CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND

Travancore was a premier princely State which remained on the southern most part of the Indian subcontinent till 1st July 1949. ‘Travancore’ is the anglicized form of ‘Tirivithankur’. The term is derived from Tiruvithankode, once the capital of the kingdom. In Malayalam, Tiruvithankur means the seat of prosperity. Once it was known as ‘Tiru-Adi Desam’, probably derived from Tiru Adikal, one of the titles of the Chera kings, ‘Tiru-Adi’ means holy feet or the royal feet and represented the usual form by which the people addressed the rulers of Travancore.1

The missionary activities of the LMS in Travancore can be properly understood only against the backdrop of the complex political and social setting at the dawn of the nineteenth century. The seeds of Protestant Christianity sown by the LMS, fell on a soil made extremely fertile through the decay of traditional institutions.

The political set-up that prevailed in Travancore was highly detrimental to the general welfare of the large majority of her people. All state authority was centred in the Raja and delegated by him to a hierarchy

of officials chosen at his pleasure.\textsuperscript{2} Plunged in sensual pleasures the Raja had little time to care for the affairs of the State and he was at the mercy of his Dewan, who exercised supreme military and civil authority.\textsuperscript{3} Under him were a number of officials in different grades. On receiving appointment an officer had to offer valuable presents to the Raja. Within the course of two or three years, these officers exacted large sums of money from the people, and were later relieved by the state of their illegal earnings.\textsuperscript{4} The Raja therefore did not restrain them, knowing that their plunder would flow to his own coffers. Since there was no machinery for the redressal of grievance, the people sought justice through bribery. This practice existed throughout the land.\textsuperscript{5} Col. John Munro the then British Resident in Travancore wrote:

“Bribery and extortion prevailed in all parts: every officer of the Government had the authority to impose fines on the people at his pleasure. The property of the inhabitants was considered to belong to the Raja on their death, and was only redeemed by very oppressive fines.”\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., pp. 36-39.
\textsuperscript{4} Minutes of Evidences taken before the Select Committee on the affairs of the East India Company, VI Political, p.276.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
There was only one authority recognized and obeyed throughout the country; the petty chiefs known variously as Karyakkar, Madampimar, Prabhukkanmar, etc. In the words of John Cox, the LMS Missionary “These men find their way into every corner, seizing the people’s goods, and forcing them in the name of their government, to labour without pay; the whole land groans under their tyranny”. The oppression of the officers sometimes led to rebellion. Munro continued that “The strict gradation of authority established among the Kariagars and the entire command which they possessed over the services of the people, contributed to perpetuate military feelings in the country, and to facilitate the means of commotion and insurrection. They were, in fact at once military and civil governors, exercising absolute power in their district”.

The authority invested with the officers enabled them to pursue the philosophy of fraud and coercion. An order disagreeable to an officer or ‘Karyakkar’ was seldom enforced. In fact, responsibility could not be apportioned; they had a kind of military constitution, devoid of laws,

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8 L.M.S. Report, 1841, p.72.
9 Minutes, p.278.
sanction and discipline, which prevented it from degenerating into anarchy and misrule.  

Travancore had been plunged into utter chaos and confusion in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Balarama Varma, who ascended the throne in 1798 was weak and vicious and had hardly taken any interest in the affairs of the State. He was surrounded by intriguing favourites who had no concern for the interests of the people and the State. People cried out against the injustice and oppression which prevailed throughout Travancore.

The establishment of political relations with the English East India Company was a turning point in the history of Travancore. An agreement between the Raja and the English East India Company for the protection of the Travancore from the Rajas of Mysore was made in August 1788. In 1795 a permanent treaty was concluded with the company “to settle and fix the terms of their old friendship and alliance and for the defence of his country against foreign enemies”. This treaty was later revised in 1805

11 Minutes, p. 226.
12 Ibid., pp. 195, 212.
when the English East India Company and the Raja of Travancore “judged it expedient that additional provisions should at this time be made for the purpose of supplying the defects in the said treaty, and of establishing the connection between the said contracting parties on a permanent basis of security in all times to come”.\textsuperscript{14} The treaty of 1805 made the Travancore Government follow the advice of the British Government for the benefit of the country and people.\textsuperscript{15} To the Raja, the treaty was an “act of extortion” which obliged him to do what he could not “without violating the laws of the country and creating a general cause of discontentment among his subjects”.\textsuperscript{16} The treaty set the British relationship with Travancore on firm foundation.

A direct result of the British relations was the appointment of a Resident in the court of the Raja, which had far-reaching effects on the history of Christianity in Travancore. The Residents became gradually “transformed from being diplomatic agents representing a foreign power

\textsuperscript{14} For. Pol. Cons., December 1855, Nos. 276-284, pp. 33-34.
\textsuperscript{15} According to this treaty the Raja promised “to pay at all times the utmost attention to such advice as the English Government shall occasionally judge it necessary to offer to him, with a view to the economy of his finances, the better collection of his revenues, the administration of justice, the extension of commerce, the encouragement of trade, agriculture and industry, or any other objects connected with the advancement of His Highness’s interests, the happiness of his people and the mutual welfare of both”. Ibid., pp. 33-51.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 4 July 1808, No. 14.
into executive and controlling officers of a superior government.”¹⁷ The whole functions of government in most cases were exercised by the Resident, in fact, if not in appearance.¹⁸ They had comprehensive, though unwritten, authority. Therefore, they frankly adopted the attitude of a superior towards a subordinate. In fact, they decided even the question of succession and acted as the guardians of heir apparent.¹⁹ The Residents, except a few,²⁰ took keen interest in the growth of the Travancore Mission and patronized the different activities of its missionaries. As a result, the local rulers tolerated the activities of the Mission and extended their help occasionally. Thus the Mission and the Christians were quite naturally associated with the colonial power. The missionaries were also aware of this. Ringeltaube, the first missionary, after receiving land from the Queen on the recommendation of Col. Munro, the Resident, had said:

>This grant firmly established the Protestant religion in Travancore as long as the British flag shall continue to fly…..²¹

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¹⁸ Minute by the President, 7 May 1859, Official Papers, pp. 43-44.
¹⁹ Col. John Munro to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George, 12 October 1812. For Pol. Proc., Fort William, 10 January 1815, No. 6, pp. 119-22.
²⁰ There were a few Residents like General Cullen who did not support the missionary activities.
From the very beginning the missionaries were supported by the British. At times of persecution, the missionaries very often had an appellate authority in the British to present the grievances of the Christians. Throughout the nineteenth century many of the social laws were changed just because the Christian Missionaries were able to present their problems through the Residents or through the British Government. In 1800 Col. Colin Macaulay was appointed British Resident in the court of the Raja of Travancore. He presented several representations to the Raja stressing on the necessity of saving the administration from those who were entrusted with it. He wanted a strong man to help him to deal with the problems effectively and found in Velu Thampi, the newly appointed Dewan in 1801, the much needed ability and firmness.22 Macaulay was also alive to the interests of Christianity. At a time when there was much opposition to the establishment of the Mission, he extended his sincere patronage. Referring to his services Ringeltauble writes:

“Our Society is indebted to Colonel Macaulay, without whose determined and fearless interposition none of these missionaries would have been able to set his foot in Travancore”23

22 Minutes, p.227.
Thus the political conditions were in a way favourable for the work of the missionaries.

The social order prevailing in Travancore at the beginning of the nineteenth century was feudal in character. Its origin can be traced back to the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D., to the rise into prominence and power of the Nambudiri Brahmins, following which, the Hindu society did not register any change for the better. The people, being orthodox and conservative, strictly observed the ancestral norms of conduct and religion. Any deviation from the established system was viewed with suspicion and superstitious dread and invariably denounced. The most interesting factor in the feudal social structure was the division of society in terms of caste. Caste system in all its severity and rigidity divided the Hindu society into a number of groups mutually hating and co-operating only to degrade the other. It was caste which decided the nature of the social relationship of individuals. Its principles made the major section of the people mere slaves of the dominant or privileged classes. In Travancore, the Brahmins and the Nairs formed the privileged classes or

26 Proclamation by the Rani of Travancore, 3 February 1829, Neettu Vol. 20, No. 161, Vide App. 1, pp. 63-64.
caste Hindu groups. Excommunication from his caste to a caste Hindu was worse than death.\textsuperscript{27} Those who were excommunicated became untouchables,\textsuperscript{28} Christians or Muhammadans.\textsuperscript{29}

The Rajas of Travancore who belonged to the Nayar clan were considered in position below the Brahmins.\textsuperscript{30} They were the only class exempted from a social and religious disabilities. They enjoyed perfect liberty of action. They were not executed for any offence which they committed and their crimes were not taken into account. Their temples were exclusively for their own worship and the lower classes were not even allowed to touch the outer walls of the temples or even approach them.\textsuperscript{31} They opposed with tooth and nail the attempt of Ringeltaube to establish the Mission in 1806.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Fra Paolino Da San Bartalomeo, \textit{Voyage to the East Indies}, London (n.d), p.207.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Abbe J.A. Dubois, \textit{Letters on the State of Christianity in India}, London, 1823, p.57.
\item \textsuperscript{30} George Norton, "Rudimentals: Being a Series of Discourses Addresses to the Natives of India", Madras, 1841, pp. 287-88.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Duarte Barbosa, \textit{A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar}, London (n.d), P. 121, George Norton, op.cit., p.283.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Letter of Dr. Claudius Buchanan, dated Trivandrum, Palace of the King of Travancore, 27 October 1806, No. 29, p.70. (Church History Archieves, Bangaloor, Microfilm)
\end{itemize}
In the social ladder too, the Nairs or Sudras were below the Brahmins. They formed the nobility, the magistracy and officials of the government – the military and police, farmers, the merchants and the skilled artisans. However their main duty was to carry on war.\textsuperscript{33} As the ruling class,\textsuperscript{34} the Nairs enjoyed many privileges. The Nair was expected to cut down instantly an Ezhava, Nadar, or Mukkuva who defiled him by touching his person, and a similar fate awaited to a Pulaya or a Paraya who did not move away from his path when he passed.\textsuperscript{35} But those Nairs who dared to speak ill of the king were awarded death penalty.\textsuperscript{36} Referring to the position of the Nairs, the missionaries of the LMS in Travancore commented:

“As a caste, they rank as the aristocracy of the country; they have constant and peculiar access to the Raja; they alone constitute His Highness’s Brigade; they monopolise most of the offices of Government and are in fact the mouthpiece and hands of the Sircar throughout the Country”.\textsuperscript{37}

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\item \textsuperscript{33} Duarte Barbosa, \textit{op.cit.}, p.124.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Generally, The Rajas of Travancore belonged to the class of Nairs.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Duarte Barbosa, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 129.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Ibid.,
\end{itemize}
The Council of Pidakaikkar, composed the Nairs of South Travanocre, exercised more authority over the southern districts than the government itself. They met once in a year at Suchindram in the month of December. They discussed in the council whether any class had changed their caste customs. If the council discovered that any individual had violated or trespassed his caste rules, it took the law into its own hands and dealt with him highhandedly.  

The Government often appointed them to restore peace and order in the State. The conversion of Nairs to Christianity was not viewed favourably. “The King of Travancore”, says Bartalomeo, “threatens with imprisonment and death to every nobleman who shall quit his court to become a Christian.”

Like the Brahmins, the Nairs also opposed the spread of Christianity, and thus came into conflict with the LMS Missionaries. The missionaries alleged that the caste Hindus were “perverting justice and monopolizing influence in their favour”, to prevent the spread of Christianity.

The caste Hindu predominance created a condition of general degradation, causing intellectual, cultural, and economic stagnation for

39 Appointment of Pidakaikkar to Prevent Rebellions, Neettu Vol. 43, No. 359, p.311.
40 Fra Paolino Da San Bartalomeo, *op.cit.*, p. 207.
centuries. The unprivileged or oppressed classes of the population composed the Nadars, the Ezhavas, the Parayas, the Pulayas etc., were kept by them in perennial subservience, poverty and ignorance. They were systematically excluded from all positions of power, and were subjected to exploitation and humiliation. This attitude of the caste Hindus drove the lower order to the fold of the Protestant faith, thereby making the Travancore Mission, the ‘pride of achievement’ of the LMS. This social and cultural background is of fundamental importance in assessing the tremendous success of the Mission.

Among the unprivileged classes the lowest were the slaves mainly the Parayas and the Pulayas. The Parayas believed that they were originally of the same family as the Brahmins. To show their high ancestry they wore a sacred thread like the Brahmins. They suffered much under the privileged classes. They were bought and sold like cattles. Their person and property were entirely at the disposal of their masters, by whom they were ill-treated “These people are considered” says James Forbes, “so abject as to be employed in the vilest offices, and held in such detestation, that no other tribe will touch them and those Hindus who commit enormous crimes are excommunicated into this caste which is considered

42 George Mattan’s Diary, 12 October 1849, Madras Church Missionary Record, 1850, pp. 143-44.
to be a punishment worse than death.”43 The first converts to Protestant Christianity in Travancore were the Parayas.

According to tradition, the Pulayas were the descendants of the aborigines, who were compelled to prefer slavery and food to freedom and starvation.44 The privileged classes never permitted the Pulayas to touch their bodies and if they accidentally did that, death was the punishment. In the words of Durarte Barbosa: “whatever woman or man should touch these, their relations immediately kill them like a contaminated thing: and they kill so many of these Pulayas until they are weary of it, without any penalty.”45 In cases of poverty a Pulaya was allowed to sell himself as a slave, but for not more than sixty fanams. If a higher price was received it would be of no use to him, as the proprietor would take the overplus.46

The eldest child, whether male or female of a Pulaya couple, was the property of the owner of the father, and the other children belonged to the owner of the mother, who had also the right to redeem the first child for the sum of sixteen fanams, whether the possessor like it or not.47

A considerable number of the Pulayas were owned by the government.

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43 J.W. Gladston, Protestant Christianity and People’s Movement in Kerala, Trivandrum, 1984, pp. 51-79.
45 Duarte Barlosa, op.cit., p.143.
They were partly employed on government lands and partly rented out to the ryots.\textsuperscript{48}

As outcastes, they were not permitted to worship the Hindu deities. They worshipped evil spirits, souls of their deceased ancestors, etc. to whom groves and altars were dedicated.\textsuperscript{49} The slave castes were not allowed to use the public roads. They were to flee and seek shelter in the jungle when a highcaste man approached; hence it was difficult for them to move from one place to another. If they had to work in or near the roads, they were to place leaves as a mark to warn the high caste man of their presence. If a slave were to raise his hand to strike his master or mistress, or to injure them, he might be punished with death.\textsuperscript{50}

To free themselves from slavery and oppression, the slaves used certain means before the spread of Protestant Christianity. Many Parayas begged the Nambudiri priest visting Suchindram and other temples in South Travancore to call them his slave for which they paid him one fanam per head in an year. The priest conferred upon them benefits and they got


\textsuperscript{50} G.A. Ballard to Acting Chief Secretary to Government, Fort St. George dated Cochin, 23 April 1870, Pol. Proc., 1870, No. 23, pp. 2-4; Circular of V. Ramiengar, Dewan of Travancore, 21 July 1884, Officer Papers, pp. 45-46; Francis Day, \textit{The Land of the Permauls}, pp. 326-29.
justice and a proper treatment as a natural corollary. The slaves of Nambudiri were treated with consideration on account of the sacred position and rank of the master. These Parayas were called ‘Potty slaves’. The Pulayas, on the other hand found Islam as a means of emancipation from their misery and sufferings. A convert to Islam enjoyed all the privileges of the Muslims and the lower castes found it the best way to remove their burdens and enhance their social position. According to James Hough “the untouchables, had nothing to lose be their chains in changing their religion, and glady accept the invitation to convert themselves to Islam”.

In the social pyramid of Travancore a position below the Nairs and above the slave castes was secured by the two numerically important communities, i.e. the Nadars and the Ezhavas. They were half-polluting castes and lived just outside the main village in their separate habitations. They were classed among the outcastes. In South Travancore the Nadars formed the majority and in Central and North Travancore the Ezhavas

were numerous. The missionaries of the LMS in Travancore concentrated their attention mainly on the Nadars of South Travancore.

The Nadars were described by Robert Caldwell “as belonging to the highest division of the lowest classes or the lowest of the middle classes; poor but not paupers; rude and unlettered, but by many degrees removed from a savage state.” They were forbidden to approach within specified polluting distance. “Martyrs to the distinction of castes, they are treated by the higher orders with supercilious scorn; too poor to invite their rapacity, they are held by them in bondage, at least they are awed in to a servitude, mitigated, to be sure, when contrasted to that of the praedial slaves.”

They were a degraded community suffering for generations from oppression. William Tobias Ringeltaube writes of his first impressions about this community.

The Shanars are a set of people more robust than other Indians, very dark in complexion, their features completely European, their ears protractacted to the shoulders by mighty

53 Robert Caldwell, *Tinnevelly Shanars*, p.4. This-between positions was also noted by Rama Rao in the Ramnad Manual. They were described as “inferior to Sudras and superior to the Parayas” (p. 36). According to W.H. Dalton, the Nadars form another portion of the great aboriginal Tartar race, which first over-ran the soil of India. (missions in India, p.95). For details regarding their origin, see H. R. Pate, *Madras District Gazetteers*, Tinnevelly, p.101.

ornaments of lead. Their habits are extremely simple. They are quarrelsome, avaricious and deceitful.\textsuperscript{55}

They were very dirty, ignorant, and of wild appearance. The most prominent feature of their character was downright indolence. Robert Caldwell says:

They cannot bear to make experiments, or calculate possibilities of advantage; they cannot bear the trouble of thinking. It is their custom to idle away half of their time, to do their work in a clumsy, wasteful manner, to be contented with the trade and position of life with which their forefathers were content to be, always in debt and to live from hand to mouth.\textsuperscript{56}

The social conditions of the Nadars of south Travancore were deplorable in the beginning of the nineteenth century. To mark their degradation their women were forbidden to wear any clothing above the waist. They were not allowed to carry umbrellas, to use roads, wear shoes and golden ornaments, carry pots of water on the hip, build houses above one storey in height, milk cows or even use the ordinary language of the


\textsuperscript{56} Robert Caldwell, \textit{Tinnevelly Shanars.}, p.38.
country. They were obliged to render uliyam\textsuperscript{57} to the government and the privileged classes.\textsuperscript{58} They were also subjected to heavy taxation.\textsuperscript{59}

The distinguishing feature of their religion was the direct worship of demons.\textsuperscript{60} “Demonism”, Robert Caldwell writes, “in one shape or another may be said to rule the Shanars with undisputed authority.”\textsuperscript{61} These demons were known as \textit{pey}, \textit{putam} and \textit{pisachu}.\textsuperscript{62} They also worshipped Bhadrakali, the tutelary deity of the community. The structures made to house their gods were generally known as pey-kovils.\textsuperscript{63} The Amman Kovil or temple of goddess, was central to every Nadar settlement. The principal devil temple was situated at Agastisvaram, the head quarters of the Nadar tribe in Travancore.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{57} Uliyam service was a type of conscripted labour. The unprivileged classes were asked to work or to carry burdens for the government temples, or for the privileged classes. For this work usually no wage were paid. There were two types of Oozhiyam service; forced manual labour and free supply of articles such as vegetables, provisions, etc. This service was a form of acute harassment to the lower classes. The force behind this system was the coercive authority and power of the government and privileged classes.
\textsuperscript{58} Uliyam – Exemption to Christians, 8 Kanni 997 M.E. (September, 1822 Neetu Vol. 15, No. 29, p.30.
\textsuperscript{59} Nadars, Ezhavas, etc., Talayara and other taxes, 20 Chingam 99 (September 1820), Neetu Vol. 13, No. 60, p.64.
\textsuperscript{60} W.H. Dalton, \textit{Missions in India}, London, 1854, p.97.
\textsuperscript{61} Robert Caldwell, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.12-13
\textsuperscript{62} Samuel Mateer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.193.
\textsuperscript{63} W.H. Dalton, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 97-98, Bhadrakali is the tutelary deity of the Nadar community. She represents the malignant aspect of the wife of Siva and is believed to inflict epidemics of small-pox and cholera. “Our Home in Wilderness, Recollection of North Tinnevelly”.
\textsuperscript{64} Samuel Mateer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.219.
The Nadars in general were industrious, simple-minded, rude, unskilled and somewhat coarse in their behavior and habits. But they were neither devoid of shrewdness nor insensible to kindness, though long oppression had rendered them suspicious and covetous.\textsuperscript{65} They lacked communal self-awareness. This consciousness began to emerge, however, in the early nineteenth century with the community’s struggle to uplift itself by taking advantage of the new educational opportunities offered by the missionaries. A major portion of the Protestant Christians were recruited from this suppressed community. With the spread of Protestant Christianity among them, they made great progress in intelligence, civilization and morals, and built up a strong movement within the community for gaining their long-denied rights and freedom.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the burden of taxes mainly fell on the unprivileged classes. The most severe was the poll-tax.\textsuperscript{66} The Nadars, the Ezhavas, and the Christians were compelled to pay it.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} George Pettitt, \textit{The Tinnevelly Mission of the C.M.S.}, London, pp. 482-50
\textsuperscript{66} Poll-tax was a capitation tax first imposed in 1754 on the Nadar by Raja Martanda Varma to meet the increased military expenditure.
\textsuperscript{67} The Nadars suffered much from this poll-tax. They paid it not on for those who were alive, but also for the dead. To escape from paying this excessive tax several Nadar families migrated to Tinneveli. The revenue accounts of Travancore for 1807-8 show that the government collected Rs. 88, 044 as poll-tax from the Nadars and Ezhavas; while from Chetties and other castes the amount collected only Rs. 4624. Col. John Munro to Chief Secretary to Government Fort St. George, 14 April 1818. For. Pol. Proc., Fort William, 17 July 1818, No.20, p.69.
Fees were levied on low castes for marriages. *Purushantaram*, a tax of about 25 percent was levied by the government on all heritable property.  

They were subjected to a large number of taxes; the meanest tax was *Kuppakazhcha*, a levy for each hut. The lower classes were to pay tax for the hair they grew, and for the breasts of ladies called breast-tax. The way in which these taxes were collected antagonized the people more than the tax itself. The Administration Report of Travancore for 1865-66 gives a list of 110 distinct taxes, which were in that year abolished by the government to relieve the poor tax payers. These taxes were to the downtrodden “a source of vexation and embarrassment”. These demands say T. Madhava Row, Dewan of Travancore (1858-1872), “were of the most uncertain character, involved a good deal of oppression and vexation and interfered with the freedom which industry of all kinds is entitled to”.

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70 An Ezhava lady of Chenalai, unable to bear the Pomeilction and rapacity of the tax collectors, in collecting breast tax, cut off one of her breasts and presented it to them. N.R. Krishnan, *Ezhavar Innaleyum Innum* (Malayalam), Engadiyur (n.d), pp. 175-80.
Justice was administered according to the caste-norms. Very severe punishments were usually inflicted on criminals like confession, mutilation, impairment and other punishments, for theft, unchastity, killing of cows, and other minor offences. Death punishment was common.\textsuperscript{73} Heavy fines and confiscation of property were also resorted to.\textsuperscript{74} It was against this political and social background that the missionaries of the LMS were called to work.

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, when the missionaries landed in this territory, they were surprised to see this beautiful state, where a self-seeking minority oppressed a large hard working majority. The code of law was framed without any sense of justice and the masses were groaning in bondage. The history of the ‘liberation’ of the unprivileged masses started with the activities of the missionaries of the LMS.

Christianity was not a new religion to Travancore at the turn of the nineteenth century. In India, Travancore has the unique privilege of having a Christian community from a very early date. This community of St.

\textsuperscript{73} Fra Bartalomeo gives an instance of severe punishment inflicted on an Nadar. He says: “At Quilon, I saw a native of the caste of the Shanar hanging on a gallows for having stolen three coconuts from the house of a Nayar. The corpus delicti was suspended from his neck, in order that it might serve as a warning to all passengers”. \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 299

\textsuperscript{74} Duarte Barbosa, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 116-117.
Thomas, otherwise called Syrian Christians, who gained certain rights and privileges from the local kings, enjoyed an exalted position in society. They gradually became a non-missionary church. They did not disturb the social order of the society. Dr. Claudius Buchanan, who visited Travancore in 1806 to investigate on the general state of Christianity, its followers, and its churches, found the St. Thomas Christians in total disarray. He “perceived all round symptoms of poverty and political depression” and breathed the “air of fallen greatness”. The ancient privileges they had enjoyed in society were things of the past and nobody paid any heed to conventional rules of social intercourse. Their priest told Buchanan:

The Hindu Princes never touched our liberty of conscience. We were formerly on a footing with them in political power; and they respect our religion. We have also converts from time to time; but in this Christian duty we are not as active as we once were; besides it is not so creditable now to become Christian, in our low caste.

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75 They are called Syrian Christians because their churches were under the supervision of the Syrian bishops and they used the Syrian language for their church rites.
78 Ibid., pp. 98-99.
When the missionary activities were suppressed by the Travancore Government rare cases of conversion from privileged classes were reported, the government employed means to check the work of proselytism among Hindu subjects.\textsuperscript{79} Those who were converted from the privileged classes were treated very badly. Neelakanta Pillai, an officer of a noble family, was shot at Aruvamozhi, because he refused to renounce the Christian religion. In the year 1787 four Nairs were thrown into prison at Trivandrum because they would not apologize from the Catholic Church. In 1780, the Government of Travancore, commenced persecution against the Catholic converts of the Nadar caste to induce them to worship Vishnu.\textsuperscript{80}

In addition to this, the Christians suffered also from their Hindu neighbours, who forced them to attend celebrations and festivals in honour of the Hindu gods. Christian women, who refused to be present, were physically dragged to the scene, for which act ancient custom was invoked by the Hindus as an excuse.\textsuperscript{81} The Christian converts were baptized by the missionaries only during the night to avoid giving any occasion to the magistrates to make complaints against them.


\textsuperscript{80} Rev. Thomas Whitehouse, \textit{op.cit.}, p.223. Whitehouse says that about 20,000, Nadars left their houses and fled to the mountains to escape persecution.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p.216.
Protestant Christianity was first introduced in Travancore at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Maharasan, a native of Mailadi in South Travancore, played a key role in founding Protestantism in Travancore.\textsuperscript{82} He was converted by John Caspar Kohlhoff, a Danish Missionary at Tanjore,\textsuperscript{83} when he visited the place to see some of his relatives, and named him Vedamanikkam, meaning the gem of the Bible. The introduction of Protestantism is in striking contrast to the evangelization of Travancore by Catholic and Syrian faiths at the instance of foreign ecclesiastics. Vedamanikkam retained the spirit of Christianity even after his return to Travancore and as a result of his efforts a small group of Protestant Christians was formed at Mailadi.\textsuperscript{84} Owing to severe opposition from orthodox Hindus the early efforts at proselytisation did not produce the desired effects. But the interference of Col. Macaulay, the then British Resident in Travancore changed the whole situation.

In England in the last decades of the eighteenth century there was an evangelical revival, and several ardent Christians thought of propagating

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\item W.H. Dalton, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 102-103. Maharasan belonged to the Paraya Caste.
\item Tranquebar was the centre of Protestant Christian activities in India. In the year 1705 the King of Denmark resolved to send some missionaries to Tranquebar. From that year it became a flourishing Christian centre. Christian Missionary activities spread from Tranquebar to Tanjore and other places. Philipps, Thirty Four Conferences Between the Danish Missionaries and the Malabarian Bramans in the East Indies, pp. xviii-xix.
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\end{footnotesize}
the gospel among the non-Christians. Every Christian considered it his
duty to employ all the means in his power to spread the gospel both at
home and abroad.\textsuperscript{85} One of the first results of this great change was the
foundation of the London Missionary Society in 1795 with its sole object,
“to spread the knowledge of Christ among heathen and other
unenlightened nations.”\textsuperscript{86} This movement attracted thousands of people.

At this time the necessity of an ecclesiastical establishment for
British India was widely discussed. Several enlightened Christians
advocated strongly that missionaries should be allowed to spread
the gospel in India. William Wilberforce raised his voice in the British
Parliament in favour of India’s evangelization through missionary
efforts. At the time of the renewal of the Company’s in 1793, he made a
heroic but unsuccessful attempt to include a favourable clause in the
Charter Act of that year to facilitate the work of Christian Missions in
India.\textsuperscript{87} Dr. Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, championed the cause in the
House of Lords. He pressed the matter for the consideration of those in

\textsuperscript{85} Rechard Lovett, \textit{op.cit.}, p.12.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p.30.
\textsuperscript{87} Julius Richter, \textit{A History of Missions in India}, London, 1908, p. 150. The attempt
of Wilberforce to include a favourable clause in the Charter Act of 1793 failed
largely due to the organized opposition of powerful men like Henry Dundas, who
were for the progress of commerce and not Christianity.
power.\textsuperscript{88} He wrote to Dr. Claudius Buchanan on 14 May 1806 that the wisdom of British policy, the equity of its jurisprudence, the impartiality of its laws, the humanity of its penal code, and above all, the incorrupt administration of public justice will when they are well understood, make the Indians our willing subjects, and induce them to adopt a religion attended with such consequences to the dearest interests of the human mind. They will rejoice in having exchanged the tyranny of pagan superstition, and the despotism of their native princes, for the mild mandates of Christianity, and the stable authority of equitable laws.\textsuperscript{89}

As a result, a favourable attitude toward Christian missionary activities in India was created.

The original design and persistent aim of the London Missionary Society was as far as means and opportunity should afford, to “preach the Gospel to every creature.”\textsuperscript{90} The success of its Mission in the South Seas and the increased facilities at the disposal of the Directors of the Society, made them focus their attention on the vast continent of India.\textsuperscript{91} The Danish missionaries of Tranquebar, hearing of the missionary enterprises

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\textsuperscript{88} Dr. Claudius Buchanan, \textit{op.cit.}, London, 1811, p. 251.
\textsuperscript{89} Watson, \textit{Bishop of Llandaff, to Dr. Claudius Buchanan}, dated Calgarth-Park, Kendal, 14 May 1806, Ibid., p.255.
\textsuperscript{90} Samuel Mateer, \textit{Land of Charity}, p.257.
\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{flushleft}
undertaken by the L.M.S., requested its Directors to send missionaries to labour in this part of India. In a letter to the Directors of the L.M.S. in December 1799, the Danish missionaries wrote:

Most happy we should find ourselves, if your Ministers should also come in our vicinity; we should embrace them as Brethren in Christ, and be with them of one spirit.92

The Directors decided to send out three agents of the gospel, namely Rev. Messrs, Ringeltaube, Des Granges, and Cran. They were sent to Tranqueber, the cradle of Protestant Christianity in India, where they chalked out the future plans after consultation with the influential Christian friends there. They reached Tranquebar on 5 December, 1804.93 The most pious and influential Christians at Madras took pains to persuade every missionary landing at Madras to work in Travancore for spiritual and temporal welfare of the people there.94 The local believers were willing to accept a European missionary.95 Thus the ground was prepared for the Protestant missionary work in Travancore.

92 Quoted by C.M. Agur, op.cit., p.464.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., pp. 471-72.
95 Samuel Mateer, op.cit., p.260.