CHAPTER I

Social Condition

The Communal Group:

Based on the occupation, the people of the region are divided into several castes. The important castes in the Kannanoor village are the Nadars, Nairs, Ezhavas, Vellalas, Vannan, and Barber¹.

Nadar Race and Asan's part in Upper Cloth Revolt:

Castes and caste distanetens were the fabrications of Aryans. They did not permit the oppressed and suppressed sections to dress neatly and compelled to keep their breast portion open before the arrival of London Missionaries in the nineteenth century. Christian Women were taught to cover their breast with clothes².

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¹ Personal Interview with P. Varadharasan Rtd Teacher, residing at Kannanoor, dated 21-03-2006.

There was a strong opposition to this from the so-called high caste called Nair. This opposition led to a series of clashes from 1821 to 1859. This war was called vulgarly as “Chanar Kalakam” or Upper Cloth Movement. And later it has been correctly termed by the living South Indian Historian Dr. K. Rajayyan as “Nadar movement”. The Nairs because of their influence in the Travancore administratively have done so many havoc to the Nadars like setting fire to the mission schools, churches and houses. During the agitation 108 Asans including Anandhan extended their cooperations to the Nadar churches. In Kannanoor some Nairs and Government Employes came together and done some damages to the Christians properties and ill-treated the Christian Nadars.

They were compelled to carry head loads of leaves and other commodities to Padmanabapuram Kottai by walk to feed their elephants. On hearing the news some Nadars from Pulipanam named as Isakimaden, Ananthapadmanabhan, and Thiruppapu Nadar’s sons like Ponnam Perumal,

\[^3\] *Ibid. P.38.*
Chadayaperumal and Padmanaben hurried to that place and started fighting. Those who failed in that fight were caught by the nadars. Nearly 25 Nairs were given the same punishment of carrying coconut leaves over their head to Thachanvilai in Kannanoor. They were dropped in front of L.M.S. Church and after words they were given pardon.

Second Upper Cloth Revolt

The second Upper Cloth Revolt took place around Kannanoor, Attoor, Aramanai, Thirppparapoo, Odayarvilai, Pulipanam, Eraniel in the Neyyoor District. On 21 December 1828 there broke out a clash between the Nairs and Nadars. Around 500 Nairs got ready with all weapons to attack the

4 I bid., P.39.
5 I bid.
Nadars of Thachamvilai. A very strong fight started at morning 10° Clock in the morning lasted till 4° Clock in the evening. In this fight six members from Ananthan family and the Nair rebels around 300 were killed.

**Position of Women:**

According to Ringle Taube the women in Travancore never attended schools. This statement clearly exposed the condition of women in the year 1806. The majority of women spent their time mostly within the four walls of the kitchen. The social evil of untouchability very much affected the lives of women. Early marriage was the order of the day. The only caste women who enjoyed considerable social influence and liberty was the Nair women. The females of that community received the basic educational knowledge of reading and writing.

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9 Reports of L.M.S. Nagercoil Mission Districts, 1905, P.123.
In the social setup, the Nadar women were treated like slaves\(^{10}\). Educational of the women was neglected and from the age of ten they were shut-up in their houses and denied all kinds of liberties. The Nadars considered the marriage relationship as sacred one\(^{11}\). Only after the 19th century Women began to spend their times in sewing in their houses. Today the status of the women members have advanced a lot due to their involvement in self-help groups\(^{12}\).

**Food Habits:**

The food habit of the people in and around the Kannanoor area are the same as that of the people of the entire District. Rice is the common food of the people. Muslims do not eat pork. Generally Hindus and the high caste people do not eat meat at all\(^{13}\). People who eat meat, fish and eggs are called non-vegetarians. Those who do not take meat, fish or eggs are


\(^{12}\) Personal Interview with R. Paul Raj, Vice President, Kannanoor Panchayat, residing at Kannanoor, dated 10-05-2006.

called vegetarians\textsuperscript{14}. In addition to their ordinary food, they have the habit of eating fruits like mangoes and bananas. They use seasonal food for their good health. All are having the habit of drinking coffee and tea in the morning\textsuperscript{15}.

**Dress and ornaments:**

The people of Kannanoor in Kayakumari District used to wear different kinds of dresses. Education has brought great changes in the system of the dresses of the people. Educated people used to wear western dress especially girls have great fascination towards it\textsuperscript{16}. Sari and blouse are most common among women. Shirts and trousers are the most common dress of men. Some people used to wear dhoti or lungi instead of pyjama they wear different clothes in different seasons\textsuperscript{17}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{14} I bid. P.31.

\textsuperscript{15} Pillai. K.K. *Studies in the History of India with Special Reference to Tamil nadu*, Madras, 1979, P.141.

\textsuperscript{16} Arul Sami, *Uravu Oru Thodar Kalthai*, (Tamil), Bangalore, 1918, P.29.

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Ornaments:

Women of this area have much fascination for gold ornaments. They used to wear ear rings, anklets necklaces and chains. They spent huge amount of money for clothses and ornaments. They consider gold ornaments as a source of wealth.

Recreations:

Kannanoor people used to involve in recreation during leisure hours. They had the habit of playing cards in groups. The youth of kannanoor area are playing different games like kabadi, Football, Basket ball and Cricket. Girls show their interest in dancing and watching movies. Children played hide and seek for recreation during leisure hours. The fishermen used to catch fish and repair their fishing nets.

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19 Agur, C.M. Church History of Travancore, Madras, 1903. P.155.
Productvity of Weapons:

Most of the war weapons were manufactured by Asans, who supervised the weapons in Thachanvilai. Carpenters blacksmiths gathered together and worked in this cantonment. They made weapons like swords, spears, daggers, bows, slings, maces, mastheads, alabaster etc. Sources used by those days have been seen now. Iron became melted and forms Iron wells. Here and there blacksmith stones are present. By these we proved that Thachenvilai is a place for making weapons. The most important soldiers from Nadar races whose daily routine was war fighting. Around each Nadars place, Silambattam war fighting centers are present. Those centres are called by Kottavilai. All these fighting centre’s are presided by Thachanvilai Asan20.

Wall Veechu Thottam:

Kannanoor Thachanvilai Asan was superior over 108 Asans. In Thachanvilai towards NorthWest direction they had one centre for giving training in sword. This place was called as

Wall Veechu Thottam. Later it was renamed as Wall Veechu Koshtam by Nambuthirees. Nowadays it is called as Vallan Thottam\textsuperscript{21}.

**Important Activities:**

On those days different places from each Villages had different eminent persons such as physicians, Neurologists, Karate Masters, Great War fighters, Siddhas. Nowadays generations of our ancestors were reminded their great achievements through hearsay message\textsuperscript{22}.

**Educational Activities:**

Kannanoor was backward in Education, till the arrival of the Christian missionaries. They took keen interest to popularize western education in their respective areas. It led to the decline of the traditional Gurukula system of education\textsuperscript{23}.

According to this system, education was imparted through discourses by teachers. Usually, the teachers belonged

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. P.26.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. P.28.

\textsuperscript{23} Parameswaran Pillai., *History of Travancore*, Trivandrum, 1994, P.68.
to the high castes and were well-versed in Sanskrit\textsuperscript{24}. Guru-Sishya Philosophy of education was perhaps the only system then. This system of study gave importance to memorise everything by heart. This traditional system existed till the arrival of Western education\textsuperscript{25}.

**Govt Middle School Kannanoor:**

This school was started as a primary school by the L.M.S. Missionaries in the year 1916\textsuperscript{26}. Later it was raised to the level of a middle school in 1976\textsuperscript{27}. Students of different castes and Religions are benefitted here. The classes commence at 9.30 a.m and end at 4p.m. daily. Students from the backward communities are given special considerations. To make teaching effective, different subjects are taught through songs and dance. Teachers attended all the training programmes prescribed by the Governmental Educationl Institution. School students used to wear khaki trouser and white coloured shirt

\textsuperscript{24} Anlet Sobitha Bai. W. History of India, Marthandam, 2002., P.462.

\textsuperscript{25} Parameswaran Pillai, Op. Cit., P.70.

\textsuperscript{26} Inscription, on the Foundation Stone Government Middle School, Kannanoor, 1916.

\textsuperscript{27} Register of, Government Middle School, Kannanoor, 1977, P.1.
dress with white ties and attend the school assembly daily. And it shows the national integration of students. Every Monday the national flag will be hoisted. Students recite Thirukkural and say some useful proverbs and read the news. A pledge for National Integration should be taken by students. Teachers give useful advices during the assembly. The free books supplied by the government are given to the students at the prescribed time. Free noon meals plan is functioning well in the schools. Students write monthly and quarterly exams regularly and the progress reports of the students are sent to their parents regularly.

Kannanoor Government middle school was declared as one of the best schools of K. K. District by the Educational Board during the teachers day celebration of the year 2001-2002. The shield was awarded as token of achievement by the District Collector. The Kannanoor school stands as one of the best middle schools among the ten best schools selected on

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29 Ibid. P.4.

30 Ibid. P.5.
23-10-2003 in this District. The donation of 3 computers worth Rs. one lakh by N.I. Engineering College at Kumara Kovil was a great achievement, in this school history\textsuperscript{31}. 

The village education group is functioning well under the leadership of the village Panchayat leader Mr. A. Raj\textsuperscript{32}. There are 9 teachers and 348 students in this school. The school has produced 100% result during this academic year\textsuperscript{33}.


\textsuperscript{33} Personal Interview with P. Sobitharaj School Headmaster, residing at Kannanoor, dated 22-03-2006.