism. *Uthsavams* and religious processions which form part and parcel of the Hindu form of worship were essentially Buddhist in origin.\(^{28}\)

**Jainism in Kalkulam**

With the help of royal patrons, Jainism spread very quickly in the 3\(^{rd}\) century B.C.\(^ {29}\) Jainism had a complete sway over the whole of Kanyakumari District between 5\(^{th}\) and 8\(^{th}\) Century A.D.\(^ {30}\) Kottar, Kurandi, Thiruchcharanathumalai and Thirunandikkara situated in Kalkulam taluk were the four famous Jain centers of Kanyakumari District. The disciples from the four Jain centres left votive images cut on the rocks in the Jain centres. These centres became the propagating centres of Jainism and many Jain scholars from different countries had visited these places.\(^ {31}\) With the disappearance of Jainism the Jain temples were converted into Hindu temples. The cave temple at Thirunandikara was originally a Jain shrine,\(^ {32}\) up to the 9\(^{th}\) century A.D. and it was converted into a Hindu Temple later on.

The Travancore Archaeological Department has officially recorded eleven inscriptions found at Thirunandikkarai temple. The earliest of all the records belonged to the Ay King Varaguna of the 9\(^{th}\) century A.D. The lines

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\(^{28}\) Census of Travancore, Trivandrum, 1941, p.127.


found in the inscription *Thirunandikkarai Bhadarar Kudutha Bhoomi* meant that the land assigned to the temple at Thirunandikkarai was donated by a Bhadarar.\(^{33}\) It is clear evident that the land on which the structural temple of Siva stands was obtained from the Jain monks. It was Rajaraja I who converted the Jain temple into a Siva temple in the 10\(^{th}\) century A.D.\(^ {34}\) The inscriptions on the wall of the cave temple records grants given to the temple for the celebration of a festival in Aippasi Satabishak or Sathayam, the birthday of Rajaraja-I the great Chola ruler.\(^ {35}\)

The central shrine is round and adorned with a top belt of Bhuta ganas. There are dwarapalas at both entrances and a small shrine of Ganesa at the left side.\(^ {36}\) The oldest stone images at Thirunandikkarai were those of Siva, Varahi and Vaishnavi unearthed some years ago and kept under the asvatha trees in front of the temple.\(^ {37}\) The *Pallichandam*\(^ {38}\) which were given to Kamalavahana Pandita and Gunavira Pandita, the managers of the Nagaraja temple proved the existence of Jainism upto the 17\(^{th}\) century in Kanyakumari District.\(^ {39}\)

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33. Bhadarar denotes Jain monks. This word is frequently found in the inscriptions of Thiruchcharanathamalai and Kalugumalai, the other Jain settlements of the 9th century A.D. [S. Padmanabhan, *op. cit.*, p.120]
37. *Ibid*.
With the coming of Aryans from the north, Buddhism and Jainism began to decline from the 8th century A.D. onwards. Being great scholars, the Brahmins could defeat the Buddhists in arguments and thereby establish the supremacy of Hinduism.\(^{40}\) To popularise the Hindu religion and culture the Brahmins established many temples and introduced several festivals. They accepted the non-Aryan gods such as Murugan, Siva and Thirumal as their gods and their practices into the Hindu fold.

Naga worship, essentially a Dravidian cult, was also absorbed.\(^{41}\) Naga worship or serpent worship was common among the Nair families of Kalkulam. Nairs kept a stone Naga image in the South Western corner of their compound. During the month of Karthihai, they lighted lamps known as *Karthihai Theebam* and worshipped the Naga deity.\(^{42}\) Offerings of fruits, cakes, flour, milk rice etc. were made to the snake god.\(^{43}\) Nair women performed Naga puja for forty days to get an offspring. It is believed that an offspring would be given within another year.\(^{44}\) In the morning after their bath they washed the Naga image near the tanks, rivers and temples with water, milk and coconut.

**Hinduism in Kalkulam**

The period from 9th century to 12th century was of great significance in

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the history of the Hindu religion. Because of Shankaracharya, the supremacy of
the Vedic religion was re-established. He made Thirparappu, a place in
Kalkulam, as a temporary centre for his religious propagation. It is believed
that the majority of the present temples in Kalkulam were established during
that period. As in other places, in Kalkulam too, the superior deities of
Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were being worshipped. All the three were
considered equal and there was no quarrel about the superiority of one over the
other. But there was no temple anywhere built exclusively for the worship of
Brahma. Thiruvidaikodu was famous for an ancient Siva temple which
contained inscriptions relating to the temple grants. The earliest of these
inscriptions belonged to the Ay King Kokkarunandakkan of the 9th century
A.D.

Thirunayinarkkurichi Siva temple in Kalkulam Taluk was a fairly
large temple. It contained a number of inscriptions on its walls which registers
the gift of money to this temple. A Siva temple was found in the middle of
the Thirupparappu village and a short distance from it the river falls to a depth
of about twenty feet. This falls is one of the picturesque falls of South India.
The Lord of this place presented a ferocious aspect of Siva named Veerabhadra.
It is said that Siva after the annihilation of Daksha selected this place of beauty

45. S. Thangamoni, op. cit, p. 10.
47. TAS, Vol. IV, p. 82f.
for his deep meditation.\textsuperscript{49} The place is held in high esteem by the pilgrims and has been considered to be the Courtalam of Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{50} It is believed that there was a shrine of Bhagwati cave temple, situated by the side of the water falls.\textsuperscript{51}

Another Siva temple was situated at Keralapuram, a small village near Padmanabhapuram in Kalkulam. The peculiar feature of the image of Vinayaka in the temple was that it was black for six months from the Tamil month of Avani and white for the remaining six months.\textsuperscript{52} Palliyadi, a village in Kalkulam, had an old temple dedicated to Mahadeva. The Lord of this place was locally called Tiruppanrikodu Mahadevar.\textsuperscript{53} The temples known as Muttalaikkurichi Virakeral Isvarattu Mahadevar temple.\textsuperscript{54} Tiruvithankodu Siva temple, Tirukkannankodu Siva temple Pannippakkam Siva temple were the notable Siva temples of Kalkulam.\textsuperscript{55}

The running of pilgrims touching the twelve Sacred Sivalayas on Sivarathri was a unique festival in Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{56} Of the twelve Sivalayas of Kanyakumari District Kalkulam taluk contained eight. They were at Thirunandikkarai, Ponmana, Pannippakkam, Neelakantaswami Coil Padmanabhapuram, Melancodu, Thiruvidaikodu. Thiruvithancode, Thiruppan-

\textsuperscript{49} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 115.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{A Cave Temple at Thirparappu, Kerala Society Papers}, Vol. I, Series 7, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{53} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{op. cit}, pp.123-124
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{TAS}, Vol. IV, p. 89f.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{TAS}, Vol. III, pp. 65f.
\textsuperscript{56} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 99f
On Sivarathri devotees wearing saffron robes and uttering the words *Govinda, Govinda* would start their pilgrimage from Thirumala locally called as Munchirai, near Kulithurai and finish their pilgrimage at Thirunattalam covering nearly fifty miles with in twenty four hours on foot. The whole day of Sivarathiri was dedicated to the worship of Lord Siva. Special celebrations were held at the twelve shrines. Ever since, this race festival had been continued on every Sivarathiri and thousands of pilgrims would take part in it with great veneration.

The Vaishnavite cult was popularised in Travancore by Ramanujacharya. His teachings became popular and secured a large number of adherents throughout the country. The people dedicated several temples to Vishnu. The Adikesava Perumal temple at Thiruvattar was a fine example of the existence of Vaishnavism in Kalkulam taluk and was considered as an important shrine of the family deity of Travancore Kings.

The Adhi Kesava Perumal temple was one of the oldest temples in Travancore and it was one of the 108 shrines sacred to the Vaishnavites in India and one among the thirteen Vaishnavite *Sthalams* in Malainadu. Thiruvattar derives its name from the river Paraliar which encircles the town on three sides. It is considered to be as sacred as the Trivandrum temple. The

58. *Ibid*, p. 102
60. Velimalai and the surrounding area in Kalkulam were part of the ancient Malainadu. [Souvenir, Kanyakumari Devaswom Board, *op. cit.*, p.30]
image in the central shrine was a Sayanamurti stretched out on his commodious serpent bed. The deity itself bore a close resemblance to the deity in the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple at Trivandrum.\textsuperscript{62} In structure and internal arrangements, the temple of Sri Padmanabha was a replica of the Thiruvattar temple. But Tiruvattar temple is believed to be the most ancient one.\textsuperscript{63}

There were fourteen sub temples or Keezhaidams operating under the Thiruvattar temple. This temple possessed extensive acres of paddy fields and landed property like rubber estates, coconut grove etc.\textsuperscript{64} Two centuries after Ramanujacharya, Sri Chaitanya, the great religious teacher of Bengal, visited this temple. He took away with him a rare manuscript, the Brahma Samhita which he acclaimed as the gospel of Vaishnavism. He popularised the gospel in North India.\textsuperscript{65}

Seramangalam was a small village in Kalkulam Taluk. The God of this temple was known as Tentiruvarangamudiyar. The God was perhaps named after the gods of the highly sacred temples at Tiruvaragam (Srirangam) and Tiruvengadam (Tirupati) in the Madras Presidency.\textsuperscript{66} Tradition says that this temple was constructed by Cheraman Perumal, who was the king of Kerala in the beginning of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{67} The chief deities were Vishnu and Siva.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} Emily Gilchriest Hatch, \textit{Travancore}, Oxford University Press, 1939, p.189.
\item \textsuperscript{63} S. Padmanabhan, \textit{op. cit}, p.106.
\item \textsuperscript{64} S. Ramakrishna, (Ed), \textit{Thulasi Garland}, Mumbai, 1998, p.69.
\item \textsuperscript{65} \textit{Census of India} (Travancore), Trivandrum, 1941, p. 127.
\item \textsuperscript{66} \textit{TAS}, Vol. V, p.28.
\item \textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid}.
\end{itemize}
Along with the three superior deities of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, a large number of people of Kalkulam Taluk worshipped the famous Subramanya Swamy at Kumaracoil. In the Tamil tradition Subramanya Swamy had been worshipped in the name of Murugan. He was the God of war and the leader of the celestial hosts. People considered him as the most beneficent deity conferring boons, protecting the helpless and avenging the wrong.  

Kumarakoil is situated at the foot of the Velimalai hills in Kalkulam taluk. The temple here built on the top of a small hill about 200 feet height and faces east and can be reached by a flight of steps. Goddess Valli, the spouse of Subramanya, the presiding deity is also enshrined in the temple by the side of the main deity. The sanctum sanctorum of the temple is carved out of the rock.

The Kalyanamandapam built on the hillock near the temple is said to be the actual place where the marriage of Subramanya and Valli took place. The place where he took rest in the guise of an old man is still known as Kizhavan. There is another place in the hill known as Vallicholai.

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69. The name Velimalai is derived from Velvimalai or Marriage Hill which means the place where the love marriage of Lord Muruga with Valli took place. Veli-marriage, Mala-Hill. [S. Ramakrishnan, (Ed.), op. cit., p.40].
nearby hamlet is still known by the name Thenaivilai. Thirukalyanam festival has been celebrated every year in the temple to commemorate the unity of Valli and Murugan. It is a colourful function which attracts a large number of devotees. The Thirukalyanam ceremony in the month of Panguni on Uttaram day starts from the traditional mantapam and the images of Subramanya and Valli are taken out in procession in great pomp and splendour. Devotees fresh and fragrant after bathing in the tank, dripping and in deep devotion, worshipping the deity with folded hands raised above their heads is a unique feature of the temple. The Hindus of the locality conduct the marriages of their sons and daughters in this temple. The free Kanji (rice porridge) distributed on Friday to devotees is considered very sacred.

The goddess Parvathi or Durga, the consort of Shiva had been worshipped in the name of Bhagavathi in Kalkulam. One of the important temples of Bhagavathi is found in Mandaicadu. Valvachagostam Bhagavathi temple was another famous Bhagavathi temple in Kalkulam taluk. It was situated about two k.m. from Kattathurai on the Nagercoil-Trivandrum road. A Chera king is said to have constructed a big temple at Valvachagostam dedicated to the Goddess Bhagavathi. The temple had a great antiquity and was held in very high esteem. The Perumal kings of ancient Travancore were said

74. Souvenir, Kanyakumari Devaswom Board, op. cit., p. 10f.
to have visited this temple for worship before their coronation took place.\textsuperscript{77}

Erecting memorial stones or \textit{Nadukarkkal}\textsuperscript{78} and respecting them on auspicious days was a primitive form of worship that existed in Kalkulam from ancient days. The early Tamil literatures \textit{Pattinappalai},\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Malaipadukadam},\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Agananuru}\textsuperscript{81} and \textit{Purananuru}\textsuperscript{82} mention this worship. These hero stones were planted in accordance with the observance of certain principles. A hero stone was planted on a mound of reddish pebbles. It was inscribed with the name and achievements of the dead in whose memory the stone was erected.\textsuperscript{83} The stone structure dedicated to the memory of the leader of the Kaniyakulam battle which was fought between the Travancore ruler and Thirumalainayak, is still to be seen at Keralapuram in Kalkulam taluk.\textsuperscript{84}

The worship of inferior deities was exclusively confined to the non-Brahmin Hindus. The inferior deities worshipped in Travancore were \textit{Elangah, Yakshi, Bhutathan, Shodalaimadan, Nallamangai, Muppidari, Shembagavalli, Mariamman, Karuppusami, Sangilimadan, Kantariamman, Maragathavalli, Chamundi} etc. The Census of India (Travancore) 1891 says, the total number of temples dedicated to these inferior deities was 3205, the largest number

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{77} M. Gopalakrishnan, \textit{op. cit.}, p.1224.
\item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{Nadukal} was erected for a person who sacrificed his own life for the prosperity of the king or kingdom or victory over enemies. Such heroic actions could be noticed in the society for ages through these memorial stones.
\item \textsuperscript{79} \textit{Pattinappalai} – 78-79.
\item \textsuperscript{80} \textit{Malaipadukadam} – 394-396.
\item \textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ahananuru} – 35.
\item \textsuperscript{82} \textit{Purananuru} – 335.
\item \textsuperscript{83} M.E. Manickavasagam Pillai, \textit{Culture of the Ancient Cheras}, Kovilpatti, 1970, p.170.
\item \textsuperscript{84} T.K. Velu Pillai, \textit{Travancore State Manual}, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 1940, p.191.
\end{itemize}
being found from the Southern taluks of Kalkulam, Agasteeswaram, Eraniel and Thovala.  

In Kalkulam, devil worship was most common among Nadars. The spirits of depraved persons or those who had met with a violent death by drowning, hanging or by other means had believed to have become demons. It is believed that these spirits wander around on earth inflicting injury of various types upon mankind. As people were afraid of evil spirits and sacrifices were performed to appease them. Generally the devil worship of Nadars took place in their own houses. On south western corner of many houses a separate small building had been constructed for the worship of the deceased parents. They also had village temples in a few places where deities such as Sastavu, Amman, Badrakali etc. were worshipped. These temples had priests from their own caste. Originally the temples were managed by a body of persons called Ooralars or Kariakhars. They looked after the temple affairs either directly or through their delegates, samudayams, manushyams etc. These Devaswoms possessed immense wealth and landed properties. The government entrusted the administration of the Devaswoms with the Land Revenue Department. The Devaswoms of Kalkulam taluk came under Padmanabhapuram Division.

There are also a large number of employees in the Devaswoms such as

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85. V. Nagam Aiya, op. cit., p. 54.
86. Ibid, p. 55.
88. O. Chithraputhra Pillai, Devaswom Finances, Souvenir, Kanyakumari Devaswom Board, op.cit., p. 50.
89. S. Natesan, Devasoms in Kanyakumari, Souvenir, Kanyakumari Devaswom Board, Ibid., pp. 5-7.
Santhikars, Sweepers, Kazhakams, watchers etc. for attending on the daily routine in Devaswoms.\(^{90}\)

**Christianity in Kalkulam**

Tradition ascribes the origin of Christianity in Malabar to the Apostle St. Thomas, who landed at Cranganore\(^{91}\) in 52 A.D.\(^{92}\) St. Thomas is reported to have preached Christianity to the Jewish settlements\(^{93}\) in Kerala and had founded the churches in or near the Jewish colonies. Muttom in Kanyakumari was a Jewish colony in ancient days. Thiruvithancode in Kalkulam, was the only ancient Christian trade colony, existed in the south of Quilon.\(^{94}\)

As per the Kerala Syrian catholic tradition, St. Thomas founded seven and a half churches. The small church of St. Mary consecrated at Thiruvithancode is considered as a half church (Ara Palli)\(^{95}\) while the other seven churches are in Kerala. It is said that St. Thomas erected this church with

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\(^{91}\) Cranganore was the ancient world’s greatest trading centre in the east and it was the first Jewish colony in India. During the early Christian centuries Yavana (foreign) trade vigorously carried on at Cranganore. In 345 A.D. a foreign merchant Prince Knayi Thomman along with four hundred foreign Christians were settled down there with the permission of Cheraman Perumal. (T.K. Joseph, *Kings and Christians in Kerala*, Kerala Society Papers, Vol. II, Series VII, p.121)


\(^{93}\) The Jews had considerable trade relations with India as early as the 10th century B.C. The ships of Jewish tradesmen were coming to India once in three years or more frequently in the time of king Solomon. Since then the Jews had important settlements at Cranganore, Parur, Palayur, Quilon, Muttom, Chennot etc. These Jewish colonies of India might have been an attraction for St. Thomas to come to India. [George Menachery, (Ed), *The St. Thomas Christian Encyclopedia of India*, Vol. II, Trichur, 1973, pp. 26-27]


\(^{95}\) Ara Palli is equivalent to the king’s church. Aran or Arasan in Tamil means king. (St. Mary’s Orthodox Booklet)
rock cut beams in the Greek pattern. This is the only church still prevailing in India in its original form, to which a new wooden structure has been attached. It is said that the first catychist Paranjothi had followed St. Thomas during his visit to Thiruvithancode was in charge of the construction of the *Ara Palli*.\textsuperscript{96} The two graves near the church are the early converts of St. Thomas.\textsuperscript{97}

Apart from tradition, documentary evidence bears eloquent testimony that Christian colonies with old *Kampolams* and *Angadis* and *Theruvus* existed in Thiruvancode, Muttom and Palur. The Chera Kings considered the Christians as a very valuable commercial asset and they granted commercial facilities and favours to these Christian colonies. The kings gave them tax free lands and built ships and churches for them.\textsuperscript{98}

It was about 1544 A.D that Francis Xavier began his missionary enterprise on the coasts of Travancore with the help of the Portuguese authorities. The king of Travancore supported him with money occasionally. The king also allowed him to the evangelizing mission.\textsuperscript{99} For fourteen months he laboured continuously along the coast, naming it the mission of Cape Comorin. Overcoming difficulties of language, climate and distance he spent in strengthening the faith of the people.\textsuperscript{100}

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\textsuperscript{96} M. Immanuel, *St. Thomas in India*, Nagercoil, 2009, p.xii.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Scott Christian College Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, Nagercoil, November 1967, p.57.
\end{flushleft}
In December 1544 A.D over ten thousand fishermen known as *Mukkuvas*, living in the coast from Poovar to Pallam were baptized. The villagers of Vaniakudi, Colachel, Kadiapattanam and Muttom in Kalkulam were included in this conversion. Whenever Xavier passed through the villages he sought to reform the life of the Christians and to gain people to the catholic fold. When Xavier arrived in Travancore for the second time, the Venad ruler gave twenty thousand Rupees and permitted the Christians to build churches with mud and thatched roofs.

For the first instance a church was built at Kottar and then in 1603 A.D other churches were established in seven villages including Thiruvithancode and Kalkulam. But in 1604 A.D with the order of Veera Ravi Varma, more than 40 churches were burnt in this locality. It is said that the Christians collected 1000/- Rs and donated it to the king towards war expenses. Hence he permitted them to rebuild the burnt churches and stones instead of mud and thatched roof. In course of time the number of followers of Catholic religion increased in number.

In the meantime Parishes were organized. The Parishes were placed under a native priest and had the power to act independently. It maintained its own revenues and had its own administrative council. The priest and the school

master were paid out of the revenue of the church.\textsuperscript{105} Colachel, the oldest Parish in Kalkulam area, was established around 1600 A.D. Around 1616 A.D Portuguese built a chapel at Kadiapattanam. The church at Puthur was another ancient church of this area. These Parishes were put under the control of the Vicariate of Verapoly.\textsuperscript{106}

Following the establishment of the Dutch hegemony in Cochin, the Portuguese missionaries were disallowed to continue their proselytisation work. Their life was unsafe and they escaped to different places. Hence the Portuguese wanted to shift the Travancore College\textsuperscript{107} from Quilon to a safer place. Thanks to the patronage of the king of Travancore, a place between Muttom and Kadiapattanam called Thope was selected for the college which also functioned as a centre for their activities.\textsuperscript{108}

An inscription found in the lamp post at the church street of Madathattuvilai near Padmanabhapuram reveals that the particular lamp post was donated for the use of that church on February 1671.\textsuperscript{109} This confirms that the Nadar community accepted Catholic religion in 1671 A.D itself. As days rolled on the Christians grew in number. The development had its own reactions in Travancore. Persecutors made a false complaint to the king that the

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., p. 13f.
\textsuperscript{107} At Quilon Father Lancilotto, the first superior of the Jesuits started a centre for training the youth of the fishery coasts as catechists and priests for Travancore. This became the Travancore college.
\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Thenoli} (monthly), Nagercoil, January 2001, p.19.
priests at Thope possessed weapons and supported the Britishers to overthrow
the power of Travancore. This infuriated the king and with his order the church
and the college at Thope were destroyed.  

Inspite of the opposition the spread of Christianity continued. In
South Travancore including Kalkulam a dispute arose over the issue of
worshipping Lord Padmanabha, the deity of the ruling house. As the newly
converted Nadar Christians resented, Nagam Pillai, the Sarvathikaryakkar
launched a severe persecution. The troops and Police were let loose.  
The new converted Christians were asked to pay homage to the idol, Padmanabha
Swamy or surrender all their wealth. About 20,000 Christians ran away to the
mountains. Around 1780 A.D about three hundred Christians were arrested
from Venganur, Thuckalay and Thiruvancode. They were hung up on trees,
cruelly beaten and tortured. A great majority of men, women and children
stood firm, but a few yielded to his threats. The soldiers found little of worth
in the wretched huts of the poor Christians. Hence they dragged them before
the judge, Melvisarippu.

The evicted Christians contacted Fr. Paolino who was then at
Padmanabapuram and begged him to present a petition to the Maharaja.
Fr. Paolino had considerable influence with the Maharaja. He persuaded the

110. Kottar Maraimavatta Ponvizha Sirappu Malar, op. cit., pp.5f.
111. V. Lawrence, History of Catholic Church in Kanyakumari District, Nagercoil,
2002, p.75.
minister to stop the persecution. After three painful months Christians were allowed to return to their homes. But they never recovered their possessions.\(^{113}\)

Neelakanta Pillai, a Nair who was associated with the royal court at Kalkulam and his family had much influence in the royal palace of Maharaja Marthanda Varma. He went into the service of the royal palace as a young man. Later he became a Christian and was baptised by Fr. Buttari, the priest of the Vadakankulam Church on 17\(^{\text{th}}\), May 1745 A.D. He was christened as Devasahayam Pillai.

The infuriated Dewan made a false complaint to the king against Devasahayam. The Maharaja who had great respect and veneration for Brahmins believed his accusation. Greatly enraged the Raja commanded the imprisonment of Devasahayam.\(^{114}\) Finally the Raja ordered his death sentence\(^{115}\) in 1752 A.D.\(^{116}\) The soldiers took him over to Kattadimalai and made him stand on a high rock.\(^{117}\) From the foot of the hill they fired at him. He received five wounds and died.\(^{118}\)

The Parish Priest of Kottar received the mortal remains and interred them under the main alter in St. Francis Xavier’s Church at Kottar.\(^{119}\) Even the

\(^{114}\) Nagam Aiya, op. cit., p.194.
\(^{115}\) J.B. Buttari, Devasahayam Pillai’s Conversion and Martyrdom from Contemporary Accounts, Trichinopoly, 1908, p.11.
\(^{116}\) V. Lawrence, op. cit., p.89.
\(^{117}\) Kathadimalai is in Aralvaimozhi, Kathu means wind, Adi means blows. At present the area was selected for installation of wind power mills by the Government of India.
\(^{118}\) P.J. Mascreen, Devasahayam Pillai, An Indian Martyr, Quilon, 1956, p. 65.
\(^{119}\) C.M. Agur, Church History of Travancore, Madras, 1903, p.285.
non-Christians regard Devasahayam Pillai as a glorious martyr of the Christian religion.\textsuperscript{120} Maharaja Marthanda Varma did not want Christianity to become another power among the high caste Nairs of his kingdom. His action put an end to the Nair Catholic Community which disappeared completely from his kingdom. Devasahayam Pillai was its best and last testament.\textsuperscript{121} There after the king issued a public edict within his dominion that no one should profess the Christian law except the Paravas and Mukkuvas. He entrusted to all his ministers and governors the strict execution of the order.\textsuperscript{122}

The Mukkuvas accepted Catholic religion and so Catholicism spread in the coastal towns of Kalkulam. The statistical report of 1847 A.D. shows that Colachel and Kurumbanai taluk became Parishes in addition to the other four Parishes.\textsuperscript{123} At that time the number of Catholics at Colachel and its surrounding areas was 2536, Muttom and Kadiapattanam 2458.\textsuperscript{124} Thereafter, Catholicism spread to the inland of Travancore and the number of Parishes also increased.

The formation of a new Diocese of Kottar in 1930 marked a turning point in the history of the Catholic Mission in Kanyakumari District. Kalkulam was the only taluk in Kanyakumari District included entirely in the Kottar

\textsuperscript{120} P.J. Mascreen, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{122} J.B. Buttari, \textit{op. cit.}, p.21.
\textsuperscript{123} Nanchil Chinthamani, \textit{op. cit.}, p.118.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Kottar Maramavatta Ponvizha Sirappu Malar, op. cit.}, p.7.
Diocese. In 1939 when Bishop Agnisamy was the Bishop of Kottar the new Parishes established in Kalkulam taluk were Chemparuthivilai, Kodimunai, Kalkurichy and Konamkadu. To meet the growing needs of the Catholics, it was found necessary to bifurcate some of the existing Parishes. In course of time, the Kottar diocese distinguished as Kottar Vicariate Parishes, Colachel Vicariate Parishes and Mulagumoodu Vicariate Parishes and Trithuapuram Vicariate Parishes of which Colachel and Mulagumoodu came under Kalkulam taluk.

Any casual visitor to the coastal belt will be struck by the sight of solid and imposing churches rising above the palm huts of fishermen. There is no comparison between the meager economic status of the people and the grandeur of the church buildings. These churches had been constructed by the contributions of the people themselves, sometimes collected in course of years. Though they dwell in huts and live in poverty and misery they take pride in having such imposing churches.

Protestant Christianity spread to Kalkulam taluk during the beginning of the 19th century. The London Missionary Society which was formed in London on 21st September 1795 sent Ringeltaube, a German in

125. V. Lawrence, *op. cit.*, p.94.
1804 to South India along with five other missionaries\textsuperscript{131} to spread Protestant Christianity. In 1805 A.D Vethamonickam who was the first Protestant Christian in Kanyakumari District met Ringeltaube at Tranquebar and requested him to come to Mylaudy on April 25\textsuperscript{th} 1806 A.D as the first Protestant Missionary.\textsuperscript{132}

Col. Munro the then resident gave permission to build a Church at Mylaudy. Thus the foundation of a new chapel, the first in Travancore was laid in May 1809 A.D. Mr. Ringeltaube had no suitable house at Mylaudy to live in. Hence he often stayed at Udayagiri Fort near Padmanabhapuram of Kalkulam taluk. He conducted English services at Udayagiri Fort for the European Military personal there. From Udayagiri he visited the places of the then Eraniel Taluk and preached the Gospel to the Hindus,\textsuperscript{133} and thus the people around Kalkulam accepted the new religion. After Ringeltaube Rev. Charles Mead, reached Colachel in December 1817.\textsuperscript{134} After his arrival a mass conversion of Nadars began and which continued throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{135} It was the beginning of the predominance of the Nadar class in the London Mission of South Travancore.\textsuperscript{136}

\textsuperscript{131} Platinum Jubilee Souvenir, Scott Christian College, \textit{op.cit.}, p.16.
\textsuperscript{132} I. H. Hacker, \textit{A Hundred Years in Travancore 1806-1906}, London, 1908, p.22.
\textsuperscript{135} C. B. Firth, \textit{An Introduction to Indian Church History}, Madras, 1983, p. 157.
\textsuperscript{136} I.H. Hacker, \textit{op. cit}, p.34.
It was difficult for the missionaries to manage the churches from Nagercoil Mission Station. In order to carry on missionary work more effectively in the western regions, in 1821 A.D. two missionaries, Charles Mead and Mault, agreed to divide the South Travancore mission work into two divisions.\textsuperscript{137}

The formation of Neyyoor Mission Station which included the congregations of Kalkulam taluk was the greatest achievement of Mead. It lay about twenty two miles north of Cape Comorin, situated in the midst of three towns namely Thiruvancodu, Pathmanabapuram and Eraniel. The mission area of Neyyoor district was about 200 square miles with a population of 1,26,000.\textsuperscript{138}

The congregations in Kalkulam taluk which came under Neyyoor division during its formation were Attur, Kodupakuzhi, Kanjiracodu, Colachel, Eathavilai, Kannanur, Kothanarvilai, Kunnankadu, Mathicodu, Maruthurkurichi, Mandaicadu, Udayarvilai, Palliyadi, Senamvilai, Senkodi, Thiruvithancode and Neyyoor.\textsuperscript{139}

Mr. Mead built a small house at Kottanarvilai, a village near Mandaicadu and lived there with his family and Mr. Devavaram and a few others. While living at Kottanarvillai he built a temporary bungalow at the

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{139} C.M. Agur, \textit{History of the Protestant Church in Travancore}, Madras, 1903, p. 392.
coastal village of Mandaicadu, where he lived for about 2 years. During his stay at Mandaicadu, Mead converted a few Nadar families at Kottanarvilai Muthuvel, the first Protestant Christian of Kottanarvilai, gifted 56 cents of land on which a church was built by Mead in 1818 A.D. As the church was burnt down twice by the Hindus of the village, the Protestant Christians of the village had to continue their worship in Mead’s residence at Mandaicadu. Villagers from Karavilai, Mandaicadu, Kovilanvilai and other neighbouring places also took part in this worship.

The Protestant converts decided to build a church in an interior place. Arumainayagam’s family gifted a land where the present Mead Memorial Church at Mandaicadu stands. Rev. Mead built a church on this land with palm leaf roof. This church was rebuilt on a grand scale and is known as Mead’s Memorial Church Mandaicadu. In the meantime Rev. Mead decided to have a permanent Missionary residence near the town of Tiruvithancode, the old capital of the state. He found a piece of ground belonging to Raman Thambi to be well adopted for Mission purposes. Raman Thambi offered the land to the Mission and hence he was arrested and put in prison for helping the Christian Missionary. Yet his family members also helped the missionary in several ways.

141. Mandaicadu Church Varalattu Sirappu Malar, Neyyoor, 1989, pp.11f.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid.
144. C.M. Agur, op. cit., p. 393.
In 1820 Mead shifted his residence from Mandaicadu to the new mission station, Neyyoor. The liberality of Mr. and Mrs. Mead helped many Christian families to settle down there and build houses. Many people accepted the gospel and became Christians. In the beginning he conducted prayer meetings under the trees and in the streets. The missionary then planned to construct a church at Neyyoor. Since the site selected was situated near the Hindu temple, the native government refused to give permission. But the British resident Cap Newall got the necessary permission from the government to buy the land and the construction of the church was started at Neyyoor.\(^{146}\)

In 1828 the London Missionary Deputation gave official recognition to the Division. Thus the South Travancore Mission was divided into two, the Eastern and the Western Division with separate Missionary Stations. Mr. Mault was allowed to continue in the old station of Nagercoil in charge of the Eastern Division. Mr. Mead was placed in charge of the Western Division. Rev. Mead was assisted by Rev. W. Miller and by Mr. Ashton.\(^{147}\)

Rev. Mead constructed the Dartmouth chapel at Neyyoor. Since Neyyoor District had insufficient population Charles Mead brought workers, merchants and carpenters from various parts of South Travancore and made them settle down in Neyyoor for the construction work.\(^{148}\) The church thus constructed by Charles Mead began to flourish under the successive

\(^{146}\) J.A. Jacob, \textit{op. cit.}, p.71.
\(^{147}\) C.M. Agur, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 390.
missionaries and Indian Christians. The establishment of the church at Neyyoor subsequently increased the importance of the village. The missionary bungalow, the Dartmouth Chapel and the other buildings planned and constructed by Charles Mead totally changed the appearance of the forested Neyyoor.\footnote{C.M. Agur, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 818-819.}

As per the 1830 report of Charles Mead, the Neyyoor village contained twenty five families and seventy five Christians. In the following years people belonging to nearby villages also became members of the church and the congregation was developed with hundred and twenty members.\footnote{John A. Jacob, \textit{op. cit.}, p.71.}
The advent of Christianity in Neyyoor, totally changed the life of the people of Neyyoor and the history of the London Missionary Society as a whole. Rev. Charles Mead was considered as the father of the South Travancore Mission.\footnote{R.N. Yesudhas, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 747.}

Charles Mead did wonderful missionary work in the neighbouring villages also. As the number of Christians increased, the number of churches also increased. In many places people offered the necessary land free of cost to build churches. The people gave up their old religious practices and were much interested in attending the Sunday Services conducted by Charles Mead.\footnote{Samuel Matteer, \textit{Native Life in Travancore}, London, 1883, p. 316.}

The heathen alters at Eathavilai in Kalkulam taluk was demolished once for all. While destroying the temple of Kotticodu in January 1832, the
images of Kali and Esaki together with the cloths and clubs etc used in demon worship were sent to England by Rev. Charles Mead. They were kept in the Missionary Museum at Austin Friars, London.\footnote{Souvenir, Mead Memorial Church, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 44.} In 1833, the number of Christians at Neyyoor district rose to 3667.\footnote{Report of the Neyyoor Mission Station, Oct. 24, 1833.}

On October 1860 ten devoted men were appointed as Evangelists in the South Travancore Mission at a great public meeting held at Nagercoil. Rev. Samuel Zechariah was appointed to the Neyyoor Mission as an Evangelist.\footnote{C.M. Augur, \textit{History of the Protestant Church in Travancore}, Madras, 1903, p. 938.} His father Sankaran Thiruppappu Nadar was a Hindu by birth and he got converted to Christianity and became Samuel.\footnote{37th Thanks giving Festival Souvenir, C.S.I. Kanyakumari Diocese, Nagercoil, p. 7.} He served in the ministry for about sixty years.\footnote{Desopakari, April 1997, Nagercoil (Cover Page).} Since the congregation at Neyyoor was large, the income of the church was also sufficient to self support it from 1865 onwards.\footnote{Annual Report of the Travancore District Committee in Connection with \textit{L.M.S.}, Dec. 31, 1861, pp.26-27.} In 1867 one thousand people were added to the Neyyoor Mission District.\footnote{I.H. Hacker, \textit{op. cit.}, p.52.} The missionaries did their best in changing the people who had been sunk in superstition, ignorance, and evil customs.\footnote{Annual Report of the Travancore District Committee in Connection with the \textit{L.M.S.}, 1866, p. 39.} Sunday schools were started to give instruction to the children and also to the youngsters.\footnote{Neyyoor Pastorate Centenary Souvenir, Nagercoil, 1966, p.124.} Many People gave up their wrong doings and trusted in the Lord.

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Souvenir, Mead Memorial Church, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 44.}
\item \footnote{Report of the Neyyoor Mission Station, Oct. 24, 1833.}
\item \footnote{C.M. Augur, \textit{History of the Protestant Church in Travancore}, Madras, 1903, p. 938.}
\item \footnote{37th Thanks giving Festival Souvenir, C.S.I. Kanyakumari Diocese, Nagercoil, p.7.}
\item \footnote{Desopakari, April 1997, Nagercoil (Cover Page).}
\item \footnote{Annual Report of the Travancore District Committee in Connection with \textit{L.M.S.}, Dec. 31, 1861, pp.26-27.}
\item \footnote{I.H. Hacker, \textit{op. cit.}, p.52.}
\item \footnote{Annual Report of the Travancore District Committee in Connection with the \textit{L.M.S.}, 1866, p. 39.}
\item \footnote{Neyyoor Pastorate Centenary Souvenir, Nagercoil, 1966, p.124.}
\end{itemize}
Rev. Samuel Zechariah often visited the towns of Eraniel, Thiruvithancode, Padmanabhapuram and the neighbouring villages and preached the doctrines of Christianity. Thousands of devil temples were demolished.

The entire London Missionary Society area in Travancore was demarcated as the South Travancore Diocese. As such the churches at Kalkulam which was a part of Neyyoor Mission came under this diocese. Within a few years it was felt that the South Travancore Diocese should be bifurcated on a linguistic basis and thus the Kanyakumari Diocese and the South Kerala Diocese were constituted.  

From stage to stage the progress of Christianity had been steady in Kalkulam taluk. The District churches, pastorates and the small churches in Kalkulam taluk came under the control of the Kanyakumari Diocese.

The Salvation Army, one of the Christian denominations started its work in Travancore in 1889. Since Salvation Army had not enough number of men for work it found difficult to preach the Gospel from village to village. The work of Salvation Army came to the notice of the Travancore Public in 1892. The Salvation Army owes its name to emphasis on the doctrine of Salvation for the soul through Jesus Christ.

The actual story of Salvation Army’s beginning in South Travancore was an interesting one. Major Johnston, District Officer of Salvation Army in

165. *Census of Travancore*, 1941, p.139.
Madras, was very much run down in health and was invited by Mr. John Cox, the planter to come over to his estate and rest a while. He came and stayed there. While recuperating, he conducted meetings among the labourers of the estate. Mr. Cox also encouraged this. Some of the labourers professed conversion through the meetings conducted by Major Johnston.

The converted labourers, after the seasonal labour was over, returned to their homes near Nagercoil. As a follow up, officers, both Indian and European were sent to their villages to continue the work started among them on John Cox’s Estate. Many people accepted this religion and it secured a firm footing in Krishnancoil a suburb of Nagercoil in 1892.

Since this mission associated itself with the basic necessities of life, equality of men and women and the dignity of the scheduled castes, a large number of people from the villages especially from Thovalai and Agasteeswaram taluks were attracted towards it and became Christians. In 1894 it extended its work in areas of Kalkulam and Kulasekaram. In 1924 they made Trivandrum as the territorial headquarters of the South Indian District. Divisional Commanders were appointed to ten separate centres in Travancore. The advent of Salvation Army created an awakening and social mobility among the scheduled castes.

168. A. Maria David, op. cit., p.27.
169. Census of Travancore 1941, op. cit, p.139.
Islam in Kalkulam Taluk

The trade relations between Malabar and the West made the advent and spread of Islam in Travancore.\(^{170}\) King Ramavarma of Travancore invited Muslim traders to destroy the trade monopoly of the Dutch. Thus a large number of Muslim came and settled in Travancore around 8\(^{\text{th}}\) century A.D. Thus the entire trade in Malabar passed on to their hands\(^{171}\) and Islam also spread in Travancore.

The spread of Islam continued with the invasion of Tippu Sultan from Mysore. During his invasion a large number of the natives were reported to have been forcibly converted to Islam by the army of Tippu.\(^{172}\) Another reason for the spread of Islam in Travancore was the voluntary conversion especially in the coast to escape social disabilities.\(^{173}\) Malik Iban Dhinar, a saint of Islam and his companions on the way to Sri Lanka got down at Cranganone in Kerala. They happened to meet the ruler of that place. The ruler came to know about Islam and with his permission the visiting team came to Tiruvithancode, Thengapatnam, Colachel and Kottar. They preached Islam to the local people. The tomb of Malik Mohammed (Malluku Muthaliar) a relative of Malik Iban Dhinar at Thiruvithancode bears witness to early establishment of Islam. Malik Mohammed lived before 850 A.D. He was the

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one who built the mosque at Colachel also. Unlike the Christian and Hindu population which intermingled the Muslims were mostly concentrated in a few centres. In Kalkulam taluk Thiruvithancode, Thuckalay, Manalikarai, Colachel were considered to be important Muslim centres.

Malukku Muthaliar’s mosque is a remarkable one at Thiruvithancode, the ancient capital of Venad. The mosque was called so, because of Malukku Muthaliar, an Arab buried at the site of the mosque before the construction of the building. Tradition says that a Raja of Travancore then residing at Keralapuram, near Thuckalay heard a sound like the Muezzin’s call to prayer. Hence he gave order for the building of the mosque. Malukku Muthaliar’s tomb, a low brick built structure was enclosed within the building. Strangers were not allowed to enter. The mosque was maintained and lighted daily from the produce of a garden granted free of tax by the Raja, who is said to have built the mosque from the collections made at the annual festival. The chief festival called sandanakudam “vessel of sandal wood” attracts pilgrims from all over the district. It is held in the month of April.

At Mettukadai, a suburb of Thuckalay in Kalkulam taluk, had a celebrated durgah which dedicated to the famous Saint poet Peer Mohammad Sahib Appa. The other name of this Durgah was Peer Mohammed Oliyulla

174. K. Mohammed Faruk, Mosques and Durghas of Kanyakumari District, Paper Submitted at the National Seminar on Heritage of Kanyakumari District, Nagercoil, dated 09-12-2006.
175. A. Maria David, op. cit., p.30.
177. Ibid, pp. 154-155.
Durgah. The Muslim Saint and scholar was considered to be buried there and the area around the tomb was donated by the Maharaja of Travancore. It has been one of the important holy places for Muslims in Kanyakumari District.

Gnana Methai Peer Mohammad Sahib Appa of the 17th century hailed from Thenkasi. After spending sometime in Peerumedu in Kerala, he came to Thuckalay. He was a great philosopher, author and saint. He was a close friend of Chera Kings and believed to have laid the foundation stone for the granite fort at Padmanabhapuram. He gave to the Tamil World several philosophical works like Gnana Pukaltchi, Gnanamanimaalai, Gnanapoottu, and Gnana Rathna Kuravanchi. He wrote 18,000 poems. He deserves great reverence and admiration from all. He was the one who dedicated all to God beyond religious limit. Everyone calls him by his pet name of Appa and Peer Appa.

His songs help to bring co-ordination in meditation and good deeds. On the eve of the closing ceremony of his annual festival, the crown of his literary works, Gnana Pukaltchi, was sung from 9 p.m to 5 a.m. The Dargah attracts large number of people on full moon days. The annual festival of the

poet has been celebrated every year on full moon day during the month of March. The Government of Tamilnadu has declared a District Holiday for the festival.183

As the population of Muslims increased the number of mosques also increased side by side. In the district of Kanyakumari there are 56 Jamaaths (Muslim Mahallas). In each Jamaath there are a number of mosques depending upon the requirements of the locality. Mosque is not only a place of worship but also a centre of learning. All Muslim functions are conducted in the mosque campus.184

183. Aayvukalanchiyam (Tamil monthly), Nagercoil, October 2008.