CONCLUSION

Twenty first century is totally dependent on the democracy based on peoples’ participation. Hence, Kottar Diocese is also giving importance for improvement of democratic structures in the diocesan administration. This improvement is possible only when good leadership is made available without any obstruction of clergy. For this, the Diocese has decided to establish grass - root structures which are well aware that hierarchy will pave the way for all inclusive human participation and resources.

The historical background of the Diocese of Kottar revealed that Christianity has come from outside in different phases and considered, foreign religion. Along with the advent of Christianity from outside, the socio- cultural change that accompanied the conversion of the people to this religion also upset the established socio- economic and cultural power relations in the society. These aspects are bound to have their repercussions in the relationship between people practicing different religions in South Travancore. The religion and culture of the non-caste Hindus is studied in different angles. Their religious experience is different from the dominant mode on many respects. It goes beyond religious reason. Their religious experience is in fact also social, cultural and
political. There are specific local features irrespective of coastal Catholic culture and the culture of interior people.

The historical profile of the BCC helped to understand better the phenomenon of the Anbiyams, their life, functioning and structures and various aspects related to them. The programme of BCCs which originated in Latin America is gaining momentum and popularity in many parts of the world today. It can be understood as an attempt by the Christian Churches to interpret themselves from the perspective of the marginalized people. Awareness among the common men and women about the biblical roots of Christian life and the aspiration to integrate elements of their faith with life realities have given birth to the formation of BCCs in the Christian Churches. BCCs have made their appearance in India since about the late 70s and in the beginning of the 80s. Initially many Church leaders were hesitant to promote them due to the fear of the threat to the existing structures and power equations in the Church. However, in the 90s they have found more acceptances among the Church leaders as well as among the people. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India has proposed BCCs as the new way of being Church and the best form to tackle the pressing needs of the Church. In many dioceses they are already functioning as a
The BCC reflects the feelings and aspirations of the Christians at the base, as Vatican II stressed the image of the Church as the people of God. It expressed the idea of participation of the people more clearly, not just as a right, but a duty. Section 3 of 285 of Code of Canon Law, the codification of canonical legislation for the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church and was promulgated on 25 January 1983 by Pope John Paul, says ‘Clerics are forbidden to assume public office whenever it means sharing in the exercise of civil power’. Hence, BCC facilitates the participation of everyone at the administration structures in the decision-making process, and the decentralization of the hierarchical structures from bottom to top in the Diocese. It promoted BCC as people centred Church. It welcomed both men and women to function in the Church services.

It is to be noted that an important reason for the domination of the clergy and the passivity of the laity is the pyramidal model of Church which is still dominant in the Kottar Diocese. The Church since the years of 1968 - 175 was evincing keen interest in the matter of renewal seminars for establishing people’s participation in the Church and society. Participatory structures were opened in the Parishes, Vicariates,
Institutions and Pastoral and Social structures by the active ministry of lay catechists. It was the extreme simplicity, dedication to duty, sincerity of purpose and above all the selfless service of the few committed Priests which attracted the local people to the Catholic Christian faith and they involved in the Church activities. The extended renewal programmes to all people was regardless of their caste, creed or sex. This democratic approach equalization of social opportunities to all without any sort of discrimination has made a profound influence on the community. They also fought against untouchability, slavery and superstitious beliefs and practices prevalent in the society. Though the Catholic Church could gain momentum only in the early part of the present century their progress was very outstanding. In the early decades of this century under the able leaderships rules of Bishops Arokiasamy and Leon Thamaraj, the Diocese achieved phenomenal progress in establishing BCCs in the parishes.

The Diocese took serious measures to put an end to hierarchy – centred and traditional concept of Church. In order to promote the active involvement of the laity, the Diocese formed territorial and administrative structures. First, the Parish, instead of being perceived as a huge, powerful and institutional structure controlled and administered by the clergy, is reformed as community of communities. They became the life style of the
people and their participation was given very important. In the Parish, now there is consultation, dialogue and sharing.

The relation between Christian Community and the church administrative hierarchy introduced a new principle called collegiality and co-responsibility in the Diocese. To build up the Diocese into a participative community in view of promoting lay leadership, it is indispensable that the structures and organs of participation are important in all the Parishes, Vicariates, Regions and Diocese. It implies collective responsibility in planning, making decisions and executing them for the common good. For this, a verity of initial training programmes on ‘open mind’, ‘dialogue’, ‘unity between the husband and wife’, ‘ties between the parent and children’, ‘about a society’, ‘create a Christian Community’, ‘create good leaders’, ‘qualities of forgiveness’, ‘selection of guides’, ‘how to conduct the BCC meetings’, ‘coordination council’, ‘regional committee’ and ‘vicariate council’ were motivated. From this, all the above structures are established for the democratization of diocesan administration.

The reign of Bishop Leon Tharmaraj is truly the golden era of Kottar Diocese. There is improvements in every field namely spiritual, social, economic, political, administration and educational. He introduced
Kuzhithurai Integral Development Social Service for the socio-economic development of the people of the Thirithuvapuram and Mulagumoodu Vicariates. The Basic Social Service Society is formed at Parish and Vicariate levels on the line of grass root structures. These participatory structures are mandatory as they are one of the principal means which contribute to the ecclesial fellowship. KIDSS focuses of group members from financial aspect to other social issues which have got a direct say in their participation and development. Group leaders are oriented towards this task by conducting trainings at different levels; training on leadership, good governance, gender mainstreaming and environment awareness are organized with the above idea in mind. This has brought out positive actions at the grass-root levels.

The KIDSS has involved in the auxiliary and accessory fields to technical education, non-formal education, and social awakening; scholarships and materials aid to poor students; removal of illiteracy, adult education and holistic health programme to every one; rehabilitation of school drop-outs; non-formal education to child workers and removal of child labour; vocation-guidance and counseling for higher education; encouraging vernacular language art and culture; establishment of reading rooms, library book exhibition and readers movement; propaganda against
superstitious beliefs and practices and establishment of students movement. If this can be done, there is no doubt we shall soon be able to create a new culture and a new society.

The Diocese in order to have better administration and serve effectively to the society it works under four vicariates, 27 zones and 3250 BCCs. In these decentralized structures, it tries to achieve social change in villages by awakening the rural people. They realized that it is not only individuals who are unjust, inhuman, violent, but also the very structure of the society, cause poverty and injustice. Hence, BCCs started social services to the affected and needy people to improve the socio – economic life of the people as its social response in the signs of the times. Therefore, the BCCs acted as agents for small saving, women empowerment, health education, free tuition, consumer awareness, alcoholic counselling, guidance for higher education, career guidance, family welfare, religious harmony, political stand and religious festivals in the District. No doubt educational empowerment and social changes have taken place. Several Anbiyam conferences at Parish, Zonal, Vicariate and Diocese have highlighted peoples’ awareness on the importance of education. It started a new dimension to research focusing from the grass-roots.
Anbiyam has made very useful contributions towards the solutions of several major and minor social issues and problems faced by people in the villages. Of late, there has been more awakening and a good amount of animation work was being done by Anbiyam through its commission and Parish, Zonal, Vicariate and Diocesan coordination. A certain amount of thrust has also been given in the task of animating women and empowering youth. In fact, there has been a gradual progress in the social awakening of Anbiyams.

The service of the Anbiyam in the field of social work is noteworthy. While responding to social issues, Anbiyam took an unambiguous stand on social justice and on its preferential option for the poor. It is to be known as the upholder of justice and be perceived as an agent of change in the Diocese. Anbiyam, within the Parish, make useful contributions in the area of environment, since it is a national and global problem. Obviously, on the environmental issue, it plays essentially a catalyst and supportive role in the villages.

Anbiyam did not want to undermine the benefits of Church freedom. It thought the experiment with the growth of Anbiyams should be organized as a major success in Kanyakumari District. They provided a useful contribution to judge the Church activities and shaped the future of
its members. The Anbiyam structure needed professional and well qualified animators to monitor democratic activities that had become service provider.

The findings of the present research reveal that BCCs are highly decentralized and participatory in nature. Policies and decisions are not imposed from the central bodies above, but are evolved through dialogue and discussions with the members at the grass – root. The main hope for the future of the BCCs lies in locating power among the people themselves. These will lead them to become more conscious of their civil and political rights in the democratic society.

The Diocese of Kottar is earnestly striving to preserve and maintain the BCCs, its territorial and administrative structures, and historical value of democratization. It should be encouraged to enter into research study for social change. Hence, BCCs need political awareness and involvement. In this matter, the main responsibility of the Diocese is to foster political awareness and involvement in the laity. It is hoped that this study will go some way towards helping in the historical understanding and assessment of BCC and also in the approach to the democratization of diocesan administration.