Chapter - II

HISTORY OF PARAVAS

The land division of the Coastal region according to the Tamil tradition is called, *Neithal*. Naturally, people living in *Neithal land* had to depend on the sea and its products for their livelihood. Their occupations were centered round the sea. An old Tamil poem describes the occupation and activities of the people of *Neithal* as follows: boating, chank and pearl fishing, swimming, in search of marine products, fishing, guiding about the rock, under the sea and the sea currents, selling fish, manufacture of salt, predicting astronomical data and weather conditions, to sail in ships and undertaking voyages to other countries for trade. From very ancient times, all these maritime occupations were undertaken by low castes among the native Hindus who were called Parathavan (later known as Paravas). For the voyages on the sea and across the seas, the people of the Neithal used various kinds of vessels. The names of such vessels used by the ancient Tamils are found in the Tamil literatures down from Sangam Age. A few of them are *vangam*, *umpi*, *nawai*, *dhoney*, *kalam*, *madhalai*, *pathai*, *punai*, *thonnai*, *paru*, *podam*, *panri*, *thimil*, *pattihai*, *paduvai*, *midavai* and *odam*. The word Kappal seems to be a very late

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139 Prabandha Thiruttu. Dr. Anne Thomas, World Tamil Research Centre, Madras 1981, Stanza. 351.
140 Vangam, used for long distance voyages across the seas. Pathitrupathu – 52; Ahananuru – 255; Maduraikanchi – 356.
141 Ahananuru – 29, 187.
142 Thirukkural – 496; Purananuru – 66, 126; Maduraikanchi – 78, 88; Perupanatrupadai – 319, 321; Seevagasinthamani – 2793.
143 Perumkathi – 36, 162 – 64; Seevagasinthamani – 967.
144 Thirukkural – 605; Ahananuru – 149; Silappathikaram – 7, 8; Seevagasinthamani – 1231; Perumkathi – 42 – 77 – 178, Kalingathuparani – 475.
145 Seevagasinthamani – 505.
146 Namadeepa Nigandu, Sivasubramaniya Kavirayar, Tamil University Thanjavur, 1930.
derivation. by about 17th century. The parts of these vessels are also described in detail in these literatures\textsuperscript{147}.

Ancient Age

Tolkapiyam

\textit{Tolkapiyam} was formed in 3rd Century B.C. In that, land was divided into four divisions.\textsuperscript{148} But later, Sangam age Literatures say that land is divided into five divisions which are explained as follow:

Kurinji

The region of Mountain and related to that. People live here were called as “Kuravur Kurathiyar” Kurinji is the region which mostly covered by hills and its surrounding areas. Occupation of the people in this region was hunting. So, they were mostly hunters. They worshiped ‘\textit{Murugan}’.\textsuperscript{149}

Mullai

The land of forest and related to that. People live here were called as “Aayar Aachigal”. Mullai region is the area of jungles. Here, the people were living as shepherds. They worshipped ‘\textit{Krishna}’\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{147} Raghavan R, \textit{Nam Nattu Kappal Kalai}, Madras 1968, p.76; N. Ethiraj, \textit{Kappalin Varalaru}, Madras 1990; \textit{Kappal Sastrum}, Madras Government Oriental Manuscript serves No.1 The word Kappal appears in usage at a very late period only. We find early reference in a copper plate of Krishnadeva Raja in the year 1513.

\textsuperscript{148} Tholuppapiyam, Porul, Agam – 5.

\textsuperscript{149} NeveSh Victoriyi M, \textit{Maththukulidurai Parathavargal}, Chennai, Aug 2007, p. 3.

Marutham

Cropland; People live here were called as “Uzhavar Uzhathiyar”. Plains were known as Marutham region during Sangam Age. The occupation of the people of this region was cultivation. So, they were Ploughmen. They worshipped ‘Indiran’.

Neithal

Sea and sea shore; People live here were called as “Parathar Parathiyar” Neithal is the coastal area. The occupation of the people depends on the sea. So, they were fishermen. They worshipped ‘Varunan’. These details are in Tolkapiam.

Palai

Palai is the region of drylands. People of this region were mostly warriors. They Worshipped ‘Durga’. These details are in Tolkapiam.

Sangam Age

According to Tolkapiyar’s saying, Kurinchi people formed “Chera Dynasty” and had “Bow” as their symbol; Marutham people formed “Chola Dynasty” and had “Tiger” as their symbol; Neithal people formed “Pandian Dynasty” and had “Fish” as their symbol. They were called as “Parathavars”.\textsuperscript{151} Silapathikaram ‘Uleasan’, Samana Munivar, called the sea business men as “Parathavar” and merchants as “Saathuvian”.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{151} Nalavenba – “Nan yenpan menilaththum naanivaththum mikkaan”.
\textsuperscript{152} Paramasivam A, Parathavar Ena Meedduruvakka Varaiveyal, Chennai 2005, p. 28.
History of Paravas

Sangam Age people set their life and occupation according to the condition earth. The five divisions namely Kurunchi, Mullai, Marutham, Neithal and Paalai. The people of these regions have independent claimate, occupation and life style of their own. Culture of the people live in these places differ each other. Let us see the social and economic background of the people who lived in the area of Neithal at the Eastern Coastal Plains.

Paravars lived in the Eastern Coast of Tamil Nadu and they were called as Parathavar. People belong to Paravas community, lived in the thatched houses nearby the coastal areas. These people believed only in the sea source and led their life. They were well versed in sea business. Their businesses were fishing, salt manufacturing, shell and pearl fishing.

Pride of Pandian’s rule and reason for the spread of Tamil People’s praise was the pearls got from the Eastern Coasts such as Tuticorin, Kayalpatnam, Oovari and Manapad. Paravars’s main occupation is fishing whereas scope for pearl hunting and salt manufacturing was not so popular during the ancient days.

Shell and pearl fishing were ancient occupations. To involve in this business, sea has to be in silent state. This fishing will happen during the months of December and January. Paravars were very much brilliant in knowing the location of pearls as well as shells.

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Kuliyaligal

Those who do Pearl fishing are called as *Kuliyaligal*.\(^{154}\) Now-a-days, *Kuliyaligal* are also called as *Ambalathar*.\(^{155}\) The word Paravar is known as fishermen in common. Parathar means the Businessmen. These businessmen had also done horse business in Kayalpatinam.\(^{156}\) During the period of Rajendran I, horse business was done in mass by importing horses at *Pavitra Manikanpatti*.

People of Neithal Land

People who lived in the slum area near coastal areas were called as *Parathavar* and *Pattinavar*. As the land had salty nature, they could not cultivate rice, grass or any other species. They totally depend on the sea source. People, who lived in *Neithal* region during Sangam age, go for fishing into deep sea by Catamaran, and by small boats. They got species by selling the fishes in the mode of exchange method.\(^{157}\)

They make use of the remaining fishes by salting them and preserve and make them dry in sun and transform them as dry fish. Sand heaps are also there to cultivate salt.\(^{158}\)

These people *Neithal* land started doing business by setting sail to Foreign Countries. To protect the nation from the enemies who may enter through sea; Pandian Kings had a strong and well-trained navy. So, the Parathavar live in *Neithal* land.\(^{159}\)

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\(^{155}\) *A.R.E.*, 1926 : 182.

\(^{156}\) *A.R.E.*, 1919 : 399


Parathavar Slum

Parathavar live in small huts built near the coastal areas in large numbers.\textsuperscript{160}

That looks like a small town. Huts were located on the mound of sand. One portion will be
covered with Pine tree and the other with water.

As many generations lived there, that area was called as “\textit{Azhiya Maravin Muthoor}”. Area of Parathars was called as \textit{Pakam}.\textsuperscript{161} Still their residential areas are as follows; Kotipakam, Kalpakam, Kadampakam, Kathipakam, Cheapakam, Eenchempakam etc...\textsuperscript{162}

Parathavar Pattinam

This is another residential area of fishermen. Here many fishermen live luxurious life. Here houses were like mansion, Broad Street, shops were seen. People who live here led a luxurious life.\textsuperscript{163} They look rich. Their area is called a \textit{Pattinam. Harbour City (Thuraimuga Nagaram) has large mansion, the morning bazaar (Nalangadi) and the evening bazaar (Allangadi) and many apartments were seen.\textsuperscript{164} Big mansions for Politian and leaders were also seen. Trees were large in numbers. Such harbour is called as \textit{Pattinam}.\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{160}\textit{Natrinai} 4:1- 4.
\textsuperscript{164} Nevesh Victoriya M, \textit{Op.cit.}, p. 17
Valour of Parathavar

Among Parathavar, South Parathavars lived from Kanyakumari to Vembar. They were well talented and skilled to War very often against Pandian Kings. As they have excellent skill and experience in sailing. They sustained their position. This was the reason why they had strong dynasty. In Southern Coast, people who lived in Neithal land gave training to their people and placed them as soldiers and navy. They were fearless and able to face the dangerous and ferocious animals like shark and whale with the powerful weapons they had.

“Kadunchura erinha koduthanthal thanthai”

To set sail by big catamaran and trade in foreign countries was introduced by theses Neithal people. They had their gym to keep them strong. In the poem Pattinapaalai, it was said that they practised boxing and well trained for war. Soldiers of Neithal people should conquer a small state. They had a flag. It was in Red Colour with a fish, bow and arrow signs. It was hoisted in the important places in their village.

Various Names of the people

People of Neithal land were named as Parathavar, Nuzhaiyar, Patriot, Saalar, Kazhiyar, Kadalar, Valaiyar, Thimilar. Even though they had various names,

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167 *Maduraikanji* 536 – 537.
169 *Maduraikanji*.
170 *Natrinai* 392.1.
172 *Pattinapaalai*.
Parathavar and Paravas were the only popular name and used by the people. Further, there are some other names for Paravas. They are Powrier, Muukkuvar and Veerakulathan etc…

**Three Crowned Kings**

*Cheran, Chola, Pandiar* were the three Kings who dominated the Tamil Nadu Dynasty for the long period.\[^{175}\] Cheran Kings Ruled the North part of Tamil Nadu, Chola Ruled Western Tamil Nadu and Pandian Ruled South Tamil Nadu. Their Rule prevailed for a long time in Tamil Nadu.\[^{176}\]

**Coastal Areas of Neithal Land**

Tamil Nadu has a very long coastal area measuring Approximately 1,076 km. This was called as Chola Section Sea Shore. Now, as it fell into European Countries and called as Coramendel.\[^{177}\] As Pearl is found in a large number in Pandian State, it was popularly known as *Muthukuzhi*. Coastal area of Chera Coast was known as North Coastal Areas.

**Names of the leaders**

Names of Leaders Neithal People were *Cherpan, Thuraivan* and *Kondagan, etc.*. But, Parathavar is the name which has been in use for long time. Nulaiyar\[^{178}\] is the name used in *Agananooru* and *Thinaimaalai* for one portion and Thimiliar name is used in *Maduraikaanchi* alone.\[^{179}\]

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[^176]: *Sirubanatrupadai*.
[^178]: *Agananuru*.
[^179]: *Maduraikanji*.
Parathar, Paravar is the names used in Nellai, Ramandhapuram, Kumari; Patinavar in Chennai, Chetpat, Thennarkadu, Tanjore; Portion of people in Ramandhapuram, Kumari as Mukuvar.\textsuperscript{180}

\textbf{Parathavar’s Ancestors}

People during \textit{Sangam} Age lived a wealthy and courageous life.\textsuperscript{181} They had knowledge of how to tend the oyster beds and also knowledge of their location. This skill made them to shine in their profession. They also had a proper Government hereditary.\textsuperscript{182}

Now, Paravas are dwelling around the coastal belt extending from Kanyakumari to Ramandhapuram in the four districts of \textit{Kanyakumari, Tuticorin, Tirunelveli, Ramandhapuram.}\textsuperscript{183}

People who lived in the seashore were commonly called as Fishermen but differentiated by their caste. In Pondichery, as Karaiyalar, in Karaikal as Parvatha Rajakulam, in Kanyakumari as Muukkuvar, in some places of Tutucorin, Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Ramnadapuram as Paravar.

In the above said, Parathavar and Muukkuvar belong to Catholic Christians. Others were commonly called as Backward Hindus. In the interior regions of Tamil Nadu, \textit{Paruvatha Rajakulam, Pattanavar, Karaiyalar, Sembadavar and Meenavar speak Tamil; Parivarthar, Thoraiyar, Sembadigar speak Telugu; Panan and Kudaikatti speak Malayalam.}\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{181} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{183} Thursten, \textit{Kulangalum Kudigalum (Tamil)}, chennai, p. 141.
Korkai Parathavar

Parathavars of Neithal people lived in the sea shore places, they do fish merchants. They also do Chank diving and Pearl diving too. Literature says male as Parathavar, Pazhaiyar, Nulaiyar and female as ParathavarMagal, PalaiyarMagaleer, Nulaiyar Madamagal. Records call them as Parathavar and Paravar. Uraiyasiriyargal call them as Parathavar, Parathiyar, Nulaiyar, Nulaichiya. Some kings invaded from south were called as South Parathavar. They were enslaved by Chola Kings and Pandian Kings. This can be found in the following lines from respective literary works.

- Thenparathavar midalsaaya, Vadavadugar valotiya\textsuperscript{185}.
- Thenparathavar poreara\textsuperscript{186}.
- Viravi vanthu adaiyatha paravarai pazhpaduthum\textsuperscript{187}.

Sangam poets briefly explained especially parathavar who lived during sangam age, in eastern coastal areas and lived in Korkai Coastal areas.

Sangam literature portrays parathavars as;

- Kolai vem parathavar\textsuperscript{188}.
- Kolval parathavar\textsuperscript{189}.
- Sirukudi Parathavar\textsuperscript{190}.
- Sirukudi Kadalmem parathavar\textsuperscript{191}.
- Nunvalai paravar\textsuperscript{192}.

\textsuperscript{185} Puranaanuru: 378: 1 – 2.
\textsuperscript{186} Madurai KaanchiThodar: 144.
\textsuperscript{187} Tamilvar: 54.
\textsuperscript{188} Agananuru: 210: 1.
\textsuperscript{189} Agananuru: 300: 1.
\textsuperscript{191} Natrinal: 111: 3.
- Nunyan valaiyil parathavar\textsuperscript{193}.
- Vilangu Valai parathavar\textsuperscript{194}.
- Oozhaa ulavar\textsuperscript{195}.
- Nayanill parathavar\textsuperscript{196}.
- Vaanthimil parathavar\textsuperscript{197}.
- Koduntamil parathavar\textsuperscript{198}.
- Thinthimil parathavar\textsuperscript{199}.
- Kaliyattrin parathavar\textsuperscript{200}.
- Meenvilai parathavar\textsuperscript{201}.
- Meenyeari parathavar\textsuperscript{202}.
- Mudimuthir parathavar\textsuperscript{203}.
- Magilntha parathavar\textsuperscript{204}.
- Vangai parathavar\textsuperscript{205}.
- Panithalai parathavar\textsuperscript{206}.
- Panithurai parathavar\textsuperscript{207}.

\textsuperscript{192} Natrinali : 184-6.
\textsuperscript{193} Iyanthinai (70) : 66:1.
\textsuperscript{194} Silambu 6 : 142.
\textsuperscript{195} Natrinali : 331:1.
\textsuperscript{196} Agananuru : 187: 22.
\textsuperscript{197} Agananuru : 350:11.
\textsuperscript{199} Natrinali : 388: 4.
\textsuperscript{200} Natrinali : 74: 4.
\textsuperscript{201} Silambu : 5:25.
\textsuperscript{202} Natrinali : 45:3, 101:8.
\textsuperscript{203} Natrinali : 207:9.
\textsuperscript{204} Natrinali : 239:2.
\textsuperscript{205} Natrinali : 303: 9.
\textsuperscript{206} Natrinali : 372:11}
➤ Valvinai parathavar\textsuperscript{208}.

➤ Then parathavar\textsuperscript{209}.

➤ Niraithimil vetuvar, vangaithimil\textsuperscript{210}.

Parathavars were well talented in fishing. They live in thatched house in low lying lands. They go to sea at early morning and catch fish by laying fishing net. As they faced a lot of problems, they were called as \textit{Nayanil Parathavar}. They had excellent eyesight and they always had a powerful staff which will have very sharp face, which will attack the shark. They also sailed in a powerful boat which had a majestic look. Parathavar did not apply oil to their hair and maintain it and had a dark skin. Their women were also dark in colour. They wore the dress made by leaves. Because of this reason, Kadaiyalur Uthiran gannar called male parathavars as, \textit{Pundralai Irum Parathavar} and female parathavars as \textit{painthalai maamagalir}.\textsuperscript{211}

\textbf{Paravas}

The history of the Fishery Coast is the history of the Paravas also. Their history reveals that the Paravas have been playing important roles as fishermen, \textit{pearl divers, chank (conch shell) cutters, salt makers, sea-farers, merchants, traders}, etc., To understand the origin and the rich past and glorious heritage of the Paravas, one should know their history.

Today, people of various communities are in search of their historical roots. But, here is a community which has retained the name of its occupation, way of life, religious practices and certain characteristics like militancy and hospitality for quite a long period.

\textsuperscript{207} \textit{Pathitrupattu} : 48: 4
\textsuperscript{208} Agananuru : 340: 9
\textsuperscript{209} Madurai kanchi: 144; Purananuru: 378: 1.
\textsuperscript{210} Madurai kanchi: 116, 319.
\textsuperscript{211} Pattinapalai – 90-91.
One is amazed at the fisher folk of any village along the Fishery Coast for their unique
culture that has been preserved and nurtured very carefully so long. These people are called
the Paravas in the *Sangam literature*.212

Various myths and theories have been put forward and proposed by historians with
regard to the origin of the Paravas. Edgar Thurston quotes from *Historica Ecclesiastica* that
the Paravas and Parvaim of the Scripture are the same. He adds that in the time of King
Solomon, they were famous among those who made voyages by sea.213 One of the
interviews of Patrick *A. Roche goes like this* “We, the Paravas, are the Parvaim, one of the
last tribes of Israel and our present settlement of Uvari*214 in *Paravananu* is the Other of the
Bible”.215

It is the general belief among the Paravas that their original country was Ayodhya or
Oudh; and it appears that before the *Mahabharatha war*, they inhabited the territory
bordering river *Yamuna* or *Jamuna*.216 Bharatha was not new but derived from the fact that
Paravas were descendants of *King Bharathan*. “We are a regal people and several Sanskrit
works attest to our Kshatriya origin.” This is the epitome of the Aryan-Sanskrit heritage as
claimed by some Paravas according to the interview given by Roche.217

According to *Edgar Thursrton*, the Paravas were once a very powerful people. They
had a succession of Kings among them distinguished by the title of Adiyarasen, some of

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214 Uvari is situated down south towards Kanyakumari on the Fishery Coast.
whom seem to have resided at *Uttara Kosamangai*, a famous place of Hindu pilgrimage in the neighbourhood of Ramnad.\(^{218}\)

Parava writers owing allegiance to the Dravidian school two points to the regal Pandyan ancestry of the Paravas and opt for the city of Uttara *Kosamangai* in *Ramnad* as the original abode of the Paravas.\(^{219}\) S.C. Motha refers to the twenty-one emblems and insignia are in vogue among the Paravas to argue for their regal status. “Other evidence of regal origins of the Bharathar” he writes, “is to be found in the use of the fish flag which was the principal flag of the Pandyan Kings, being the emblem of the fish goddess (*Meenakshi*) and of twenty other banners depicting birds and animals belonging to the Bharatha Kings of the North and the Pandya Kings of the South.”\(^{220}\)

If the *Sanskritic* and Dravidian interpretations of the past served to establish the Paravas’ royal status, the Judeo-Christian heritage had its own complementary value. As some Paravas stressed the trade connections with King Solomon, the explicit references to Bharatha Kings being the actual rulers of the Parvaim added a regal tinge to the *jati* (caste).\(^{221}\)

*Fr. Henry Heras* throws fresh light on this issue saying that the Paravas belonged to one of those ancient groups of people who derived their origin from the cradle of world civilization, the *Indus Valley*. The *Moon Paravas* as he mentions in the research findings

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\(^{220}\) *Ibid.,* pp. 18-19.

\(^{221}\) *Ibid.,* p. 19.
were likely to be the ancestors of the Pandya Kings of Madura and of their Parava subjects of the Fishery Coast.\textsuperscript{222}

Leaving their birthplace in the \textit{Indus Valley}, the Bharathars came down South in search of fame and fortune. They settled on the South East Coast of India, the Coromandel Coast on the one side and on the other side along the West Coast of Sri Lanka from \textit{Negambo to Mannar}.\textsuperscript{223}

Here, they consolidated their position and became a distinct and important entity in South India. In the ancient Tamil inscription, there is a reference to ‘Parava men who fished pearls by paying tribute to \textit{Alliyarasani}, daughter of the Pandya King of Madura.\textsuperscript{224} They were probably the only people who so fished pearls at that time.

It is noted in the Madras Census Report of 1901, that there were in reality three castes which answered to the name Paravas and which speak Tamil, Malayalam and Canarese respectively, and probably all the three descend from the Tamil Paravas who were fishermen on the sea Coast. Their headquarters was Thoothukudi and their headman was called \textit{Talaivan} (leader). They were mostly native Christians. They claimed to be Kshatriyas of the Pandya line of Kings, and would eat only in the houses of Brahmins. The Malayalam Paravas were shell collectors, lime burners and gymnasts, and their women acted as midwives. Their titles were Kurup, \textit{Varakurup and Nuraukurup}. The Canaries Paravas were umbrella makers and devil dancers.\textsuperscript{225}

\textsuperscript{222} Henry Heras “\textit{The Minavan in Mohenjo Dara}”, in Reprints from the Journal of Oriental Research, Madras, 1936, p. 284.
\textsuperscript{223} \textit{Ibid.},
\textsuperscript{224} \textit{Ibid.},
\textsuperscript{225} Edgar Thurston, \textit{op. cit., Vol. VI}, p. 143.
It has been suggested that the West Coast Paravas were descendants of those who fled from Tirunelveli in order to avoid the oppression of the Muslims.\footnote{Ibid.}

Whatever their origin, the Paravas made their first appearance in history as fishermen, divers of pearls and organizers and chief beneficiaries of the pearl fisheries along their coast. The word ‘Paravan’ in classic Tamil denotes ‘man of the sea’. Its plural form in Tamil is Paravas. The Paravas are also called ‘Bharathar’ or ‘Bharadhavars’ in conformity with their alleged origin from their royal ancestor, Bharathar, the grandfather of the famous Kulasekara Pandya –founder of the Pandya Dynasty in Tamil Nadu.\footnote{Venantius Fernando S., \textit{The Impact of the Portuguese Padroado on the Indian Fishery Coast}, Rome, 1977, p. 6.}

From the Paravas also arose the race of ancient Indian sailors who later carried Indian goods in boats to Africa and Arabia in the west and to Malaysia and China in the East. Besides, many among the Paravas engaged themselves in pearl fishing and in collecting conch shells. Highly renowned for its pearl trade, Korkai was the chief town of the leading Paravas of the region. The people of the town consisted of mostly of pearl divers and chank cutters.

Literature dating to the Sangam Age, refers frequently to the Paravas as a group that led a prosperous life on the Fishery Coast. In course of time, as the fishery Coast passed through different fortunes under different Ruling Dynasties, the Paravas life also underwent changes.
Francis Xavier

When the fear of physical insecurity and persecution left the paravas, the converts who had no deep faith in Christianity because of lack of sufficient teaching and spiritual nourishment, waited for an opportunity to relapse into the faith of their fore fathers. Moreover, most of their relatives who remained Hindus scoffed at them and treated them as outcasts. So, the majority of the converts began to throw off Christianity in favour of their old religion. This tendency was arrested by the arrival of St. Francis Xavier to the Fishery coast.

S. Manickam says, “The year 1542 A.D is an important land mark in the history of the Paravas of the Gulf region, for it marks the advent of the saintly and devoted Francis Xavier. His arrival created a, new and powerful influence”. The conversion of the Paravas into Christianity caused a lot of heart-burning to the Rulers of Vijayanagar who were the sovereign power over the Gulf of Mannar. St. Francis Xavier, in one of his letters to a colleague, speaks of the Paravas as ‘subjects of his Portuguese Majesty’ and that these paravas were conferred upon by their new masters ‘somewhat dangerous privileges’ for being their subjects.

Hence, the anger of the Vijayanagar authorities was greatly kindled against the Portuguese and the Paravas. The missionary activities of the Portuguese which seemed to have created great fear in the minds of the Imperial regent Ramaraya, there were other reasons too which made him highly indignant. That was the Portuguese Governors of Goa.

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organized a plundering raid on the temples of South Indian pilgrim centers which were famous for their wealth in the form of gold and diamond jewels\textsuperscript{230}.

In 1549 A.D at Vedarai, a village near Kilakarai, Portuguese erected a mud Fort and Chapel. The Portuguese forcibly extracted money from all the Hindu pilgrims who visited the temple at Rameswaram\textsuperscript{231}. These brought the second invasion of the Badagas. Six thousand soldiers marched against Vedarai and the Portuguese were hunted from pillar to post. The badagas were greatly assisted by the affected Muslims of Kilakarai. An Italian priest by name Antonio Criminali\textsuperscript{232} was killed while trying to rescue the Christian converts at Vedarai. The Chapel and the Fort at Vedarai were razed to the ground\textsuperscript{233}.

The dismal state of affairs on the Fishery coast and the apparent failure of his ministry made St.Xavier greatly disappointed. So, after some time, despaired of any success commensurate with his hopes, St.Xavier left for Japan. On the way he died in 1552 A.D\textsuperscript{234}.

**Parava – Muslim Conflict**

Navigation in the Indian Ocean was pioneered by the Arabs, and they were the dominant players throughout history, as far as sailing ships in the western part of the basin were concerned.\textsuperscript{235} They were the for-erunners to the Europeans in trade agreement, sending trade representatives abroad, fixing the boundary in the sea, barter system, port contact, etc.\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{231} Krishnaswami A, *The Tamil country under Vijayanagar*, Annamalai University, 1964, pp. 239-240.
\textsuperscript{232} Western J.I, *The Early History of Tinnevelly Church*, 1928, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{235} *Ibid.*, 
In the Seventh Century the Arabs who settled on the west coast married Kerala women. They moved to Pazhayakayal and then to Kayalpattanam. They mastered themselves in pearl and horse trade. Through marriage and conversion, they established Tamil Muslim communities and had pushed down the Paravas, the owners of the pearl fisheries.

Muslims held a major share of the maritime trade of the far south and were moving to exploit the rich pearl beds of the Gulf of Mannar which had previously been worked by the Paravas. After the first Muslim invasion of South India in the fourteenth century, clusters of Muslim settlers and seafarers appeared all along the southern coast where they monopolised all the trade of the two coasts and became uncontested masters of the seas. They tyrannised the poor Paravas, prevented them from fishing without their permission and claimed a monopoly of dealing in pearls. The Paravas who had always considered the Muslims as intruders and usurpers now rose in arms against them.

The Moors who had spread themselves over India, and principally along the coast of Madura, were strengthened by the natives professing Mohammedanism and by the Arabs, Saracens and the privateers of the Zamorin of Kozhikodu (Calicut). They began to take to pearl diving as an occupation, but being led away by ill feeling and hope of gain, they often attempted to outreach the Paravas, some of whom they gained to their party and to their religion, by which means they obtained importance. The Kings themselves joined the Moors, anticipating greater advantages from the trade which they carried on and from their

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Ibid.,

power at sea; the Paravas were oppressed and although they frequently rose against their adversaries, they always got the worst of it.\textsuperscript{239} The Fishery Coast became the habitation of several Muslims who had settled there after their expulsion from Madura by the Vijayanagar Rulers. The Muslims had practically become the ultimate owners of all the pearl fisheries.

It seems that the Muslims also had a glorious past in the Fishery Coast, like the Paravas. At a certain point, history shows that the Muslims gained an upper hand over the Paravas. According to \textit{Roche}, there are several factors, which caused the Parava-Muslim struggle. With the indigenous fishing know-how as well as the superior Arab navigational expertise, the Kayalar had gradually emerged as the prime maritime caste in the region. While other native sea-faring groups did not threaten Parava economic interests, the Kayalar did. They threatened the entire basis of Parava identity and livelihood and the groups seized on trivial incidents to try and oust the other from the vicinity.\textsuperscript{240}

The Kayalar-Parava struggle centred upon the pearl and chank fisheries. Both pearls and chank shells were valuable commodities with regular markets in China and Bengal. The Kayalar-Parava contest was in fact more broad based and incorporated a struggle for carrying on the trade along the Coromandel Coast and across the Palk Straito Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{241}

The Paravas and the \textit{Kayalars} had tightly knit corporate solidarities. The separate corporate identities and rivalry of the two groups had been nurtured over three centuries not only on account of the splintering of certain segments of Paravas from the parent body to

\textsuperscript{241} \textit{Ibid.},
inter-marry with the Arab settlers of Kayalpattanam but also because of their conversion and incorporation into Islam as Kayalas.242

The fate of the Paravas was not unique. Prior to the Portuguese intervention, Hindu Rulers on the Fishery Coast controlled the activities of fishermen and pearl divers as a means of raising revenue. In addition, the Hindu Rulers on the Malabar Coast encouraged the conversion of fisher-folk by the foreign Muslim merchants, to build a solid local base of sea-faring skills and mercantile expertise, linked to the prosperous and expanding Muslim trading world.243

Barbosa notes that it was the custom of the Paravas to fish pearls exclusively for the boat-owners every Friday. Generally, the boat owners were Muslims. Besides, they also used to fish for a whole week at the end of the season for the Muslim dignitary of Pazhayakayal. Thus, it is clearly established by Barbosa that the Muslims were boat owners who also wielded immense power and influence in the region.244

The problem for the Paravas was associated with the rise of Muslim mercantile and other sea-faring groups along the Coromandel Coast. Indian Muslim mercantile groups which dominated sea lanes from the Arabian Sea to the Strait of Malacca.245 On the Tirunelveli coast, the Kayalar-Parava converts to Islam and other Muslim groups like Navayats, and Marakkayars were rapidly undermining the economic base of Paravas by intruding into their pearling and other maritime activities. The position of local Muslim

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242 Ibid.,
groups was further strengthened by their links with Gujarati Muslim merchants and seafarers, which gave them access to a wide range of commodities eagerly sought by land based powers such as the Hindu Rulers of Madurai and Venad.\textsuperscript{246}

The Paravas’ inability to withstand the superior Kayalar military and maritime power explains their recourse to outside help. Bereft of support from contiguous groups and faced with the possible collapse of their entire economy, the harassed Paravas turned for succour to the only power that had proved a match for Muslim seamen on the Indian coast.\textsuperscript{247}

Though the Vijayanagar Kingdom had been extended up to Kanyakumari in the extreme south of Tamil Nadu, the rulers of the same empire were not interested in bringing the entire territory under one jurisdiction because the Vijayanagar Rulers were held up between the Deccan Sultans in the north and the Madurai Sultanate in the South.

Though the Fishery Coast had rich deposits of marine resources, neither the Vijayanagar Emperor nor did his Viceroy (the Nayaks) make any attempt to establish monopoly over the same. They must have been carried away by the pollution concept of the Vedas which prevented the Hindus from undertaking any dealing with the seas. There was no power to stop the intrusion of the Muslims into the Fishery Coast. As a result, the Muslims grew strong and pushed the Paravas to the edge of the shore and the Paravas were not in a position to assert their access to the pearl fisheries.

There were a number of local Rulers vying with one another to control the fisherfolk who were scattered over three Kingdoms. These local Rulers also took the side of

\textsuperscript{246} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{247} Kenneth McPherson, “Paravas and Portuguese”, p. 137.
the Muslims since they had already become powerful economically. Their association with all the Muslim merchant groups made them the real owners of the Fishery Coast. The Parava-Muslim conflict had reached its climax at the arrival of the Portuguese.

Tamil Rulers have used pearls mainly as an ornamental item. Yet, there are references to show that pearls were bartered for other commodities and many foreign trade missions visited the Fishery Coast. The Pandya Rulers who were in possession of the Fishery Coast for more than thirteen centuries were satisfied with the tribute paid by their subjects, the Paravas. The latter were also content with their status.

In the fourteenth century, the Muslims asserted their superiority over the Paravas, and thus the fate of the Fishery Coast underwent a change. When Islamic Rule was introduced in the extreme South, all the Muslim merchant communities were united under one umbrella which strengthened their economy. This consideration rendered the Paravas helpless before them and they were desperately looking for a saviour to deliver them from their adversaries.

When the Portuguese arrived on the Fishery Coast, the Vijayanagar Empire was the only Hindu Empire left in India. To promote their trade and colonial interests, the Portuguese, did nothing that would change the status quo of the Hindu power. Therefore, the Vijayanagar Rulers and their Viceroyos (the Nayakas and Poligars) extracted their share of revenue from the Paravas and left them to the mercy of their various oppressors.

At a global level, the tension between the Cross and the Crescent continued after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and it had its repercussions in the Indian Ocean also. Wherever the Portuguese met the Muslims, the Portuguese were reminded of the Spanish Moors whom they detested. Here, in the Fishery Coast, they found an opportunity to
challenge the same Muslims. They also found a large community wanting to be freed from the oppression of the Muslims. The Portuguese found these conditions and situations very conducive to further their cause.

Their two aims, namely ‘Spices and Christians’, were to be realised on the West Coast. On the East Coast, they were motivated by another motto ‘Pearls and Christians’. The opportunity came in handy and the Fishery Coast came into the fold of the first European power - the Portuguese.

**Mass Converts of Paravas People**

The Paravas were the people who were inhabiting the Sea Coast of the Kingdom from time immemorial and their occupation was that of the pearl and the chank fishing. In the Tamil literature of the *Sangam Age*, they were described as great warriors and the *Pandyan King Nedunchezhaian* conquered them and gave them many privileges. They were the people who were residing at Korkai and Kayal and the villages north and south of them. They had a “*Jati Talaiyan*” whom they regarded as their Chief and with the privileges they were enjoying, they were content to be under the Pandya’s Rule.

That the Paravas were the people who were connected with this industry of the pearl fishing is best explained by what Simon Casie Chetty says in the following words. In the drama of Allirasany who is supposed to have resided at Kudiraimalai on the North-West Coast of Ceylon, the Paravas act a conspicuous part. We find them employed by the Princess Alliarasany in fishing for the pearl off the coast…The fact of the pearl fishery is
corroborated by the vast quantity of oyster-shells which are found embedded in the sand along the seashore from Putalam and Kondatche.  

This condition of the settlement of the Paravas on the Fishery coast continued till 1200 A.D., when Arabs in a very large number began to visit Kayal, the primary sea-port of the Pandya Kingdom for commercial purpose. The Arabs had much influence with the Pandya King who befriended them to give impetus to their export trade and the import of horses from Arabia and Syria. We have already seen the high position that some of the Arabs held in the Council of the Pandyas and also enviable position of the Prime Minister for Customs held by a Mussalman. This and the other privileges they enjoyed in the Pandya Kingdom made them think of settling down in this country itself. Not only did they settle here on the Tirunelveli coast but they even propagated their religion first under peaceful means. They made matrimonial relations with some of the Paravas. The decay of the Pandya power and the humilities the Pandyas were put to by the Muslim invaders from the north gave encouragement to the Moors to publicly force the Paravas to embrace Islam. Moreover, the Moors were very powerful on the sea and they became stronger by the help given to them by the Zamorin of Calicut. The Empire of Vijayanagar which had, by this time, the beginning of the sixteenth century, acquired almost the whole of South India except Travancore, did not take interest in what was happening on the fishery coast. The local Rajahs were on friendly terms with the Moors since they were afraid of their sea-power and anticipated some advantages from the trade the Moors conducting.

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The Paravas who were thus oppressed, rose many times against the Moors but they failed at every time. Their wrath was very great and they waited for an opportunity to fall on the Moors. The opportunity for the same came not very late. At a pearl fishery held at Tuticorin, the Paravas had purposely picked up a quarrel with the Moors and killed some hundreds of them. They even burnt their vessels and remained masters of the coast for some time. They were apprehending trouble from the Moors at any time. At this juncture, the Portuguese power in India has come to rise. The Portuguese defeated the Zamorin of Calicut in 1502 A.D. and established themselves in Cochin. They were very eager to seize the Tirunelveli coast and the pearl fishery therein. The time for the expansion of their power to the Tirunelveli coast was not off. The Paravas fearing Moorish retaliation for the murders they had committed on them, heard of the rising power of the Portuguese on the sea and their success over the Zamorin of Calicut and they decided to seek their help against the Moors.²⁴⁹

When the condition of the Tirunelveli coast was like this, the Portuguese mission under Manual de Fries sailing round Cape Comorin in 1523-1525 A.D., on their way to search for the remains of St. Thomas on the Coromandel Coast, arrived at Kayal. They found the Paravas were hard-pressed by the Moors and the Muslim converts abstained party from the Paravas themselves. The Paravas requested them for assistance and obtained their help on condition that they should become Christians. The Portuguese who had come with the expressed intention of seizing the pearl fishery, had on board Joao Froles, already

²⁴⁹ The details are taken from the Report of Van Reede and Laurens Pyl to Van Goens, the Governor of Dutch India and Ceylon. (Hornell, “The Indian Pearl Fisheries of the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay,” pp. 12-16.
appointed by the King of Portugal as the Captain and Factor of the Pearl fishery. And, on the Paravas promising to become Christians, the Portuguese had no difficulty in exacting a rent from the headman of the coast of 1500 cruzados per annum and Froles was left with a small force to guard the pearl fishery and enforce due payment.

The Paravas sent Commissioners with some of the Portuguese to Goa. The Commissioners returned with the priests and all the Paravas of the seven port were baptised and accepted as subject of the King of Portugal. Thus, the Paravas, though saved from the oppression of the Moors, dwindled from having their own chief and their own laws, into subordination to the priests, and the Portuguese who, however, settled the rights and the privileges or the Parvas so firmly that the Rajahs of the land no longer dared to interfere with them or attempted to impede or bridge their prerogative. On the contrary, the Rajahs were compelled to admit separate laws for the Paravas from those which bound their subjects. The wholesale conversion of the Paravas is attested by the following remarks of Baldaeus. He says that the Paravas were freed from the yoke of Muslims and they returned their pearl fisheries which formerly belonged to them and twenty thousand of them adopted Christianity. The Census report of 1871 says that the Paravas “were found by the Portuguese on their arrival in India to be groaning under the Mahamudan yoke and were assisted by the Portuguese on condition of their becoming Christians. This general conversion for political ends explains why the fishing population of the present day along the South-East Soast is to a considerable extent Roman Catholic.” The Paravas who

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250 Hornell, “The Sacred Chank of India”, p. 4.
251 Ibid.,
252 Thurston. “Caste and Tribes of South India,” Paravas, p. 86.
253 Ibid.,
feared that the Moors would force them to embrace Islam, had, by their own will to become Christians. This did not satisfy them and they waited for an opportunity to release themselves from Christianity. These baptised Paravas were condemned by others who continued to follow their own religion and at one time most of the people who became Christians, began to throw away Christianity only by the timely arrival of St. Xavier. In the year 1543 A.D., this great saint began to preach his religion among the discontented Paravas. His headquarters was at Tuticorin. His biographers represent him as being constantly on the move and devoting from one to three weeks to each village according to its population. By his patient working, by his service among the people and by the miracles he did, he converted the entire Parava community to the Christian religion. After this, the Parava remained sincere Christians and had many monasteries built for them in the villages and towns. Tuticorin, their chief town, was provided with an excellent hospital, Church and School. “The marvellous conversion begun by St. Xavier, had been continued for fifty-three years by Father Henriquez, who died in 1600 A.D., leaving more than 1,35,000 converts.”

Christianity in Kilakarai (Ramanad)

Christianity entered systematically into the religious system in India only after the coming of the Europeans. The colonial period of India appeared to be the key day of the Christian faith. The Gospels of Christ were preached by the selfless religious workers called missionaries, as a result of which thousands of persons embraced Christianity in

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255 J.D. D’Orsey, “*Portuguese Discoveries, Dependencies and Missions in ASIA AND AFRICA*”, p. 147.
India. The missionaries did yeoman service not only in the field of religious propagation, but also in the realm of socio-economic and educational developments of Indians.

European improvements in sailing technology and trading strategy and the effective use of fire power helped the Portuguese to establish their naval supremacy in the east and control over the lucrative spice and pearl trades. The strategic importance of the coromandel coast and particularly of the gulf of mannar, as a sort of entrepot and a cultural melting pot, the armed character of the coastal trade and the interconnectedness between commerce, politics and religion on an unprecedented scale became matters of vital interest. The proselytizing activities of the catholic missionaries among the Paravas of the pearl fishery Coast adds one more significant dimension to the Coastal politics.

In the vortex of power politics and commercial rivalries between the Portuguese and the native potentates, between the catholic Christians and the Arab Muslims, the illiterate Paravas were caught up helpless. Very often, they were used as valuable pawns on the chess board of colonial politics, which kept them perpetually dependent either in terms of politics or religion.

According to Dr. Caldwell, the first recorded appearance, however, of any Portuguese expedition on the Tinnevelly coast was in 1532, when a deputation of Paravas, people of fisher caste, came to Cochin for the purpose of obtaining the aid of Portuguese against the moors or Muhammadians. The chief place along the coast then as now was inhabited by Muhammadians of Kayalpattanam. On the request of the Paravas, the fleet of Portuguese with father Michael viz the vicar general of Cochin arrived at Kayalpattam seashore. The battle was between Portuguese and Kayalpatnam Muslims.

\[^{256}\text{Caldwell, A History of Tinnevelly, p. 68.}\]
The Portuguese inflicted heavy ravages on Kayalpatnam and people were afraid of the lawless marauders and even some Muslims left Kayalpatnam and settled at places like Kilakarai, Paranki pettau, Nagore, Karaical, Palaverkadu, Madras and Ceylon.

After winning the battle, the Portuguese set about baptizing the Paravas all along the coast in accordance with agreement into which their representatives had entered. Further, all Hindu Paravas were asked to embrace catholic religion. The Paravas of nearly thirty villages extended all the way along the coast at irregular intervals from Cape comorin to Rameswaram adopted Christianity. John Nieuhoff, while relating in his Travels about the incidents of 1533 A.D in the Fishery coast says: “The Nayak of Madura left the Portuguese in full possession of their jurisdiction over the Paravas and of the free exercise of their religion” 257.

**Religious Conversion of Kanyakumari Muukkuvas**

The Stone Age van be considered as the beginning of our Ancien History. During that time, the humans win their bread with the help of hunting and farming. But, fishing surpasses all other jobs and exists before both hunting and farming. 258 Naturally there is a compulsion for man to depend upon water bodies. So, every civilization boats near the water body areas.

During the birth of Civilization, a part of people depend upon their living on fishing. Their profession gives them many names like Fisher, Parathavar, Muukkuvas, Malciar, Arayar, Nulayar, MaraiKayar etc… 259

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Muukkuvas, the fishing people, get this name due to their livlihood in the Southern most corner and also they take pearl from the sea. So, they get the name Mukkuvas.

During Indus valley civilization minas, a fishing community migrated into Southern most part of India due to the arrival of Aryas. They have the experience of travelling through sea, ocean, rivers and ponds. So, they travelled through that and settled in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. They are called Parathavas. They started branching, out into different communities. One such communities is Mukkuvas. In Tamil classic literature, it gets a name Neithal. This literature potrays some information about this fishery community.

**Muukkuvas, Before the Arrival of Portugues**

The arrival of Aryas changed the Indian Social structure. The prominence of Muukkuvas were degraded. This situation leads them to settle in South India. The arrival of Thomayar would have changed the life style of this people. They consider him as the ambassador of christ. This man came into India through sea in BC 52. Through Musuri harbour, he came into India. His preachings made the people of Kollam, Kranginoor, Pallayur to convert into chirstianity. In order to lead this people in the right path, people from prominent families had been appointed. Thomayar was very lovable towards this people. But, this conversion did not brought any economical change in the life of Mukkuvas. It is also evident that there were not any leaders to guide them related to uptrend to be a flaw and the improminance of this community today may be the consequence.

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260 George Mark Moraes, *A History of Christianity in India*, From Early times to St. Francis xavier. A.D. 52 to 1542, Bombay, 1964, p. 34.
The South India people adapted christianity even before the Europeans. This was mentioned by Jawaharlal Nehru.\textsuperscript{264} The modern History scholars are also very sure about the presence of Thomayar in India.\textsuperscript{265} The temples built during this period were the evidences of his presence.\textsuperscript{266} The churches in Kollam and Trivancore are the very important evidences. These Churches portrays the holy work of Thomayar.\textsuperscript{267} Bahiyan and Piliny had released some important things about fishermen in History. In BC 1329, Pope John, the twenty second, played a vital roie in Kollam. The stone cravings in Kanyakumari is a very big evidence for the presence of chirstians even before the arrival of Portuguese.\textsuperscript{268} This people followed the latin mothed of worshipping. They even had the connection with Pope in Rome.\textsuperscript{269}

During 1348 BC, The Pope’s representative, Jones. D Meriloni proved that the people had followed latin methodology.\textsuperscript{270} Christians lived in place like Muttam, Kollam, Kanyakumari proved the arrival of Jones D Meriloni in this place. During the establishment of this starts, the people carried Jones D Meriloni in their shoulders. Like this the activities of christians is evident in the Eastern Coast from Mylapore to Kanyakumari and in the Western Coast from Kanyakumari to Karachi.\textsuperscript{271} The Trivancore King Unni granteel tax free for the tempt in Chinna Muttam.\textsuperscript{272}

\textsuperscript{264} \textit{The Hindu,} 2\textsuperscript{nd} February 1986, P.II & Dinamalar, 6\textsuperscript{th} February 1986, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{265} \textit{Apostolic letter to the Arch Bishop of Verapoly}, Rome, 13\textsuperscript{th} November 1952.
\textsuperscript{266} \textit{Travancore Archaeological Series}, Vol VI, Part II, Trivandrum, 1927, pp. 176-181.
\textsuperscript{267} C.M. Agur, \textit{Church History of Travancore}, Madras, 1901, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{268} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{269} Hosten H, \textit{Antiquities from Santhome to Mylapore}, Calcutta, 1952, p. 688.
\textsuperscript{270} \textit{Travancore Archaeological Series}, Vol. VI, Part II, 1927, pp. 176-181.
During the end of fifteenth century, a new Chapter began in the life of Mukkuvas with the arrival of Europeans. Vasco-da-Gama came to India in 1498. He came to Kozhikod in Kerala. He had written more than two lakh fishermen lived in that area. He also mentioned the Christianity was not very well preacted to that people. During his second travel to India, he met the Muukkuvas in the Arabic sea, When he returned to Portuguese fishermen from this area was also accompanied him. They were joined in Portuguese Navy. After this, Latin Catholics were also lived in South India.273

Petro Alvaris Gabril came to India and experienced the christianity here. He felt and explained the situation to the portuguees King and got Financeal assistance for the proper promotion of christianity in India.274 Under the guidance of Henry, eight portugues priests came to India and involved in religious work. They learnt Indian languages and preached in Indian languages.275 They worked from pesin to santom in India. They stayed in India by building their own homes.

Muukkuvas were converted into Catholic by this group of priests. They converted people upto Kanyakumari in the Southern side. Apart from Trivancore limits, this religion was spread.276 The France priests got permission from the Trivancore Government in 1516 BC. However, there were no changes in the social and economic life of converted people. Especially, the community discrimination was not eradicated and still remained even after the conversion. The christianity preached the brotherhood among the common people, but it

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was not practised by people in their life. They accept the caste and focused on the conversion of religion. The upper caste people discriminated the lower caste people. There were no changes in this system. But, the foreign missionaries felt sympathy only. They could not change anything except that. The missionaries influenced a lot on Muukkuvas. There were some changes in the life style of people.

**Muukkuvas with Francis Xavier**

Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus. This society focused on the religious growth and the higher studies. *Ignatius Loyola sent Francies Xavier to India in 1540 BC.* After a long voyage, Francis Xavier came to India and landed in Goa in 1542. His sincer efforts in religious works spread Christianity in Kanyakumari, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli and Trivandram especially in the Coastal side the religion was very well followed.

*Udhaya Marthanda Varma*, ruled in Trivancore, was a very great motivator of priests to spread christianity in India. More than two lakh christian were lived in and around Trivancore. Francis Xavier learn pranthi language and showed interest in preaching Christianity to Muukkuvas. He conducted special prayers to cure patients. Moral education were also taught to youngsters in India. A college and a hostel were also built in Kollam and Kanyakumari. Muukkuvas were admitted in that college, Michealvoss was the chist priest of South India. His guidance made Francis Xavier to achieve several religious tasks in India.

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Kanyakumari Muukkuvas were attacked several times in the sea to plunder. So, this people contacted Francis Xavier and requested him to preach in their area. Because they also belonged to the Trivandcore territory.\textsuperscript{280}

Francis Xavier loved to work with backward class people. Mukkuvas won their livelihood very handily. They were also discriminated. Xavier helped them with the help of Portugues. Christovos Fernandes and Antonio Fernandes accompanied Francis Xavier in his mission. They went to Kanyakumari through Manapadu.\textsuperscript{281} Paulo-ross accompanied them for cooking purposes. They came through the living place of Paravas.

They started preaching christianity in Kanyakumari in 1544.\textsuperscript{282} They were taught a little about the christian sincerity. They were all converted into Christianity irrespective of their age. Francis Xavier converted all of them in to christianity under his guidance. All of them were very interestingly converted themselves into Christianity.\textsuperscript{283} These things, happened in a simple manner and not in a grand manner.

Francis Xavier did not spend much time in building churches but he simply built with the help of coconut leaves and a cross. Fortyfive churches were built like this in 1544. After that, the time passed away and they built churches in that area. He went to so many villages and converted people into christianity. Because of his serries, he gained a great name from Muukkuvas community. He conducted many prayers to them to cure diseases.

\textsuperscript{283} Mark Netto, \textit{Thiruvananthapuram Rupatha} (Malayalam article), Pope John Paul Randamante Santharasana Smaramika, Trivandrum, 1986, p. 67.
Especially, he involved himself in funeral activities of dead. The children and youths were taught moral education.284

Many people were coverted into christianity during 1544 in Poovar. He really worked hard to improve the Socio and Economic life of the people. The proper preaching were not reached the people who have newly converted. Missionary schools were started and education were inculeated along with morals.285 Tamil and Malayalam were wed to educate Portuguess officials were not able to execute the plan of Francis Xavier.286

**Trivancore Ruler and his relationship with Francis Xavier**

The Portugues and the Trivancore Ruler had a good relationship. Francis Xavier played a vital role in maintaining this relationship. This leads him to have a favourable situation in spreading religion. Madura decided to attack Trivancore but Francis Xavier went with a cross and stoped the war.287 This proved to be a great attempt.

Francis Xavier received an invitation to meet the King. The King received him like a King. The King honoured Francis Xavier as a mighty priest. They became intimate friends. Then many schemes were announced by the King to promote christianity. Francis Xavier was given respect like a King everywere. The King gave twenty thousand rupees to build churches.288 Francis Xavier gave respect to social habits of Muukkuvas. He lived and

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285 Letter of St. Francis Xavier, dt. 24th March 1544, Monumenta Xavieranana I.


287 George Schurhammer, *op.cit.*, pp. 460-463.

ate the foods of Muukkuvas and stayed in their homes. Muukkuvas were converted into christianity more than other religions.\(^{289}\)

**Mukkuvas after Francis Xavier**

*Michael Ross* continued the religious duties to Muukkuvas during 1546 BC. Francis Xavier’s letters to him were really great many messeges. Many schools were opened by them. They easily converted this people into christianity other than other part of the country.\(^{290}\)

Schools were opened to girls and boys in Muukkuvas Community. They were educated through Tamil language. But, after that, the method of Herny priest became different. The churches were opened to different castes in different places. The scheduled caste people were allowed to build separate churches.\(^{291}\)

There were fortyfour coastal villeges from Kanyakumari to Kollam; but there were only thirtysix churches in 1600 BC. There were three chief priests and the churches were very simple. Meanwhile priests from European countries especially from Holland, England and Denmark came to India to do holy work.\(^{292}\) There were many clashes during this period. There was a war between Dutch people and Trivancore people. Dutch was defeated with the help of Kolchal people in 1741.

The Franciscan priests involved in spreading Christianity between Thenkaipattanam and Kanyakumari.\(^{293}\) A rumour was spreading that Muslims from Mysore were intentional

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\(^{292}\) Achilles Meersman, *Franciscans in India*, 1929 to 1941, Karachi, 1943, pp. 504-505.

to attack Trivancore in 1774. Pope Clement the fourteen, requested the Trivancore King to protect the Mukkuvas people.294

England defeated Tippu Sultan with the help of Trivancore. So, English people spread around Trivancore. Colonel Manro was appointed as the Diwan of Trivancore in 1810. Jesuits Priests Martin and Manset stayed and involved in religious service in Trivancore 1839.295

Kollam District reached the hike in status in 1886.296 Under this District there were 165 temples. There were seventeen European priests and twenty one Indian priests. Ferdinand OC became the bishop.297 Under Koochi constituancy were from Pallithurai to Iramuthurai298 people from Belgium, Italy, Spain came to India to involve in religious service. They involved in practice among Mukkuvas.299

Indian Fishermen community have a great history of five thousand years. In the Indian culture, Fishermen played a very vital role and they excluded themselves from Aryas, discrimination and settled themselves in the coastal sides of India. Especially, they settled themselves in the southern side of Indian sub-continent. They were the native people of Neithal land. Because of their profession, they lived close to the Sea. The classic literature has the traces of their life style in it. The temple in the south side became evident to the religious work of Christ’s disciple Thomayar. The important news was that Indians adopted Christianity even before westren people adopted it.

284 Achilles Meersman, *Franciscans in India, 1929 to 1941, Karachi*, 1943, p. 84.
286 Ibid.,
287 Ibid.,
Even before the arrival of portugese, the Kollam District was formed in Indian in 1329. They followed the Latin methods related to religious practices. Muttam and Trivancore were the evidences for this. Andalo a glass statue in Kumari is also an evidence.

There were so many changes after the arrival of Portugese in the life of Muukkuvas. The Society of Jesus played a vital role in the process of conversion to Christianity. Francis Xavier organised the people in a proper manner and converted them with great respect. He become the most respectable person in that region. Muukkuvas religious practices were organised properly by him. They were taught to read and write in Tamil and Telugu. They were educated by them.

Although many were converted into christianity. They were not able to leave their caste and community also the priests tried to change it but they failed in it. Francis Xavier’s good relationship with Trivancore King made them spread religion effectively. Moreover many favours were received by Muukkuvas from Trivancore King.

*Francis Xavier’s* efforts lead to build churches in and around Kanyakumari. After some years, it was continued by Micheal voss and Henry. The Francis can priests continued to work in this area to promote goodness, people from *Holland, Spain, Belgium, Denmark and England* came to India to spread religious work. Thus, the growth related to Mukkuvas was clearly portrayed in History.

Thus, the political activities of various European powers pushed the Paravas to change their life style, religion and economical conditions.