

**CHRISTIANITY IN MEDIEVAL KERALA:  
A STUDY OF FAMILY HISTORIES  
(KUDUMBAYOGAMS)  
13<sup>TH</sup> TO 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

*A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN  
HISTORY**

**BY**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Christianity in Medieval Kerala: A Study of Family Histories (Kudumbayogams) 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Century**” submitted by Lisha .C. John bearing Regd.No.**04SHPH06** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in History is a bonafide work carried by her under my supervision and guidance which is a plagiarism free thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Lisha .C. John, hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**Christianity in Medieval Kerala: A Study of Family Histories (Kudumbayogams) 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Century**” submitted by me under the supervision of **Dr. M.N. Rajesh** is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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Lisha .C. John

## CONTENTS

Certificate	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgement	iii-iv
Contents	
Chapter 1	
Introduction and Survey of Literature	1-51
Chapter 2	
Socio Cultural Contexts in Early Medieval Kerala	52-129
Chapter 3	
The Entry of the Portuguese and its Impact on Christianity in Kerala during the Medieval period	130-217
Chapter 4	
Kudumbayogam and the Creation of Family Histories	218-246
Chapter 5	
A Study of Family Histories (Kudumbayogams) Excerpts from two main family histories with reflections from three minor family histories for a comparative study.	247-310
Chapter 6	
Conclusion	311-319
BIBLIOGRAPHY	320-330

## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Survey of Literature

#### Introduction:

India being a country with diversity of cultures, owing to its vast area and regional demarcations is gifted with varied cultural practices and traditions that are region specific. They play an important role in effecting the daily lives of the people be it in happy times or otherwise everyone are bound to adhere to it as they have received it down the ancient line of generations, the cultural practices of people sound unique as they are carried out under different religious denominations. Christians of Kerala especially Syrian Christians also carry out their cultural practices that they inherited from their ancestors. Their ancestors according to tradition were Hindu Brahmins who were converted in the first century of the Christian era by St.Thomas. According to a South Indian tradition the Apostle had arrived in Kerala in A.D.52 on account of the Parthian regions being endowed as his responsibility of spreading the Gospel.Christianity, an alien religion in a largely Hindu India was a great impossibility to be an adopted religion by the indigenous people of India. The true study of Christianity in India can be well comprehended only if its world situation is examined and studied. The effects of Christianity on the sub-continent of India at different periods of time are a direct reflection of the events that took place around the world. The present societal sphere in today's world is engaged in a multi religious friction where the world religions like Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism and so on go hand in hand. People mostly are left to their own choice if being born into a religion by the nature of birth whether or not to continue in it in future or to change or convert it into another one for either their spiritual gain or convenience. Therefore when a religion springs from the people living in that soil they also tend to claim the religion of their land as their own.

Therefore, coming down from the world religious scenario we can dwell into the origins of Christianity in India. Firstly in a largely Hindu majority country like India where its people before the arrival of St .Thomas, Apostle of Christ considered Christianity as totally a foreign religion not many might know clearly as to why St.Thomas had chosen India. According to K.P.Padmanabha Menon in Letter XVI of his book dealing with the classes of Malabar Christians under the tradition of

St.Thomas maintains that the old Christians were known as St. Thomas Christians who were later known popularly by the term 'Syrian Christians'. This fact is dealt in detail by K.P. Padmanabha Menon<sup>1</sup>. It is given that India actually did not lie within the sphere allotted to St Thomas, whose mission was to Parthia. It goes on to explain that an early tradition associates Thomas with Parthia, Philip with Phrygia, Andrew with Syria, and Bartholomew with India, but according to later traditions the apostles divided the various countries between them by lot.<sup>2</sup>According to the earliest records of the travels by St.Thomas the document discovered by Eusebius from the public records of the city of Edessa establishes the fact that "St.Thomas spent his earliest labour in the city of Edessa in Syria.Menon further gives vent to the fact that "the contents of the document have been further corroborated by the manuscripts acquired from the Nitrian ministry in Lower Egypt by the British Museum in 1841-1843-1847A.D. These documents have borne out the traditional stories of the journeys of St.Thomas and they have been strengthened by recent discoveries both of coins, inscriptions, and manuscripts<sup>3</sup>. From the city of Edessa, the journey of St.Thomas's preaching the good news to the Parthians, the Medians, the Persians and the Hyrcanians is established under adequate historical evidence. According to Menon, who quotes Mr. Justice Hunt "All the Historians seem to agree (Hough, Whitehouse and others) that St.Thomas visited *Male* (Malabar), Cranganur (where he is said to have founded a Bishopric and to have built seven churches), Quilon, and Mylapore, although few seem to agree as to the order in which he visited these places. I take it that it would be in the order of the trade-route of those days"<sup>4</sup>. But before the Apostle's entry on the Indian soil,a sufficed background of the period needs to be studied.The south of India was already colonized under the Aryan invasion. The establishment of Hinduism on the Coast of Malabar long before the Christian era is authenticated by the statement of Mr. R.C.Dutt who is quoted by Padmanabha Menon as "by 1000 B.C., Hindu settlers had come as far southwards as south Behar, Malwa, Southern India and Gujarat. To be more specific and to come nearer home, by the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the whole of

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<sup>1</sup> Padmanabha K.P, "History of Kerala, A history of Kerala written in the form of notes on Visscher's letters from Malabar", edited by Sahithya kusalan T.K.Krishna Menon, Vol 2 Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1983,Pg 444 Para 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. pg 454, para3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,pg 467, para 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pg 469, para4.

Southern India had been Hinduised (Hindu is used for want of a better term though the historical term is brahmanical religions), and the three great kingdoms of Chera (Kerala), Chola and Pandya had been established, stretching as far south as Cape Comorin<sup>5</sup>. Therefore K.P.Padmanabha Menon cites the fact that is found in the Breviary of the Syrian Church which reads, “By St.Thomas the error of Idolatory has been confounded in the Indies”, the existence of a Christian colony from very early days claiming a Syrian origin; the designation of “Christians of St.Thomas” transmitted from age to age; their steadfast allegiance to Antioch; the holy Chrism; the institution of pontifical succession and other usages of the church, such as the celebration of the festivals of good-will and love, usages representing those ordained by the Apostles and insisted upon in churches and among communions which they founded, and finally the very existence, long and continued, its origin being lost in antiquity, of the tradition itself so tenaciously clung to by a supremely conservative people<sup>6</sup>. Thus the Syrian Christians continued to exist in with other religionists sacredly securing its own identity unintruded by any external religious forces until the coming of the Portuguese who not only brought a divide among the Syrian Christian group but also instigated the strong allegiance of the Indian Christians to the supremacy of the Roman Pope in the Medieval period during the course of the beginning of the Portuguese discoveries. The Portuguese were also responsible for the loss of many valuable documents that were a proof of the establishment of Christianity in India by the Apostle St.Thomas, by setting fire to it as a result of reaction to the opposition of St.Thomas Christians who refused to be brought under the Papal supremacy. But the grants and other privileges that were endowed on the Christian community by the then ruling landlords or kings were recorded in copper plates also find mention in the notes on Visscher’s Letters from Malabar by Menon.

Padmanabha Menon maintains that the presence of the Kottayam Syrian Christians copper plates attests the grant of various highly prized privileges to the Christian community of Malabar. The dates assigned by “Burnell and Kielhorn to the grant given by the Perumal to Iravi Cortten of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pg,471,para2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pg473-474,para3.

Cranganur was 774 A.D. The grant by Sthanu Ravi Gupta is said to have been given in 824 A.D to a colony of Christians who landed at Quilon under the leadership of Mar Sapor and Mar Peroz”<sup>7</sup>.

The copies of two Syrian Copper plate deeds translated by Dr. Gundert with notes of Mr. Logan are quoted by K.P.Padmanabha Menon in Letter XVI under the Letters from Malabar. They read as follows:

No .I

“Hari Sri. Adoration of Ganapati. The blessed rule having devolved from the earth-ruler, Man-Lord, Chakravartti, Vira Kerala (the first of the line), through regular succession, upon Sri Vira Raghava Chakravartti, now wielding the scepter for many 100,000 years, (in the year) Jupiter in Capricornus, the 21<sup>st</sup> of the Mina month, Saturday, Rohani asterism, the following grant was made in the royal palace (of the Perumal). We have given to Iravi Corttan of Mahadeverpattnam [henceforth to be called Grand Merchant of the Cheraman world (Kerala)], the lordship of Manigramam. We also have given to him (the right of) the feast-cloth (?), house-pillars (or pictured rooms?), all the revenue, the curved sword (or dagger), and in (or with) the sword the sovereign merchantship, the right of proclamation, the privilege of having forerunners, the five musical instruments, the conch, the light (or torch burning) by day, the spreading cloth, litter, royal umbrella, Vaduca drum (drum of the Telugu’s or of Bhairava ?), the gateway with seats and ornamental arches, and the sovereign merchantship, over the four classes (or streets), also the oilmakers of the five kinds of artificers we have subjected to him (or given as slaves to him.) We have given as eternal (literally “water”) possession to Iravi Corttan, the lord of the town, the brokerage and due customs of all that may be measured by the para, weighed by the balance, stretched by the line, of all that may be counted or carried, contained within salt, sugar, musk, and lamp-oil, or whatever it be, viz., within the rivermouth of Codungalur and the tower, or between the four Talis (temples of the deputy Brahmans) and the gramams belonging to them. We have given it by an unreserved tenure to Iravi Corttan, Grand Merchant of the Cheraman world, and to his sons and sons’ sons in proper succession.

Witnesses are:-

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pg 466, para3.

With the knowledge of the two Brahman divisions Panniyur and Chowaram village have we given it; with the knowledge of the Venadu and Odunadu (rulers) have we given it; with the knowledge of the Eranadu and the Valluvanadu (rulers) have we given it; given for the time that sun and moon shall last; with the knowledge of the above, written by Nambi Chadayan, grand goldsmith of the Cheraman world.

No.II

- a. Hail! in the time (literally, year) of Perumal (Co, King, or Go) Sthanu Ravi Gupta, who now rules gloriously for many 100,000 years, treading under foot hostile heads, in his fifth year, this year under the concurrence of His Excellency the Ayyan Adigal, governing the Venadu (the Travancore king is still called Venad Adigal, “the adorable feet of Venadu”) of Anjuwannam (the Jewish principality of Deed No. I) and of Punnattala’s Lord (the next neighbour, *vide, d*), the following grant of a freehold has been given by His Excellency the Ayyan Adigal to the Tarisa church (and community), established (or built) by Isodata Virai of Curakkeni Collam (the name Tarisa is perhaps to be recognized in the Dariaygal of the Syrian tradition).
- b. And I also (one of the above lords or Maruwan Sapir Iso of the church, (*vide, n*), which formerly had the possession of the share-staff (feudal tenure?) of the four families of Ilawar (“Simhalese, also Tiyar, Dwipar, Islanders”, now palm-tree cultivators), and of the eight families of Ilakeyar (Sihala, low castes or slaves? belonging to them, and one family of washerman coming from the same stock as these-all these being entitled to the fetter-right (the foot-rope for mounting coconut-trees?) and ladder-right (for reaping pepper?), to the tax for the elephant feeder, or to the wash gold (“eri”, perhaps “ari”), which the Chandan (“great person?sun?”) is wont to get (mattu, “hook in” T., “get by ruse” M.), as well as to the harvest gold (“polipon”, gold of interest?shining gold ? ) to the nightly meal of rice and to the pot measure –I, possessed of this share-staff, and of the Cavvan(or cappam? “tribute”), and of those five Kandis (pieces of ground or shares?), have given them by a free and unrestricted transfer.

- c. Maruwan Sapir Iso (Maruwan, the Syrian Lord?), who has received the water (hereditary possession) of this town, having arranged that these four families of Ilawar( with their servants and washermen), to families of,- one family of carpenters, and four families of Vellaier (Tamil agriculturists)- the latter being Caraiar (Tamil, ploughmen, Malayalam, temple servants, used, Clause m, for trustees, hence Clause I, the noun Caranmei, “trusteeship”) of the Alave (or Aladeiya) land – that all these may do their duty to the God, the planter by planting (rice, etc.), the setter by setting (trees, or by building, offering?), so that the required ceremonies, such as the oil for the church, suffer no dimunition, has enacted and given to the Tarisa church the land now to be described.
- d. Decreed with the sanction of the Palace-Major (Koyiladhikarikal) Vyaraka Devar (probably Commissioner of the Perumal, since he is repeatedly mentioned before the Travancore vassal), and power given with (the ceremony of ) water drops for seizing and possessing, under the concurrence of His Excellency the Ayyan Adigal, His Excellency the second Raja Rama (brother of the former and next heir), his officers and ministers, and of the 600 (a local authority, *vide, f.*); also of the (neighbouring ) lords of Punnattala (place of Calophyllum trees” ), and Pulacudi (dwelling of silk cotton trees”), the land bounded so that the east order be Vayalcadu (open waste plain) and the backwater included; the south-east border be the wall near the little door-gate (Chiru watil cal matil) : the west border the sea; the north border the Torana garden ; the north-east border the garden of the unapproachable (andilan) of Punnattala; the land enclosed within these four borders I have empowered to take, and by executing this copper-deed have given, for the days that earth, moon and sun exist.
- e. And it has farther been settled with the concurrence of His Excellency the Ayyan Adigal, His Excellency Rama, and the Palace- Major, that the church people (Palliyar, probably heads of the Tarisa citizens) alone have power to punish the (heathen) families of this land for any offence whatsoever, and receive the fines expenses, head-price and breast-price (probably the right of selling males and females for serious caste offences).

Mine own relations, whoever they be, whatever the charges be, shall never have the right there to speak as heads of the land dealing with subjects. Let the 600 (The deed, it will be observed, makes no allusion here to the headmen of the Jewish and Christian communities, although it is known from Deeds Nos. I and II that such headmen had been appointed. The conclusion is, therefore, that the power of protection here assumed resided not in the headmen, but in the communities as corporate bodies. This strengthens the view in the note to para (d) that the "Six Hundred" were really the *Kuttam* of the *Karanavar* of the *Nad*), the Anjuwannam and Manigramam (Jewish and Christian principalities) be the protectors.

- g. Let them, even Anjuwannam and Manigramam, act both with the church and the land according to the manner detailed in this copper deed for the times that earth, moon and sun exist.
- h. Ordered with the sanction of the Palace-Major Vyaraka Devar, and with the sanction of His Excellency the Ayyan Adigal, and His Excellency Rama, and free tenure granted to these (Palliyar) as follows:-
  - i. (Again a difficult sentence. I take *Ulaka*, i.e, loka for the official name of the citizens, Christian freemen formed into a corporation and distinguished both from the Palliyar, who are their headmen, and from the Cudi or Heathen families, who live on their grounds as farmers or slaves). There being 61 citizens, the number not to be increased nor to be diminished, no personal tax to be received' if you read perar) ;for admitting any conveyances or letting them out they are to receive 8 coins (Kachu-wayinam is vahanam, understood horses, wagons); in the case of (female) elephants and of boats, whether for letting in or letting out, they are to receive 4 coins; merchandise belonging to the citizens to be disposed of (or removed) by them with the cognizance of the above(the palliyar? or the protecting lords?); and that they (the Palliyar) do all the business (rights and duties) of a lord (Swami)on the place of packing the wares (or on spots where poles with leaves are set up as signs of prohibition) and elsewhere, only after deliberation with the above mentioned (Anjuvannam and Manigramam?); that Anjuvannam and Manigramam protect the citizens in every coming generation; that in the

space within the four gates (or in the four public offices?) and on the spot where land for sale (or “under prohibition”) is given in trust, the palace (or Supreme Government) having received the King’s title (Kopatawaram), Anjuwannam and Manigramam receive the Lord’s title (Pati-ppata-waram).

- k. With the sanction of the Palace-Major Vyaraka Devar, who has given of these (the Palliyar) the 72 Janmi rights (*viduperu*), such as for marriages (or processions), the elephant’s back, the earth, the water, & c. (or “earth and water on the elephant,” at all events, marks of nobility), and with the concurrence of His Excellency the Ayyan Adigal, His Excellency Rama, the minister and officers, the 600, and the lords of Punnattala and Pulacudi, let Anjuwannam and Manigramam carry out this unrestricted possession right in the manner described by this copper-deed for the time that earth, moon and sun exist.
- l. If any injustice be done to these (the Palliyar? or Anjuwannam and Manigramam, they may withhold the tribute (“world-bearing hire”) and remedy themselves the injury done to them. Should they themselves commit a crime, they are themselves to have the investigation of it.
- m. And let whatever the two chieftains in Anjuwannam and Manigramam, who have taken the water (possession) as trustees for this town (Caralar), may do in unison be counted for one act.
- n. And let Maruwan Sapir Iso, who took the water for this town, since he acquired (or transferred? *peruttu*) the share-staff (*Varakol* of *b*), and those 5 pieces (or *Anjacandi*) which formerly were the property of the Palliyar, pay for it the full price to the church. This also I have given over by unrestricted transfer.
- o. I have ceded to the Tarisa church people, by full and unrestricted tenure, every kind of revenue by this copper-deed for the time that earth, moon and sun do last.
- p. Those Ilawar are permitted to follow out their occupations (?) in the bazaar and on the wall. The washerman may come and do his work in the bazaar and on the wall.
- q. Nor have the Island ruler (or Tiyar headman) and the Wall officer, or whoever it be, any power to stop them on any charges whatsoever. Though they should commit a trespass, the Palliyar alone have to try them.

- r. I have given this in the manner detailed in the copper-deed, for the time that the earth, moon, and sun do last, by full, free and unrestricted tenure.
- s. The person who made this full, free and unrestricted transfer to the Tarisapalli through His Excellency the Ayyan Adigal, is Maruwan Sapir Iso.
- t. To those who keep this and care to see it observed let God himself be gracious (what is *anugramam* or *anucramam*?) The writing of Ayyan; and may this benefit ( *vel*, or it is a compound word?) be equal to Cula Sundara's (Vishnu?) Rule victoriously!<sup>8</sup>

The above described two copper plate deeds grant the Syrian Christians with various types of privileges which were bound to be enjoyed by them till an indefinite time as written till the sun and moon lasts. This proves the position they occupied in a caste centered period in Kerala. Thus the conversion of seven Brahmins into the Christian fold citing the beginnings of Indian Christianity in Hindu soil by St.Thomas also enabled the co-existence of the newly converted Christians along with their contemporaries, the caste structured Hindus and the Muslims.

Christian identity of medieval Kerala is best explained only if the definition and meaning of Christianity as a well developed world religion is described in detail. We tend to understand Christianity from the name itself as one that attained its derivation from the post – resurrection period of Jesus Christ. Christianity came to be identified with those people or believers who became the followers of Jesus of Nazareth hence were termed as Nazarenes in its prime period. And the religion that they newly began to follow came to be known as Christianity. As its original roots lie outside the Indian sub- continent it will be more feasible to dwell into its existence and prevalence in the Middle East before its spread to India. In India too Kerala being a coastal area was the only state which was easily intruded by Christian Missionaries beginning at first with St.Thomas, Apostle of Christ in A.D.52 and many centuries later with the Portuguese, French, Dutch and the English. The former

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.,pg 503. This deed belong to the Syrian Christian of the Cochin and Travancore states. This translation, by Dr.Gundhert, appeared in the *MadrasJournal of Literature etc*, Vol.XIII, Part I,p.130.(P.P.CXVII to CXXII, Nos. 2 and 3.).

Christian call by St. Thomas into the Indian land was solely for the purpose of evangelization and to spread the Gospel of God and the later Christians came mainly for trade purposes and also with a mission to establish their respective empire in India the real success of which was enjoyed by the British.

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Society clearly gives the definition of Christianity under various approaches. Firstly, as a “belief system it defines Christianity as the existential recognition that [in the New Testament phrase] “Jesus is Lord”, or, in the theological formulations of the Councils of Nicea, Constantinople and Chalcedon (325,381 and 451 C.E), that the Divinity is a unity with three particular faces {The Father, Son, Spirit}, and that Jesus is “God Incarnate” {both fully Divine and fully human}.

Secondly, as an ethical idea, it defines Christianity as the practical recognition that {in Jesus’ words, in the four Gospel} “The Kingdom {of God, or of heaven} has come {or, is here, in the midst}”, meaning, in him, and in the attempt to extend its boundaries, in the life of the disciple and of the world.

Thirdly, as a social institution, it defines Christianity as may be delineated by the dominical sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist as well as by the spiritual and organizational “fellowship” {to use St. Paul’s expression in his Epistles} to which they give entrance and sustenance.

Further the encyclopedia explains the above three approaches to the phenomenon of religion corresponding to Paul’s “abiding” trio: faith, hope and charity {love}, of which “the greatest” is the last {1 Cor.13: 13}. Therefore this early description of the spirituality at the heart of the new religion represents the classic analysis, based upon participant observation”<sup>9</sup>.

According to the encyclopedia, when seen historically rather than structurally, Christianity began as one of a number of Jewish movements that thought it had found the Messiah {“anointed with the spirit [of God]”; Greek, Christos}. The hope was as utterly dashed, religiously, as it was politically, by the death of Jesus through the accused method of crucifixion. The hope was revived by his {equally unexpected} post – resurrection appearances; but its content and its

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<sup>9</sup> Swatos Jr. William H., “Encyclopaedia of Religion and Society”, Altimira Press, A Division of Sage Publications, Walnut Creek, 1998, pp-82-83.

consequences demanded immediate and continuing transformation on the part of members of his “Body”. Those who “followed {participated in} the Way”, and that which united them, were quickly contextualized by contemporary pluralism, respectively, as “Christians” and as “Christianity”.

We can also trace the main events in the history of Christianity in the ancient as a consequence of which the present day Christianity took its form. According to the Encyclopedia of Religions Christianity was based on teachings of Jesus of Nazareth {shortly before the year 1 of our era}, who seems to have come to regard himself as the Messiah {Christ} eagerly expected by the Jews. In the Apostolic Age Churches began to be organized on very much the same lines as Jewish Synagogues. In the second century the powerful appeal made by various types of Gnosticism led to the development in Christianity of its Episcopal form of government and of a tendency to rely upon written creeds”<sup>10</sup>.

According to “The Penguin Dictionary of Religions” the definition of the term Syrian Christian is explained in detail as follows: - “A community in India. According to a tradition by the Syrian Christians in Southern India, the Apostle St.Thomas founded seven churches in Cochin and Travancore, and then extended his labours to the Coromandel Coast, where he was martyred. The Apostle is supposed to have landed about 52 A.D. In the second century Demetrius of Alexandria is said to have been requested by natives of India to send a Christian teacher to them. According to Dorotheus of Tyre St.Thomas was martyred at Calamina in India. According to Rufinus, his remains were taken from India to Ephesus. The evangelization of India is also attributed to one Thomas of Cana, a Syrian merchant who is said to have conducted a mission to the Malabar Coast to improve the conditions of the Christians there. In any case from this time until the arrival of Portuguese in India the natives of Malabar seem to have welcomed the visitations and teachings of Nestorian and Jacobite Bishops without troubling to distinguish between them. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century they seem to have come under the authority of the Nestorian Patriarch of Mesopotamia. When the Portuguese

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<sup>10</sup>Eliade Mircea., “The Encyclopaedia of Religion”, Volume 3, Mac Millan Publishing Company, New York, 1987, 372-374.

came they lost little time in converting the Malabar Church into a branch of the Roman Church (A.D.1599). But the conduct of the Jesuits led before long to a split in the Malabar Church and the rise of two parties, the Romo-Syrians and the Jacobite Syrians, who acknowledged the spiritual supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch. The Romo-Syrians are now known as Catholics of the Syrian rite. The converts made among the various castes of the Hindus by the Portuguese formed a third party known as the Catholics of the Latin rite. A long dispute between the claims of Rome, Babylon, and Antioch sharpened the divisions of the Malabar Church”<sup>11</sup>.

“De-contextualized understandings of religion that focus solely on established or projected belief systems and creeds at the expense of less-than-tidy practices forfeit vital complexities and, notions of boundaries and identities that are more permeable than rigid”<sup>12</sup>.

Religion in India, as elsewhere, has been irreducible; it continues to have its impact on all secular spheres, be it social organization, political system, or nationalism<sup>13</sup>. Other articles on religion see Ft.Nt<sup>14, 15</sup>.

The history of Medieval Kerala is largely written using sources from Hindu landed magnates- which also gives an insight into other histories of the contemporary period. This study will be focused on using sources like family histories, travel writings in addition to the usage of usual sources like the primary sources and secondary sources.

### **Purpose of this Study:**

\* This study focuses on family history’s role as an effective source of Kerala Syrian Christian History as to how the newly converted Brahmin Christians had staunch faith in Christianity given to them by

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<sup>11</sup> Canney Maurice, “An Encyclopaedia of Religions”, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 1976, pp-343-344.

<sup>12</sup> Dempsey Corinne G., “Lessons in Miracles from Kerala, South India: Stories of Three “Christian” Saints”, History of Religions, Vol.39, No.2, Christianity in India. (Nov.,1999), pp. 175.

<sup>13</sup> Venugopal C.N.,”Reformist Sects and the Sociology of Religion in India”, Sociological Analysis, Vol.51, Special Presidential Issue Sociology of Religion: International Perspectives.(1990), pp. S88.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander, K. C. “Caste and Christianity in Kerala.” *Social Compass* 18, no. 4 (December 1971): 551–60.

<sup>15</sup> Fuller, C. J. “Indian Christians: Pollution and Origins.” *Man*, New Series, 12, no. 3/4 (December 1, 1977): 528–29.

St. Thomas which though was disturbed during the course of time still preserved its purity and orthodoxy till the present day.

\*This study will also highlight to what extent and in which areas the reconstruction of Christian history based on family history is possible.

\*This study will also bring to light the social status, political rights enjoyed by these Christians including the role of women.

### **Methodology:**

\*The Methodology of this study will be based on textual analysis of written i.e. primary and secondary sources and *Kudumbayogams* (family history books), and combined with unwritten sources such as oral traditions. This will be seen in the background of the comparison of the variants in the Christian traditions and the evolution of local usages and practices.

\*Translation of Family History text from Malayalam to English for a clear understanding of the source.

### **Scope of this Study:**

This study limits itself to the St. Thomas Syrian Christian community history with a background to European history and the situation of Christianity prior to the arrival of St. Thomas. The core chapter of this study will include translative comparison of two major family histories - *The Kaniyanthra Family History* and *The Elanjickal Kudumbavum Kudumbangalum* with minor reflections from three other Family Histories namely The Parekattu Family History, the Mukkathu Kudumbayogam and The Kallumpattu Family history. The data from the above family histories will only be limited to the political, cultural and social evidences they highlight in the historical period under my study leaving apart the tabular or chart form of the family names along with photographs from their initial stages till the present day.

This study therefore is based on a comparative study between the proposed family histories. For a clear background of the factual understanding of the place occupied by the St. Thomas Christians from the time of its establishment in Kerala to the period of study in the medieval period

one has to be equipped with the knowledge of primary sources to begin with in addition to the regular secondary sources.

**Primary Sources:-**

**i) Inscriptions:**

Nos 128 & 129- Inscriptions at Muttam near Cape Comorin: - Two stone slab inscriptions are found near a church situated at Muttam in Cape Comorin. They date back to Kollam era 669 and 701 and with the regard to the present Calendar era to 1494 and 1526 respectively. The Travancore Archaeological series quotes Mr. Mackenzie's citation in his History of Christianity in Travancore, as an edict that credits its importance to the favour of the Christians. Regarding the antiquity of the Cape Comorin Church Duarte Barbosa, the "The Father of the Portuguese Indian Story", this quotation is stated in the Travancore Archaeological series as follows: "At this Cape Comorin (Kumari: Comorin) there is an ancient church of Christians which was founded by the Armenians (Syrians who still direct it and perform in it the divine service of Christians and have crosses on the altars. All mariners (after a common Indian custom) pay it a tribute and the Portuguese celebrate a mass there when they pass. There are these many tombs amongst which there is one which has written on it a Latin Epitaph: Hi jae Catuludus Gulli filius qui obit anno"<sup>16</sup>. This quotation apart the main contents engraved on this inscription are as follows:

The First inscription dated in Kollam era 669 mentions about Unni Kerala Tiruvadi who ruled as the Travancore King of that period- gave the subjects residing at Kumari-Muttam few exemptions from tax and also permitted the collection of a less severe than possible duty from fishermen and transport boats (popularly called as Uru and Samban) that sailed past KovaiKullam in Kumari-Muttam transporting goods consisting of paddy and other items to and fro along the coast.

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<sup>16</sup> Ayyar Ramanatha A.S, with Index to Vol VI-Parts I and II by Sastri Sivaramakrishna K., "Travancore Archaeological Series Vol.VI-Part-II", Superintendent Government Press, Trivandrum, 1929, pp-176-177.

The Second Inscription dated in Kollam era 701 is interpreted as quoted in Travancore Archaeological series as “a royal writ for redressing the grievances of the Christian Paravas, which was sent to the senior and Junior Kangan(the headman and his assistant among the Hindu Fisherman) who resided in the haven at Kumari –Muttam, commanding then that they should not thereafter molest or harass in anyway the Christians who were exempted from paying the taxes due to the village community of the heathens, such as idangai and valangai-panam, padaipanam, prachanda-Kanikai etc”<sup>17</sup>. This meant that the Travancore King Udaiyamarttandavarman relieved the fishermen from certain deplorable conditions “such as injustice, tyranny, blackmail, confiscation of fish” etc and assured them safety under his rule so that they could live their life in security. At this juncture it is also important to take note of an extract of a letter of Francis Xavier dated September 7, 1544 from Tiruchendur. The letter reads as follows “My chief motive is to do something at once for the unfortunate Christians who have been driven out of Tuticorin Bembare, and to secure for them a fixed and safe place of settlement in the dominions of the great King. The first thing that I shall settle with Inniquitribrium and with the utmost diligence, will be to get him to assign a certain territory where these most miserable exiles may dwell unhurt and in peace”<sup>18</sup>.

No.54 Epitaph No.7: on the 9<sup>th</sup> (day), of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (month) of (the year) 1701 Tomma-rajavu of Villaravattam residing at Chenonnam died. This epitaph exhibits the sovereignty of the Christian King who ruled over the St.Thomas Christians. During that period due to the prosperity achieved by the Christians of Quilon and Cochin there was a necessity which was brought into practice by appointing for themselves a king. The arrival of Portuguese on the Christian shores witnessed the allegiance of the Malabar Christians to the King of Cochin. The said King is believed to have used as an authority ‘a red rod tipped with silver, having three small bells attached to the upper end’. This rod was given to the

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.. Pg 178.

<sup>18</sup> Ayyar Ramanatha A.S, with Index to Vol VI-Parts I and II by Sastri Sivaramakrishna K.,“ Travancore Archaeological Series Vol.VI-Part-II”, Superintendent Government Press, Trivandrum, 1929.

Portuguese by these Christians as mark to maintain their cordial relationships as they were Christians from different faith countries<sup>19</sup>.

No.55 Kandanad Epitaph: A good number of Epitaphs are found from a church at Kandanad amounting to twelve. The dates of the earliest to the latest range from Kollam 807(1632 A.D) to Kollam 835 (1660 A.D). Some epitaphs are inscribed on an open air stone cross that is situated towards the front side of the Kandanad church. Among these one epitaph accounts for the setting up of a Baptismal Font by two individuals<sup>20</sup>.

**ii) Copper Plate Records:**

Two Copper Plate Records from Palaiyur: As published in Travancore Archaeological series these copper plate charters were given under the auspices of the ruling Chera Kings of Kottayam and Cochin Sthanu Ravi and Bhaskara Ravi Varman belonging to the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively. These plates bring to light the equal patronage by the Hindu Kings who mobilized the continuity of the Church of Christians and also the Jewish community who were jointly commercially prosperous in the West Coast.

Palaiyur Copper Plate of Kollam 852: This plate written in Vatteluttu script on both sides with the year 852(Kerala Calendar) which can be understood as 1676 A.D(Gregorian Calendar) records the sale of a piece of land called Pali paramba by a private individual along with his younger brother to a priest(the head of a church)<sup>21</sup>.

Three Copper Plates from the Chittiate Church Nos 148 to 150:- These three documents inscribed on copper plates in Vatteluttu script belong to Verapoly's Chittiate Church. These three sources make mention of the transactions that is related to landed property in the years 894, 936 and 956 respectively.

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<sup>19</sup> Ayyar Ramanatha A.S., "Travancore Archaeological Series Vol VI-Part I", Published under the orders of Government of Travancore, Superintendent Government Press, Trivandrum, 1927, pp-69, 6<sup>th</sup> para.

<sup>20</sup> Ayyar Ramanatha A.S., "Travancore Archaeological Series Vol VI-Part I", Published under the orders of Government of Travancore, Superintendent Government Press, Trivandrum, 1927.

<sup>21</sup> Ayyar Ramanatha A.S., "Travancore Archaeological Series Vol VI-Part I", Published under the orders of Government of Travancore, Superintendent Government Press, Trivandrum, 1927.

The first record of the Kollam era 894:- This Copper plate mentions the bestowing a piece of land in the form of gift to a Carmelite Father Mathew by Ravi-Rama Kaimal for the construction of a church.

The second record of the Kollam era 936:- This copper plate emphasizes on the sale of 125 para of land by Kumaran Sreekantha-Tirumulpad of Mannadu to the Carmelite Mission's Muppam Padiri.

The third record of the Kollam era 956:- This copper plate refers to the buying of a piece of land Known as Pattiyalapparambu in Varakalpula desam by Fr. Francis Muppam Padiri of the Carmelite Mission at Varappula from Kunnattu Raman-Kumara Kaimmal and his brothers<sup>22</sup>.

**iii) Family Histories:-**

Kanianthra Family History, Elanjickal Family History, Parekattu Family history, Mukkathu Kudumbayogam and Kallumpattu Family History. These will be dealt in detail in Chapters IV and V.

**iv) Narratives and letters :-**

The Narratives of Joseph The Indian and The Letters by K.P. Padmanabha Menon that will be dealt in detail in the Survey of Literature.

**v) Dutch Records:-**

These records give a detailed account of Syrian Christians, their privileges, the taxes paid by them and their maintenance of family registers. The following extract from the Dutch Records explains in detail the above mentioned characteristics.

As per the records, the beginnings of Christianity with regard to the place and its spread is explained as follows, "The Christians at Mylapore have been very numerous from time immemorial, and they greatly increased in numbers, and long flourished there, notwithstanding the scorn and hard treatment they received from the heathens, till at last this town was devastated and the Christians persecuted by fire and sword. They were then

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<sup>22</sup> Ayyar Ramanatha A.S, with Index to Vol VI-Parts I and II by Sastri Sivaramakrishna K., "Travancore Archaeological Series Vol.VI-Part-II", Published under the orders of Government of Travancore, Superintendent Government Press, Trivandrum, 1929.

dispersed over other countries, where they received gentler treatment, especially on the Malabar coast and more particularly in the kingdoms of Cranganore, Coilan, Travancore, in the cities of Calicut and Todomale, as also in the towns of the Malabar highlands". This extract explains the reason for the settlement of St.Thomas Christians from Mylapore to the Malabar and other places in coastland Kerala. The following extract proceeds to explain the types of privileges and grants the St.Thomas Christians enjoyed as a result of the initiative taken by Thomas Cana. "According to the reckoning of the Malabaris, there arrived at Cranganore a merchant from Syria named Thomas Cnay or Cana with some priests and other Christians from Bagdad, Mosul and Jerusalem. After having obtained great influence with the princes by means of his riches and wealth, he secured for the Christians-who had chosen him as their head-great privileges and brought it about that they were not only ranked among the nobility of Malabar, but were even preferred before the royal Nairs (which is the title given to notables and noblemen among the Malabaris). They were also granted the privilege of trading all over the country, of building shops and churches and certain honours, which could be used by no one without special leave of the princes. The annals will even have it that this Thomas obtained a written grant of the aforesaid privileges, engraved on a copper plate, which was preserved with the most extreme care and is still supposed to be in the church of Tevalkarre near Calicoilan". These grants and privileges of the St.Thomas Christians attest the fact of their being accepted in the society on par with the high caste Hindu subjects. Reveling on their granted privileges these Christians desired of appointing a King over them. The extract explains the same as follows:-

"These St.Thomas' Christians then, being favored with privileges, increased, it is said, in influence, power and number among the nations of the country, became bold through all these advantages and desired, just as the Israelites of old, a king over them and did in fact appoint one, by name Balearte, and gave him the title of King of the St.Thomas' Christians. His descendants are also said to have succeeded him on the throne until at last one came to die without offspring. In his place was elected with the common

consent of the people, a King, who was at the same time king of Diamper or Odiampur [Udayampur], which is distant 3 miles from Cochin to the south in the present territory of the king of Travancore and so is wrongly located by Valentyn near Mylapore or St. Thome; when the kings of this dynasty also had died out altogether, the Kings of Cochin are supposed to have got possession of that kingdom.

These Christians obtained leave in course of time from the kings of Cochin to create one of their priests an archdeacon, and this office was confirmed by the King with the rank of a Rajadore [Port. regedor, high officer] of the kingdom, and power to decide all civil disputes among people of his own faith.

Under the Kings of Cochin they hardly had to endure persecutions, but rather enjoyed a sort of protection, which is still accorded by the King of Cochin on condition that they pay to him, besides the ordinary taxes, the Perusandrum [Purushantaram], being a certain sum of money, estimated according to the inheritance being large or small, which must be paid by the heirs when the head of a family dies. But this relates only to the Syrian Christians of Odiampur, while there are very many Christians scattered about under other princes.

Such was the condition of the Malabar St. Thomas' Christians, when the Portuguese under the command of Admiral Vasco de Gama arrived at Calicut with three ships on the 18th of May 1498".

The prosperity of St. Thomas Christians under the Cochin Kings is clearly explained. And further the extract also testifies to the fact of how these Christians were attracted by the Portuguese but still continued to pay tribute to the King of Cochin. Those attracted to the Portuguese came under the Roman religious authority were known as the Pazhayakur (the Old Party), while those who resisted their attempts in joining their Roman fold formed the Puthenkur (the New Party). Such dissensions in St. Thomas Christians also marked the medieval period of Christianity in India. The Dutch Records also highlight an important aspect of the St. Thomas Christian family's maintenance of registers. The extract reads as follows:

“The houses of these Christians are not mixed up with those of the other Malabaris, but they have separate quarters, where they live among themselves. They also seem to be very exact in keeping their family registers. They do not mix or inter-marry with newly converted Christians of lower castes or classes. The majority of them belong to the Nair caste or class of nobles, and for this reason they, like the Nairs, carry a sword in the hand as a token of their dignity”.

The above extract specifies the segregation and position of the St.Thomas Christians in Medieval society. Family registers and the accuracy regarding the details maintained in them forms an important characteristic feature of the St.Thomas Christians beginning from the Medieval period. As a part of insignia they carried a sword in order to denote their equal status with that of their Hindu brethren the Nairs who held a nobility status under the ruling Kings. These records also further verify the limit of authority vested in the Dutch Company and the Portuguese over the St.Thomas Christians. According to the records “The Company has never had any authority, nor could have, over the St.Thomas’ Christians, who were always subjects of the country princes. Not even the Portuguese exercised any jurisdiction over them, although they did their utmost, with the consent of the King of Cochin, to make these Christians accept the doctrines of Rome, and acknowledge the hierarchy of the Pope”. This situation attains a change after the Conquest of Cochin by the Company. The records maintain that “The Company, after the Conquest of Cochin, not only favoured the revolt of the Eastern Christians against the usurpation of Rome, but also assisted them in getting out new Bishops from Syria, who formerly could not come without endangering their lives, by placing at their disposal the ships of the Company”. This also shows that the St.Thomas’ Christians “religious freedom” as mentioned by the records remained undisturbed during the tenure of the Dutch Company<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Van Der Burg Rev.A.J and Groot Rev.P., “The Dutch in Malabar”, Selections from the Records of the Madras Government, Dutch Records No.13 bring A Translation of Selections Nos.1 and 2 with Introduction and Notes, Superintendent Government Press, Madras, 1911.

## **Secondary Sources:-**

These include all the published material including the travel writing left behind by many well known foreign travellers during the given period, that serve as a background for the purpose of present study. It also includes the recent works by many later scholars who have undertaken numerous studies on Christianity in Kerala.

## **Aims and Objectives:**

- This study is mainly aimed at reconstructing the Syrian Christian History of Medieval Kerala from specific sources like Family Histories rather than applying large scale generalizations.
- To reconstruct the establishment and Spread of Christianity and the social condition of Kerala as seen in the chronicles.
- To reconstruct the political system in pre-modern Kerala.
- To study the relation between Christians and other socio-religious groups.
- To study the depiction of Medieval Kerala in the Family History and compare and contrast it with other texts.

The central focus of this thesis is to locate the family histories based on a comparative study and bring it out as an important source material for studying the history of Syrian Christians of Medieval Kerala and see how the Portuguese intervention and the subsequent struggles against the St. Thomas Christians culminated to result in certain turning points in history by taking the case study of three family histories. Beginning with a geographical preface of the region, i.e. Kerala, the first chapter would focus on the primary sources like Malabar Syrians and the C.M.S, the Narratives of Joseph The Indian, The letters from the Malabar, trying to explain how family histories and foreign traveller's account with references also to the Jewish traveller's accounts like the works of Benjamin of Tudela can be used in addition to the existing archaeological, literary and epigraphical sources that clearly reveal shifts in patterns of religious observances. The above chapter would also outline the methodologies which will be drawn from history, theology, art history and comparative literature and

would end with a detailed discussion on the thematic scope of the thesis. In the next three chapters, the central topic i.e. the evolution of Christianity in Kerala and its subsequent transformation from the ancient to the 'medieval phase' with the introduction of Portuguese influence would form a lengthy introductory and anchoring theme based on the hypothesis that the Kerala Christians (hereafter referred to as Nazarenes) earlier had only loose contacts with West Asia and adapted to Kerala society drawing from indigenous traditions and practices but still followed some West Asian models particularly in Church organization. Portuguese influences in all spheres right from architecture to liturgical practices and theological interpretations had deep ramifications leading to splits among the faithful with some Nazarenes steadfastly sticking to the earlier practices while others adapted to Portuguese influences which will be discussed in detail with a lengthy description of the individual Orders. Developments in medieval Europe like the Spanish Inquisition, fall of Granada and the rise of the Absolutist State had a direct bearing on the events in Kerala and a connection is made to see a lineal link between the European developments which found an echo in the churches of Kerala leading to splits among the faithful. The splits and subsequent severing of contacts with West Asia, followed by numerous 'sectarian' interpretations and struggles propelled the Nazarenes to a 'new historical period'-a period in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries where there was a multiplicity of interpretations and struggles. New reference points and categories emerged in the Christian discourse replacing and reformulating some of the earlier practices like the architecture period of subsequent internalization of the new values and finally a different lens through which to look at Christianity. The fourth chapter will focus on the creation and the role of Family History in general. The fifth chapter will look into the logical comparison between the two major and three minor Family Histories which will reveal whether family history writing can also be used as a source for reconstructing the history of Syrian Christians of Kerala.

**Themes for Consideration:-**

- \*The nature of Family Histories in Kerala among the Syrian Christians.
- \*Patterns of Patronage and the process of creation of Family Histories.

\*The Structure of the Family History: Narrative Strategy, Roles and Statuses, Interpolations, the transcribing of Oral traditions to texts and the site of transcription – the patron and the church.

\*Social groups, Actors,Hypergamy, Role of women, Markers of Self-Identity.

\*Kinship Patterns and Genealogy.

### **Survey of Literature:**

P. Cheriyan in his book “The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society”, quotes Paoli who observes that when Mahomedan influence became predominant in Malabar, the St. Thomas Christians retired from the dominions of the Zamorin and established themselves among their brethren who lived in the territories of the Rajah of Cochin.<sup>1</sup> (1.Voyage to the East Indies, page169). In Action VII Decree 5 of the Synod of Diamper it is stated that in the borders of the territories belonging to the Zamorin there were villages of people who were Christian only in name though not in their observances. They chose one of themselves to be a sort of King or ruler over them. He engaged to defend them from the ‘Mahomedan’ as well as the ‘Pagans’. This Chief who was called Bellearte.<sup>2</sup> (2.This is probably a Europeanized form of the family name Valyarvattam.) resided at Udayamperur. The Syrians who remained in the Zamorin’s dominions seem to have been exterminated during Tippu’s wars. The horrors of those days are described in detail by Paoli.<sup>3</sup> (Voyage to the East Indies, page 141.). The native Christians of Malabar were overjoyed at the news of the Portuguese traders arrival.<sup>4</sup> (4.Voyage to the East Indies, page 169.).Waiting for a few years they came to an understanding of the arrival of Vasco da Gama with a fleet of ships in Cochin in the year 1502. The native Syrians of Malabar sent a deputation to let him know that they were interested to be taken under his master’s protection after they realized that he was a subject of a Christian King so that they might be protected from the difficulties and harm done to them on a day to day basis by the infidel princes , and for an assurance of their showing affiliation to the king of Portugal they sent the Portuguese king, ‘a rod tipped at both ends with silver with three bells at the head of it, which had been the scepter of their Christian kings’. But since the Portuguese power was not firmly established

in India till some years later, 'the Portuguese Admiral sent them away with good words'<sup>24</sup>. The Syrian Christians without a strong political leadership were under the rule of a heathen King Zamorin bore up with immense difficulties which forced them to confide in the Portuguese whose Christian faith was relied on without lamenting on the threat that they were to witness in the years to come. The medieval period thus reaped a time of turbulence in the belief of Syrian Christians, the seeds of which was sown by the Portuguese. In order to understand the situation of Kerala in detail at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in the medieval period the study of the narratives by Joseph The Indian would deem appropriate.

A very detailed picture of Kerala of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the account of St. Thomas Christians is given in detail in the narratives of Joseph the Indian who toured Europe in 1501 A.D. This is recorded in three different sources namely Paesi, Itinerarium and Sonderlinge Reysen Van Joseph. In his book India in 1500 A.D., the narratives of Joseph the Indian by Antony Vallavanthara C.M.I. explains in detail about the above mentioned three main sources of the narratives of Joseph the Indian. The earliest known source is in Italian. It was first printed and published from Vicentia, in Italy in 1507 with the title Paesi Nouamente Retrouati. The second, titled Itinerarium Portugallensium was published in Latin from Milan, in Italy in 1508. The third source was in Dutch Language entitled Sonderlinge Reysen Van Joseph Den Geboornen Indian was published in 1706 by Peter Vander. The first two sources consisted of a collection of the voyages and great discoveries of the new world. The third source was translated from Portuguese for the first time. The circumstances that led to such a narration can be read further. A short and brief history to these happenings began from the interest of the King of Portugal in sponsoring such ventures that resulted in the finding of the new sea routes and the discovery of new lands. Once such venture was Vas co da Gama's first voyage to India from 9th July 1497 to 10th July 1499. He was greatly successful in finding the sea route round the Cape of Good Hope and also in establishing trade relations with the Malabar Coast, which after that time was under the control of Arabs. All these made King Emmanuel of Portugal in the year 1500 to decree and send a new fleet of ships under Pedro Alvares Cabral received the royal standard on 8th march and on

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<sup>24</sup> Cheriyan. P., "The Malabar Syrians and the Church Missionary Society 1816-1840", The Church Missionary Society's Press, Kottayam, 1935, pg 43.

9th march he set out with a fleet consisting of around thirteen ships along with Bartholomew Dias as one among his captains who had in the immediate past attained the fame of discovering the Cape of Good Hope .On their way to Indian shore they had unexpectedly discovered the coast of Brazil and Madagascar.Thefleet under the command of Cabral had to face some difficulties due to constant storms that destroyed four of his ships. One ship was sent back to Lisbon to give the unexpected news of their finding a new land named Brazil and its adjacent place Madagascar. Another ship sailed to Zaphala. Finally they arrived at the coast of Calicut on 13th September 1500 with their only remaining seven ships after six long months of sea journey.Cabral also had audience with the King of Calicut, the Zamorin. The fleet of Cabral anchored at Calicut for around three months, then when the situation became worse with the Mohammedan merchants when one of their ships was captured by the Portuguese, they reacted by attacking the Portuguese. Even the king of Calicut did not heed to the demand for compensation to the Portuguese. Therefore Cabral consecutively attacked the town for two days which resulted in many deaths in a village called Fundarane. Due to the tension prevailing in Calicut, Cabral and his fleet sailed to Cochin.

The narratives give a detailed description of the loading of Portuguese ships at Cochin and Cranganore. It was in the port of Cranganore that they come into their first confrontation with St. Thomas Christians. Among them two men one named Joseph and the other his brother Mathais expressed their wish to travel with the Portuguese to Rome and Jerusalem. Their wish was heeded to and when Cabral heard that a large fleet was racing towards them from Calicut, he started his voyage back to Portugal along with these two Christian brothers on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1501. The Portuguese ships were further loaded on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Jan at Cannanore and continued their journey to Portugal. They journeyed for around two and a half months to reach the Cape of Good Hope on April 4<sup>th</sup> and Lisbon on June 30, 1501. As per Joseph's wish he receives an opportunity to meet Pope Alexander VI. Joseph was also given a companion by the King of Portugal to accompany him to Rome, Venice and Jerusalem as mentioned in the Italian text.

According to him there was caste system prevalent in Kerala among the gentile community which was divided into three hierarchical castes. The highest castebeing the Naires, the second being the Rustic people and the third caste being the Nuirinam or fisherman. Each of these castes

maintained separate temples. Women had their own temples separated from their men folk. The first fruits of earth like rose, figs, etc were offered at their temples. They worshipped one god, the creator of everything. Images or statues of their gods were made of stone carvings in human likeness. The rituals of the gentiles as mentioned in the narratives are numerous like smearing forehead with earth, visiting temple thrice a day, and about the rituals of dancing and such art forms performed by their priests. The practice of sati was prevalent. The gentile king could have as many wives as he want from time to time. The law of succession by inheritance was not practiced. (as the king's wives had relation with many people and the sons were not deemed worthy or deserving for it).

Joseph also mentions in detail about the Christians in Cranganore. They mostly lived in houses paid on rent to the gentile king. The churches had crosses inside and outside the church top also. According to Joseph's explanation the Thomas Christians had a Pontiff as their head, twelve Cardinals, two Patriarch Bishops and Archbishop's. They also are believed to have priests and deacons. The baptism of a child is done forty days after birth. The Thomas Christians have a strict rule of confession and it is only after confession to a priest (kumbasaram) that they are given the right to take part in the Holy Communion i.e. the body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Joseph further elaborates that there was no extreme unction (anointing oil on body) but they only bless the body. They also use unleavened bread for consecration of the body and blood of Lord Jesus Christ. The wine used for the consecration of the blood is not grown in that land hence they use dried grapes coming from China and dissolve it in water and later squeeze out the juice for the above purpose. They practiced burial of the dead. When a fellow-human being passes away, many of the Christians come to that house and share a fellowship in dining, praying etc this continues for eight days. As per the rule of law a last will or a written document of the abandoned property is made, if not done then the property gets automatically transferred to the closest relative of the deceased. Widows are given the dowry and they are allowed to leave and they also exercised the right to get married only after one year. In the words of Joseph "they have four evangelists and four gospels of passion. They observe the lent and the advent. On Good Friday and Holy Saturday until the Easter day, they abstain from food and they preach in the night of Good Friday. During the year they celebrate the following feasts the feast of Resurrection with the two feast days following. On the octave of Easter they have a

greater feast than the others in the whole year, for they say that they do so because on that day St.Thomas put his hand in the side of Christ and recognized that he was not a phantom, the feast of Ascension, the feast of St.Thomas of the Trinity, of the Assumption of the blessed Virgin Mary, her nativity and Purification, the feast of the Nativity of our Lord and the Epiphany”<sup>25</sup>. In addition to these the feast of the Apostles and the Sundays are celebrated by them. Due to the strong “veneration” by the Christians as well as the gentiles two feasts are celebrated to commemorate the memory of St.Thomas on the first day of July. Their monks dressed in black live in poverty lead a life with Chastity which is common to the nuns also. At any point of time the priests were found to be deviating from their chaste life,they are bound to not to exercise their right to conduct the Holy Eucharist. Divorce never formed a part in these Christian’s lives. The Holy Communion was not received frequently by the people as they always had certain rules and preparations to accept the body and blood of Christ. Hence Joseph states that “all the people communicate three times a year”. There is also a mention of presence of outstanding doctors among them who were well versed in the study of letters. They also had prophets. According to Joseph who was himself a priest, voice that the said doctors “spoke about the Bible and the Prophets. Antony Vallavanthara cites the opinion of Joseph, with regard to the dress of these Christians and compared themwith that of the Moors. These Christians of Malabar usually dressed up in cotton clothes. According to their custom one year is divided into twelve months. St.Thomas Christians also observed the intercalary days (it is used to describe a year to which an intercalary day or month has been added. For example: - A leap year is an intercalary year). Each day was divided into sixty hours where each hour was known as nabhika. Thus there were thirty nabhika for a day time and thirty Nabhika for the night time. The hours during the day and night were calculated based on the sun and stars respectively.

The Narratives also produce many important aspects relating to Geography of Kerala. Joseph further explains that their longest day consisted of thirteen and half hours while the shortest day was marked by ten hours. To quote him “ when the sun is in the sign of Taurus, they have perpendicular shadow, and when the Sun is in Cancer the shadow falls in the south and when the Sun is in Virgin its

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<sup>25</sup>Vallavanthara Antony CMI, “India in 1500 A.D The Narratives of Joseph The Indian”, Oriental Institute of Religious Studies, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, 1984, Pg 176.

shadow is perpendicular and when in Capricorn the Shadow falls in the North”. There is no navigation in the months after May to August owing to the change of seasons resulting in heavy rains as part of the monsoons. There are many ships that navigate to the west to places mostly in the Middle-East like Arabia, Persia, Red Sea, the Orient, India, China, Taprobane, Faillam and many other places. A very detailed explanation about the ships are given that some had twelve sails most of which were made of mat and the others made of cotton. Ships were mostly made with “nails of iron”. Frankincense and other mixtures are used in the making of a pitch. The ships were put in water with the help of a great number of people who enable to push the ship into the water which was also a great cause for the death of men and from thenceforth men were replaced by two elephants.

With regard to the economy of the St. Thomas Christians Joseph explains that there were three types of money in circulation. The first known as Sarapho made of gold, the second known as Parante made of silver and the third known as Tare was also made of Silver but of a lower value. The letters of their King are inscribed on these coins. The land of Cranganore experienced a warm climate. It is a fertile land producing everything except wheat which is bought from the nearby by islands. Horses are also not available here and they are bought from Ormus. Horses are used only to carry goods and not for war as the wars are fought on foot. The weapons that are mainly used by them during wars were “bow and arrow, swords and bucklers” etc. some of the weapons are made up of the back skin of certain hard fish and the others are made out of iron. These Christians used to eat all types of animals like cows, sheep and buffaloes except oxen which was worshipped by the gentiles. They also had a great number of big and small (i.e.) elephants and hens and geese respectively. There is no mention of pigs during this time. As the land was fertile it produced good quantity of rice and sugar. Rice was used to make bread. They have nutritious herbs of twenty varieties. They eat some sort of root of herbs. Figs and palm nuts are produced in great number. According to Joseph the Indian Nut tree produces four things starting with “wine, Vinegar, sugar and oil”. Many other products from palms were “bread and honey’, wine and vinegar and different types of textiles”<sup>26</sup>. Its pith is used instead of charcoal by the blacksmith, when put in water it takes the form of fodder for sheep, and oxen. The bark of this wood is also used in making rope and baskets. Other spices like large quantities of pepper,

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<sup>26</sup> Pg 190

ginger mirabolin, and cassia are found in this region. They are exported by the Moors to regions like “Cairo, Alexandria, Damascus and Persia”. All these above matters confine to the Land of Cranganore and Priest Joseph goes on to explain about the city of Calicut.

Calicut a greater city than Cranganore is located around ninety miles west to Cranganore. Here also the King is an idol worshipper and shares the same sect of the king of Cranganore. Their mode of worship was not that different from that which Joseph The Indian had explained in the previous chapters. This city also witnessed an influx of many Moorish and Gujerathi merchants (who were good traders in different commodities). Thus the city of Calicut was famous for its flourishing trade and it also attracted many businessmen. It was during this time that the Christian people of China used to frequent this city but in course of time they ceased to come due to their being not received cordially by the King of Calicut. As retaliation to this they came back once more and slaughtered many innocent people in Calicut-after which they never came back. A remarkable aspect that Joseph mentions about the palace of the King of Calicut is that it has four different chambers for audience with Gentiles, Moors, Jews & Christians. The palace also has an inbuilt man power security establishment with seven thousand men, three hundred men are assigned to go around houses at night as the city of Calicut was not fortified. The people here were also allowed special audiences with the King only after cleansing themselves. Those who did not follow this were termed to be unclean. The people especially the gentiles followed this rule under the King very strictly. They also refrained from the idea of having food while travelling on sea. The moment they violate this they are not supposed to meet the King again. The Narratives of Joseph also highlights the prevalence of the tradition of ‘Sati’ committed by the Hindu women for the simple belief that the path to immortality can be easily cleared for them due to their self-willing immolation along with their dead husbands. The flourishing trade of Calicut is also mentioned in Chapter XV of Strabo’s Geography. Joseph quotes Strabo’s geography whose chapter begins as follows: “Nicholaus Damascenus says that he in Antioch etc. as said above, much business is done there in the city of Calicut and on fixed dates of the year there are markets which are well known everywhere. People from every place come together on such days, namely from China especially, and Hindus of all castes Persians, Syrians, Turks, Assyrians, Arabs, Aegyptians and especially those who inhabit Babylon, namely Cairo the town of Egypt adjacent to the river Nile and

many people from the border areas”<sup>27</sup>. This provides us with the information of the names of countries from which merchants come to the annual fair of Calicut. The mention and knowledge of these regions made the writer of this narratives enquire from Joseph as to whether he knew anything about their own country to which promptly Joseph answered that the three cities of Rome, Venice and Gaul popularly known as France which was considered with great honour by the people. Mention is made of gold and silver coins of Venice which were valued among the people very much. Apart from the mention of the city of Calicut Joseph also goes on to mention about Cambia (The Gulf of Cambay), the island of Ormus (An island located where the Persian Gulf begins) and Guzerat (The present Surat). Joseph explains the prevailing condition of the above three cities. Then in the last Chapter i.e. the fourteenth Chapter which is an explanation about the King Narasindo and a certain Church of St. Thomas. According to Joseph King Narasindo ruled the kingdom of Vijayanagar. And Joseph goes on to explain in detail about the Kingdom of Vijayanagar. In this kingdom the King while going for war had an army followed by eight hundred elephants, four thousand horses and innumerable foot soldiers. This kingdom had a circumference of three thousand miles. The Vijayanagar king was also an idol worshipper. Joseph further spoke about the cities that were adjacent to the sea. At first comes the city of Cochin from where if one travels down south they reach the Cape called Cumar (present day Kanya Kumari). Another city that extends to the sea was known by the name Milapar (present day Mylapore). Here Joseph mentions about a church which is well known as the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle. This Church is known for its witness of various miracles which even make the gentiles have belief in it. The two islands that are also mentioned by Joseph towards the ending part of his narratives are Sayla (the present Ceylon) and Taprabana (the present day Sumatra). Beyond Taprabana is China, an island with many islands. Much mention is not made about China as Joseph did not explain the same. The narratives find an end here.

Joseph, a man of forty years of age hailed from the region of Cranganore in Kerala. He was well versed with Malayalam and Syriac. He was neither too tall nor too short and had a medium appearance. He had a dark complexion. As per the views maintained by Mathais Mundadan and to a certain extent Schurhammer Joseph is believed to have returned to India in the following years before

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid .,pp-203.

1518<sup>28</sup>.The narratives of Joseph the Indian gives a very valuable account of the life of St Thomas Christians with regard to their religious, social, economic and cultural life. Joseph an Indian Christian and an ordained priest hailing from Cranganore in Kerala was a well educated person who narrated his present day culture among his native people during the sixteenth century. This narrative attains authenticity due to the fact that it is narrated by the son of the soil Joseph, an Indian Christian where in main events and social conditions was narrated without any distortions or interpolations as can happen with a foreigners account or a travelers account which they perceive from their view point and do not always agree totally with what is seen by them. One such account of the Syrian Christians shall be begun by the Christian Researches in Asia by Rev. Claudius Buchanan, followed by the foreign travel accounts.

Buchannan's portrayal of the Syrian Christians of Kerala brings to light their ancient identity as the indigenous Christians who existed much before the arrival of Portuguese to be mentioned by the Portugese in their accounts to have witnessed a rather novel experience in being introduced to these Malabari Christians. When these Christians were confronted by the Portugese who expressed that all what they see as constructed churches in the Indian soil for its one reason being Christian by its character they conveyed that all existing Christian churches pay their allegiance to the Pope. This was received with their alarming response from the St.Thomas Christians of not knowing the Pope, as they carried out their ecclesiastical rituals and traditions that were in accordance to the Episcopal Jurisdiction of Antioch. This also meant that these Christians were provided leadership by the Bishops who were sent by the Patriarch of Antioch. Buchannan argues the contradicting work done by the Portuguese in trying their best to manoeuvre the St. Thomas Christians to abandon their existing form of worship and absorb them under the Roman Papal fold. This became easier once they rooted themselves firmly on the Indian soil. Firstly, they intruded into the existing churches and evicted its clergy in order to divert these Christians to Roman faith. But when these Christians remained persistent with their belief, they arrested Mar Joseph, the Syrian Bishop and expelled him to the prison of Lisbon. The Portuguese in the absence of a Syrian Bishop convened a Synod that was held at Diamper (Udayamperoor) adjacent to the city of Cochin that was conducted under the hegemony of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Pg 81,para3.

Arch Bishop Menezes, a Bishop sent by the Roman authority. In Buchanan's account of the Syrian Christians published at Calcutta in 1807, the following forms an extract relative to the name or denomination of the Syrian Church. "The number of Syrian churches is greater than has been supposed. There are at this time, fifty-five churches in Malay-ala, acknowledging the Patriarch of Antioch. The last church was erected by the present Bishop in 1793.

"The Syrian Christians are not Nestorians. Formerly indeed, they had bishops of that communion; but the liturgy of the present church is derived from that of the early church of Antioch, called 'Liturgia Jacobi Apostoli'. They are usually denominated Jacobitae; but they differ in ceremonial from the church of that name in Syria, and indeed from any existing church in the world. Their proper designation, and that which is sanctioned by their own use, is, 'Syrian Christians;' or, 'the Syrian Church of Malay-ala.'-The Syrians have continued, till lately, to receive their bishops from Antioch- *Dr. Buchanan's Account of Syrian Christians, Calcutta, 1807;p.3*

Further, it has been maintained that the Syrian Christians have latterly been denominated Jacobitae, or Jacobites; so called according to their books, from (Jacobus) James the Apostle. The Jacobites are also called Eutychians, as following the opinions of Eutychus; and are sometimes styled Monophysites, or those who hold that Christ "had but one nature." This opinion is the distinguishing dogma of the Eutychians. In the Author's discussion with the Syrians, as he did not think fit to propose to them the points in the Athanasian creed in which they differed so they did not trouble him with Eutychian difficulties. His chief object was to forward the translation of the Bible, knowing that this was the fountain of light, and that, if they were once possessed of this, it would be easier to adjust particular doctrines. He perceived, too, that the minds of the people were in a fluctuating state; the effect of a very obvious cause. The nation in general are called the St. Thome Christians. This is their name in all parts of India, and it imports an antiquity that reaches far beyond the Eutychians or Nestorians, or any other sect. But, in process of time, certain Nestorian bishops obtained supremacy among them; and after them Eutychian; and now the Roman Catholics constantly assail them, when opportunity offers. The author, therefore, finding a people in such interesting circumstances, professing the doctrines of the Bible, and resisting that anti-Christian spirit which had "deceived the

nations of the earth,” sought rather, in what things they might agree than in what they might differ<sup>29</sup>. According to Kerr’s account of the Syrian Christians as published in the *Christian Researches in Asia*, “The Christians on the Malabar Coast are divided into three sects. I. The St. Thome` or Jacobite Christians. II. The Syrian Roman-Catholics. III. The Latin Church.

“I. The St.Thome` Christians still retain their ancient creed and usages, and consider themselves as the descendants of the flock established by St. Thomas, who is generally esteemed the Apostle of the East. They are respected very highly by the Nairs; and the Rajahs of Travancore and Cochin admit them to rank next to the Nairs. Their occupations are various as those of other Christians being cultivators and artisans.

II. The Syrian Roman-Catholics are those who were constrained, after a long struggle, to join the Latin Church, and who still continue in her pale, though distinguished from her in this, that they are allowed, by a dispensation from the Pope, to perform all the services of the Church of Rome in the Syro-Chaldaic language. The Roman-Catholic Syrians, it is thought, are much more numerous than the members of the original church. The Hindoos have a much greater respect for the Christians of the original church than for the converts of the Latin communion.

III. The Latin Roman Catholics are subject to the Primate of Goa, under whom is an archbishop and two bishops. “The churches are numerous: but as they are in general poor, and are obliged to be supplied with priests from Goa, one vicar holds upon an average five or six churches. The number of Christians composing these churches must be great, as all the fishermen are Roman Catholics”.

Dr. Kerr closes his interesting Report with some general observations. “It appears,” he remarks, “from the foregoing statement, that pure Christianity is far from being a religion for which the highest caste of the Hindoos have any disrespect;”<sup>30</sup>

Buchanan here highlights the orthodoxy of the Syrian Christians in not easily giving up to the Portuguese pressure to be absorbed under the Roman Papal fold but resisting their attempts and maintaining their integrity, though Dr. Kerr maintains that at a later period two divisions took place as

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<sup>29</sup>Buchanan D.D Rev.Claudius, “*Christian Researches in Asia: With Notices of The TRANSLATION OF THE SCRIPTURES into the Oriental Languages*”, Tenth edition, T.Cadell and W.Davies, London, 1814, pp126-127.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pg 150, para 4.

they deviated from the ancient branch St.Thome` Christians to form Syrian Roman Catholics and Latin Roman Catholics. Though all such divisions took place among these indigenous Christians in the Indian soil, they were considered equal with their contemporary Brahmin brethren with regard to their caste status. The foreign travel accounts of Marco Polo, Ibn Batuta, Benjamin of Tudela delves deep into the prevailing conditions, customs and practices of the Syrian Christians.

In Book three covering the travels of Marco Polo in Japan the Archipelago, southern India and the coasts and islands of the Indian sea, the chapter XVIII deals in detail with the place of Malabar where lies body of "Messer St.Thomas the Apostle". According to Marco Polo both Christians and Saracens used to frequent this place as part of their holy visit. The Christians who went to that place as part of a holy visit took a portion of the earth from the place where the Apostles was killed to give anyone who was sick, in Polo's words" of a quartan or tertian fever, and by the power of God and St. Thomas the sick man is instantly cured". The earth obtained from that place was red in colour.

Marco Polo gives insight to a miracle that took place in the year 1288. An indigenous ruler who had excess grain storage, filled them in all Christian houses that owed their allegiance to the Church. The Christians were greatly depressed by this act of the idol worshiper King and pleads with him to remove the same as they had no place to even in Marco Polo's words "lay their heads", but the King paid a deaf ear to their pleas. One night this King had a dream that St. Thomas appeared to him in the night holding a fork in his hands which he pressed against the idolatrous King saying: "if thou void not my houses, that my pilgrims may have room, thou shalt die an evil death," thus saying St. Thomas is said to have pressed him very hard to make the King think that he was a dead man. The next morning he ordered the stored up grain to be removed from all the concerned Christian houses and also related his dreams to the people of the destiny that was in store for him at the saint's hands if he did not obey what the Apostle had told him to. The Christians greatly rejoiced at the miracle that took place and offered thanks to the Almighty God and "to blessed St. Thomas". According to Marco Polo many other miracles also have took place there like healing of the sick, deformed, etc. Marco Polo relates that the Indian Christians who were of that Church had many Indian Nut trees which were a main source of their living. They also paid every month six goats for each tree to that king. The

story about the death of St. Thomas as related by the Christians of the church, Marco Polo explains it as one day the Apostle who was in the woods just outside his saintly dwelling saying prayers was surrounded by many peacocks when a hunter of the Gavi tribe aimed at one of them and without noticing the saint shot an arrow which pierced the saint on the right side and caused his instantaneous death in Polo's words "he died of the wound, sweetly addressing himself to his creator"<sup>31</sup>. The provinces of Quilon and Malabar are also mentioned by Marco Polo in detail. There is good reference of some Christians and Jews staying in Quilon. The spices referred to are ginger and pepper that grows in plenty. Mention is also made of fine indigo that is also grown in plenty. Climate mentioned here in Quilon is of a very hot type. The trade relations of Kerala with the outside world can be witnessed with the reference of Marco Polo of the arrival of ships loaded with goods of merchants coming from Manzi, Arabia and Levant to the Kerala coast and making considerable profit by means of what they export or import.

Marco polo also gives insight into the different types of animals and birds found here. The lions being of a single colour black and parrots of different colours are found. Those from as white as snow with red beak and feet to the red, blue and green ones. Here parrots of exceedingly small sizes can also be seen. Marco Polo cites the place to have number of "very beautiful peacocks". Marco Polo concludes all that he found there to be quite different from those belonging to his country and he attributes this difference to the climate that is extremely hot which also makes them finer and better here in the province of Quilon in Kerala. Further he narrates their staple food to be rice and wine is obtained from palm sugar. Everything else is available in plenty and is quite cheap. They also have among them good astrologers and good physicians. Men and women walk about half naked with a fine piece of cloth worn in the middle. They are allowed to marry among their cousins. A widow can be given in wedding to her husband's brother. This custom is mostly followed all over India. Marco Polo describes Malabar as a great province that is situated towards the west. Here he explains people to be of idol worshipping type with "a language of their own and a king of their own"<sup>32</sup>. He also makes a mention of cinnamon, turbit and nuts of India that are available in plenty. Buckrams of very

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<sup>31</sup> Parks George .B., "The Book of Ser Marco Polo The Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East", Mac Millan Company publishers, New York, 1927, pg 282.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp-293.

delicate and beautiful variety are manufactured here. Ships coming from the east bring copper in ballast (tonnes). Marco Polo also witnesses the ships bringing “cloths of silk and gold, and taffetas (cloth) including gold and silver, cloves and spikenard”,<sup>33</sup> including other fine spices that were in demand here and exchange them for this country’s products. The ships that arrived here in Malabar according to Marco Polo not only came from many different areas but also from the vast province of Manzi. There is export of coarse spices both to Manzi and to the west and one fact that was specially noted by Marco Polo was that those ships that were “carried by the merchants to Aden goes on to Alexandria and those ships that went in the latter direction are not one to ten of those that go to the East”<sup>34</sup>.

The travel account by Marco Polo gives insight into the various miracles as witnessed by the Christians as well as the gentiles. As a part of healing effect to those genuinely sick, the earth from the burial of the Apostle St. Thomas was given to those who paid a visit to it. This account establishes the presence of Jews in Quilon, the availability of spices like ginger, pepper in plenty in addition to fine indigo plant grown here in plenty. This account also throws light on the trade relations Kerala maintained with Manzi, Arabia and Levant. Therefore, trade formed an important factor on which the economy of Kerala thrived as portrayed by Marco Polo.

In the book titled “The Travels of Marco Polo” by Sir .E. Denison Ross and Eileen Power, a detailed description is given on ships on which the merchants board to the country India and back. Fir and pinewood are the two kinds of wood used in the construction of these ships. Marco Polo explains in detail the body and parts that constitute the ship “They have a wide deck. On this deck there are in most of the ships sixty cabins, in each of which a merchant can live comfortably. They have one rudder and four masts. Often they add two more masts, which can be set up and brought down again as the occasion demands”<sup>35</sup>. Thirteen tanks or compartments are mostly found in bigger ships which are made up of strong boards joined together firmly to prevent the ship from drowning in case of an accident of a hit against a rock or a blow from a hungry dolphin which will break into the inward

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid pp-294.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp-294.

<sup>35</sup> Ross Denison E., “The Travels of Marco Polo”, George Routledge and Sons, Ltd, Great Britain, 1931, pp 268

portion of the ship, this is frequent during night times. Once the ship is thus hit by a rock or a dolphin the water starts flowing through the broken part of the ship into the bilge that is always kept empty. The sailors then understand the leak and empty out the water filled compartment, they also transfer the cargo from one compartment to another and then replace it back after the leak is sealed up and rectified.

Marco Polo continues to explain the fastening of these ships which are made in two layers of planks all around. They are fastened with iron nails and in between the planks it is sealed with waterproof material. Marco Polo observes that these ships do not consist of a pitch but are painted instead and in his words of how they make the paint is “they take lime and finely chopped hemp, pounding them together with a certain tree oil to get something as sticky as bird-lime. With this they paint their ships. It is quite good as a pitch”<sup>36</sup>.

Marco polo opines that such ships required around three hundred, two hundred or one hundred and fifty and either more or less sailors depending on their size. Marco Polo does a slight comparison between these ships and theirs and explains that the former carry heavier cargo than latter ones. In the beginning there were large ships but owing to the rough weather conditions in the sea which had spoiled the harbours coasts in the islands that did not facilitate enough standing water for the above said large ships thus they began to make smaller ships. These ships also used oars which were pulled with the help of four rowers.

Marco Polo relates how these large ships are “accompanied by two or three smaller ones manned by sixty, eighty or even hundred sailors and laden with much goods as they are capable of carrying even thousand baskets of pepper”.<sup>37</sup> The small ships number to one or two, one being bigger than the other. The smaller ships according to Marco Polo are “also propelled with oars and very often used to tow the large ships by means of ropes or lines. They are tied to one of the large ships with ropes, and go on ahead, pulling the ship after them, whether it sails with oars, or else sail with the wind on the beam, not when the wind is astern for the sails of the large ship would take the wind out

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid,pp 268

<sup>37</sup> page 269

of those of the others and the latter would be run down.”<sup>38</sup>It is also stated that the large ships usually have around ten dinghies that are mostly used for services such as in anchoring the ship,fishing,etc.Mostly these dinghies are taken along by slinging them to the sides of the large ships, these dinghies are also common to the smaller boats in which they are carried. The repairs of these large ships are done generally in a year of their sail. Marco Polo describes the method in which these ships are repaired, mostly after one year of sail, over the two layers of planks a third layer is nailed around the ship to make the ship having triple sides. The entire ship is also caulked and also painted all over again. In its next repair a fourth layer of planks are nailed. It goes on the same way till it acquires six layers. Afterthe sixth layered stage the ship is discarded and no more will be used for sail in the sea.

Macro Polo explains in detail about the place where the body of St.Thomas the Apostle lays and the trees of the church, that the Christians lookafter, produce wine and also the trees bear Pharaohs nuts. One of these nuts is sufficient for a man’s food as well as his drink. This nut according to Marco Polo is made up of an outside husk,beneath the husk is an eatable substance enough for a man’s meal, it is as sweet as sugar and its color as white as milk and hollow like the outside husk. The inside of this being filled with water sufficient enough to quench ones thirst after having the nuts flesh.

Marco polo further goes on to describe the Kingdom of Coilum which is situated to the south west of Maabar. Reference by Marco Polo is made of the presence of some Christian and Jews as an exception as the others were idolaters. Macro polo observes the abundance of pepper and indigo grown there.

Marco polo also explains in detail about the Kingdom of Melibar which had an idolators population. The North Star was more visible from this Kingdom. Here also there is abundance of pepper, ginger etc along with cinnamon, turbith Indian nuts and other spices, mention is made of buckram, precious wares etc that are found in melibar.The merchants come with copper and cloths of gold and silk , sandals ,gold,silver,cloves,spikenard and other such spices which are exchanged for the products of this country.

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<sup>38</sup> page 269

The present account of Marco Polo provides in detail the construction and maintenance of huge ships that are used for trade purposes. The conditions prevailing in medieval period state and Kingdoms in Kerala are best explained in the travel accounts of Ibn Batuta.

The travels of Ibn Batuta in the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D highlight the condition of the state in different parts of India of which he visited. Here we may take the places Malabar, Quilon and Calicut that he had visited. Ibn Batuta narrates that he found the place of Malabar to be a flourishing place in pepper. He further explains the hospitality shown to travellers by the ruler. According to Batuta the road from Sandabur (Goa) to Kawlam (Quilon) runs under a shade of trees where there are benches laid under wooden sheds for the convenience of the travellers to sit irrespective of them being a Muslim or an infidel. An infidel is kept in charge of every well here and he offers water to an infidel in a vessel and if the person is a Muslim the water is offered in their hands. Batuta observes that it was only the ruler of the land who travelled on an animal i.e. horse and all others by palanquin or by foot. The luggage or goods are carried by hired men. Batuta relates that he had never experienced a safer road than the above mentioned one as no one used to steal a single fruit that had fallen on the road except for its owner for fear of being executed by the illegal act. Though there were infidel sultans with strong and weak armies, the strong never tried to take the possessions of the weak by force. Another peculiar thing narrated by Ibn Batuta is that at the boundaries of the territories of every ruler “there is a wooden gateway, on which is engraved the name of the ruler whose territories begin at that point. It is called the “Gate of Security of such an such a prince” this meant that any infidel criminal or Muslim who escapes from one Prince’s territory and reaches the Gate of Security of another, his life is saved- and the Prince from who he had escaped can in no way seize him even with his mightiest armies. Batuta describes Calicut as being “one of the chief ports in Mulaybar and one of the largest harbours in the world. They also happen to pass by a hilltop place known as Kunja-Kari, which was inhabited by the Jews, “who had one of their own member as their governor and pay a poll tax to the Sultan of Kawlam”<sup>39</sup>. The trees of that region were cinnamon and Brazil trees mostly used for making fire which also helped in the preparation of food on their journey. Ibn Batuta labels Kawlam (Quilon)

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<sup>39</sup>Sir Ross E. Denison and Power Eileen , “The Broadway Travellers”(Ibn Batuta-Travels in Asia and Africa 1325-1354), George Routledge and Sons Ltd, London,1929. Pg 238,para 2.

as one of the best towns they had found in the Mulaybar region. This town had wealthy merchants and an infidel Sultan who respects the Muslims and filed severe laws only against those who do certain wrongs. Batuta also narrates that Quilon is a city that is “the nearest of the Mulaybar towns to China and it is to it that most of the merchants from China come”<sup>40</sup>. Ibn Batuta maintains that the Muslims were well honoured and respected.

The travels of Ibn Batuta brings to light the proficient rule of the Muslim Kings in the above mentioned places, with segregation of respective territories with a wooden gateway assuring the security of subjects within their boundaries, the security to travellers and their well being taken care off, while stringent punishment was maintained in case of violation of the prescribed laws of the ruling Kings. Batuta highlights Calicut as not only one of the chief ports of Mulaybar but also one of the largest harbours in the world. This view attests the fact that effective trade was going on in the medieval period. The availability of cinnamon in plenty would add on to the flourishing spice trade of Kerala. The presence of Jews who were subjects to the Sultan of Kawlam confirms that the Jews enjoyed the protection of the Sultan of Kawlam in return of the poll tax paid. The exploration of Jewish antiquities of Cochin on the Malabar Coast as put forward by Fischel can be attributed to scholars, travellers, Orientalists and such other exponents of history<sup>41</sup>.

An interesting travel account of the medieval period in Kerala by a Jewish Traveller, Benjamin of Tudela can be further studied.

According to Elkan Nathan Adler in his book Jewish Travellers observes that “the wandering Jew is a very real character in the great drama of history”. To quote about him a Jewish Traveller “From Ur of the chaldees to Palestine and Egypt and then back again to the Holy land and then to Assyria and Babylon and Egypt and the farthermost cities of the far flung Roman Empire, he has travelled as a nomad and settler, as fugitive and conqueror, as exile and colonist, as merchant and scholar, as mendicant and pilgrim, as collector and an ambassador. His interest in foreign countries both near and far was fostered by scripture and the famous chapters of Isaiah and Jeremiah and others

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.,pp-238

<sup>41</sup> Fischel Walter J., “The Exploration of the Jewish Antiquities of Cochin on the Malabar Coast”, Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol.87, No.3.(Jul.-Sept., 1967), pp.230-248.

are a very mine of ancient geography. He was of necessity bilingual and therefore master of many languages and able to make himself understood, wherever other Jews were to be found. He was the ideal commercial traveler and interpreter". One such Jewish traveller was Benjamin of Tudela who had travelled avidly in most of the civilized parts of the world during his time roughly in the second half of the twelfth century. Alder quotes Purchas who had published an English translation of Tudela's itinerary in 1625, where Benjamin of Tudela is "reckoned one of the greatest traveler that ever lived". This in turn is supported by many manuscript and countless editions and translations of his work Tudela travelled to many places a mention of them as made by Adler are "Tudela went through Catalonia, Southern France, Italy, Constantinople, the Greek Archipelago, Rhodes, Cyprus, Antioch, Palestine, Damascus, Baghdad, through Persia to Basra and the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf and then home by way of Aden and Assouans. The information Tudela gives of India and China can be understood that he had narrated about these countries of what he had heard. He becomes the first European traveller to make a mention of China". The authenticity about the description of various things that he had seen comes from the fact that he only spoke the truth and was man accuracy. Tudela's descriptions also necessarily consist information of not only about the details of the many places mentioned above but also in recording the dwelling and the conditions of Jews in general who are withered into many countries whether they live in the respective countries freedom or are living in seclusion abiding by the their laws.

Benjamin of Tudela narrates the places of his visit starting from Tudela he reached Abydos after which he happened to pass through Constantinople, the Capital of Greece. It is in Greece that the Jews are not granted permission to live in the city and therefore their settlements were found behind an inlet of the sea. This narrowly gives hint of the hatred of the Greeks towards the Jews. Benjamin also mentions of passing through Tigris i.e. At the foot of the mountains of Ararat and then to Mosul. From Mosul proceeding to Rabbah on the river Euphrates to Karkisiyas and then to EI-Anbar, Hadara, Okbara, Baghdad, Mulahid, Hamadan Tabaristian, Isaphan, Shiraz, Ghaznah, Samarkand, Tibet, Mountains of Nishapur, returning to the land of khuzistan the Indian Ocean. Then to EL-Katif by sea and finally to Khulam (Quilon). Benjamin describes Indians to be black colour worshippers of Sun God. To the best of the knowledge of Benjamin these sun worshippers were the sons of Cush who studied the

stars. Tudela estimates the people to be honest in commerce. He always describes how they received merchants from far of countries, three of the Kings secretaries records their names and make them present themselves in the King's presence after which the Kings takes up the responsibility of their belongings if at all they had let it in the open without any protection. Tudela also mentions of an official who is seated in his own office is approached by anyone who had lost their belonging which often they describe its details will receive it back from him. According to Benjamin this is followed in the entire country. Tudela narrates the summer to be so severe that the people here do not go out to work till evening and in the night most of the people venture out in their work places and the markets are also lighted for work and business. There is also a mention of availability of pepper which in Tudela's words are "as white as snow" and it retains the black colour only after a long process of pouring water in a saucepan containing pepper in it and later being taken out of water and dried in the sun. As early as 12<sup>th</sup> century AD itself there is reference to the availability of many kinds of spices in Kerala where Benjamin names two of them namely calamus and Ginger. The proceeding ritual of not burying together dead and preserving the dead bodies by way of embalming the same by use of various spices and covering with fine linen placing on chairs as witnessed by Benjamin at that period of time in Quilon a part of Kerala cannot be segregated into any separate religious denomination. Benjamin narrates that the embalmed dead bodies "look like living being, so that every man can recognize his parents and members of their families for many years". With regard to their superstitious worship of the sun, they had a solar disc made out of "cunning workmanship" being fixed at every high place where the moments the sun rises, the disc would rotate with a loud noise which was a clear sign to both men and women to offer incense to the sun holding censers in their hands. There is also a mention of several thousand Israelites who inhabit the place, along with the Jews who were all described as black in colour. Benjamin also mentions that the inhabitants knew the Law of Moses and the Prophets<sup>42</sup>.

Benjamin, a foreign Jewish traveller furnishes his account of the situation that prevailed in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in Kerala. His entrance through Quilon or Khullam documents his confrontation with the

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<sup>42</sup> Sir Ross E. Denison and Power Eileen., "The Broadway Travellers",-Jewish Travellers-Elkan Nathan Alder, George Routledge & Sons, Ltd, Broadway House Carter Lane, London, 1930. Pg 59, para 1.

Sun worshippers who were well versed in the science of the study of stars. Commerce flourished and merchants were well received under the King's responsibility. Benjamin also highlights the peculiar embalming and preservation practice of dead bodies using the spices of various types, being followed in Quilon irrespective of religious denominations. Benjamin opines the availability of pepper, calamus and ginger attesting the fact that Kerala was the truly the land of the spices. Benjamin also witnesses the presence of Israelites and Black Jews. Though Benjamin was a witness to the presence of Jews, their acculturation in the Indian scenario need to be carefully examined. This would further necessitate the detailed study of the divergent styles of religious acculturation put forward by Nathan Katz.

Nathan Katz in his article, "The Judaisms of Kaifeng and Cochin: Parallel and divergent styles of Religious Acculturation" clearly portrays the dissolution of Judaism into the Indian culture. The Jewish life was based on certain rules and regulations in the name of rituals called Halacha along with the practice of local customs called the Minhagim. Existing alongside a diverse cultured people of India the Jewish community centered at Cochin began to get influenced by the local customs of the neighbourhood Hindus, Christians and the Muslims. The comparative study by Nathan Katz between the Judaisms of Kaifeng and Cochin reveal the continuance of Jewish customs in accordance to their ancient tradition. That still remains a remarkable fact of Cochin Jews. While in Kaifeng the Jewish community became extinct few centuries ago itself. During their first arrival both the places i.e Kaifeng and Cochin they were given a warm welcome and thus began a new group that settled on the Indian soil practicing their religion freely under their Indian auspices. To quote Katz, "Modelling themselves after the Brahmins and the Maharajas, Jews, Christians and Muslims spatially and temporarily located their migration into India from their Holy lands during their sacred times". According to this statement the Christians saw their origins to the oldest converted community by St. Thomas Apostle of Christ in 52 A.D. hence this is proved true by the reference made to the Acts of Thomas where it clearly mentions St. Thomas's presence in Jerusalem in order to receive the commission for his mission from Jesus. The four key elements of sacred time, sacred space, extrinsic origin and longstanding residency in India is rightly embedded to the newly formed group the Christians where the sacred time refers to the year of the sowing of Christianity on the Indian soil.

Sacred place refers to Jerusalem which is famous for the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Extrinsic origin refers to the beginning of Christianity outside the Indian soil and its continuation upto this date clearly explains its longstanding residency in India. Katz maintains that the Muslim community of Kerala also relates the above four elements as found in the origin of their legend is mentioned in famous Arabic historical work *Tohfut-ul-Mujahideen* a Kerala Muslim Shaikh Al Malbari Zain al-Din in the sixteenth century. To quote Katz, "Al-Din's narrative locates the origin of Kerala Islam in the eighth - century Makkah Arabia when a trio of pious pilgrims set out for Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka stopping in Cranganore enroute. Contemporary local Muslims go on better, the Cheraman Juma Masjid named for Cranganore's dynastic rulers bears a sign which proudly proclaims it to be the oldest mosque in India, having been established in 621. This would date the Mosque from the lifetime of the prophet himself, thus connecting Kerala's community directly with Muslim sacred time, in accord with local legend. Very similarly, the Cochin Jews narrate an origin legend which connects them not only with sacred space, Jerusalem, but also with sacred time, the era of the second temple. Their claim is that they came to Cranganore in the year, fleeing the Roman occupation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Their claim is graphically asserted: in the Cochin synagogue hang paintings which depicts the Temple in flames and Jews setting sail for India. All three legends go a step further in narrating a most hospitable welcome from the Cheraman dynastic Maharaja of Cranganore. Several popular Malayalam language wedding songs have the Indo-Bactrian King Gondaphares sending for Thomas, a carpenter, to build him a temple as grand as Solomon's. Local traditions claim Gundaphorus to have been a Cheraman Maharaja. Like the Muslims and the Jews, the Christian's narrative continues with a royal welcome from "Cheraman Perumal" and the bestowal of a copper plate inscribed land grant, bestowing upon them sovereignty at Mahadevapatanam, 'The City of the Great God, in Cranganore, and the rights to the seventy two traditional privileges of royalty'"<sup>43</sup>

According to Nathan Katz, the Muslims maintain, according to their tradition that they received a grander welcome and also relate that Cheraman Perumal had converted to Islam after

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<sup>43</sup> Katz Nathan, "The Judaisms of Kaifeng and Cochin: Parallel and Divergent Styles of Religious Acculturation", *Numen*, Vol.42, No.2.(May, 1995), pp122-123.

confidentially going to Makkah along with three Muslim pilgrims. This fact is also attested by Keralolpathi a quasi-historical Malayalam text which under the local Hindu legends maintain that the King who left for Makkah came to be called thereafter as “Makkatpoya Perumal”(The emperor who went to Makkah). Evidences of the tradition of royal welcome and patronage also exist in the form of a stone inscription at the Muccanti Masjid of Calicut that witness the grant of an income to serve for the maintenance of the Mosque by a Zamorin belonging to the thirteenth century.

Two inscribed copper plates from an important possession of the Cochin Jews which is kept at their synagogues Aron hakodesh (Holy Ark). These plates as narrated by the Cochin Jews were given to Joseph Rabban, the leader of the Jews by “King Cheraman Perumal”(a dynastic name the individual monarch was Bhaskara Ravi Varman) in 379 C.E. Most modern scholars date the plates from the beginning of the eleventh century. In addition to this the local tradition attest to the fact of the plates endowing an independent Jewish principality at Anjuvanam believed to have been a section of Cranganore, known to the Jews as Shingly<sup>44</sup>. Therefore, Katz maintain that such grants boosted the independent status of the Jews in addition to the privileges that was given to Rabban including such aristocratic symbols as the use of a parasol(umbrella) and an elephant, the sounding of a trumpet salute while the levy of duty and tolls that exhibited their commercial supremacy. Hence the cordial relations between the King Bhaskara Ravi Varman and Joseph Rabban are emphasized by the folk songs and wedding rites that serve an important mode of memory for the future generations. Likewise, when differences arose the Jews had to move out of Cranganore and settle down at Cochin, the King of Cochin also offered similar privileges such as grant of land for constructing their synagogue and dwelling places in the neighbourhood of the King’s palace and Temple. This relationship between the Hindu Maharajas and Jewish leaders as Katz maintains remained evergreen till the year 1947, when the princely state of Cochin was absorbed into the Indian republic, while studying the Jews of Kaifeng in comparison to the Jews of Cochin, the origin of the former remains a mystery. Few early writers relate the presence of Judeo-Persian words from Kaifeng Chronicles to be having a Persian origin for this community but the fact remains that the finding out prove more as Persian influence rather than a Persian origin.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.,pp123, 3<sup>rd</sup> para

According to the 1663 and 1489 records of Kaifeng Synagogue, the original of the Jewish community is attributed to T'ien-chu 'India'. The migration of the Jews to Kaifeng is dated during the rule of the Chou dynasty in the first millennium B.C.E. It is mentioned in the 1489 Stele record the warm reception in China by the Emperor who welcomed the Jews to China in order to respect and preserve the traditional heritage of their Jewish ancestors to be handed down to future generations. In addition to this the Emperor also equipped the community through their physician Yen-Tcheng with the incense and also gave them permission to repair their Synagogue. The Synagogue also exhibits a grand tablet that was bestowed by the Ming Dynasty. Yen-Tcheng was conferred with many honours and titles by the Emperor. This tablet symbolized the favoritism of the Emperor. When compared to the Cochin Synagogue, Kaifeng Synagogue also consisted of different types of gift given by their non Jewish population. Here the similarity is sharply contrasted. The Cochin Synagogue displaced the donated objects that were mostly Jewish rituals objects with a unique exception of the copper plates. While the gifts displayed in Kaifeng are purely Chinese in order to assimilate the idea of commonality between Chinese Confucianism and Judaic faiths. This also contrariwise spread the message of underestimating the uniqueness of Judaism.

The copper plates considered as the most valuable gifts donated to the Synagogue symbolizes the cordial relations enjoyed between the Hindu Maharajas and Jewish subject upto the year 1947 and it never meant to differentiate itself as belonging either to Hindu or Jewish beliefs. The folk songs mostly incorporate in it the gifts of land for the construction of Kerala Synagogues. The Keterim otherwise known as Torah Crowns is the one that arouses curiosity which is donated to the Cochin Synagogue in 1803 by the Maharaja of Travancore. It is described as studded with sapphire, rubies and emeralds and made of 22 carat gold. Thus it can be perceived that majority of Synagogues in Kerala exhibits a list of donations that were directed towards its construction and maintenance. The Hindu, Christian, Muslim or Jain were the most distinguished donors, the non-Hindu donating quite less often. The display items in Cochin Synagogue were purely synagogal items while different steles erected by Confucian officials define the character of Kaifeng Synagogue of housing the donated Confucian items. These steles or inscription display the honour or privilege that the Jews occupied in the society. The explanation on these inscriptions throws light on the fact of the inter intention of the

Confucian officials who explain in the inscription that it is for certain that there exists no differences between the two faiths taking into account the Jewish duties in regular life or in paying respects to their beloved ones. This sort of total realization on the part of the Confucian officials made the Jews to blend into the former which resulted in complete renunciation of their Judaic faith.

The most outstanding feature about the Kaifeng Synagogue was the observance of the local custom otherwise known as Minhag which was the placing of censers and incense in front of the “ancestral shrines” donated by an Emperor belonging to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). Thus it has become a transparent fact that be it from the Han or Sung (960-1279 C.E) period the Kaifeng Jews similar to the Cochin Jews accepted the view of their ancient origin with regard to the sources that are scarce on their ancient origin in order to get an authentic understanding like any other religious beliefs, legends are to be depended on.

Therefore both the Cochin and Kaifeng Jews were similar in the process of their blend into the local customs and ritual practices into their Minhagim for example in Cochin the noble symbols of Simchat Torah and ascetical practices of Passover of Kerala Hinduism were assimilated into the Judaic practices. While in Kaifeng the practice of ‘ancestor worship’ and death anniversaries of the Confucian China were assimilated by the Kaifeng Jews. This forms a good prototype of ritual acculturation.

With respect to the donated items in Cochin and Kaifeng there exists a reality of the Cochin Synagogue items being completely Judaic while at Kaifeng’s Confucian in character. These displays in both Synagogues exhibit a contrasting attributes at ideational and social relevances wherein with respect to the former attribute the Jews of Cochin did not identify their religious ideas with the ideas of the Hindus. The authors at Cochin portrayed in their indigenous literature the differences that Judaism maintained from other religions like Hinduism, Islam and Christianity of the fellow human beings, whereas Kaifeng Jewish inscriptions portray the similarities of Judaism with Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

At the societal level, the Jews of Cochin and Kaifeng from among the world’s Jews enjoyed a unique freedom with respect to following their own religion as there was no sense of hatred or discrimination which they experienced in Cochin or in Kaifeng which boosted the continuation of

their faith under the secure nature of their countries India and China respectively in which they settled.

The chief cause that can be attributed to the total assimilation of Kaifeng Jews into the Chinese community was the learning of Confucian classics which was necessary for the entry into civil service examination that was also open to foreigners which made the educated Jews neglect Judaic learning and absorb themselves into Confucianism that marked the end of a separate existence of the Jewish community at Kaifeng.

The Indian picture poses a different scenario as the traditional Indian society was rooted in hierarchical caste based principles which never attempted to absorb other immigrant cultures into its own fold but allowed the societal space for other cultures to grow with equal independence. India thus welcomed the societal space for the diversity in human fold. Thus, India experienced a continuous immigration of Jewish Christians and Zoroastrians and Tibetans in recent times.

In conclusion, according to Nathan Katz, “In China Sinicization proved fatal to the Jewish communities who embraced the opportunities it afforded. In India, success and status were more matters of fidelity to one’s own tradition than mastery of another’s and therein lies the essential divergence between the Judaism’s of Cochin and Kaifeng”<sup>45</sup>.

Nathan Katz article on Parallel and Divergent Styles of Religious Acculturation prove true the settlement of alien communities in an Indian atmosphere with an assured freedom of their unique existence in order to continue their race maintaining an equal relationship with their co-religious communities. While in China there exists an absorbing into its own fold any immigrant community which had to strictly follow the Chinese universal culture, religion or human nature by the process of which they renounce their own identity and adopt the Chinese way of life. This article also throws light on the open attitude that India continued from down the ages the line of giving a secular and sacred space to the immigrant communities in its fold. This also brings to the limelight the survival of Christian religion in India upto the present day.

Conclusion:-

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp 136

Family History helps in tracing the root identity of a present family to its ancient status. Most of them even bring out the fact that the present family under history writing truly belongs to one among the seven converted families by St.Thomas in A.D. 52. Family History can be explained in other words as tracing the lineage of any present Syrian Christian family to their first converts dated to A.D 52 of the seven Brahmins converted by St.Thomas Apostle of Jesus Christ. These seven Brahmins are believed to be the Indian forefathers of Syrian Christian religion who successfully handed their own traditional knowledge down the generations. Hence even in the present day Syrian Christians there is a slight reflection of Brahman religious practices and ideas in following certain customs and rituals with the same purity. A comparative study needs to be done between two or more family histories. Presently this thesis would be examining two family histories to start with (i.e.) Kianantha Family History & Elanjickal Kudumbavum Kudumbangalum. The writing of a family history is initiated by private individuals who are interested to record the day to day happenings of their respective families for the knowledge of the future generations. In recent pasts, usually a meeting is conducted every year headed by an elected committee, the members of this committee would comprise of senior members as well as juniors with respect to the post they hold in being the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and such other office bearers from that single family spread over different areas and the meeting will be attended by all branches of family members who belong to that single family name. A general background history is also explained to everyone and then those that are present need to introduce themselves and their family. After all these, this meeting will be concluded with a Love feast in the afternoon. The family history committee then makes a detail survey of the individual, innumerable nuclear families present over there and verifies their relations to the main family name. The book that is published under the auspices of a family history committee will have a presiding secretary. The history will also include the positive role that is played by this family in the course of Kerala's evolving history.

The primary sources and secondary sources give vent to the fact that St. Thomas Christians were an indigenous group in Indian History who enjoyed privileges from their respective rulers and never experienced any caste discriminations in a caste based Hindu society of Kerala. As is read about the scanty documents of St. Thomas Christians from the 1st Century to 16<sup>th</sup> Century and even if

some less information available was also destroyed by the Portuguese for their political ends. This became an invaluable loss to the history of ancient Christianity in India. While using family history as a source material it can be seen that every family is situated at some part of Kerala later immigrating to a congenial settlement pattern. This would require a thorough study of the geographical preface of Kerala and Kerala's historical cultural and social life in order to understand whether the geography of the region influenced its history.

The present study situates the importance of family histories to be used as important source for the reconstruction of history of Syrian Christians of Kerala.

The present thesis is divided into six Chapters.

Chapter I - Introduction,

Survey of Literature

Methodology & Scope

Chapter II - Socio Cultural contexts in early Medieval Kerala

Chapter-III The Entry of the Portuguese and its Impact on Christianity in Kerala during the Medieval period.

Chapter IV-Kudumbayogam and the creation of Family History.

Chapter V- A Study of Family Histories (Kudumbayogams) Excerpts from two main family histories with reflections from three minor family histories for a comparative study.

ChapterVI-Conclusion

By outlining the topic and the associated themes longwith a survey of the sources this chapter has narrated the presence of a number of sources in medieval Kerala that are in sizeable number and can be used to reconstruct the history of Christianity in India from the earliest period. This chapter thus makes a claim that there is a viability for adding facets to the history of medieval Kerala by using the family histories that describe in detail the life of the Christian community in certain spheres.

Though the scope of the themes covered in the family histories are not exhaustive, they are able to afford materials that help in the reconstruction of Christianity in medieval Kerala and by extension aspects of the medieval history of Kerala.

## Chapter 2

### Socio Cultural Contexts in Early Medieval Kerala

In this Chapter the main study will be on the socio-economic, cultural and religious conditions that Kerala witnessed during the medieval period. This chapter begins with the introduction of the language of Kerala, the evolution of the land of Kerala, its geographical situation as a long tract of coastal land resulting in its economic history which favoured constant trade relations with foreign lands from time immemorial. This geographical situation also facilitated firstly, the introduction of Christianity indigenous to the Indian soil by St. Thomas, the Apostle of Christ who landed at the port of Cranganore during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D with a mission to spread the word about Christ, followed by the entry of travellers by sea and later the European navigators from Portugal under the leadership of Vasco da Gama who landed at Calicut with a mission to further their trade interests in addition to their mission of Westernising Indian Christianity. The establishment of Syrian identity to the St. Thomas Christians, their church architecture from ancient to the medieval period, the interpretation by travellers on the social and cultural conditions of Kerala which highlights the peculiarity in their observations from their respective backgrounds. This chapter also will delve into the religious harmony among the three existing religions namely Hinduism, Islam and Christianity in Kerala, the witness of matriarchy and patriarchy by families down the generations, the customs and rituals followed by the Syrian Christians, their settlement patterns, and the condition of Kerala which was congenial for Portuguese exploitation.

Kerala, the land of Malayalam speaking people, credits its inhabitants of a long history of its formation. The name Malayalam, connoting the language of Kerala, is often debated as of recent acquisition “The word was used at first to denote the land and is supposed to consist of two words mala, meaning ‘hill’ and azham meaning ‘deep’ or ‘sea’. Some scholars think the second word is not azham, but alam which means ‘land’. This interpretation seems to be more probable”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Sunit Kumar Chatterji and K.M.Munshi, “The Cultural Heritage of India”, Volume V, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1937, pp 535, para2.

Malayalam was so deeply influenced by Sanskrit which was responsible for the production of a strange variety of dialect in literature called Manipravalam. “The term Manipravalam is familiar to other South Indian languages, as an admixture of Sanskrit and Dravidian words, but in Malayalam it has a special and distinctive sense. It is a necklace strung with Mani (jewel), i.e Malayalam and Pravalam (coral), i.e Sanskrit, according to Lilatilakam, the author of which is unknown was a great scholar in Tamil, Sanskrit, and Malayalam. Primarily concerned with the Manipravalam form, the work contains discussions on the linguistic features of Malayalam and its differences from Tamil. There are a large number of Manipravalam works in Kerala which can be broadly divided into two branches: The Sandesa- Kavyas- message poems which in technique are modelled on Kalidasa’s Meghaduta among these, the Unnunili-Sandesam is the most outstanding – it is a message sent by a King of one of the Travancore dynasties to his beloved, Unnunili, the authorship of which is unknown, and Campus –works written partly in prose and verse. The genre is popular in Sanskrit. The verse in manipravala-campus follows the rules of Sanskrit prosody but the prose consists of verses composed in the various Malayalam metres which are less rigid and more musical. Majority of the campus belong to the period between the fifteenth and the eighteenth centuries”<sup>2</sup>. The Malayalam Literature is divided into three periods the Early, the Middle and the Modern period. The earliest specimens of Malayalam literature belong approximately to the ninth century of the Christian era.

The literary history takes a new turn with the works of Ezhuttacchan (sixteenth century), an outstanding writer who set standards for future writers. The composition and construction of Malayalam had taken a comparatively modern form a few decades before him. This is clear from the famous work Krsna-gatha whose language is nearly as modern as that of Ezhuttacchan’s works. Krsna-gatha belongs to the fifteenth century. The revolution started by Cerusseri Nambudiri the supposed author of Krsna-gatha, was completed by Ezhuttacchan. So, it can be estimated that the Modern period in Malayalam literature starts with krsna-gatha i, e from the fifteenth century<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 536, para 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp 536, para2.

Thus the ancient literary period of Malayalam can be traced back to the fifteenth century which consisted of “three distinct literary streams which have contributed to the moulding of a classical language of Kerala. They are:-

- 1) Suddha(indigenous) Malayalam stream, by which we mean literary expression in pure Malayalam without any admixture;
- 2) The Tamil Stream;
- 3) The Sanskrit stream. The literary field of Kerala was fed by these three streams differing in quality and depth”<sup>4</sup>.

An innumerable account of folk songs and ballads owe their credit to the Malayalam language. During the ancient period such songs were not regarded as a part of literary stream and hence least care was taken to preserve them. It is only in the recent past that the importance of these songs are highlighted which throw effective light on not only the social conditions prevalent during that period but also lays emphasis on the type of literature that was in vogue in those days. The main occasions for such songs to be sung were in ‘religious ceremonies, festivals, farming time and other occupations’. While ballads were only sung during the time of only some ‘historical and sociological importance wherein the glorious deeds, of popular heroes were lauded. These ballads fall under the Suddha Malayalam stream on account of their ‘simple and direct expression’. Most scholars maintain that these songs belong to as early as tenth century A.D. They maintain that these songs have attained a change in their forms due to them being handed down through several centuries. These songs also reflect a large scale basis the old spoken Malayalam. “Bhadrakali Pattu, Pulluvan Pattu, Tiyatu Pattu, Sastrakali, and Tottam Pattu are a few of the important songs. Vattakan Pattukal edited by Dr. C.A.Menon gives a good collection of ballads of north Malabar dealing with local heroes. The Christians, who had settled on the west coast during the early centuries of the Christian era, made their own contribution to this branch of ancient literature. The most important and perhaps the earliest

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp 536, para3.

of their compositions are known as Margam Kali Pattu which relates the glorious deeds of St.Thomas during his sojourn in the Cola and Kerala territories”<sup>5</sup>.

Therefore, in conclusion it is true that Malayalam flowered into literature later than Tamil and Kannada. But the antiquity of a literature does not necessarily reflect a corresponding antiquity of the language in spoken form. As a spoken language, it can claim as much individuality and as much antiquity as any other member of the Dravidian family of languages<sup>6</sup>.Freeman attempts to use the historical interplay between language ideology and the trajectory of actual language practice in Kerala to critique the tendency of much poststructuralist thought to assume reproductive congruencies between discourse and social power. According to him the complexity of language can work just as readily to de-stabilize projects of normative regulation as it can to foster discursively based domination<sup>7</sup>.

Therefore, Malayalam as the language of Keralites united the people of Kerala irrespective of their religious identities of either belonging to Hinduism, Christianity or Islam. The religion Christianity is dealt in detail under my study which would also reckon an understanding of its establishment in Kerala.

The establishment of Christianity in Kerala can be perceived as an outcome of the spread of the good news by the disciples of Christ around the world. In the words of Francis Day, “Knowledge of Christianity, was in very early days, spread into distant quarters of the globe, partly owing to the persecutions directed against its exponents, which forced them to seek refuge in more congenial climes, where they might peaceably follow the practices of their religion, denied them in their native lands. It may also have partly arisen, from the eastern luxuries imported for the use of the Roman Citizens, for some of the merchants engaged in this commerce, may have been instrumental in the diffusion of the Christian faith. It is not improbable, that in company with some of these Roman

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp 537 para1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp 535-536.

<sup>7</sup> Freeman Rich., “Cultural Ideologies of Language in Precolonial India: A Symposium”, The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol.57, No.1.(Feb., 1998), pp.5.

merchants, St.Thomas the apostle visited India, and the date generally given is A.D. 52”<sup>8</sup>. St. Thomas’s converts also known as St.Thomas Christians were joined by the Christians from Syria in the following centuries. The migration of these Syrians from Syria to Kerala under Thomas of Cana resulted in the acculturation of both the migrated Syrians and the St.Thomas Christians.

According to Day, “in the second century, Egyptian mariners carried tidings to Alexandria, of the Christians residing in Malabar, who traced their paternity in Syria to St.Paul, and owned the supremacy of the Patriarch of Babylon. Therefore they must have been here, at least one hundred years prior to the doctrines of Nestorius. It is by no means improbable, that the Jews who came to Malabar, divided themselves into two parties, one of which became Christians, and the other retained their ancient faith where Day quotes Paoli according to whom, “had they been originally Indians, why should they make use of Chaldaic expressions, and not much rather words peculiar to the Malabar and Sanskrit languages. It is therefore not improbable, that a considerable number of Christians, went from Persia and Chaldea to India, and united themselves to the small body of the original Indian Christians, whose ancestors were formerly converted to the Christian faith, by the Apostle Thomas”<sup>9</sup>.

The conversions by St.Thomas marked the beginnings of a new Christian sect indigenous to the Indian soil as the new converts were from the upper castes, the Brahmans, while the Portuguese made extensive converts among all the four castes which also included the lower caste Shudras. Francis Day opines that such conversions from the fishermen and slaves by the Portuguese were looked down upon by the high castes. These native Christians, as Day maintains were given equal treatment on par with the high caste Nairs by the Princes of Malabar. Their independence can be assessed to the extent of their electing their own King to rule over them. But as Day observes “their church prestige began to decline from the tenth century, when they first had a King to rule over them,

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<sup>8</sup>Day, Francis., “THE LAND OF THE PERMAULS OR COCHIN, ITS PAST AND ITS PRESENT”, Asian Educational Services, Madras, 1863,pp.211-212.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, pp.214.

their royal authority passed into the hands of the heathen Prince of Diamper, and the Portuguese found them in reality, governed by the Rajah of Cochin”<sup>10</sup>.

Francis Day also gives a detailed picture of an ancient Syrian Church in terms of its architecture which was estimated to cost not ‘less than half a lac of rupees and some double that sum’. In the words of Francis Day, “The one at Paroor, is capable of containing 15,000 persons. They were formerly built long and narrow, with low entrances, having buttresses supporting the walls, and sloping roofs, and were easily distinguished from those of any other sect, by having the chancel end always higher than the nave, instead of being lower as with us. The facade had small columns, but these were never carved with emblematical figures externally, as some of those of later erections are. No bells were permitted to be rung from the belfreys, as the Hindus asserted, that their gods in the neighbouring Pagodas were disturbed by the noise. Inside these Churches, there were galleries corresponding to our organ lofts, for the residence of unmarried Priests. There were numerous crosses in various parts, and one on the altar, opposite which, at the entrance to the chancel, a lamp was kept burning night and day.

Gradually some of these ancient forms have changed, both with respect to worship, architecture, vestments, and the method of performing the services, a summary of which is as follows. The more modern Churches are built in a style something similar to those erected by the Jesuits, with pointed arched windows, circular and fretted ceilings over both the altar and choir, whilst the beams are exposed to view. No images are allowed within them, but some of them are adorned with paintings, which are said to be simply for ornamental purposes. There are three altars (or as they are termed thrones,) in each Church, the largest being at the east end and within the chancel, and one on each side just without the entrance of the chancel, covered with a white cloth, having a cross on it. The chancel is raised two steps higher than the body of the Church. Before it hangs a veil, so that if necessary it can be concealed from the congregation. Near the chancel are the bells used in honour of

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.,pp.217.

the host. Crucifixes are placed on the altars and in various other parts of the buildings, some of them being plain, others adorned with, or composed of gold, silver, wood, or stone”<sup>11</sup>.

In conclusion, Francis Day in his chapter on Christianity in Malabar traces the emergence of Christianity in Kerala, the reasons for its establishment in Indian soil by St.Thomas at the same time of its spread around the globe by the respective Apostles of Christ. The detailed description of the shift from St.Thomas Christians to Syrian Christians also upholds the fact that the caste status remained the same and the differences arose only after the mass conversions which were initiated by the Portuguese irrespective of caste divisions. The grandiose architecture of the ancient Syrian church as mentioned by Day testifies the firm establishment of Christianity in the Hindu state of Kerala.

Satish Chandra’s essay on the Society, Culture and the State in Medieval India portrays a clear picture of Christian society in Medieval India whose society was a division between Spain and Portugal under the auspices of the Roman order. This type of state at a later period emerged victorious in controlling many divisions of power and authority at its own centre without leaving out the semi-local political power making it a weak state and in the words of Perry Anderson, “It was based on ‘Paracellized Suzerainty’, with strife and warfare being endemic in the country side so that the Mughal Sovereign controlled little more than some towns and roads”<sup>12</sup>.

Though there were many draw backs of medieval Indian state, the formation of State developed considerably. This led to boosted economic development, a difference in the societal sphere and a coming together of varied cultural groups. Barani views that “In the field of Ideology a moderate Islamic state was based on Jahandari was sought to be developed into a de facto secularist state under Akbar”<sup>13</sup>. It came to be known as a Islamic state which was liberal and later it came to be called as the Mughal Model.

In the Political arena a very flexible foreign policy was followed to give security to the country from the invasions of foreign nations and also to prevent their envious

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 257.

<sup>12</sup> Anderson Perry, “Lineages of the Absolutist State”, London, 1984.

<sup>13</sup> Barani Ziauddin, “Fatwa-i-Jahandari”, Eng. Tr. by Dr. Afsar begum as Political Theory of the Delhi Sultanat, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, n.d originally printed in Medieval India Quarterly , Aligarh, Vol.III, Nos 1 and 2, 1957.

consolidation in India. Under the societal sphere there was a rise of the Zamindars or Kharaji and the Khudhkash (farmers) in villages, merchants in cities and the development of junior administrator class like the (Kayasthas, Khattris, Hindustanis)<sup>14</sup>. The most potent ideological instrument that stabilised the relations of production was the caste which accommodated into its fold the variety of economically stratified social groups as functionaries of hereditary trades<sup>15</sup>. The religious observances with respect to the beliefs and practices are practised irrespective of the caste status from the lowest to the highest which will also include certain local features<sup>16</sup>. The elaborate account of the origin and establishment of the State of Kerala and its religious castes is available from its earliest written source the palm leaves also known as the Kerala Utpati.

Kerala Utpati (palm leaves) traces the origin of Kerala by the act of Sri Parasu Rama who created the land of Kerala after separating it from sea to the period of Cheraman Perumal who had converted to Mohammedan religion. An extract from Kerala Utpati as given in Col. Mackenzie's collection reads as follows:- It begins with an adoration to gods "To thee Oh *Ganapati* !- to *Saraswati* !- to *Krishna* !- to *Sri Parvati*!- *Sri Bhagvati*!- to *Sri Bhadrakali*!- to *Ayapen*!-and to *Arumukan*! Be Prostration and also to thee *O Guru*! be submission profound!-

- In the *Krita, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali*, in all these Four *Yugams* were many Rajas who ruled the earth properly, with equity (or with a regard to Justice and to the Public Good.)
- Afterwards wicked Rajas arose in the *Kshetriya* Tribe and in order to destroy them *SriParasu Rama* was incarnated.
- Wherefore *Parasu Rama* in ancient times, in twenty one different Battles destroyed the crowned Rajas.
- On that account, that he might be released from the *Vira Hatya Dosham* or sin of slaying heroes, he went to *Gokarnam* in order to perform sacrifices.

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<sup>14</sup>Chandra Satish., "Essays on Medieval Indian History", Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

<sup>15</sup>Gurukkal Rajan., "Towards the Voice of Dissent: Trajectory of Ideological Transformation in Early South India", *Social Scientist*, Vol.21, No.1/2. (Jan.- Feb.,1993), pp. 16.

<sup>16</sup>Raghavan V., "Variety and Integration in the Pattern of Indian Culture", *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol.15, No.4(Aug.,1956),pp 502.

- He stood on the Hill of *Kal-malla* and prostrated himself to *Varuna*. He also made his obeisance to *Bhumi Devi*, the Ocean he made to withdraw, and the Land of one hundred and sixty *Kadams* was created.
- And that the Land of *Malayalam* might receive Protection he established one hundred and eight *Iswars*.
- But the Trembling of the Land did not cease; therefore *Sri Parasu Rama* in Kerala created Bramins, and brought *Bramins* from many Points and placed them in *Keralam*. But they would not stay there always, and they all went a-way to their own Countries.
- The cause of this was that into *Keralam* the snakes came in numbers, and remained, and thro' fear of their venom no one could remain there with confidence.
- Therefore *Sri Parasu Rama* having considered, from the *Uttara Bhumi* (or Land of the North) he brought the *Arya Bramins* and settled (or placed) them there.
- These *Arya Bramins* formerly set out from the saints of Ahi and came and resided in the *Kshetram* of *Samanta Panchakam*, otherwise called *Kuru-Kshetram*; from thence *Sri Parasu Rama* brought the inhabitants of the sixty four villages and settled them in this Foreign Land.
- He promised to grant to each an *Agaram* and a *Gramam*, and having told them thus, he brought them and placed them first at *Gokarnam*, and made them wear the Lock of Hair on the Forepart of the head.
- "Enjoy the Land as a *Brahmana-Kshetram*" he said, and then to the People of the 64 villages he presented Flowers and Water.
- Afterwards he established Places of 42 feet square, and then he strewed Gold Dust and stamped Coin, and thus he stopped the quaking of Land.
- Afterwards he said to the People of the 64 villages---Do you want weapons --- Receive them from me"---Those of the *Bharadwaja Gotram* then received arms from Rama.
- All this being done by the Order of *Sri Parasu Rama*, he sent for the 64 villages and commanded "You are to give one share out of the Property of the *Bramins* to the serpents, which lately terrified you (and who are to be considered as Local Dieties) and to protect you:

accordingly everyone granted each one share from their lot and acquired their favour, and afterwards they (the snakes) remained as local Deities and the Fear of snakes thus ceased in *Keralam*.

- Afterwards *Sri Parasu Rama* assembled the sixty four villages and established them at *Vallapa Nat Karra* near *Palakad*.
- In this manner *Sri Parasu Rama* after having established the *Kerala* country and granted the *Udaka-Danam* (or Gift with Water) to the Bramins of the 64 villages) and committed them to the Protection of *Devendra*, he afterwards went to the Forests to perform *Tapas*.
- Thus in the land created by *Sri Parasu Rama*, the *Brahmans* should all bathe at dawn of day, and live virtuously, performing Religious Duties, Worship and offerings of Rice to the elements at the *Kshetrams* or holy Places and *Kavus* (or Lesser Temples) and that the Sorrow and Sickness which are incidental to mankind, might be removed from the People they were to cause to be performed *Iswara-Seva-kul* (or Worship to God) by

<i>Homam</i> ,	Fire offering.
<i>Dhyanam</i> ,	Meditation on the Deity.
<i>Bhagavati Seva</i> ,	Devotion to the Goddess <i>Bhagavati</i> .
<i>Pushpanjali</i> ,	Worship with Flowers.
<i>Andi Namaskaram</i> ,	Prostration in the evening.
<i>Teru-kala-Puja</i> ,	Worship at dawn, noon, and sunset.
<i>Ganapati Homam</i> ,	Fire sacrifice to Ganapati.
<i>Mruten-Japam</i> ,	Prayer or invocation in the name of <i>Mrityu</i> (or death) to avert accidents.
<i>Munu Laksha Sahasra Namam</i> ,	The Ceremony of repeating of the 1000 names of <i>Iswar</i> three Lacs of times.
<i>Brahmana Sahasra Bhojanam</i> ,	Distribution of victuals daily to a thousand Bramins.
<i>Maha-Mruten Japam</i>	Prayer to <i>Mrityu</i> .

- Thus many rites, were ordained, and that nothing might prevent the performance of their own Ceremonies the *Deva Bramhanar* received the Land from the *Arddha-Brahmanar* according to the Orders of *Sri Parasu Rama*.

- Upon which they divided that Land into different *Desams*(or Cantons) in their names, to which *Desams* they gave different names, and in each they erected a *Kshetram* (or Temple) and consecrated it and placed an Image in them, and performed Puja with Lamps, and adorned the whole with Garlands, and they placed the protecting Dieties or *Sthana-Devam*, *Dherma-Devam*, and *Sthala-Para- Devata* and performed worship to them; also they established *Urpalli Devi* in their own *Desams*, and performed the prescribed Ceremonies.
- They also established *Adama* (Bondage) and *Kuddema* (or Husbandry) and protected the *Adiar* (or Slaves) and *Koddia* (or Husbandmen) and appointed *Tara* (or villages) and *Tara-vaatu-kar* (or Heads of villages) and by their means took the Duties of, *Kanna*,--*Kye*,--*Kalpana*.—*Avakasam*. And Protected and Preserved them from lessening and falling.
- They then Established the Privileges of their respective stations, to the *Kuddiar*, the *Kilykur* (or State of Inferiors); and to themselves (the *Taravatukar*) the *Mailaykur* (or State of Superiors); to the *Kuddiar* the *Kanam* or Custom of taking Lands on lease, and to themselves the *Jenmam* or Privilege of holding Lands in Property.
- In this manner when sixty four *Gramams* and twenty one *Desams* were established, the sixty-four *Gramams* assembled and ordained or fixed that a *Raksha Purusha* should be elected once in three years in Order to punish and protect.
- In this manner it passed, but after a long time they found that Injustice prevailed instead of Protection. Wherefore the 64 *Gramams* assembled declared “In future let us know the Protection and Punishment ,” and they also ordered and appointed one *Talliadrimar* from each of the Four Assemblies; and to each they assigned a *Kshetram* (or House.) at *Kodangallur*, and placed them there; besides they ordered that no Act of government should be done without their knowledge; but no married Person was to be employed in that Office.
- The *Kshetriya* who was brought at that time was named *CharumanParumal*. The Raja in *Chola Mandalam* was *Chola Parumal* and the Raja in *Pandya Mandalam* was *Pandya Parumal*. From being the first that was brought into *Keralam* he was also called *Kerala Raja*.

- When the *Brahmanar* had brought the Raja, and were installing him, they (the *Bramins*) held his hand and made the following agreement. That which we cannot do, you must perform, and protect us. The Raja must not object to the interference of the *Brahmans* in the management of the State, nor judge of any complaint of which they may judge, or in which they are parties. At least not in *Kerala*, in other countries the Raja will settle everything.
- Having made known all these, they assigned Lands to the Raja and to the *Bramins* of the 14 *Gotrams* who came from *Ahi-Kshetrams* and they poured Water, and granted that Land which is called *Viruti* and was the Royal demesne, some countries they granted to him and some to the *Bramins* themselves, and some as Benefices of Temples to be enjoyed in *Keralam*.
- In this manner was the *Mana-nad* governed for a short time; then they, (the *Bramins*) considered how to prevent the Rajas from getting too great strength or Power. And they divided this *Keralam* of 160 *Kadams* extent and formed it into 17 *Nads* and 18 *Kandams* in which the *Raja-Karyam* (or affairs of the Raja) were to be conducted by an assembly and council, and without neglecting this the Raja was not to consult and determine at his pleasure. Therefore the sixty-four *Gramams* assembled, consulted and besides the aforementioned four *Kulakams* they appointed three other *Kulakams* inferior to the four *Gramams* in Order to transact the *Nitya-Karyam* or Daily business along with the Raja—there were besides *Paruvur* abovementioned the following, viz.

1. *Ayerani-Kolam*- 2. *Muli.Kolam*- 3. *Irungn'yani-koda*.

Thus they ordered and directed that the *Parum-kovilakum* (or Palace) at *Kodangalur-Gramam* should be the Residence of the Raja, and near that place Four *Taly* ( or Houses) for the residence of the chiefs of the 4 Councils were erected, viz.

1. *Mail-Taly*—2. *Kil-Taly*---3. *Nadeya-Taly*---4. *Chengapuram*.

In this manner in these 4 *Taly* they were residing, and ruled by the Title of *Talayadri-mar*.

1. The *Kil Taly* belonged to  
*Ayerani kolam*,  
2. *Chengapur* belonged to  
*Irungn'yani koda*,

3. The *Nadeya Taly* belonged to *Paruvur*.  
4. The *Mail Taly* belonged to *Muly-kolam*.

In this manner there were four *Tala*.

- As at *Panniur*, *Parum Chellur*, and *Chenganiur*, they all resided at a distance; therefore, the Four *Kulakams* were established near *Paruvur*, in the time of *Parumal*, viz.

1.*Ayerani-kolam*, 2.*Muly-kolam* 3.*Irungn'yani-koda*, together with *Paruvur*.

The other *Kulakams* had been established in the time of *Parasu-Rama*.

- There were also chiefs of the following places who assisted the Raja.

1. *Karingumpali Soruvam*,                      3. *Yelumpara-kota-Soruvam*.

2. *Kari mukal-Soruvam*,                      4. *Chinnani-kolatu-Soruvam*.

- The *Taly-adris* in these *Soruvams* being Inferior *Talyadris*, they did not give the Sixth in *Mana nad* to the Raja but only granted the *Viruti*. The *Shat –Bhagam*(or sixth share) from the lands of all was enjoyed by the *Raksha- Purushumars* ; but that sixth Share was a second time enjoyed by the *Talliyadrimar*. The same sixth share is at present enjoyed by the *Kshetriya*. Thus the Raja and *Taliadrimar* governed for sometime.
- Some time afterwards when a little was past of the *Kali-Yugam*, the *Boudenmar* came and saw *Parumal*, and explained to him the *Pramanyam* (Doctrines or Principles) of the *Bauddha-Sastram* and they persuaded *Parumal* that this was the True Faith, and the *Parumal* of that time accepted of the *Bauddha-Mayam* and that *Parumal* told the *Mananad* (or *Malayalam*) to follow that way- At which time on hearing what was said, all the senses of the *Bramins*, were confounded or lost: they all went to *Teru-Kariur* and there remained together, and there preserved the *Valeya-Purusha*(respectable men, the Ancients or Elders) of the *Gramams*. They were obliged to serve under different people to obtain a livelihood, and at that time not being able to prevent Pollution and preserve their Purity, they were grieved.
- Then by the favor of *Iswar*, a *Maha-Rishi* (or Great Sage) came thither, whose name was *Jangaman* ; and the whole of the *Bramins* who were there, assembled together, and declared their *Sankatam*(or Trouble) to the *Maha-Rishi* when the *Maha-Rishi* answered “I

shall whisper you a *Prayaschitam* (or Form of Purification) to expiate the sin of Pollution which arises in your Cooking Places; For which purpose after Sunset you should place Lamps, and the *Bramins* should make the *Pradakshinam* round the Lamps, dressed in the *Taru*, tying the *Mailmundu* over it and putting on the *Pavitram*(or Ring on the fourth finger) holding the *Karam-Dulu* (a kind of Grass) and in that place, you are to Worship, and believe that to be the True-Religion of *Siva*.

- He then recited to them a *Ganam* (or Hymn) which is the principal *Mantram* in the *Sam Vedam*, and which *Ganam* consisted of Four *Padams* ;and he said. “If you perform Worship in this manner you will be released from your troubles”.
- The *Maha-Rishi* also said. “The cause of this Calamity happening to you is, because into the *Rajya* granted by *Parasu Ram* you brought a *Kshetriya*, who was his Enemy; and made him a Raja; this loss of his favor has happened to you. In future you are to be Slaves and to pay them (the *Bauddanmar*) *Acharam* (or submission) and *Ocharam* (or Respect) and then their Generation and Power will decrease” In this manner did the *Jangama-Maha. Rishi* make known, and then disappeared.
- According to these directions the *Bramins* prayed; and while they were staying at *Toru-Kariur* Six *Sastris* came from *Para-Desam* whose names were.

- |                             |                           |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. <i>Batten Narainen,</i>  | 4. <i>Batten Kumaren.</i> |
| 2. <i>Batten Vasudeven,</i> | 5. <i>Batten Vijayen.</i> |
| 3. <i>Batten Mayuren,</i>   | 6. <i>Batten Vanen.</i>   |

In this manner were 6 *Sastris*.

- The Disciples of *Buddha-Muni* were four viz.  
1.*Vybhashikam*—2.*Madhyamikam*—3.*Yogi-Acharien* and 4.*Sarvtrantikam*.

In this manner were four Disciples.

And many inferior castes came from foreign countries, viz.

- |                       |                                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Aatuvidi,</i>   | An inferior Tribe of Cultivators.   |
| 2. <i>Kody-patam,</i> | Fishmongers and Salt Manufacturers. |
| 3. <i>Andalam,</i>    | Cultivators.                        |
| 4. <i>Chati,</i>      | Merchants.                          |

5. <i>Konkanien,</i>	Natives of <i>Conkan.</i>
6. <i>Naikunmar,</i>	Tank-diggers.
7. <i>Mainayen,</i>	Cultivators.
8. <i>Shoraken</i>	Barbers.
9. <i>Mugradari,</i>	
10. <i>Pandien,</i>	Natives of <i>Pandia Desam or Madura &amp; c.</i>
11. <i>Kosaven,</i>	Potters.
12. <i>Arien,</i>	Beggars.
13. <i>Chuden,</i>	A low Caste of Cultivators.
14. <i>Yonaken,</i>	Arabs, Labbis, Moplis.
15. <i>Nasrani,</i>	<i>Nazarenes</i> or Christians of St. Thomas.
16. <i>Sikaven,</i>	Unknown.
17. <i>Chaleyen,</i>	Weavers.
18. <i>Dipa Mandan,</i>	Unknown.

Thus these were *Jadikal* (or Castes) of *Tamular* who came to *Malayalam*. They are *Hina Jati* (or out castes) and are called the Eighteen Tribes of Foreigners. Water, Butter and milk ought not to be received from them; and concubinage ought not to be formed.

- If the undermentioned Castes meet a *Bramin* they should perform the *Chemmurti*.

1. <i>Kanesan,</i>	Astrologers.
2. <i>Koravan</i>	Thieves, Mat weavers, Fortune Tellers or Indian Gypsies.
3. <i>Kusavan</i>	Potters.
4. <i>Palur,</i>	Snake Inspired.
5. <i>Panen,</i>	Makers of Umbrellas.

In this manner are Five Castes(*Anji Jati*.)

- The names of the 6 *Sastris* who came from *Para Desam* were formerly mentioned. Those *Sastris* and the *Bramins* having met together went and saw the King who had lost the True Way, and said “Ho! O!King! Why did you commit this fault?” After they had asked him this, the *Parumal* answered : “This alone is the Truth:” then the *Sastris* said “If so; We and these *Baudamar* shall dispute; should we lose, you may cut out our tongues and banish us from the country—Should the *Baudamar* lose, you should cut out their Tongues and banish them from the *Nad*.”So they agreed ; they then began to dispute with the *Baudamar*, whose doctrine was proved to be false, and their Tongues were cut out, and they were banished out of the Land; and it was ordered, that in future if any *Baudamar* came back to dispute, the Raja, should not again desire them to dispute with the *Vedantis*, but punish them: they took an oath to this purpose from *Parumal* whom they then established.

Afterwards they granted a separate Estate to the apostate *Parumal* and kept him separate. That *Parumal's* name who was set aside was called *PaNi-Manur* who on another *Parumal* being appointed went to *Mekka*. Therefore the *Boudamar* say that *Charuman- Parumal* went to *Mekkam* and not to *Swergam*(Paradise). That was not *Charuman Parumal* but the *Kerala-Raja* for after Four *Parumals* had ruled—the Fifth Raja, named *Charuman Perumal* ruled.

- After the *Kerala Raja* who went to *Mekka*, *Kula-Sekhara-Parumal* ruled, who at the end of his Reign went in his Mortal Body to *Swergam*(Heaven)<sup>17</sup>.

Thus, in conclusion, it can be said that in Mackenzie Collection – A Descriptive Catalogue of The Oriental Manuscripts, the *Kerala Utpati* serves as one of the most important source of information on the origin and establishment of the Land of Kerala by the incarnation of Sri Parasu Rama. The above extract from *Kerala Utpati* gives a series of facts in sequence explaining the events one after another. The settlement of Brahmins, the division of Kerala into 64 villages, improved administrative methods in villages and appointment of respective village heads. The segregation of foreign castes into *Hina Jati* and the creation of the downtrodden *Anji Jati* with whom pollution rules were effected in case of a contact with them by the Brahmins. There is also a mention of the Nazarenes, or the Christians of St.Thomas which came under the Eighteen Foreign Castes.

While the *Kerala Utpati* serves as an extravagant source of information on the beginnings of Kerala History the respective dates to each aspect is not revealed. Therefore it can be sufficed that during the rule of *Cheraman Perumal* where the present extract ends might have been the period when Thomas of Cana had come and the Syrian Christians were granted the privileges inscribed on Copper plates. The social status and the accompanying privileges that the St.Thomas Christians enjoyed becomes even more attested by the written accounts in the form of the above mentioned copper plate grants. Among the four copper plate grants namely the Thomas Cana plates, the *Iravikorthan's* plates,

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<sup>17</sup>Wilson H.H, “Mackenzie Collection- A Descriptive Catalogue of The Oriental Manuscripts (and other articles illustrative of the Literature, History, Statistics and Antiquities of The South of India; collected by the Late Lieut-COL. COLIN MACKENZIE), Vol.II, Printed at the Asiatic Press, No.3, Council House Street, Calcutta, 1828, Pg 73-95.

the Quilon plates and the Thevalacara plates, Mundadan estimates the importance of the Thomas Cana plates and the Quilon plates as they are mentioned in the Portuguese accounts.

The plates and their contents as explained by Mundadan according to the Portuguese accounts of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are as follows.

1. The Thomas Cana Plates-“The plates were of fine metal, each of one and a half palm length and of the breadth of four fingers, written on both the sides and bound together at the top with a thread of thick wire”<sup>18</sup>.

These plates give vent to the fact of assignment of certain privileges to the Apostle during his stay at Cranganore by the then ruling King. The Apostle was granted “a plot of ground extending many ells measured by an elephant, each measure being equal to the length of ten palms”<sup>19</sup>. This land was donated by the King to the Apostle for the construction of a ‘house of prayer’ in the town. The Portuguese chose this piece of land to erect their fortress in Cranganore. The Christians were free to construct their own dwellings around this land ‘free of royal rent’. For the maintenance of this church the King granted ‘one fifth of all the merchandise the Christians brought to that town as it was a very large sum due to it being a very big trade centre’. These plates were in the possession of Mar Jacob who gave them to the agent of the Portuguese factory in Cochin for safe custody which disappeared due to their carelessness. This deprivation of loss of written documents which included their privileges drew lot of concern among the Christians during any sort of their contention with the heathen Kings who violated their valid privileges of adoring their head with golden flower on the occasion of marriage ceremony, enjoying elephant rides, which were the sole priority of the successors of the Kings, and the use of carpets to sit were few to mention among the many honours the Christians enjoyed which no other caste had permit to. Mundadan cites serious strife between these Christians and the Moors which resulted in lot of bloodshed due to the killing of many. This

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<sup>18</sup> Mundadan Mathias.A., “Sixteenth Century Traditions of St.Thomas Christians”-With a Foreword by G.Schurhammer, S.J, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, Printed at K.C.M Press, Ernakulam, 1970, pp 133, para1.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp 133, para 2.

incident can be accounted as one incident which marked the violation of one of the privileges by the King of Parur who sold the same to few Muslims for a good ransom.

Mundadan cites Roz's narration of the copper plates which clearly explain the honours given by the Xoran Perumal to Thomas Cana and his successors. The honours varied from the use of seven kinds of musical instruments to the freedom of speech on par with the ruler of the land to walk and even ride as he did. The use of Palanquin, whistling of women during wedding occasions as was the custom with the King's women. The spreading of carpets, the use of sandal-paste, pandals erection and the ride on elephants, royal umbrellas and above all the grant forever "five taxes to Thomas and his posterity and to his associates, both men and women, and to all his relations and to the followers of his faith"<sup>20</sup>.

2. The Quilon Plates:-These plates were found towards the last years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Archbishop Menezes on his visit to Malabar. Mundadan quotes Gouvea who maintained that "in 1599 Menezes saw them in the possession of the Christians of Thevalacara, and that they were three in number, each two palms long and four finger broad joined together by a ring. There was writing on both sides of the plate and this writing included the privileges of the Quilon Church inscribed in different Alphabets and characters, "Malavar, Canarin, Tamul and letters of Bisnaga"<sup>21</sup>.

Mundadan quotes Roz who had these plates translated by 'Etyman Cassanar( a Thomas Christian priest called Ittimani) in October 1601 according to whom they were in the possession of the Tarega or Tenant of Thevalacara'. These plates when translated revealed that "the Christians of St.Thomas in Quilon were allowed to collect the hundredth part of the duties on brokerage and weights for the maintenance of their church in the town. Besides seventy two gardens also were given to them"<sup>22</sup>(Roz, f. 89 v.).

Thus, in conclusion the importance of copper plates needs to be understood from the fact that it became an assurance for guarding the grants and also for the defense of the rights of the St.Thomas

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp 135, para1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp 135, para2.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp 136, para1.

Christians to avoid its exploitation by anyone. The St.Thomas Christians enjoyed their 'privileged existence' and they had sought the Portuguese help in the protection and establishment of their privileges if they were opposed. In addition to this it can also be noted that the royal family Villarvattam who were the guardians of "the privileges and honours of the Christians became extinct, or unable to extend their protection effectively"<sup>23</sup> during the arrival of the Portuguese.

Though the Kerala Utpati mentions the St.Thomas Christians under the Eighteen Foreign Castes, the term "Syrian" to these Christians must have been assigned after the arrival of Thomas of Cana with a few Syrian immigrants on the coast of Kerala in 3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> C A.D. Such type of external immigrations that took place from Syria to Kerala began to take an internal migration pattern of shifting and settling from one place to another. This type of migration since ancient historical time necessitates its detailed study in order to perceive their settlement patterns.

The early Christian settlements of Kerala by James Puliurumpil throws light on the historical importance of the land of Kerala and the consecutive periods in which the St.Thomas Christians fashioned their hold in the agrarian villages of Kerala with spice cultivation as their occupation.

Kerala's ancient history with regard to its origin can be inferred from the Puranic Epics as maintained by Puliurumpil. According to Puliurumpil, the Epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata mention the inhabitants of Kerala as a class of people and 'forest dwellers' respectively. A short outline to the socio-political, cultural and religious situation of Kerala in the first centuries of the Christian era as portrayed by James Puliurumpil is as follows. It is a known fact that mostly history of place is credited firstly to foreign accounts and later to the indigenous literatures. The history of Kerala too can be extracted from accounts of foreign travellers and the earliest ancient literary source namely the Sangam literatures which covers 'a span of around five centuries from 2<sup>nd</sup> C. B.C to 3<sup>rd</sup> C. A.D'. During the 1<sup>st</sup> C A.D the three main kingdoms of the Chera, Chola and Pandya constituted the Tamil country or the Tamizhakam. Among the three kingdoms either the Pandya or Chola held supremacy or control over the other two at different periods in history.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp 136, para2.

In order to explain the administrative divisions as understood from the historical works, Kerala can be divided into five small principalities or (kingdoms) ruled by local rulers, but nevertheless they had a King known as Perumal who ruled over the entire Chera Kingdom. Each territory of a kingdom was called a Nadu- which was further divided into a number of Desams or villages. The administration of the Kingdom went systematically as the Nadu and village had their respective hereditary chiefs who paid an annual lieu to the King on account of them being subject to the King.

As mentioned in the Sangam sources, a detailed account of government and society in the early centuries of Christian era in Kerala can be referred to. The political rule was monarchy with a 'patrilineal (Makkathayam) system of inheritance'. While the 'matrilineal system' (Marumakkathayam) was in vogue in the post-Sangam period and absent in the Sangam period. The Queen's status was privileged equally with that of the King during most of the religious ceremonies. The social condition of the people was marked by the freedom and equal division of people on caste basis. Education was a right enjoyed by everyone including women who had a high position in society. The evils of society namely child marriage, dowry, polygamy and concubinage were not practiced in Kerala. During the Sangam period rice was the staple food along with fish and meat.

In the cultural arena people entertained themselves in dance, poetry and music. With regard to their economic prosperity, agriculture contributed to their main occupation along with hunting, weaving, spinning, fishing, carpentry, leatherwork, etc. Internal trade was characterised by Barter system while external trade flourished well with many foreign countries namely the Romans, Greeks, Chinese, Arabs, etc in the main export items such as spices, pearls, ivory and precious stones.

The religious life of ancient people of Kerala was characterised by Dravidian practices which was an amalgamation of 'primitive rites and superstitious beliefs'. In the early centuries or before the Christian era Kerala witnessed the entry of the three major Indian religions like Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanism. Hinduism spread to Kerala on account of Aryanisation of Kerala. The local Dravidian religions paved the way for the superior Brahmanic religion. Christianity marked its

beginning in 52 A.D with the arrival of Apostle St.Thomas at Maliankara on the Kerala coast. Judaism's presence in Kerala is dated before the establishment of Christianity. While Islam flourished in Kerala from the seventh century A.D.

The apostle St.Thomas converted seven Brahmin families to Christianity at seven different places from which sprang up Christian settlements. The seven settlements in 1<sup>st</sup> C.A.D. in central Kerala were 'Kodungalloor, Palayoor (Palur), Kokkamangalam, Kollam, Niranam, Nilakkal and Paravur'. These seven settlements were under two different kingdoms the Chera and the Pandya. " Of these Palayoor, Kokkamangalam, Kodungalloor and Paravur were in the Chera Kingdom and Nilakkal, Niranam and Kollam in the Pandyan Kingdom, Mylapore, the place of martyrdom of St.Thomas was under the Chola Kingdom"<sup>24</sup>.

Settlement patterns are generally based on areas concentrated on occupation basis. Therefore as the St.Thomas Christians main occupation was agriculture in spice cultivation, these settlement areas in the beginning of Christian era were concentrated around 'maritime centers of exchange namely Kodungalloor, Paravur and Kollam. Kokkamangalam was connected with the backwaters of Vembanad and Nilakkal and Niranam were located in the fertile valley of Pampa'<sup>25</sup>.

The Christian settlements detailed in the present work by James Puliurumpil provides an insight into the expansion of the settlement areas based on agriculture by the St.Thomas Christians due to the increasing demand for spices from the West. As per the demand more areas were brought under cultivation for spices especially pepper. According to Puliurumpil pepper cultivation was at its pinnacle during the centuries that span between 50 A.D and 400A.D in addition to the period that "also witnessed the apogee of Roman trade with Kerala"<sup>26</sup>. Thereby the St.Thomas Christians also developed an economic identity of their own through the vast areas of pepper under cultivation for trade purpose.

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<sup>24</sup> Puliurumpil James, "The Early Christian Settlements of Kerala", Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Publications, Kottayam, 2008,pp.133, para1.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp.137,para 1.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp.150, para1.

The Settlement pattern of the St.Thomas Christians in the interiors of Kerala in a series of periods of time in detail is explained by Puliurumpil. According to him, “ the following are the different places inhabited by St.Thomas Christians in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries in the process of expansion: Aruvithura (ca. 300A.D),Ambazhakkad (300), Pallippuram (300), Kuravilangad(335), Puthukkad (400),Puthenchira (400), Kaduthuruthy (500),Muttuchira(500), Champakulam (500), Angamaly (500), Enammavu (500), Mattam (500), Akaparambu (500), Udayamperoor (510), Edappally (600), Mylakombu (600), Chalakkudy (600)”<sup>27</sup>(Pius Malekandathil(ed.), *Jornada of DomAlexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*, LRC Publications, Kochi 2003,p.XLIII.)

Puliurumpil quotes Bishop John Marignoli who referred to the Christians of Kollam as a ‘rich people’ and as owners of pepper plantations (M.Geddes, *History of the Church of Malabar*, London, 1694,p.31). Puliurumpil further explains the settlement in new places as new areas were brought under cultivation in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The new places as testified by the Portuguese writers in the later documents were Alangad, Muthalakodam, Njarackal, Koratty, Poonjar, Alappuzha, Kanjirappally, Kudavechoor(Pius Malekandathil(ed.), *Jornada of DomAlexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*, LRC Publications, Kochi 2003,p.XLIV), Purakad (K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1989, p.294.) (Ambalapuzha), Chennamangalam (Bernard of St.Thomas, *The History of the St.Thomas Christians* (Mal), Pala 1916, p.315.) and Mapranam (K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *History of Kerala*, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1989, p.332) (Irinjalakuda)<sup>28</sup>.

Therefore the Settlement pattern of the St.Thomas Christians also brings to light their migration due to religious persecution from the Coromandal coast to the Malabar Coast and Cape Comorin, resulting in the expansion of Christian settlements in Kerala. Puliurumpil maintains that ample historical evidences are available to prove the persecution of Vellalar Christians in Kaveripatanam as a result of which they migrated to Kollam, Thiruvankod also called Thiruvankulam.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.,pp.151,para1

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.,pp.152,para1.

Thiruvankod's first Christian community is also believed to have connection with St.Thomas, the Apostle. The St.Thomas Christians thus as spice cultivators had a very strong bond with the spice traders from Persia. The relationship between the above mentioned two groups boosted more Christian traders from Persia to come to India along with whom arrived many priests and bishops who took care of the spiritual needs of the St.Thomas Christians<sup>29</sup>.

The settlements that can be traced from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries are Athirampuzha in 853 A.D, Pala in 1002 A.D, Ernakulam in 1112 A.D and Changanassery in 1117 A.D. and from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries the places were Kothamangalam (13<sup>th</sup> C), Alangad (13<sup>th</sup> C), Muthalakodam (14<sup>th</sup> C), Njarakkal (14<sup>th</sup> C), Koratty (14<sup>th</sup> C), Poonjar (14<sup>th</sup> C), Allepey (15<sup>th</sup> C), Kudavechoor (15<sup>th</sup> C), Kanjirapally (15<sup>th</sup> C)( Pius Malekandathil(ed.), *Jornada of DomAlexis de Menezes: A Portuguese Account of the Sixteenth Century Malabar*, LRC Publications, Kochi 2003,p.XLIV)<sup>30</sup>.

Thus, in conclusion it can be perceived that the trade fostered increase in the expansion of agricultural lands which were at first centered around coastal belts which later penetrated to the interior lands of Malabar thus concentrating the occupation of St.Thomas Christian settlements on spice cultivation for trade through which an economic identity of the St.Thomas Christians was created. The families that spread and settled were also responsible for the erection of a number of churches that marked their continuity undisturbed by other religious forces. The family thus plays an important role in the settlement pattern of a given community. The settlement pattern of the St.Thomas Christians with a span that lasted for almost more than fifteen centuries established their overall identity religiously (Syrian Christians), socially (Nazrani caste status) and economically (spice monopoly in trade). The authenticity of the term "Syrian Christian" for the St.Thomas Christians needs to be further explained in detail with a reference from its earliest written records, "The Acts of Thomas".

The "Syrian Christians of Kerala", by S.G.Pothan finds a mention of these acts in detail in its introductory chapter on the Traditions of St.Thomas. The "Acts of Thomas" is an apocryphal work

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.,pp.154,para2.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.,pp.163, para2.

written by one Bardesanesa, a Syrian and native of Edessa in Mesopotamia. These Acts are embellished with romantic details and doctrinal propaganda in a Syrian Manuscript<sup>31</sup>. This complete Syrian text for the first time was published with an English translation by Dr.W.Bright in 1871. According to the translated document the contents constituting the Acts of Thomas are as follows.

“The Acts are divided into nine parts, of which eight are called *Acts* and the last *The Consummation of Judas Thomas*.

The first Act is headed *The first Act of Judas Thomas the Apostle, when He (i.e. apparently Jesus Christ) sold him to the merchant Habban that he may go down and convert India*. This part of the Act goes on to tell us that the Apostles, divided the countries of the world among themselves, and India fell to Thomas who did not wish to go there. This part of the Act then describes that in the company of Habban the merchant of King Gundaphar *Thomas proceeded by sea and landed at the town of Sandaruk*.

The second Act begins with the words *And when Judas (Thomas) had entered India into the realm of India with the merchant Habban. Habban went to salute Gundaphar, the King of India*.

Acts three to six are not of importance and describe certain miraculous events and conversions in and about the city of King Gundaphar.

The Seventh Act is of importance as it describes how *while Judas (Thomas) was preaching throughout all India, he was called by the general of King Mazdai to heal his wife and daughter*. The Act proceeds to say that they went with a *driver* in a *chariot* drawn by *cattle* and the daughter of the King was brought in a *palki*. We are told that the King's wife and daughter were converted by Thomas which angered the King and one of his servants dragged Thomas with his *turban* cloth and Thomas was thrown into the prison.

The Eight Act is the final section and is headed *The Consummation of Judas Thomas*. The Apostle is condemned to death by King Mazdai. The martyrdom is described, which takes place

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<sup>31</sup>Pothen, S.G., “The Syrian Christians of Kerala”, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963, pp.9.

*outside the city and on the mountain* where Thomas was speared to death by four soldiers. Finally, we are told that the bones were secretly taken away by one of the brethren to the *West*<sup>32</sup>. Many coins unearthed from North West India testify the rule of King Gundaphar. The coming of the Apostle Thomas to India during the rule of king Gundaphar is also clearly evident from a stone inscription that was unearthed from the ruins of a Buddhist city near Peshawar towards the end of the last century. This stone inscription is known as the *Takht-i-Bahi*. This stone inscription measured 17 inches length wise and 14 and half inches breadth wise. The inscription is in six lines in ancient Gandhara which was deciphered. This inscription testifies the contact of the Apostle with the ruling King.

The critical study of the Acts by Bishop Medlycott as referred by Pothan is as follows: - Bishop Medlycott “refers to many south Indian manners and customs in the narrative, such as taking of a bath before meals, the palki or palanquin, a cart drawn by cattle or oxen, the mention of the turban and the prostration before a religious leader as a sign of reverence. After discussing all this at length, he concludes “It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the writer of the Acts must have had information based on contemporary history. For at no later date could a forger or legendary writer have known the name. It is impossible to suppose that a later writer, drawing on his imagination for facts, persons, localities, and incidents, could have brought about the coincidence of two personages, one of whom was unknown to living history, fitting the circumstances of place, persons, duty and time, so aptly as occurs in this case. On this ground we maintain there is every reason to conclude that the Apostle Thomas had entered King Gondophares’ dominions in the course of his Apostolic career”<sup>33</sup>(*India and the Apostle Thomas* by A.E.Medlycott, (1905).

The Syrian Christian possession of their own King at Valyarvattam near Udayamperoor is considered by Pothan as a very interesting tradition they cherished. The first King was known by the name Baliartes or Valayarvattam when translated into Malayalam. The prevalence of a sceptre testified the existence of kingship. It was a red rod, tipped with silver, having three small bells at the upper end. This sceptre was preserved until the arrival of the Portuguese. The last king of this dynastic

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp 11-12.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 14, para2.

rule died without an issue wherein the kingdom came under the rule of the Cochin Royal Family. The rulers also conferred certain privileges exclusively on copper plates to the Syrian Christians which include the right of self government. These copper plate grants are in the custody of Jacobite Christian Seminary in Kottayam, a town in Kerala<sup>34</sup>. Similar grants of privileges on copper plates were made regarding Jewish community. The Jewish tradition maintains that they came in A.D.69 and settled in Muziris or Cranganore. The privileges enjoyed by the Jewish community as mentioned by Pothan reads, “The Jews received similar privileges on copper plates, just as the Syrian Christians obtained in the fourth century. The grant to the Jews was given by King Bhaskara Iravi Varma to Joseph Rabban and his posterity granting him the land called Anguwannam. The copper plate granted to the Jews is preserved in their Synagogue at Cochin. It must be mentioned here that the Jews were expelled from their original settlement in Cranganore by the Portuguese in 1566 and were given shelter in Cochin by the Raja of Cochin where their small settlement now exists. These Jewish colonies were established near the Syrian Christian colonies can be admitted without any doubt. The names *Judakkunnu* or “Jews Hill” near the Church at Palayur and *Judankulam*, or “Jews Pool” near the village of Vadakkal, bear testimony to the fact that there was a close parallel between the early Jewish and Christian settlements<sup>35</sup>.

The Syrian Christian appellation for St.Thomas Christians is explained in detail by Pothan. According to Pothan, “Aramaic was the language of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic and became the language of the mother Church of Persia and so it was the sacred language of the daughter Church in Kerala. We have also seen that from time to time there were Christian immigrants, mostly Syrian who settled in Kerala <sup>36</sup>(see more references on Kerala Christians from Ft.Nt). But basically, the members of the Church of Kerala are called Syrians, not because they claim Syrian blood in their veins, but mainly because they have a Syrian liturgy. The name is not an ethnological or geographical designation, but is purely ecclesiastical. Their social customs,

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 32, para5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp 33, para1.

<sup>36</sup>Jacob, Mathew K., and Leela Dube, “Kerala Christians.” *Man*, New Series, 12, no. 2 (August 1, 1977): 340–42.

physiognomy, build, etc., indicate that they are essentially children of the soil like their Hindu brethren. They are generally referred to in Kerala as *NazareneeMapillas*. The term “Mapilla” is a compound Malayalam word *Maha* (great) and *Pilla* (Son) signifying “prince” or “royal” son, which was the honorary title granted to Kanayi Thomas (Thomas Cana) and his followers by Cheraman Perumal, the old renowned Emperor of Kerala<sup>37</sup>.

The Syrian Christian appellation of the St.Thomas Christians and the authenticity of the arrival and martyrdom of St.Thomas are clearly depicted by S.G.Pothan. Thus, to conclude Pothan has highlighted the relevance of ‘the Acts of Thomas’ in shedding light on the chronology of events that took place under the Apostleship of St.Thomas. St.Thomas is thus credited in introducing Christian faith in Hindu India beginning his ministry from the state of Kerala. Therefore a brief study on the available sources that testify the Apostleship of St.Thomas is necessary.

The available source on the apostolate of St.Thomas is given in detail by A.E.Medlycott in the chapter on Thomas, The Apostle of India in his book India and the Apostle Thomas. Medlycott maintains that, “Owing to the frequent wars waged between the Roman Empire and the powers ruling east of the Euphrates, whether Parthian or Persian, from some time before the dawn of Christianity to even after the fifth century and later, communication between Europe, Western Asia, and the countries beyond the Euphrates was generally cut off for long periods, and, when open, was of the most fitful character”<sup>38</sup>. An incident that took place had its own repercussions at a later period due to which the information regarding the Apostles remain scarce. The incident is narrated by Medlycott as follows, “In the year A.D.139 Achadabues and Kam-Jesu, *alias* Job-Jesu, were, at the dying request of Jacob, the Bishop of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, sent to Antioch in order that one of the two might be chosen and appointed his successor ( Barhebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, Abbeloos and Lamy’s edition, 3 vols., Lovanii, 1872-77, vol. iii., col.24; and Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, in 4 vols.fol.,Romae, 1719-28, vol.ii.p.396, and vol. iv. p.41), for the ecclesiastical usage then prevailing, required that the person elected to the see should receive consecration at the hands of the Bishop of Antioch. On their

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp 36, para2.

<sup>38</sup>Medlycott. A.E., “INDIA AND THE APOSTLE THOMAS- An Inquiry , with a Critical Analysis of the ACT A THOMAE”,David Nutt, London, 1905, pp. 18.

arrival at Antioch, the two candidates were denounced as Persian spies to the authorities. Both were seized, but Achadabues escaped to Jerusalem, while his companion, Kam-Jesu, and his host were executed as spies by the prefect or governor of the city. This sad event naturally led to a change of the ecclesiastical rule in the case of the See of Seleucia-Ctesiphon.

The occurrence shows how political difficulties hindered and made it impossible to keep up any intercourse between the churches within the Roman Empire and those under barbarian sway beyond the border in the Far East. It is owing to this, no doubt, that so little of regular history has been handed down to us through the ordinary channels of Western Church records regarding the preaching of the Apostles, the doings of their disciples in the sub-apostolic age, and the foundation of churches outside the Empire, especially in the Far-East. If then, any morsels of information regarding the apostolic and sub-apostolic age have escaped the general havoc wrought by the Mahomedan and Mongholian hordes in the East, we can only hope to recover them by careful search among the Syriac records still existing in the far eastern churches and monasteries. Guided by this conviction we have for years devoted our efforts towards recovering from Syrian sources whatever may cast a gleam of light upon the Indian Apostolate of Saint Thomas<sup>39</sup>. One such remarkable source on the Apostolate of St.Thomas according to Medlycott were the hymns written by Saint Ephraem, the earliest author of the Eastern Syrian Church, though a native of Nisibis till A.D.363 had retired to Edessa and lived there for ten long years at the end of which he attained heavenly abode in the year A.D.373. Among the many hymns of Saint Ephraem that testify the evangelisation of India under St.Thomas, the following forms one of its extracts:

*“D.--By the third hymn given by Monsignor Lamy.*

(1)Thomas is destined to baptize peoples perverse and steeped in darkness, and that in the land of India(I).

(2)Thomas, the Lord’s Apostle, has the singular power of designing an edifice on earth, and erecting it in heaven(II).

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid. ,pp. 18-19.

(3) Thomas' praises are well known: the result of his apostolate is attested by his martyred followers; his work attests his teaching; his miracles proclaim him living in heaven; the rough Indians are converted by the deeds they have witnessed. Who, then, can possibly doubt the truth of his Relics? (v.)<sup>40</sup>. According to Medlycott, the facts that are portrayed in the hymns are not solely the faith and understanding of Saint Ephraem only but that of the entire church of Edessa. In the words of Medlycott, "Ephraem was not putting forward his personal views on the subject, as an ordinary writer would do, but he embodied in these hymns the local tradition and facts which were of common knowledge among the people<sup>41</sup>.

Another important source that testify the apostolate of St. Thomas was an ancient Syriac document titled 'The Doctrine of the Apostles', edited by Cureton (*Ancient Syriac Documents*, London, 1864), and previously by Cardinal Mai (*Scriptorum Veterum Nova Collectio*, Romae, 1838, Latin translation by A. Assemani, vol. x. pp. 3-8, text pp. 169-175). Medlycott views that "These writings contain a collection of ancient ecclesiastical ordinances which obtained eventually the force of Church canons. This can be dated to third or early fourth century. We can legitimately use these collections as witnesses to the ancient usages, customs, and belief of the Church which adopted them to her service. It is then, in support of the ancient belief of the Syrian Church that we quote from Cureton's translation one of the following passage bearing on the traditional knowledge by that Church of the apostolic labours of Saint Thomas:

At p. 32: 'India and all its own countries, and those bordering on it, even to the farther sea, received the Apostles' Hand of Priesthood from Judas Thomas, who was Guide and Ruler in the Church which he built and ministered there'.

The other sources that testify the apostolate of Saint Thomas in India are the quotations from the service-books of the Jacobite Syrian Church which are taken from Assemani gives the traditions of the Syrian churches connected with the Apostle Thomas (Bibl. Or., iv. pp. 30 ff.), the testimony given by the Fathers of the Western Church to the Indian Apostolate of Saint Thomas: According to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 32.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 33.

*St. Gregory*, Peter belonged to Judea, Luke with Achaia, Andrew with Epirus, John with Ephesus, Thomas in India, Mark in Italy-*St. Ambrose* maintained that as India was to Thomas so was Persia to Mathew-*St. Jerome* testifies the presence of Christ with Thomas in India, Peter at Rome, Paul in Illyricum, Titus in Crete, Andrew in Achaia- *St. Gaudentius* in his sermon during the dedication of a church where the relics of St. Thomas, John the Baptist, Andrew and Luke were preserved, the Bishop witnesses that they 'live forever in God as the power of their works discloses with John at Sebastena, Thomas among Indians, Andrew and Luke at the city of Patras'- *St. John Chrysostom* based on the fact of the relics of St. Thomas being preserved at Edessa testifies the apostolate of St. Thomas in India in his works. The following is an extract of three passages from the works of St. John Chrysostom: "In the first of the three passages St. John Chrysostom asserts that in the Apostolic age the Indians, in common with the Scythians and others accepted the mild yoke of the Gospel teaching. In the second passage he speaks of the gift of tongues conferred on the Apostles, and mentions the Apostle of India as one endowed with the gift. In the third passage he mentions that the apostles erected altars everywhere, and among the Scythians, Persians and Indians"<sup>42</sup>.

In conclusion, the hymns of St. Ephraim, the translation from Cureton's Doctrine of the Apostles, quotations from the service books of the Jacobite Syrian Church and the testimony given by the Fathers of the Western Church substantiate the Apostleship of St. Thomas to have ministered in India. The above witnesses to the Apostleship of St. Thomas is based on a general belief of the respective Church, area and the people as a whole rather than their personal opinion on the ministry of the Apostle who sowed the seeds of Christianity in the land of Hindu people in India.

The use of the term "Indianization" to describe the contacts between the subcontinent and Southeast Asia conceals the complexities of socio-political organization in the early first millennium C.E., when the Indian subcontinent consisted of a mosaic of cultural and political entities. The simultaneous adoption of traditions from the subcontinent throughout Southeast Asia varied in response to local needs and circumstances<sup>43</sup>. Influenced by Western exemplars, initially supplied by the Christian missions, Chinese, Japanese and Mughal artists experimented with realism and perspective, and those of the imperial Mughal court took to working in a style unmistakably Indian

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp.47.

<sup>43</sup>Smith Monica L., "Indianization" from the Indian Point of View: Trade and Cultural contacts with Southeast Asia in the Early First Millennium C.E.", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol.42, No.1.(1999), pp.18-19.

yet perceptibly western<sup>44</sup>. Thus the arrival of St. Thomas through sea route marked the beginning of an entry route to India for many foreign travellers who came to witness the strange customs and traditions of distant lands and reported back their experiences to their respective countries. Such traveller sources facilitate the understanding of the medieval period in Kerala from a traveller's perspective.

**Traveller's Sources:** The travel writings of Sig. Pietro Della Valle and Ludovico de Varthema provide valuable information during the course of their observations in the city of Calicut.

In the pre-medieval period the claim for a divine status for the King or the dynasty was in vogue<sup>45</sup>. The Indian situations, its people and culture can be primarily read from the travels of Sig. Pietro Della Valle who writes his experiences as a traveller and all that he has seen, in the form of letters to His Right Honourable Roger Earl of Orrery, dates quoted every month to month with year mentioned at the title of the letter. The present explanation of the Indian scene falls in 1624 A.D of the Christian era. Valle witnessed men and women of Calicut wearing the most scanty clothes from their waist to the knees just the space for covering their nakedness. Both men and women have their long hair that they neatly tie on their head. It was a common sight to see both the sexes adorning their arms with bracelets, their ears with pendants and their necks with jewels. Therefore in Valle's words "the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Calecut and the in-land parts, especially the better fort, are all Gentiles, of the Race Nairi for the most part, by profession soldiers, sufficiently swathing and brave :But the Sea-coasts are full of Malabari, an adventitious people, though of long standing; for Marco Polo who writ four hundred years since, makes mention of them; they live confusedly with the Pagans, and speak the same Language, but yet are Mahometans in Religion"<sup>46</sup>. The description of the sea coasts goes to the extent of naming the people living there as Malabari who derive their name from the place which is situated in a long tract called Malabar. Valle goes on to give a detailed description of Malabar as being "famous in India for the continual Robberies committed at sea by the Malabar

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<sup>44</sup>Scammell G.V., "After Da Gama: Europe and Asia since 1498", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.34, No.3.(Jul.,2000),pp.542-543.

<sup>45</sup>Veluthat Kesavan., "Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation: The Case of Early Medieval South India", *Social Scientist*, Vol.21, No.1/2(Jan-Feb., 1993), pp. 23-33.

<sup>46</sup>" *The Travels of Sig. Pietro della Valle, a Noble Roman into East-India and Arabia Deferta*". In *Familiar Letters to his Friend Signoir MARIO SCHIPANO*, Printed by J. Macock, Holborn, 1665, pp.181.

thieves". This is also supported by the fact of his witness in the Bazar of Calecut to the sale of "good store of Portugal's commodities as Swords, Arms, Books, Clothes of Goa, and the like Merchandizes taken from Portugal Vessel at sea, which things, because stolen, and in regard of the excommunication which lies upon us in that case, are not bought by our Christians<sup>47</sup>". This forms peculiar information of the Malabar thieves narrated by Valle. A generalist opinion cannot be sufficed from this view of Valle as he cannot deem the entire inhabitants of Malabar as thieves. Well, as in many cases certain groups of people irrespective of their cast or religion get occupied in cases of theft hence we need to segregate them as a separate body of Malabaris.

Valle describes the City of Calicut as he viewed on his way to the Palace of the Samori. To quote Valle, "City is great, and we found it to consist of plots beset with abundance of high Trees, amongst the boughs whereof, a great many of wild Monkeys; and within these close Groves, stand the Houses, for the most part at a distance from the common Ways or Streets; they appear but little, few of their outsides being seen, besides the low walls made of a black stone surrounding these plots, and dividing them from the Streets, which are much better than those of the Bazar, but without any ornament of windows; so that he that walks through the City, may think that he is rather in the midst of uninhabited Gardens, than of an inhabited City : Nevertheless it is well peopled, and hath many inhabitants, whose being contented with narrow buildings , is the cause that it appears but small"<sup>48</sup>.

The social relations maintained in Nair household and royal households is portrayed by DellaValle as strange as he explains it as follows, "The Gentil *Nairi* have no peculiar Wives; but all Women are common amongst them; and when any man prepares to visit one of them, he leaves his weapons at the door, which sign sufficiently debars all others from entering in to disturb him; nor does this course beget any disgust or jealousy. The women are maintained by those men that have to

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp.182.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp.182.

do with them. The children neither seek nor many times know, who their father is, but that descent by the mother's side is alone considered, and according to that all inheritances are transferred. The same is observed among Princes and their Wives; the Queens, who are the King's sisters, use to marry other neighbouring Kings, and go into their States to have children, who are to succeed in the Kingdoms of their Uncles, and by this means are of Royal blood both by Father and Mother<sup>49</sup>.

Valle further also portrays a peculiar war situation between the two Kings the Samori and the Rajah of Cochin. In the words of Valle, "When two Kings happen to war together, each Army takes great heed not to kill the contrary King; nor so much as to strike his Umbrella wherever it goes, which is amongst them the Ensign of Royalty; because, besides that it would be a great sin to have a hand in Royal blood, the party or side which would kill or wound him, would expose themselves to great and irreparable mischiefs, in regard of the Obligation the whole Kingdom of the wounded or slain King hath to revenge him with the greatest destruction of their enemies, even with the certain loss of their own lives if it be needful. By how much such Kings are of greater dignity among them, so much longer these obligations of furious revenge endureth. So that if the *Samori* should be killed or wounded by the Army of the King of *Cochin*, who is his enemy, but of greater dignity; the people of the *Samori* stand obliged to one day of revenge, during which, everyone is obliged to act their utmost to the utter destruction of those of *Cocin*, even with the manifest hazard of their own. But if the King of *Cocin*, who hath a greater repute, for honour at least, if not for power, should happen to be slain or wounded, by the people of the *Samori*; the fury of revenge is to last in those of *Cocin* all the time of their lives, which would cause a great destruction of both sides. They call this term of time, or manner

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.,pp.191-192.

of revenge, *Amoco*, so that they say, the *Amoco* of the *Samori* lasts one day; the *Amoco* of the King of *Cocin* lasts all the life, and so of others”<sup>50</sup>.

In conclusion, Valle portrays the Bazar of Calicut as an important trade centre for the sale of Portuguese commodities but the prevalence of Malabar thieves was rather a threat to the flourishing sale of Portuguese merchandizes. Valle’s travel literature also gives a glimpse of the city of Calicut under Samori’s rule. The matriarchal system of inheritance being practiced among both the Nair women and the royal households also signifies its prevalence during the beginning of the seventeenth century. Valle also cites an inference wherein an incident of injury or death to any one among the two King’s(i.e.), the Samori and the Cochin Rajah ‘ the obligations of revenge’ on each other is based on the dignity occupied by the respective King’s in society. Thus, Valle had featured certain important aspects in the societal set up of Malabar especially the City of Calicut during the medieval period.

Another important European travel writer was Ludovico de Varthema. Rubies maintain that Varthema can be assigned under the tradition of a ‘curious traveller’: the traveller who is not primarily a merchant, an ambassador, a spy, a conqueror, a mercenary, a pilgrim or a missionary, but rather an independent character self-defined by a desire to know other lands and peoples, and to report back on them to his own community of origin. Rubies quotes Varthema who extends an intellectual concern with regard to travel: “I determined, personally, and with my own eyes, to endeavour to ascertain the situation of places, the qualities of peoples, the diversities of animals, the varieties of fruitful and aromatic trees of Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Felix, Persia, India, and Ethiopia,

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.,pp.192.

especially remembering that the testimony of one eye witness is worth more than ten hearsays”<sup>51</sup>.

Varthema’s narrations in Europe about the places he visited cover varied themes in ethnography.

According to Varthema most of the description on whole of South India including Vijayanagara can be confined to the description of Calicut. The choice of Calicut by Varthema, Duarte Barbosa lies in the fact that Vasco da Gama had first arrived in Calicut as it was a significant centre on Malabar Coast both economically and politically. Varthema’s observations on Calicut begin with its religion where he relates a kind of worship which is both idolatry as well as devilish as he viewed it from a western tradition more than an Indian tradition. The King of Calicut’s belief in God was through his adoration of the devil (Varthema’s interpretation of an idol). Thus the first theme introduced by the traveller Ludovico de Varthema in his travel memoirs was religion after which he portrays the significance of the city of Calicut more as a commercial centre on the Malabar Coast than a ‘city’ like Bijapur or Vijayanagara with its ‘urban city building structure’.

According to Rubies, “if we consider Varthema’s description of Calicut as a whole, with references to eating habits, sexual customs, marriage arrangements, caste differences (distinguishing six ‘sorts’ of gentiles: priests, warriors, artisans, fishermen, pepper-gatherers and rice-gatherers), dress codes and eating prohibitions, burial ceremonies, the administration of justice, religious worship, festivals, methods of fighting, groups of merchants, money-lending, ships and navigation, the royal palace, medical practices, the ten wonderful uses of the coconut, agricultural practices, and a number of natural products and animals, it is apparent that the fact that the inhabitants worshipped the devil did not create any global problem of interpretation. Instead, it shifted the weight of interpretation away from religion, so that what is most remarkable about sixteenth-century texts (and in stark contrast to the fascination for the wisdom of the brahmins in ancient Greek accounts) is an almost

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<sup>51</sup>Rubies John-Pau., “Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance, South India through European Eyes, 1250-1625”, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 133.

complete lack of interest in the beliefs and faith of those peoples whose material resources, military power, dress and ritual customs attracted such attention. Only the earliest descriptions of Malabar, still under the influence of the myth of the Prester John( the Prester John was a promise of restoration of the original Christian paradise through the success of spiritual reform and war against the infidel<sup>52</sup>) tended to make gentiles as Christian as possible. After that, when the concept of Indian gentiles became more distinct and substantial, no knowledge of the religious and philosophical foundations of manners and customs was thought to be essential for their practical understanding”<sup>53</sup>. Varthema communicated with the Hindu Brahmins in colloquial Malayalam as he knew some of its basics.

According to Joan Pau Rubies, during the course of Varthema’s travel the King of Calicut was always at war with the Portuguese and the travel literature by Varthema did not provide anything which was more significant when compared with the reflections of Marco Polo or Nicolo Conti. But according to Rubies, “the importance of Varthema’s book was not only the clarity with which the idea of the traveller as an independent authority on the subject of human diversity was publicized, but also the degree to which the de-contextualized individual was now subjected to the pressures of a powerful literary context- that is, the one made possible by colonial imperialism. In Portuguese India as in Spanish America, ‘pen, ink and paper’ were an essential element of the overseas administrative machine”<sup>54</sup>. Rubies cites the terms used by Varthema, “Certainly other cities had merited similar epithets: in India itself Canonor (Cannanor) is ‘big and beautiful’, Bathacala (Bhatkal) is ‘very noble, beautiful and walled’, Deccan (Bijapur) is ‘extremely beautiful and very fertile’ and ‘walled as is custom among Christians’ (i.e. with stones, as in Europe). More impressively, Damascus in Syria was ‘very wealthy and populated’ and the place produced ‘huge quantities of grain and meat’ as well as ‘the greatest quantity of fruits that I ever saw’. Varthema’s citations on Vijayanagara ranked it the best among other cities as its location was in a ‘fertile, healthy and beautiful place strongly defended and rich in merchandise’<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 122.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 162.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 162-163.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp 148.

In conclusion, Ludovico de Varthema was such a traveller who chose to be under a single identity of that of an observer. In the course of his travels he mostly disguised himself as a moor not revealing his true Christian identity. Varthema's observations on the religion of Calicut reveals its primitive nature of continued idol worship termed as devilish to his European background. As a traveller, Varthema's travel acquires significance in the way he disguised himself to suit the respective cultures and religions more than his travel literature. Thus, the land of Kerala especially the city of Calicut as Varthema found it was an important trade centre on the Malabar Coast. Thus trade paved the way for a flourishing Islamic community in Kerala.

Stephen F.Dale provides a detailed explanation in his article "Trade , conversion and the growth of Islamic community of Kerala, South India." Stephen Dale reflects the lack of sources that would have furnished a clear account of Islamic history. Though available sources confine their expositions to certain aspect of history and culture of the Muslim world, few works have yet appeared which make it possible to understand how the process of settlement and conversion interacted to shape the evolution of particular Muslim societies. This is as true for those areas where Muslims armies first established "Islamic" states as it is for those regions where Muslim first arrived in the person of merchants.<sup>56</sup>

The spread and origin of Islam is widely discussed by Dale. The introduction of Islam in Kerala owed mainly to the flourishing of trade in the trade routes of Africa, India and South East Asia. Mostly the West Asian merchants were attracted to Kerala in order to purchase 'spices, aromatic woods and hardwoods.'<sup>57</sup>

Trade recieved royal patronage in Kerala as the public revenues of the kingdom depended on the commercial duties. Therefore the foreign merchants received an amicable treatment. Wherein they were offered trade security and in addition to the autonomy granted to their settlement which marked it as commercial communities culturally as well as religiously. Thus by the early centuries of the Christian era the Roman trade had established their settlements in Kerala and later witnessed

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<sup>56</sup>Dale Stephen F., "Trade , conversion and the growth of Islamic community of Kerala, South India," *Studia Islamica* published by Maisonnecure and Larose, No.71,(1990), pp155 para 1.

<sup>57</sup>Pg.156

the settlement of the Jewish and Christian Communities. This ultimately led to the vast amount of commercial traffic between West Asia and Southwestern India on account of the regular monsoon winds. These factors also paved the way for the popularity of Arabian Sea trade in which many Muslims were involved. The visit by Muslims on the Malabar coast increased after Muhammad had conquered Mecca. The Muslims thus dominated the Arab Sea trade in which Islam remained the popular religion of the population spanning 'the Arabian peninsula and the Persian Gulf.'<sup>58</sup>

According to Dale, the information on Muslims of Kerala from inscriptions dates back to ninth century A.D. The presence of an established Muslim community in Kerala during the mid-fourteenth century is clearly evident from the travel accounts of Ibn Battuta, a North African when he 'visited the Malabar coast on his way from Delhi to China'<sup>59</sup>.

The observations by Ibn Battuta were limited due to his ignorance of Malayalam Language which was one of the Dravidian languages spoken in majority by the inhabitants of Kerala. Nevertheless valuable information on the Kerala Muslim Community with respect to its 'character size and institutions' is being furnished by Ibn Battuta. Battuta's observation highlights the fact that the Arabic or Islam culture that was a characteristic feature of the Muslim Communities spread along 'the Indian Ocean trade routes, extending from East Africa to Arabia to India and Indonesia and even to Canton on the South China Coast' was also shared by the Kerala Muslims. While the Muslim traders originally from the Arabian Peninsula or Persian Gulf observed the 'Shafi School of Islamic law' which was commonly followed by the Muslims along the 'Indian Ocean route.'

As per the travel records of Ibn Battuta, Muslim concentration was based in Quilon in South and Calicut in the north. Among these two trading centres Calicut was the main centre for commercial trade of West Asian Muslim merchants during the mid-fourteenth century. Ibn Battuta's travel accounts also cite an instance wherein appointment of a Muslim Bahrain merchant as the 'chief port administrator by the Hindu Raja Zamorin' is mentioned.

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<sup>58</sup>pg 156

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.,pp. 157.

In addition to Ibn Battuta's observations on 'the character and extent of the Kerala Muslim community' the fourteenth century in Kerala witnessed a well established 'Islamic society' with its institutional set up such as Mosque establishments along with the 'professional infrastructure i.e the existence of the ulama who officiated at these mosques such as Fahr al-Din Uthman, the Qadi of Calicut'<sup>60</sup>.

Ibn Battuta cites the place Elimala which was famous for its cathedral mosque to be of importance to the Muslims who reached the land of Kerala after crossing the Arabian Sea. This type of patronage to the Elimala mosque was utilised by the mosque officials in charity in the form of support to students of Islam sciences, to cater to the needs of travellers as well as the poor local Muslims in the community.

Ibn Battuta maintains the importance of Elimala not as an agriculturally popular area but "as the principal navigational landmark for mercantile vessels sailing to the Malabar Coast"<sup>61</sup>. Therefore Ibn Battuta's observations on the indigenous Muslim population of Kerala throw light on the prevalence of poor Muslims who were a part of the Kerala Muslim community due to conversions and intermarriages. This poorer section formed the majority of the 'Kerala Muslim population in the first decade of the sixteenth century'<sup>62</sup>.

The sixteenth century in Kerala according to Dale is endowed with abundant sources on the Muslim community. The availability of such sources would itself throw light on the importance of 'international trade' and the change in its nature with the arrival of the Portuguese. A Portuguese official named Duarte Barbosa furnished an early account of the Kerala Muslim community during the beginning of the sixteenth century. According to Duarte Barbosa the Kerala Muslims can be viewed under two distinct categorical groups. One group of Muslims formed the elite class with their occupation being involved in international Indian Ocean trade and hence were known as 'Pardesis'- meaning foreigners when translated in Sanskrit and the other group being the indigenous Kerala

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp 158.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp 159.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp 159.

Muslims who were known as Mappilas- ‘a word of uncertain Dravidian origin’<sup>63</sup>to the Hindu inhabitants. Due to the repeated attacks by the Portuguese the Pardesis who represented the ‘mercantile elite’ returned to West Asia leaving behind a large Mappila population which also shared most of the cultural characteristics of the Hindu Nayar caste. Therefore, according to Duarte Barbosa, ‘two main aspects of conversion and intermarriage had generated a local Muslim society whose members spoke Malayalam’<sup>64</sup>.

Another sixteenth century source on Kerala Muslim history by Zayn-al-Din throws light on the insecurity or ‘inconveniences’ faced by the lower castes against the Nayars or Nambudiris, the reputed higher castes in Kerala resulting in conversion to religions like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. According to Zayn-al-Din the rulers who controlled the trade ports granted similar “privileges that was already a right enjoyed by the Muslim trading communities”<sup>65</sup>.

Stephen F. Dale compares the works of Duarte Barbosa and Zayn-al-Din with that of Ibn Battuta and arrives at a conclusion of the nature of the Muslim communities to be mercantile in their character and also views the absence of information regarding the Muslims as also involved in the occupation of agriculture either as tenants or agricultural labourers. In addition to this Stephen F.Dale maintains that information in all the three sources fail to portray the role of ‘ulama’, ‘ the local imams or qadis or even wandering faqirs’<sup>66</sup>who have in some way tried to influence in the course of conversion.

In conclusion, as Stephen F. Dale puts forth the available medieval sources of the 16<sup>th</sup> century on Islamic history does not convey information on all aspects regarding Kerala Muslim community. Dale further furnishes information on the sources from seventeenth century onwards that deal with Colonial period which does not corroborate with my study. Thus, the sixteenth century sources portray the Kerala Muslim community to be mercantile in character but fails to explain the influence of the spiritual elites’ like the Ulama and such other local imams or institutions that have enhanced the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp 160.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp 161.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp162.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid ., pp 165.

conversion thus developing an indigenous Muslim community in Kerala. Islam therefore occupied an equal status with Hinduism, Christianity and Jainism. The Malabar manual by William Logan dwells into the beginnings of the above mentioned religious denominations respectively and their continued existence from down the generations in the Hindu state of Kerala.

According to the Malabar Manual Vol. I, the Hindu land of Kerala was intruded in by foreign religions at different periods in historical time. Beginning with the Jains, Muhammedan & Christians who came and settled here, influenced the Hindu religion to some extent. The Manual furnishes the advent of Jain missionaries into the land of Malabar during the reign of Asoka. This fact is attested by Asokas's Girnar edict which reads as follows: "In the whole dominion of the King Devanampriya Priyadarsin, as also in the adjacent countries, as Chola, Pandya, Satyaputra, Kerala-putra, as far as Tamaraparni, the kingdom of Antiochus, the Grecian King, and of his neighbour Kings, the system of caring for the sick, both men and of cattle, followed by King Devanampriya Priyadarsin, has been everywhere brought into practice; and at all places where useful healing herbs for men and cattle were wanting, he has caused them to be brought and planted; also he has caused them to be dug and trees to be planted on the roads for the benefit of cattle"<sup>67</sup>.

The Jain religion's main characteristic belief in refraining from the flesh of animals in their food left a very little impact on the Hindu population who with an exception of the upper caste Brahmins relied on 'fish and flesh' in their food. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that though the Jain religion ceased to exist in the land of Kerala, peculiar Jain styles of temple architecture marked the Hindu temples and the Muhammedan mosques in the Jain bastis at Mudbiddri and such other places in the South Canara district.

The Malabar Manual describes Hinduism of Kerala to be a confluence of all kinds of religious ideas. To quote Logan, "Malayali Hinduism embraces, chiefly as diverse manifestations of Shiva and his consort Kali, all the demoniac gods originally worshipped by the Malayalis. Brahma and Vishnu, too, are worshipped with Shiva, the other member of the Hindu Trimurti or triad. It has borrowed

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<sup>67</sup>Logan William., "Malabar Manual" in 2 Vols, Vol.I,Low Price Price Publications, Delhi, 1887, pp.184,para 6.

from Christianity – with which, probably for the first time, Hinduism came into contact in Malabar – some of the loftiest ideas of pure theism. And Buddhism and Jainism have each left their mark on the system as eventually elaborated”<sup>68</sup>.

The beginnings of Islam in Kerala differ in the indigenous writings and the version provided by the Arab families settled in Kerala. As per the indigenous writings the Muhammedan were otherwise called (Mappilas) who believe that their first convert was directly instructed by the prophet Mohammed himself. The principles of Islam were commonly called the “Fourth Vedam”. The term ‘Mapilla’ is applied to the generation arising out of the alliance between the Arab traders and the women of the country. The indigenous manuscripts also assert that the Prophet had “changed the name of the convert to Thiaj-ud-din (Crown of the Faith). The Arab families base their assertion on Sheikh Zin-ud-din, a writer who rejected the story of the convert who died during his period was said to have ‘died on the coast of the Red Sea, while it was a known fact that his tomb was at Zaphar (on the Arabian Coast north –east of Aden)’<sup>69</sup>. Therefore according to Sheikh Zin-ud-din, Islam was introduced into Malabar 200 years after the Hejira. In this context the importance of Muhammedanism among the Hindu population must be clearly considered more significant than the year or the circumstances which led to the beginnings of Islam in Kerala. In a caste structured Hindu Kerala even when a Pariah or a low caste Hindu is converted to Muhammedanism his social status is automatically uplifted in the manner of treatment from the Hindus who consider them with due respect. The rules of pollution from henceforth did not apply to the Pariah as he now belongs “to a different scale of being”<sup>70</sup>. In addition to a boost in their caste status the Pariah also benefits with other aspects as well, being a Mapilla. According to William Logan, the ceremonial observances of the Mappilas are described clearly which involves “bathing, the washing of the face and hands, worship by prostration, the appropriate prayers, the hours of worship, the Prophet’s commandments, acts

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.,pp.187,para,3.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.,pp.191,para 4.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.,pp.197,para 4.

vitiating the efficacy of worship, the giving of alms, the observances of Ramzan (the fasting- month), and many other similar subjects are treated off in these tracts”<sup>71</sup>.

The eighth century A.D. witnessed a dichotomy in Islam wherein a new group called the Shiah’s were added to the already existing Orthodox party the Sunnis. The establishment of Christianity in Kerala is given in chronological order from an extract in the Malabar Manual. According to successive periods under which Christianity attained firm roots in Indian soil, the propagation of Christianity in the first century A.D by St.Thomas, Apostle of Christ marked the beginning of indigenous Christianity where the Brahmins were converted to Christianity. Hence the Christians were considered with high status equal to that of the Nairs. They continued the faith handed down to them by St.Thomas. There was an influx of Christian immigrants from time to time with the first colony of Christian’s arrival with a Syrian merchant Thomas of Cana in 350 A.D with four hundred Christians and a Bishop- Mar Joseph. They landed at Cranganore and settled there with the permission of the King Cheraman Perumal’ of Malabar who also granted the Christian community with privileges of 72 in number. These privileges granted to them were engraved in copper plates which were also responsible for the upliftment of their status equal to that of the Brahmins. To mention one privilege was their supremacy over the seventeen lower castes.

The second colony of immigrant Christians arrived from Persia to Quilon between the ninth and tenth century A.D. The first Christian immigrants based their head quarters at Cranganore which also included the northern community of Kerala and the southern portion had their headquarters at Quilon.

The Syrian Christian community reached the pinnacle of prosperity between the ninth and fourteenth centuries as portrayed in the Malabar Manual as they had a King of their own choice. The house of their Princes was known as ‘Valiyavattam’ or Udayamperoor dynasty which became extinct after sometime and the Syrian Christians came under native Cochin.

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid.,pp.199,para1.

In conclusion, though the intruding religions maintained their identity without completely dissolving into the Hindu fold, however it cannot be denied that the disappearance of Jainism and Buddhism from Kerala had left an indelible mark on the architecture of the construction of the Hindu temples. While the Hindu conversion into Islam had provided a mark of dignity from the rigid caste system prevailing in Kerala. In the case of Christianity the fact that the Apostle St.Thomas had converted seven families from Brahmin household to Christianity also elevated the status of St.Thomas Christians in a Hindu society where the rules of pollution were not applicable as they were considered equal to the high caste Nairs of Hindu society. The arrival of Portuguese truly marked certain distortions in the faith followed by St.Thomas Christians for centuries which were un – Christian like for the Portuguese and hence they initiated the mission for retrieving their lost fellow Christians under the Papal authority of Rome as according to them Indian Christianity was Indianised, Hinduised and Keralised. And moreover the St.Thomas Christians owed their allegiance to the Patriarch of Antioch and therefore all efforts of the Portuguese under their religious administration were directed towards absorbing as many St.Thomas Christians under the Roman supremacy. While the Portuguese considered Indian Christianity to be Hinduised for various reasons they could provide, will also bring to the fore the practice of the caste system by the Syrian Christians of Kerala which had become the prevailing practice among the Hindu culture of Kerala. According to Kathleen Gough, “The most effective group in the Kinship system was not, however, the exogamous lineage, but a segment of the lineage whose members jointly held land and a house. This group was at once the property – holding unit, the dwelling group, the group within which operated the legal and moral authority of kinship, and the group whose members combined in propitiation of dead male heads of the lineage”<sup>72</sup>. The weakening of Hindu kinship led to the formation of caste<sup>73</sup>. This aspect of caste consciousness is further discussed by C.J.Fuller.

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<sup>72</sup> Gough E.Kathleen., “Changing Kinship Usages in the Setting of Political and Economic Change Among the Nayars of Malabar”, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol.82, No.1.(Jan –Jun.,1952), pp 71-88.

<sup>73</sup>Shrimali Krishna Mohan., “Reflections on Recent Perceptions of Early Medieval India”, *Social Scientist*, Vol.21, No.12, December 1993, pp.32.

According to C.J.Fuller in his article titled Kerala Christians and the Caste System the question whether the Syrian Christians borrowed and practiced the caste system as a part of Indian tradition is discussed. Though the study was conducted on Central Travancore during the 1970s a detailed background is provided in this article. Firstly in a Hindu country like India, though the census indicate a considerable equal percentage of Christian and Hindu villages Christians formed a larger majority of the population in comparison to their Hindu Counterparts. Christians of India are chronologically belonging to three different groups, divisions and legends. Fuller categorises these divisions under the title groups and legends. According to the first group or *Legend Christianity* gained firm roots in India in the first century A.D the same time when Christianity was originally established in different parts of the world by the twelve disciples of Christ who were assigned by him to spread the Gospel after his ascension to heaven.

C.J. Fuller in his article Kerala Christians and the Caste System tries to explore the caste relationship that is functional among Christians and Hindus and to what extent the caste levels are observed in these independent religions whether they portray similar characteristics or act like poles apart. According to Fuller, the Kerala Christians can be basically divided into three main divisions of the Syrian Christians, Latin Christians and New Christians which according to Fuller, “are distinguished according to two main criteria to which caste the original converts from whom the member of each grouping descent belonged and the date of these original conversions. (Alexander (1972) refers to the New Christians as ‘Neo-Christians’; in Malayalam they are known as putiya kristyani - ‘new Christian’ or avasa kraistava-‘backward Christian’)<sup>74</sup>.

The two popular legends that portray the establishment of Christianity are such that the first connected with the sowing of Christianity by Apostle St.Thomas in A.D.52 in certain Nambudiri Brahmins who believed and converted to Christianity by faith. The authenticity of this legend is debated. The second legend portrays the introduction of Christianity by immigrant Christians from Syria under Thomas of Cana. And hence it is understood that it might be based on this second legend

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<sup>74</sup> Fuller.C.J. “Kerala Christians and the Caste System”, Man, New Series, Vol.11, No.1(Mar.,1976), 53-70, pp 54 2<sup>nd</sup> para.

that the Syrian Christians derived their name, and the liturgy that the Kerala Christians followed was also Syriac as they had relation with the Antiochan Church of Syria. Missionaries and travellers in the ancient and medieval periods testify to the fact that there existed a flourishing Christian community before the sixth century. This is mentioned by Cosmas Indicopleustes, an Egyptian monk in his wanderings recorded in his Christian topography. There are some writers of history who maintain that the Portuguese were the first Europeans to discover the Syrians in India can be refuted, as according to the early travel accounts of Marco Polo towards the end of the thirteenth century had visited India and made a mention of these Christians back in Europe. It was during the period of the Portuguese in the year 1544 that St. Francis Xavier visited Kerala and as a result of his missionary efforts converted many people from the Fisher community. These newly converted people came under the Roman Catholic fold following the Latin Rite. Their presence as coast settlers (Mukkuvans and Arayas) even continues to the present day near Travancore coast popularly known under the second group Latin Christians.

The New Christians, under the third group of Christians are formed under the new converts by the missionaries during the British period. The Church Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society led by the European Protestants diverted their interests to the lowest caste. The low caste people in getting converted to Christianity longed for a breakthrough in their age old status of being at the lowest ebb in society. Though there were even high caste conversions that were considered to be 'genuine' the work of these missionaries in uplifting these lower sections by the process of conversion was looked down upon by differentiating the missionary churches as untouchable's churches and making the Christian religion as the 'religion of the Pariahs' as Fuller puts it.

Therefore the New Christians were the Christians converted by the missionaries in the late nineteenth century. These new Christians did not fall under the Syrian or Latin Christian grouping though they attend the Syrian Catholic service. But at a later period of time these new converts were considered to fall under the Syrian Christian group.

According to C.J.Fuller, the above listed three Christian groupings may be considered as castes of Indian Syrian Christianity. The occupations that most Syrians specialised in comparison to other major castes of Kerala were mostly land holders and traders. It is also mentioned that in the sixteenth century they also held the post of powerful landlords and also were adept in the control of pepper trade. Many others were soldiers like their co – castes the Nayars. These Syrians based on their economic prosperity wielded the power and status of Nayar. Fuller quotes Brown(1956:173)who concludes that Syrians have generally been ranked equal to Nayars, both , he says, could formerly carry arms(1956:15,Ayyar 1926: 55-7), both had similar roles in village organiosations, inferred from the Syrians’ role as protectors of artisans, both had similar right in land and both observed similar pollution rules. (Brown 1956:168-9; Ayyar 1926:53-4)”<sup>75</sup>.

But Fuller’s argument contradicts Brown’s assessment as a part of the study of their perception about the status of both Nayars and Syrians; both have equally maintained that the Nayars ranked higher than the Syrians. The Nambudiris status claimed by the Syrians were based on their being the direct descendants of Nambudiris who were converted by St.Thomas, Apostle of Christ is easily an opposed view of some Syrians as majority of Syrians according to Fuller “accept that they rank below them and there is little concern about the contradiction between this and their claimed Nambudiri ancestry”<sup>76</sup>.

According to Fuller the feeling of caste consciousness in a Syrian Christian arises from his choice or preference to marry a Nayar or any other Hindu high caste than marrying one from the recently converted new Christians who are economically backward and their status more or less equal to the outcastes from the Hindu denomination. Therefore, marriages between these three Christian groups occur only in the case of love marriage. Fuller mentions that the conversion of this low caste into New Christians resulted in their status being polarized, the Syrian Christians at the top and the New Christians at the bottom. This also otherwise can be termed as a caste status from one religion Hindu to another religion Christianity which totally negates the idea of ‘forgetting’ the caste status

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.,pp 56,para 4.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid ., pp56.

through the process of conversion. Therefore, the above mentioned polarization of caste is not found in Hindu religion where according to Fuller, “there is a gradation of status from top to bottom through many castes”<sup>77</sup>. Even recognition to Hindu dalits as low caste are classified under the scheduled caste as per the Indian Constitution rules which is lost when they are converted as New Christians they fall under the Backward castes- that is listed under State government and ‘not guaranteed as inviolable by the President of India’. Further, after four generations the first being that of the original convert- Backward class status is also lost in theory”<sup>78</sup>. This was a great loss regarding community status of the New Christians. Though these New Christians reconvert and claim for scheduled caste status though, in practice they are considered with a low profile ranking below the Hindu dalits. C. J. Fuller therefore asserts that the comparison between the Syrian and New Christians under Christianity and the Hindu and Harijan under Hinduism work respectively thus co-relating themselves as a part of a single caste structure and not as two different entities that flourish together. In the case of Muslims the blend was quite the same into the Indian caste system as was the case of Christians but with a difference that the Muslims had in them as put forward by Fuller who quotes Miller(1950:ch.4) “an Islamic consciousness whereas the Syrians tried to maintain their Indian-ness by not developing a Pan-Christian consciousness”<sup>79</sup>(a movement for the political union of all the Christian nations).

Fuller also attests the fact that the unified Christian Church of India owed its allegiance to the Nestorian laws of Antioch. The arrival of the Portuguese marked a divide in their unity due to their strong policies that were directed towards a total shift from the adherence of the doctrines from Antioch to that of Rome. Two groups were consequently formed the first being the Pazhayakuttukkar who agreed to abide by Roman authority and the second group who retaliated the Portuguese dominance and continued their independent adherence to the Antiochan law-came to be known as Puttankuttukkar. The former and latter present day is popularly known as Catholics and Jacobites respectively in addition to the Latin Catholics who were confined to the coastal region among the fishermen folk. Further division of sects occurred in the Jacobites and Catholics in the modern period

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp 57.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp58.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 58, para 3.

based on the reform of the church from within the respective main groups i.e. Mar Thoma group and the Syrian Orthodox being separated from the main Jacobite division and the Syro-Malankara separated from the main division of the Catholics. Here Fuller puts forth an argument whether the 'caste' and 'sect' can be clearly perceived as being enrolled in it by the process of birth and affiliation respectively. Fuller also maintains the most commonly seen tendency of the transfer of sect into a caste. He cites the sects of Jains and Lingayats as an example to show their evolution in the fifth and sixth B.C and twelfth century A.D as purely a sect which has transformed itself to the status of caste in the following period. The modern periods cults such as the Radha-Krishna cults are totally voluntary affiliation and not caste based. Fuller opines to apply the above study of Hindu sects being converted into castes with regard to the Christian context. To cite an instance of Syrian Catholic children being baptized into the Catholic sect would not become a permanent follower of the same in most of the cases, there is a probable tendency of these Catholic children being influenced by another sect of the same Christian faith and hence there drift to the other church sect. This according to Fuller is not a common phenomenon as is witnessed in society but at the same time it is not a rare phenomenon as well. Therefore Fullers assessment can be concluded in his own words, "Christian sects are, at least now, very much nearer to our ideal sect than they are to our ideal caste and that we should not regard them as castes or sub-castes"<sup>80</sup>. Fuller portrays the static character of the caste status which remains undisturbed even if the sect is changed.

Fuller complies with the fact that membership to the Syrian caste is acquired down the Patrilineal line by the process of birth which naturally explains the connection of the present Syrian caste claiming themselves as descendants of the Brahmins or Nambudiri's converted by St.Thomas. This claim of being converted from Brahmin Hindus to Syrian Christians signals their acceptance on par with the highest caste in the existing society. Fuller admits this claim being confined to only a fraction of Syrian Christians while another fraction of Syrian Christians belies the fact of their being the descendants of converts by St. Thomas. Fuller also compares this disbelief among other Indian castes which rely on myths to explain their origin. With regard to these the instance or the legend of

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp 61,para 2.

Parasurama is cited by Fuller who was the sixth incarnation of Vishnu believed to have initiated the settlement of Nambudiris in Kerala becomes historically a questioned fact whereas the arrival of St.Thomas might be considered as historical fact that can be accepted. The other means of acquiring the status of Syrian Christian according to C.J.Fuller was the ownership of land which defined their material wealth equalling their status role in society. This was mainly considered significant in the case of newly converted Christians.

In matters of rules and pollution Fuller observes that, “Unlike Hindus, however, Christians-like Muslims(Mines 1972:339)-have no concept of bodily pollution consequent on birth, death, menstruation or other bodily conditions, nor do they observe pollution for them”<sup>81</sup>.

Fuller concludes his arguments with the concept of ideology wherein he maintains that the stress on the individual in Christianity is greater than in Hinduism which stress on group. To quote Fuller, “Hinduism does not totally devalue the individual and Christianity does not totally devalue the group”<sup>82</sup>.

Fuller thus dwells into the inner attitudes and behaviour of castes and sect between Hinduism and Christianity seldom citing examples with the Muslim community. Fuller’s concludes that Hinduism and Christianity are part of a single community based caste system.

Caste system in ancient India consisted of a solid structure absorbing even the tribes into its Hindu fold in contrast to the present day caste system which is abandoning its restrictions in the wake of the rise of cities and industries to be adapted to the new industrial system of transforming into guilds or trade unions<sup>83</sup>. In a caste based society of Kerala, the type of hierarchisation established had left the different groups intact within their own limits, and this was reflected in the symbolic field not by the destruction of earlier beliefs but by their integration, in a subordinate position, into the religious ensemble. Religious pluralism

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp64, para3.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. pp 67, para 3.

<sup>83</sup> Mukerjee Radhakamal., “Caste and Social Change in India”, The American Journal of Sociology, Vol.43, No.3.(Nov., 1937), pp 377-390.

was not dysfunctional for the whole of the system, and religion continued to perform a function of identity for the particular social groups<sup>84</sup>. Though the caste consciousness was varied from among the religions of India, religion also existed with its physical structure in the form of Temples, Churches and Mosques for Hindus, Christians and Muslims respectively in moulding their faith. This perception of faith would also reckon a detailed study of the church architecture that underwent changes in Hindu India as put forward by Sreedhara Menon.

“The Cultural Heritage of Kerala” by Sreedhara Menon cites in detail the changes that had been affected among the St Thomas Christians in Hindu India by the Portuguese.

Kerala<sup>85</sup>(is in detail described by Robin Jeffrey see Ft.Nt), the land with symbiotic cultures that owed its existence from many centuries ago in ancient India continues its cultural co-existence among different religious communities. This type of co-existence has nevertheless had a major impact on one another’s religious customs and also in the architectures that decorated the religious shrines from time immemorial. Christianity being an introduced religion in Hindu India had its religious and sacred places being designed under the Hindu temple pattern. This aspect as Sreedhara Menon maintains ‘a Kali temple was under mistaken identity thought to be a church by Vasco Da Gama as both bore very revealing similarities’.

The Church architecture according to Sreedhara Menon “comprised of a four sided sanctuary with a large pillared hall in the front. There was a tower, which like the Sikhara above the garbha griha of the temple, soared to the maximum height. Some of the Churches had a sala or portico to provide shelter to pilgrims on the occasion of festivals. The open air cross seen at the main entrance in some of the churches recalls the tradition of placing the balipitha or dipasthambam near the entrance to the Hindu temple”.<sup>86</sup>In addition to the above mentioned features some churches also have flag staffs imposed as in the Edathwa St.George church similar to the Hindu temple’s Dhwaja stambhas

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<sup>84</sup> Lemerciner Genevieve; Houtart Francois., “Social Functions of Religion in Pre-Capitalist Societies: The Case of Kerala”, *Social Scientist*, Vol.23, No.1/3 (Jan.-Mar., 1995), pp.106.

<sup>85</sup>Jeffrey, Robin. “Kerala’s Story.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 10 (March 5, 1994): 549.

<sup>86</sup> Sreedhara Menon .A, “Cultural Heritage of Kerala”, DC Books Publishers, Kottayam, 1978.pp141 para 2.

used at flag-hoisting ceremonies (*kodiyettu*) that was symbolic for the beginning of 'annual festivals' is seen customary in both churches as well as Hindu temples.

The arrival of the Portuguese marked the Latin phase of Church architecture in Kerala. This architecture was aimed at removing even the slightest trace of Hindu influence in Churches by their introduction of innovations that brought changes in the architecture of the Churches. According to Sreedhara Menon, the new style that marked the Latinised architecture was the absence of the dominating tower. An example of such church built based on the new style is the Santo Antonio, the present St. Francis church at Cochin being the first church of its kind which became the model for further construction of churches in India. Menon further furnishes two Orthodox Syrian Churches from Kothamangalam that are built on the Basilican model. These churches namely the St. Thomas and St. Mary's Church are of vast dimensions with the former church constructed with the peculiarity of arch form built on the side wall of the *hykla* (nave), this conical arch displayed the architectural design from West Asia.

Though Church architecture was deeply influenced first by Hindu style and later by the Latinised form of architecture which became embedded under the Indian culture portraying a far fledged Western Asian influences. The institutions reflecting social and economic life of the people according to Menon like the "joint family, polyandry and Marumakkathayam which are peculiar to Kerala developed here almost independently while the complex institution of caste introduced by the Aryan missionaries who came from the north assumed its own form under the influence of local forces. The growth of the Janmi system in Kerala within the framework of a feudal polity was also a historical development rendered inevitable by the very logic of things"<sup>87</sup>.

The societal division of Kerala based on caste hierarchy was not prevalent in Kerala in the beginning of the Christian era and in the Sangam age. Therefore, it can be sufficed that the existence of landlord tenant relation in the following years was also unknown. Menon maintains that by the 8<sup>th</sup> C A.D the Chaturvarnya or the four divisions based on caste came to be established by the Aryan

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.,pp229, para 1.

missionaries. This caste system became more effective by the 11<sup>th</sup> C A.D as a result of certain factors due to the Chola-Chera war. Therefore under the caste system the Namboothiris occupied the highest strata in society and their word was taken to be final in matters concerning religion, society and politics. Most of the Namboothiris took to 'the profession of arms as well'. This period also witnessed the birth of the Kalari system, Janmi, Marumakkathayam and polyandry. The Feudal system with its necessary evils was prevalent from 11<sup>th</sup> C A.D to 15<sup>th</sup> C A.D. This period also witnessed the prevalence of Devadasi system and the degeneration of the Namboothiris.

Menon also cites the difference of opinion among the views regarding Makkathayam and Marumakkathayam. According to the traditional view maintained by 'Brahmin aristocracy and the authors of Keralolpathi estimates Marumakkathayam to be of 'hoary antiquity and that Makkathayam form of inheritance was 'unknown to ancient Kerala'. The view opposed to this maintains the prevalence of Makkathayam in ancient Kerala while Marumakkathayam came to prominence only at a later period in Kerala history owing to the influence of certain 'compelling forces'. This view is supported by the fact of the early Chera succession and the Kulasekharas of Mahodayapuram which was from father to son. While Marumakkathayam or the matrilineal system can be understood as the inheritance and succession of property through the 'sisters' children in the female line. Therefore, the fact in the transition from Makkathayam to Marumakkathayam is clearly portrayed by Sreedhara Menon who quotes the statement of Prof. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai who maintains that "The Marumakkathayam system, like the Janmi and the Kalari systems, as a product of the compelling socio-economic forces was let loose by the Chola-Chera war of the eleventh century AD. He has pointed out that the political and religious dominance of the Namboothiris, their rise to economic ascendancy as the Janmi's of Kerala and the introduction of Compulsory Military training leading to formation of the suicide squads or chavers during the Chola-Chera war were the compelling circumstances which led to the switch-over from the Patrilineal to the Matrilineal system in Kerala"<sup>88</sup>. The traditional Nayar family

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid pp 233 para 1.

of the Malabar Coast is an archetype of Matrifocal family where there would be no regularly present male in the role of husband-father also known as co-residential kinship group<sup>89</sup>.

While Dr. M G S Narayanan tries to maintain that by the ninth century AD, the rulers of Mahodayapuram were matrilineal which also influenced other Kerala rulers like the Mushikas to accept matriliney. The above mentioned statements form a part of the views put forward by various authors under the theory of origin of Marumakkathayam system of inheritance.

The Marumakkathayam system of inheritance also witnessed the family or taravad in a joint family set up. This joint family also based on Matrilineal<sup>90</sup>(reference for Matriliney is given in Ft.Nt) inheritance had the joint dwelling of the mother with her children and grand children through her daughters, her brothers and sisters and the 'descendants of the sister's' sharing the same home with their common kitchen and thereby owing inheritance to the property after the death of the mother by sharing it in common with one another. Nevertheless, there was an eldest family member called Karanavan who would oversee the management of family affairs through the joint property by law belonging to the females. It was this Karanavan's wife called Ammayi who exercised undisputed authority over the affairs of the Tharavad. The Anantaravan's or the junior members of the family also played a pivotal role in the joint family system under the Matriliney wherein they acted as a check to the managership of the Karanavan, the failure of whom would result in his removal by the initiation of legal proceedings against him by the junior members. These Anantaravan's occupied no property of their own but they could succeed to the Karanavasthanam based on seniority status. The Karanavan owing to the partiality he showed to his own branch (i.e.) the children of his direct sisters also were a matter of complaint among the junior members of the family who were displeased with Karanavan's managership. This initiated lot of troubles and intrigues within the joint family system which also in the following years marked its failures to function in harmony. The breakdown of the traditional

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<sup>89</sup>Randolph Richard. R., "The "Matrifocal Family" as a Comparative Category", *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol.66, Part 1.(Jun., 1964),pp.628-631.

<sup>90</sup>Dube, Leela. "Matriliney and Women's Status." *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 33 (August 18, 2001): 3144-47.

Nayar taravad <sup>91</sup>(described in detail by Fuller C.J see Ft.Nt) into small family units had indeed witnessed a change in the family roles occupied by the family head. This shift brought about a redefinition of male role in nuclear families where male heads exercised their authorities over his wife and children<sup>92</sup>.

This also led to the reform in the law of inheritance under the Marumakkathayam system. Menon also opines the maintenance of the Makkathayam system of inheritance by the non-Hindu communities like the Christians and the Muslims.

The social customs observed in Kerala as stated by Menon includes the practice of both monogamy and polygamy. While the Christians strictly practiced monogamy, polygamy was practised by Muslims as part of their customs. The prevalence of Polyandry among certain Nair communities came to be practised under the Sambandham form of marriage. Menon cites the origin of this kind of marriage in a quote by Prof.Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai who “ascribed its origin to the circumstances created by the Chola-Chera war of the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He points out that the heavy casualties sustained by the Nair chavers led to a situation in which the number of Nair women exceeded that of men. In these circumstances began the practice of the eldest sons of the Namboothiri families alone marrying within the caste and the younger brothers going in for Sambandham system of marriage with Nair women.” The ceremonies namely Talikettu (tying a thali around the neck of a girl by the member of same higher caste who had no claim on the girl in order to bestow the girl with marriageable status), Tirandu Kalayanam (a ceremony lasting four full days connected with the attaining of puberty by a girl) and Pulikudi (a ceremony performed in the ninth month of a pregnant woman).

The Janmi system of landlordism was an end product of the Chola –Chera war during the eleventh century A.D. This war completely mobilised the state resources. Namboothiris occupied a dominant place in the social and economic spheres. Owing to the war that had ‘preoccupied large sections of society’ who showed a decline of interest in administration of temples gave scope to the

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<sup>91</sup>Fuller, C. J., and M. A. Moore. “The Nayar Taravad.” *Man*, New Series, 21, no. 1 (March 1, 1986): 135–37.

<sup>92</sup>Mencher Joan P., “Changing Familial Roles among South Malabar Nayars”, *South Western Journal of Anthropology*, Vol.18, No.3.(Autumn, 1962), pp.230-245.

mismanagement of temple finances by appropriating the same for themselves as the Namboothiris were trustees of these temples. In addition to these, the Namboothiris were also invested with the transferred lands by ordinary tenants who owned lands. Such transfer of land and property were made to the Namboothiri Brahmins and temples which were regarded as Devaswams and Brahmaswoms in return for protection from destruction by enemies at war times and also to be relieved from tax levies by the state. This type of endowment of land made the Namboothiris rise to the status of powerful and wealthy landlords or Janmis. The circumstances that led to the birth of the Janmi system which bore close resemblance to the reasons for the rise of feudalism that emerged in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries for the same cause of obtaining protection from their lords during times of emergencies by surrendering their properties to them.

The Feudal Polity of Kerala had its evolutionary characteristics with the beginning of Janmi system that marked an end to the political unity of Kerala by the 11<sup>th</sup> C A.D. While the preceding two centuries i.e., the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, under the Kulasekhara Empire, Kerala was a 'homogeneous political unit' consisting of a centralised administrative set up and the Naduvazhis or Viceroys ruling under the central government's effective control. But towards the end of the Chera-Chola war in 11<sup>th</sup> C A.D, the Naduvazhis declared their independence on account of the weakness of the Central government. This also resulted in the rise of small principalities 'on the ruins of the Kulasekhara Empire'.

The arrival of the Portuguese in Kerala also witnessed a weak feudal set up. The rulers of the two major political powers of Calicut and Venad enjoyed 'sovereign political rights'. The extent of influence of these major powers also included the Naduvazhis or other chieftains. The Desavazhis or local Nair chieftains along with few Namboothiri chieftains were an added feature in the feudal polity who exercised their 'effective authority in their respective domains'. These Desavazhis also provided the Naduvazhis with 'fighting forces in times of need' similar to the feudal barons of medieval Europe. These principalities also comprised of suicide squads (Chavers), respectively the activities of which culminated in an anarchical condition in the land.

Menon also observes a religious character in Kerala's feudal polity. The Devaswoms or Sanketams that was protected from attacks in times of war was often the cause for frequent clashes between rulers to obtain its 'over-lordship' (Melkoyma) though they were within their ruling domains or not. The Sanketam had the status of a state within the state and hence the ruler could not exercise effective political control over the Sanketam. Many political intrigues centered around the Sanketam. The Namboothiris owed allegiance to the Azhavancheri Tamprakkal, their caste chief who also exercised the right to punish them. The Namboodiri Brahmans of Kerala are also well known for their unusual characteristic features with regard to kinship relations and marriage regulations<sup>93</sup>. Even the Namboothiri Janmis exercised the 'extraordinary power' of punishing their tenants with a death penalty. Such was the condition of Kerala in the sixteenth century wherein there was political strife among the quarrel between various chieftains and such religious discord added to the general disharmony of the period.

According to Sreedhara Menon, the state of feudal polity in Kerala is accounted by the 'Portuguese and Dutch writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The 'feudal aristocracy' of Kerala was headed by a Naduvazhi whose vested powers were checked by Kuttams or local assemblies. Landed properties were possessed by all the chieftains beginning from the ruler to the Deshavazhi who cultivated the same through their slaves or on lease to Kudiyan or tenants. Though there were several sources of revenue for the Naduvazhis there was no levy of taxes during that period.

The sources of revenue enjoyed by the chieftains in Kerala can be summed up as receiving presents on special occasions such as births, weddings, funerals, inauguration of new palaces, fees for protection from strangers and dependents, seizure of ships with cargo that came ashore, the sale of women convicted of adultery to foreign merchants reaped much profits, purchase of gold by anyone also bestowed the chief with a royalty.

The powers enjoyed by the chieftains include the augment of his revenue by the "ankam – a duel fight arranged between two parties, to settle an unresolved dispute. A sum of 1000 panams had to

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<sup>93</sup>Mencher Joan P.;Goldberg Helen., "Kinship and Marriage Regulations Among the Namboodiri Brahmans of Kerala", Man, New Series, Vol.2, No.1.(Mar.,1967), pp.87-106.

be paid for getting permission to conduct the ankam, with the chieftain himself acting as umpire”<sup>94</sup>. The chieftain was presented with money as he was the sole settler of marriages. Construction of two-storeyed houses or tiled houses also required the chieftain’s permission, also taking a bride with the prescribed fees to chieftain’s house before the Tali tying ceremony.

The privileges enjoyed by the chieftain include the use of palanquins and dholies, confer of titles such as ‘Menon’ on members of Nair community after receiving presents of money and other articles, the daily routine or the mode of living, in detailed matters of the subjects were dictated by the chieftain. These include the adorning of bracelets by those who were permitted this privilege, in addition to the use of umbrellas with handles. Those without permission had to use umbrellas without handles over their heads. Permission of chieftain was also required for the adornment of nose ring by women. It was under the institution known as ‘Talavettiparvathayam or authority obtained by decapitation’ that the chieftains exercised the “power of life and death and in some places this was delegated to select persons for a fixed period, usually five years”<sup>95</sup>.

Menon maintains that slavery under feudalism of Kerala during the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries had reached a summit wherein the landed magnates dealt with slaves assigning them the value of not more than a commodity. The Janmis became so powerful where they could pronounce a death sentence ‘without being called to account’. Thus, the slaves were least treated as humans entitled to rights and privileges.

The Hindu society in Kerala was based on castes and sub-castes. The Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Nairs belonged to the upper castes and therefore enjoyed privileges which were denied to the lower castes such as the Kammalas(artisans), the Mukkuvans(fisher folk) and several other castes like the Pulayas, the Parayas and the Kuravas. Untouchability, death sentence were entitled to the lower caste while the Brahmins were exempted from a death sentence. Even there was ‘trial by ordeal’ and the type of ordeal was decided based on caste status both in civil and criminal cases. Brahmins were subject to ordeal by balance (Tukku), the Kshatriyas were tried by fire while poison

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid.,pp. 239,para2.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., pp.239, para2.

was reserved for the Sudras. The Savarnas (upper castes) practiced rules of pollution. Inter-dining and Inter-marriage was unheard of. But within this rigid caste system in the social context of Kerala the non-Hindus like the Christians or Muslims had no such restrictions as prevention from entering into temples, roads, admission to schools etc. In an article titled “Colonialism and Ethnogenesis: A Study of Kerala, India by Prema Kurien, she evaluates the pre- colonial structure of Kerala society which had a strict and woven fabric of caste consciousness that was also observed under a scheduled custom. According to her “over the period of colonialism, the global and systemic character of the social structure and most of the earlier ties of dependency that bound the groups together were dissolved, and each of the units of the system began to develop autonomous ethnic identities”. In this article she also makes a mention of the “ethnic exclusivity and identity” that was very strong among the Syrian Christians of Kerala <sup>96</sup>(Prema Kurien also furnishes a detailed article that explains on the Mar Thoma community see Ft.Nt<sup>97</sup>).Therefore, new converts to Christianity and Islam were immediately given access to privileges without any protest from the Savarnas. This led to large scale conversions from among the Avarnas to Christianity and Islam.

Sreedhara Menon also highlights the significance of Devadasi system that began in Kerala from the 9th and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries onwards. According to Menon, “Devadasis were dancing girls attached to the temples. The post of Devadasi was a prestigious one and it was much sought after by women of royal and aristocratic families in all parts of South India”<sup>98</sup>. The first recorded evidence of Devadasi system is available from the Chokkur inscription of Goda Ravi dated Kollam Era 107 (932 A.D). The institution of Devadasi began with a sole purpose of ‘rendering meritorious service to the temples by raising temple funds through performances in music, dance and such other fine arts’. By the 13<sup>th</sup> century the Devadasi system became hereditary and there was a decline in the moral standards of the Devadasis with the institution of Devadasi turning into a ‘symbol of moral bankruptcy’. Devadasi system’s ‘moral degeneracy’ was complete by the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was evident in the

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<sup>96</sup>Kurien Prema., “Colonialism and Ethnogenesis: A Study of Kerala, India”, *Theory and Society*>Vol.23, No.3(June., 1994) pp 385-417.

<sup>97</sup>Kurien, Prema. “The Impact of International Migration on Home Churches: The Mar Thoma Syrian Christian Church in India.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53, no. 1 (March 2014): 109–29.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.,pp243, para 2.

literature, inscriptions, paintings and sculptures of the age which bear testimony to the overall moral degeneracy of the Devadasis.

In conclusion, though the Church architecture had been influenced by the Hindu temple architecture prior to the arrival of the Portuguese, it had adopted the new Latin style influenced by the Portuguese. The existence of certain practices like the Marumakkathayam, the Janmi system, Feudal privileges, Caste system and the Devadasi system had been in practice only for a few years or centuries and most of the above mentioned practices had degenerated due to various causes as portrayed by Sreedhara Menon. Though Kerala displayed a picture of a weak society with its practicing evils, it was also a state which inculcated native practices as well as foreign influences in the respective areas of culture and society. The native practice followed by the St. Thomas Christians is further given in detail by Susan Bayly.

Susan Bayly in the chapter on South Indian Christians in the pre-colonial period emphasises mainly on the shared beliefs and practices among the St. Thomas Christians, the Muslims and the Hindus in Kerala. Bayly maintains that “‘Syrian’ Christians are a group who defy all the received wisdom about Indian Christians. The term ‘Syrian’ refers to the presumed West Asian origins of the group’s ancestors and to their use of Syriac as a liturgical language. Their spoken language has been Malayalam for many centuries”<sup>99</sup>. As a matter of fact the Syrians have a history of power and privilege in contrast to the low status or low caste convert Christians under the European missionaries. Bayly observes that their elevation as ‘warriors, traders and Church notables’ under the Hindu Malayali rulers was an additional advantage to their regular maintenance of superior status ritually from all other Christian convert group. This status acceptance of the Syrian Christians in Hindu Society was due to the conversion of high caste Brahmans to Christianity by the Apostle St. Thomas in 52 AD.

According to Bayly, the Syrian Christians seem to share a commonality with their Muslim neighbours in the manner of establishment of shrines and commercial centres by the founders of the

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<sup>99</sup>Bayly Susan, “Saints Goddesses and Kings”, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, pp 243, para2.

religion and also the reverence for the “legendary precursors and holy men”. The Muslim (the Sahabi or companions of the Prophet whose tombs are supposed to be located in Karaikkal and to all the other early Pirs who are associated with the coming of Islam to South India”<sup>100</sup>.

The foundation of Christianity by St. Thomas who established seven churches throughout Kerala also owed to the formation of many shrines with importance to its apostolic origins. Some of these church centres like Kottayam and Kuravilangal were Kerala’s most significant “ pre-colonial export centres as they served as natural arteries of trade and transport in the region due to its location on the estuaries or inland water ways( back waters)”<sup>101</sup>.

The Syrian Christians as subjects of local rulers of Kerala were also credited with their occupation of involving in ‘world maritime trade and commerce’ from many centuries. The St. Thomas tradition as Bayly puts forth “ has come to overlap with accounts of other heroic founder figures such as Thomas of Cana, a pious West Asian Christian Merchant who led seaborne colonising party to the Malabar coast, remembered as the founder of Cranganore . Apart from these overlapping Thomas figures the Syrians most widely revered precursor figures are all real of semi- mythical clerics. Mar Sapor and Mar Prodh, the ninth century hero - Bishops are the earliest of these most revered precursor figures, founders of Quilon, Kerala’s second major entrepot”<sup>102</sup>.

Bayly maintains that all the features that existed in the St. Thomas tradition were recorded in the statements of European travellers in the Medieval period. According to the travel accounts under the existing South Indian St. Thomas tradition the locally settled Christians played a pivotal role in the pepper trade of Malabar, in the case of Quilon during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Syrian Christians were pepper traders and ‘port revenue officers’ to their regional local rulers or kings of Kerala. In such instances the Syrian Christians showed close similarity to the South Indian Muslim trading groups. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the Syrians served their Hindu Kings by excelling as ‘skilled military men’ – which also earned them grants, honours and titles as their reward

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<sup>100</sup>ibid pp.245,para2.

<sup>101</sup>ibid pp.245,para2.

<sup>102</sup>ibid pp.246,para1.

from their rulers. The Syrians movement from the coastal areas to the Inland areas of Kerala, a settlement pattern based on their occupation in pepper growing regions in centres with riverine and backwater centres like 'Kottayam, Palai, Tiruvella and Ankamali'. The settlement of the Syrians in these regions also witnessed their marriage with the Nayar landholders, as a result of which the Nayars came to be identified as St. Thomas Christians. To quote Bayly, "in 1503 a West Asian prelate reported that there were 30,000 St. Thomas Christian families in the Malabar Country, and in 1653 the group was said to no 2,00,000. As of the mid to late nineteenth century the St. Thomas Christians probably comprised about 10 to 12 percent of the Malayali population"<sup>103</sup>.

The settlement of the Syrians as Pepper traders since the Ist century AD offered the Hindu Coastal rulers the income for their kingdom from the main source i.e. trade and other sources like forest products such as ivory, spices and hard woods, as a result of which the Malabar coast had become a part of the trading system of the Indian ocean. The rulers who thus had access to the most flourishing harbours were 'The Zamorins of Calicut, The Rajas of Cochin, Vatakkumkur, Tekkumkur and Venad' – Malabar in the medieval period had militarised population with a distinctive martial culture. The flexibility in caste categories enabled many 'outside recruitments into the ranks of the rulers' client warrior groups. But the observance of 'ritual purity and pollution' was recorded by European observers from the sixteenth century onwards. The landed magnates and the 'old Keralan martial' warriors identified as the Nayars followed the matrilineal descent system of inheritance. The Panikkars were the spiritual guides to their warrior young disciples or boys in Kalarigymnasia. In addition to the Hindu Nayar martial groups comes the 'indigenous Malayalam speaking Shafi' Muslims, the Mappilas and also the St. Thomas Christians whose 'central place' in martial culture of Kerala was less wellknown. Nevertheless, the Hindu rulers always considered the St. Thomas Christian martial culture equivalent in status to the 'upper Nayar warrior groups'. The Syrian Christians also 'observed the bonds of ritualised fealty and patronage' wherein the ritual being at the completion of their respective Kalari training, the youths presented 'ceremonial tokens of fealty to their ruler who in turn presented them with a sword. This custom or ritual carried a similarity with the

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid pp.247,para2.

Muslims darbar's exchanges of 'prestations of cloth and ceremonial Khelat'. The Syrians also followed the rite of securing 'bonds of blood and affiliation that related the warrior to his respective ruler or raja' that was observed by Nayars and other such Hindu warriors. The Hindu rulers of Malabar rewarded the Syrian warriors with 'royal grants and privileges' mostly the foundation accounts of Churches clearly mention the patron Kings as benefactors. These Hindu Kings patronised the Syrian Churches in the same manner as they protected the Hindu temples. The Syrian Church rites "also part of a common martial culture were linked to the region's other warrior groups- to the upper Nayar groups, and more tenuously, to south India's arms - bearing Muslim populations"<sup>104</sup> .

The commemoration of death anniversaries of deceased saints and holy men were the key events in the Syrian calendar similar to that of the south Indian Muslims Urs celebration. The Syrian Christians offerings of sacrificial cocks (nerccas) "at the shrine of the Nayar warrior goddess" in addition to the distribution of consecrated foodstuffs that resembled the Hindu prasadam. The 'rules of ritual purity' applied to the St. Thomas Christians that was the norm of the upper Nayar caste. The different kinds of rituals observed by Syrians that displayed similarity with the Hindus were the "Sradhas (oblations to the family dead which also remove the ritual pollution caused by death), birth, puberty and marriage rites", etc<sup>105</sup>. Such observances of rites elevated their moral status equal to that of a high standard clean caste under the Hindu caste hierarchy. As a result of this St. Thomas Christians were granted with a "most critical sign of ritual status in the society of the right of access to Hindu temples and sacred precincts"<sup>106</sup>.

The St. Thomas Christians were also excluded from the bans of entrance to Hindu temples and its surroundings and the adjacent 'ceremonial procession routes, palaces and other places associated with both royal and divine power' which was applicable to low caste Hindus as well as low caste Christian converts from fishermen and agricultural groups. This ban also applied to the low caste Muslim converts. The Syrians position in Hindu society in pre-colonial period of Kerala can be assessed from the fact of them being 'donors, honoured patrons and sponsors at Hindu shrines and

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 251, para 1.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., pp 251, para 2.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pp. 252, para 2.

temple festivals all over southern Kerala'. The instances of Nayars reciprocating as donors and participating in Syrian Church festivals reflect the deep rooted relationship between the Nayars and the St .Thomas Christians. This right to share in Hindu 'sacred space' also resulted in the construction of ' Syrian' churches "on the sites virtually adjoining Hindu temples (as at Niranom, Cannanur, Parur and Kallupara, where such churches were built in the fourteenth , fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) Christians used Hindu-style torches, umbrellas and banners in their cattam festivals and some localities actually had a single collection of processional regalia which was shared between both church and Hindu temple"<sup>107</sup>.

In addition to the facilities or advantages drawn by the Syrian Christians from Hindu temples, the practice of leasing or providing temple elephants to the Syrian worshippers on rent basis on the occasion of festival processions, was similar to the lending of elephants by Srirangam authorities to the Nathar Wali Dargah.

The St .Thomas Christians from the beginning of their establishment on Indian soil itself until the coming of European missionaries had over years owed their allegiance to the West Asian Christian primates. Therefore the Syrian's affiliation came to be termed as 'West Syrian' or 'Jacobite' Patriarch of Antioch- who believe in the Monophysite doctrine that upholds 'the divine and human persons of Christ as a single indivisible entity'. While in practice they had the Pakalamarrams as their chief clerics who were hereditary archdeacons claim their ancestral home to Kuravilanat, the ancient trading centre. The Pakalamarrams claim that their ancestors were ordained as priests by St.Thomas himself and hence their pre-eminent priestly line was thus established under the 'hereditary command of the Kuravilanat Church'.

The St.Thomas Christian's church individually had a group of hereditary priests (Katanars) who were ordained to perform 'marriages, baptisms and other life-cycle rituals and also presided over the groups cattam or saint-cult feasts'<sup>108</sup>. The office of hereditary Pakalamarram archdeacons commanded the key shrines of the group and with regard to their personal observances they remained

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.,pp. 253, para2.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.,pp 255,para2.

unmarried and hence the archdeacons office was succeeded by his nephew. The spiritual power exercised by the archdeacon was similar to that of a Muslim Sufi or the Barakat of a Middle Eastern Christian monk. “Within the churches of West Asia the primate or patriarch was regarded as the source of this sanctifying energy, and it was dispensed to other clerics through acts of consecration and ordination. Thus like initiates in a Sufi tariqa (mystical order) bishops and priests were bound and united by the chain of spiritual authority emanating from the primate”<sup>109</sup>. In the living tradition of devotion to the entombed Saint figures who were founders of their respective communities, the Indian Muslims and the St.Thomas Christians share similar belief patterns.

Bayly cites the role of Saint-heroes in the establishment of both the Christian and Muslim communities in south Indian Hindu Kingdoms. The Malabar Coast at the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498 was traded by West Asian Muslim seafarers who had their base at Calicut flourishing in Pepper trade. The relationship between the Muslim traders and the Hindu Zamorins of Calicut was so deep rooted that this kingdom with its hinterland became Malabar’s most powerful port kingdoms. Portugal’s intention was to direct the spice trade in the Indian Ocean trading routes through the Portuguese customs post under the Cartaz or pass system which would provide them with the control of international commercial networks by expelling their hated ‘Moor’ or Muslim traders. The Portuguese were however unsuccessful in their attempts but to some extent they were able to curb the power of Calicut Muslims by building up a ‘chain of settlements and fortified enclaves which came to constitute the Estado da India’. There appears more than one striking similarity between the St.Thomas tradition and the Hindu and Muslim cults with shared beliefs namely the ‘belief and worship of the ideas of resurrection and martyrdom’. There are also many existing legends that “recount cosmic battles between rival saints and divinities: goddesses battling with demon asuras, Hindu Gurus fighting Muslim Pirs and so on”.<sup>110</sup>

Susan Bayly concludes that “St.Thomas cult had many features in common with the Muslim Pir traditions of Malabar, Tamilnad and the Deccan. Upto the nineteenth century these features of the

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<sup>109</sup>ibid.,pp 255,para3.

<sup>110</sup>ibid.,pp.279,para3.

Syrians religious life served to 'integrate' and link the group with the regions other powerful arms-bearing and land holding communities"<sup>111</sup>.

In conclusion, St.Thomas Christians marvelled in the trade of pepper and therefore as skilled warriors and observing ritual fealty to their patrons had indeed carved out their share of space in a Hindu Indian Keralan Kingdom. Though the St. Thomas Christians shared beliefs and customs with the Hindus and Muslims of the region, they preserved their own identity as equal to the Nairs the high caste Hindus of Kerala. The belief and customs that emanated from the saint heroes and holy men were similar in their features with regard to the Christians, Hindus and Muslims, the best example being the worship of the footprints and other worships to follow. Therefore it can be assessed that the shared beliefs and customs were region specific i.e., Kerala.

Therefore, the relation between Hindus and Christians of Kerala became so entwined together that it seemed an impossibility to exist without each other's cooperation in their day today lives. This also brings to light their inbred relationship to the fact that the Syrian Christians of India as indigenous Christians accepts their blood to be of Brahmin kind due to the Brahmin conversion done by St.Thomas. And as per the law of nature any human born of the same blood line are recognised by their blood relationship which stands true to the Syrian Christian with the Brahmin Hindu of Kerala. This is best explained by M.G.S. Narayanan in his write up on the Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala.

Symbiosis is best defined by Narayanan as "two organisms of different species live together and derive mutual benefit from the association, the partnership is called Symbiosis"<sup>112</sup>. Ancient Kerala is accredited with an initiation of such type of a relationship in the case of heterogeneous religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Kerala represents the multicultural religious country India as a microcosmic unit in all respects. India in the ancient world being mostly dominated by Hinduism as its major religion applied the same to all its states and therefore Kerala also existed basically as a state that was dominated by a Hindu society. The later religions which got acculturated along with the major religion Hinduism of Kerala need to be

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<sup>111</sup>Ibib.,pp.280,para2.

<sup>112</sup> Narayanan M.G.S., "Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala", Kerala Historical Society, Trivandrum, 1972, pp vii, para1.

carefully studied. This acculturation should not be perceived as absorption completely of one religion into another but the co-existence of different religions on a mutual plane. This mutual co-existence need not be pre-supposed as a result of either by ‘military conquests or political conflicts’. Kerala’s geographical landscape also supports the same as it forms a narrow strip of land along the south –west coastal belt of India placed between the two secure natural forms of the Arabian Sea on one side and the Western Ghats on the other. Mention here is made of the King Kulasekhara belonging to the Cera dynasty of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D who an eminent playwright proclaims himself as quoted by Narayanan the “master of Kerala made up of charming paddy fields”<sup>113</sup>. The rule of the Cera Kings not only witnessed the thriving of Brahmin community at the top most rung of the society along with the artisan and merchant groups belonging to non-Vedic or non-Hindu religious groups.

Trade also provided a considerate atmosphere for the intermingling of different religions within India and also abroad as they were settled in the state of Kerala permanently based on the purpose of their trade. The Indian trading communities being the Chettis, Vaniks following different Aryan creeds like Jainism and Buddhism while the foreign traders belonging to different faiths like Judaism, Christianity and Islam who settled in Kerala were well received and also patronised by the rulers who were ‘embodiments of virtue’ by their practice of religious tolerance.

It was through the prosperity of trade that ancient & medieval Europe’s quest for spices especially pepper was quenched. In return Kerala received Roman coins in gold and silver. Trade was fostered by the Hindu rulers in lieu of good and increased revenue while Kerala was sought after as an attractive market to sell their goods. This type of settlement pattern by different traders enabled the mutual co-existence between the major existing communities and the settling communities. While the former benefitted from the new cultural exchange of the settlers by imbibing their culture through ‘language, faith, art patterns, and even race-mixture while the latter followed and later made their own ‘the style of life’.

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., pp vii, para 2.

Therefore trade became the medium through which different religions like Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian and Islamic elements dwelled together respectively without losing their own 'identity or character' as maintained by Narayanan. Kerala's majority community in course of time came to accept 'non-Indian strains of plants namely tapioca, papaya, Cashew and tobacco from the West while pottery, gun powder and chillies came from China, in addition to these Arab horses, Persian scents and Greek Wine were also imported. Narayanan further maintains that the dissolution of the minority groups like the Jains into the Nayar community, the Buddhists into the Ilava community, the Jews became an ethnic division of Malayalam speaking 'Black Jews', Christians adopted Hindu names, the use of nilavilakku and social customs like the adornment of tali by a bride, while Muslims construction of temple like mosques, adoption of matrilineal form of family and also formed a new branch of Arab-Malayalam with their own folk-literature. Thus, to quote Narayanan, the minority groups were Indianised, Hinduised and also Keralised".<sup>114</sup>

This kind of co-existence and dissolution of an individual into another religion not only existed among the commoners but also the royalty. Legends as put forward by Narayanan mention of a "royal Saivite Saint Ceraman Perumal Nayanar and the royal Vaisnavite saint Kulasekhara Alvar but also of the Pallivana Perumal (the King who lived in the Palli) who might have been a Jain , Buddhist, or Christian and the Makkattupoya Perumal (the king who went to Mecca) who was certainly a Mussalman"<sup>115</sup>. The Portuguese records also provide evidence to the secret conversion of a Tanor Raja in Central Kerala to Christianity. Such occasional conversions seem less significant when compared to the indefinite patronage provided by the Hindu rulers to their non-Hindu subjects through which the economical, political and military interests of the respective Kingdoms were taken care of by the colonising subjects. To cite a few instances Zamorin King of Calicut patronised the Arab Muslims while the Raja of Cochin patronised the Portuguese and later the Dutch. The nature of such patronage took the twist of loss of independence and initiative by the native rulers to their foreign allies. While this takes the form of harsh reality it was a fact that Kerala Princes revelled in a tendency of welcoming the foreigners. Even the Keralites mindset was fashioned in such a way to

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<sup>114</sup>ibid., pp ix, para 2.

<sup>115</sup>ibid., pp ix, para 3.

receive foreigners due to expectation of overseas wealth. In relation to this, Narayanan mentions the favourite myth of Parasurama axe which rightly claims the creation of the land of Kerala. This amicable attitude to foreigners like Arabs, Europeans, ancient Israelites, Romans & Syrians was fostered by the Keralites without sensing any negative notions from the colonisers. Therefore, there began mutual co-existence where 'non-Hindu' culture created its space among the Hindu cultured population which also resulted in mutual benefits.

Narayanan states that the legends and stories regarding the arrival of Jews and Syrians pertain to certain historical circumstances. With regard to the settlement in Kerala the Jews owe it due to the seizure of Jerusalem in 68A.D, while the Syrians claim their beginnings in India with the establishment of the Church by Apostle St.Thomas. The claims of origin of these religions are also associated with 'social prestige' attached to them. This aspect also applies to the spread of Islam under the Muslim tradition where Islam spread to Kerala during 'the days of the Prophet'. According to Narayanan the Muslim tradition is rejected by early Muslim writers like Sheikh Zeinuddin as reality does not suffice with it. Further in order to serve as a historical fact the epigraphical records of Cera Kingdom and its successor states give a detailed description of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim settlements. While in the Sangam age the Jain and Buddhist settlements in Kerala can be traced back to some extent.

As per the fact findings Narayanan observes a very significant aspect of cultural co-existence in Kerala. The non-Hindu settlers in Kerala mostly belonged to trade and industry while the Hindu's culture was moulded based on agrarian economy. Jainism thrived by the migrating traders from Mysore, Karnataka, the 'Pandi and their pockets usually found along the Ghat ranges in Wynad, Palghat, and Kulithura'. While Buddhism became popular through the 'early traders and toddy-tappers from Ceylon' in Kerala beginning with regions like Aleppey-Kottayam. The Jews, Christians and Muslims shared a secured dwelling in the main 'harbour towns along the shoreline' without confronting any religious persecution'.

Ancient chroniclers like Atula, the court poet and chronicler in the Kingdom of Mushakara ruled by King Srikantha, as observed by Narayanan gives a detailed description of the 'religious harmony'

in the capital city of Kollam in his Mushakavamsa Kavya-dynastic history in Sanskrit language. This description of Kollam alone can be attributed to Kerala for many centuries to come. This social co-existence and harmonious relationship was dated to the beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> century. A foreign traveller, Pyrard de Laval around five centuries later makes a mention of Calicut with almost the same affiliations between the colonisers and the settlers as maintained by Narayanan.

Therefore, Narayanan concludes that though trade and commerce flourished in Kerala with the involvement of diverse religious communities, their existence with the Hindu population was one which was characterised by peaceful co-existence instead of conflict during the medieval period as cited by M.G.S Narayanan. The cultural trait of the settlers was featured with maintenance and preservation of their individuality rather than dissolve into the settled Hindu population. Thus the cultural behaviour of the settlers and the settled Hindu community of Kerala worked in parallel ways not affecting nor intruding in one another's religious freedom. Narayanan opines the disappearance of Jainism and Buddhism while the other religious communities continued to exist alongside with the Hindu population of Kerala for many centuries. This type of mutual adjustment in living patterns was credited with the title Symbiosis by Narayanan according to whom "It is true that different creeds coexisted, but no creed could be described as the anti-thesis arising from the thesis of Hinduism, and no synthesis had ever been formed"<sup>116</sup>.

In conclusion, the mutual amity among the three religions of Kerala thus thrived well into the following centuries but nevertheless it cannot be denied that there were certain influences between one another. This type of co-existence<sup>117</sup>(see Ft.Nt for details on integration of cultures) has nevertheless had a major impact on one another's religious customs and also in the architectures that decorated the religious shrines from time immemorial.

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<sup>116</sup>ibid., pp xii, para 3.

<sup>117</sup>Raghavan V., "Variety and Integration in the Pattern of Indian Culture", The Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol.15, No.4(Aug.,1956),pp 502.

The reconstruction of the past through forms of historical consciousness is portrayed by Susan Visvanathan in the book titled “The Christians of Kerala”. According to Visvanathan, “The time continuum for the Syrian Christian in a historical (not a theological) perspective is marked off from the coming of St.Thomas to the town of Muziris in the first century A.D. The perception of the past reflects homogeneity till the sixteenth century after which the effects of Portuguese ritual colonization can be seen. A shared historical consciousness is also expressed in the idea of community identity. The statements such as ‘Till the Portuguese came, we were one community’ is often commonly heard<sup>118</sup>.

Susan Visvanathan opines the importance of a house or taravat which also carried with it a name identified with the family that occupied it. Therefore, according to Visvanathan “Biography and History are woven closely together in these narratives, especially when a place is of both private and public significance. Genealogies play an important role here, for a house is a concrete symbol, embodying a particular genealogical moment. Houses are associated with specific families, and express the relation between past and present”<sup>119</sup>.

The embodiments of the past can be visible in certain symbolic structures such as houses and churches as maintained by Visvanathan. A place which is significant irrespective of it being a house or church is vital in historical time. This place establishes continuity between the past and the present. The houses or Churches “express different moments of its past. Architectural styles, graveyards, portraits of saints and bishops, hanging lamps and carvings, everything expresses a period peculiar to it, and accretions are as noticeable as exclusions”<sup>120</sup>.

Further “in the context of the neighbourhood, the physical, spatial and symbolic geography of house and church remain constant units at the level of particular description. This is because narration

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<sup>118</sup>Visvanathan Susan., “The Christians of Kerala”, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1993,pp34-35.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., pp37,para,4.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., pp 38, para 1,2.

and narrators are to be seen here more in the context of dramatic enactment than of narrative as merely a story told” in the folktale sense of the word.<sup>121</sup>

The history of the evolution of majority of churches portray its establishment as a result of the quarrels or feuds and therefore convey a bitter form of history in the reconstruction of its past. In the words of Visvanathan who quotes an old woman, “It is we who feel the impact of these quarrels and divisions. It is for us that the quarrels between churches are difficult to accept. For every quarrel a new church is spawned: churches grow out of quarrels, not out of faith. At every corner we have a new church, and each of these is a living memory of bitterness”<sup>122</sup>.

According to Visvanathan from the narratives of church history<sup>123</sup> (sabha charitram) it can be observed that the reconstruction of past purely depended upon the perception of the narrator based on hearsay and the knowledge of what he has read. The histories recounted and told by the previous generations to the present generation had obtained a different picture of the past, as the narrator while narrating the accounts often included ‘the three strands-community, neighbourhood and the individual which together form the tapestry of an event recollected. Beyond the biographical dimension, the events also reflect a moment in the general history of life in a certain neighbourhood. This juxtaposition of the two levels, community and neighbourhood, has its effect on the life of individuals and families’<sup>124</sup>.

The Narrative History of the recent past as part of Oral history does not maintain the same quality as the narratives that described events more than a century ago. This is because to quote Visvanathan “the narrator infuses into his account a subjectivity that can be born only of direct participation, and the semi-objective format of oral accounts is replaced by highly coloured emotional

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid., pp42, para 2.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., pp 44, para 3.

<sup>123</sup>VISVANATHAN, SUSAN. “The Legends of St. Thomas in Kerala.” *India International Centre Quarterly* 22, no. 2/3 (July 1, 1995): 27–44.

<sup>124</sup>Op.cit Visvanathan Susan., “The Christians of Kerala”,pp 54, para 2.

statements. The subjects of the narrative are not merely characters or personages on a public stage but are persons for whom the narrator has certain strongly defined and clearly articulated feelings”<sup>125</sup>.

In conclusion, Susan Visvanathan highlights the recollection of past memories mostly of a subjective category which is supposed to be of objective category. Hence such subjective views also form a part of historical consciousness. Thus, houses or taravads that marked the identity of the respective families also necessitates the detailed study of the type of families that were involved in the shaping of history through a shift from one form of inheritance to the other. The evolution of Patriarchy from Matriarchy in Kerala is explained in detail by Krishna Iyer.

Krishna Iyer in the book *Social History of Kerala, Vol. I* throws light on the importance of Matriarchy and Patriarchy that forms the pillar of Family system. According to Iyer, women from time immemorial maintained a low profile or rather was forced to do so. Iyer observes that women occupied the position of a slave in the past and hence they were not permitted to participate in any religious festivals. This type of treatment was common not only among the primitive tribes of Africa but also in most of the parts of the world.

Iyer begins to explain the circumstance under which women slowly gained importance. This was initiated with the discovery of fire by the primitive man during the Ice Age to protect himself from cold weather and to survive against the possible attack from wild animals. The primitive man thus found his basic necessity food as a hunter. Here his role at the fire place transferred on to the woman and man became only a regular visitor to the fire and later became dependent on it. Men, even after shifting to cattle rearing and also as a nomad travelling from place to place, his dependency over woman grew with the discovery of the earthen cooking pot.

Woman thus increased and expanded the range of her responsibilities. The cultivated crops under primitive husbandry were a result of the discovery of gathering fruits and digging of roots by the woman. This led to simple garden cultivation by spade and hoe the work of which was transferred to the woman by man.

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<sup>125</sup>ibid., pp 60, para 1.

Iyer observes that the importance of women attaining high levels with the realisation by man the ‘connection between procreation and birth’. The literal blood relationship between a mother and child introduced the system or knowledge of matriarchy. Here Iyer gives a comparison of the nursing period of the mothers which varies around the globe. “Among the primitive races, the mother nurses the offspring much longer than among civilised races. The period is six years among the Australians, fifteen among the Equinos, and three to four among the Malapantarams and the Paniyans of Kerala”<sup>126</sup>.

According to Iyer, a survey around the globe regarding the system of matriarchy shows that it was prevalent not only among the primitive people of Asia, Africa, Australia, America and Europe, but also among the civilised people in countries like Egypt, Greece, Rome and Persia. In the Indian Scenario, Iyer maintains that the earliest Indian culture- the Indus or the Mohenjo-Daro civilization also practiced matrilineal system. Iyer provides instances from epics like Mahabharata, and other religious literature and practices of Hindus, an affiliation towards matriarchy.

In the case of Kerala, the northern Kerala witnesses the practice of matriarchal system most importantly among the Mappilas and the Namboodiris also followed the same. To quote Iyer, “Kerala and West Mysore on the West Coast and the Khasi and Garo Hills of Central Assam in the extreme north-east are the two strongholds of Matriliney in India. In Kerala, it is largely found among the primitive tribes not to speak of the Dravidian tribes and castes. The matriarchal order is also found among the Bants and Billavas who are confined to the coastal plains. Similarly, it is found among the shifting cultivators like the Malakudias, who live in the rainy-forested slopes on the Western side of the Ghats”<sup>127</sup>.

According to Iyer, Matriarchy is defined as a ‘means of inheritancy in the female line in regard to relationship and property’. In other words property or inheritance was transferred from the mother’s brother to her son (his nephew) under the matriarchal form of inheritance through the female

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<sup>126</sup> Iyer Krishna L.A., “Social History of Kerala”, Vol. I- The Pre-Dravidians Book Centre Publications, Madras, 1968, pp 110, para 4.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp 111, para 4.

line. The role of man, though an owner or guardian of the matriarchal family, in the matter of inheritance his sisters sons would inherit the same as they were out of their father's ancestral family household.

The type of inheritance was known as matriarchal and was practiced by the primitive tribes among whom the departure of a girl or a woman from their group was not easily accepted. Therefore, men were only considered as 'offshoots of the main female stem' and were never regarded as important elements for the continuity nor the formation of the group. Hence, the rules governing the matriarchal system were always in harmony with regulations of the social institution.

Iyer provides certain fact findings or rather theories or principles that attest the effective function of matriarchy. He quotes F.J.Richards according to whom "there is abundant evidence that inheritance through females was at one time general in South India over which the Brahminic superstructure was built"<sup>128</sup>. Iyer also puts forth Tylor's study of the principles of survivals following which the anthropologists of the British school "attached great importance to survivals of matriarchy as a means of tracing the development of human institutions. Their conception of matriarchy was that it represented "the original state of society and that where existing societies are patriarchal, there matriarchy has been preceded by an earlier institution on a matrilineal basis"<sup>129</sup>.

Iyer observes the view of the anthropologist who maintained that as the primitive man lived by hunting, he took his wife for himself and they along with their children wandered from place to place formed the patriarchal family where man was the head and there was no clearly defined system of inheritance as they had nothing to inherit. Iyer gives few examples of earliest patriarchal groups in nomadic hunters like 'the Malapantarams, the Aranadans, the Kadars, and the Paniyans in Kerala. The system of patriarchy was replaced by matriarchy when man settled his life from hunting to agriculture.

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<sup>128</sup>ibid., pp 112, para 2.

<sup>129</sup>ibid., pp 112, para 3.

In the case of Kerala, Iyer maintains that from the early periods Kerala witnessed matriarchal set up as small areas of Kerala were under the rule of small chieftains who practiced matriarchy. Iyer further cites few place names of Kerala that followed matriarchy, they were the coastal Kerala under the Pre-Dravidian population, the Thantapulayas and the Kanapulayas of the coastal and midland areas while in the midland area the Western Pulayas, the Malavetans, and the Malankuravans matriarchy paved the way for patriarchy. Malabar witnessed matriarchy while Travancore had tribes that practiced patriarchy like the Malapantarams, the Aranadans, the Pathiyans, the Paniyans and the Kadars. Iyer further observes few more places that followed matriarchy like the dolmen-builders of Malabar, Muthuvans & Mannans of Cardamom Hills, the Vishavans of the Idayara Valley, etc.

Iyer observes the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy taking place in Malabar among the Pathiyans, the Thachanadans, the Kunduvadians, the Kadars (Wynad), the Kurichiyans, the Karimpalans, the Vettuvans, the Pulayas, and the Malakudias. Instances of matriarchy apart from Kerala, Iyer maintains that the Khasis of Assam in the North-East of India forms a very good example of matriarchy.

In conclusion, Iyer maintains that “the evolution of the family transformed the system of inheritance of property, but left that of dignity untouched. Family as a social unit has assimilated the traditions, the sentiments, and the modes of the behaviour of society. From social point of view, matriarchy cannot be considered as inferior to patriarchy. While the early basic traits of the personality of the individual are formed in the family, which transmits the cultural heritage to him and maintains a cultural continuity between the individual and society and indeed between generation and generation of society”<sup>130</sup>. According to Iyer, the matriarchal system was a perfect system long before the education of women was thought of anywhere in the world. In the beginning, men lived in families, inheritance being Patrilineal. As they grew in size with the growth of tribal feuds, they lived in aggregations, producing patrilineal and matrilineal institutions.<sup>131</sup> Thus the institution of family

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., pp 115, para 2-3.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., pp 115-116.

witnessed the patriarchal and matriarchal systems or vice versa based on the occupation or settlement pattern of the tribes or clans or groups at different periods of time.

According to an article from the *Social Scientist* written by Meera Velayudhan titled “Caste, Class and Political Organisation of Women in Travancore” maintains that women were considered to be mere actors in the historical process rather than as passive recipients of social change. This arose from a recognition of the social and economic structures that define women’s subordination and within which women have nonetheless, collectively struggled to establish their independence and autonomy<sup>132</sup>. It can be seen that the adoption of Hindu customs in case of marriage, by Christians is not only evident among the Syrian Christians but also among the Christians in South Canara as portrayed by Severine Silva and Stephen Fuchs<sup>133</sup>.

#### Conclusion:-

Families aligned their settlements on the basis of their occupation. Though the Syrian Christians, Muslims, Jews had diverse reasons for their settlement in the Hindu state of Kerala, their mutual co-existence independently maintaining their own identity was an exceptional feature of medieval Kerala society. The economic identity of the St. Thomas Christians was established through the flourishing of Spice trade. The Caste System that reigned the medieval period Hindu society was affected with its decline as the lower castes converted to religions like Christianity and Islam in order to liberate themselves from the rules of ‘pollution’. Kerala witnessed the summit of slavery under its feudal polity during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries wherein the landed magnates considered their slaves with the value of not more than a commodity. Both Matriarchy as the role of women gained importance and Patriarchy the male member as the head of the family marked the Kerala society at different periods

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<sup>132</sup>Velayudhan Meera., “Caste, Class and Political Organisation of Women in Travancore”, *Social Scientist* Vol, No. 5/6(May-June, 1991),pp. 61-79.

<sup>133</sup> Silva Severine; Fuchs Stephen., “The Marriage Customs of the Christians in South Canara, India”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol.24, No.2.(1965), pp. 1-52.

of time. The medieval period in Kerala also witnessed monogamy, polygamy and polyandry under the Christians, Muslims and Nair households respectively.

The introduction of Christianity by St. Thomas in ancient India and the conversion of down-trodden to Christianity by the Portuguese in the medieval period was a breakthrough in Hinduism as Christianity had no hierarchical caste system as was practised under Hinduism. The divisions under Christianity were on a horizontal plane with certain differences in their faith patterns. The term “Jati” was used to degrade the lower castes by Brahmins. But later the term “Matham” was used to show equal status to the religion a person belongs to. This transformation of terms was a result of the introduction of education by the Britishers. The coming of the British was a follow up to the previous three unsuccessful nations beginning with the Portuguese who came for the sole purpose of trade, the Dutch who followed the Portuguese the French who did the same and finally it was the British who were successful in the effective administration of the Indian empire for few years until the dawn of its struggle for an independent India. Therefore the introduction of Christianity was rather an ice-breaker in the prevalent ancient customs of Kerala.

The present study on the medieval family histories would also necessitate the detailed perception of the purpose of the arrival of the Portuguese during the medieval period. It may be said that in the long journey of the history of Kerala there developed a distinct personality on account of the topography, political situation and the patterns of production which produced a certain type of social structure. The Christians were thoroughly integrated into this structure and as Narayanan points out that they were like other immigrant groups Indianised, Hinduised and Keralised that continued till the Portuguese entry which marked a sharp historical break.

### Chapter 3

#### **The Entry of the Portuguese and its Impact on Christianity in Kerala during the Medieval period**

The Portuguese arrived as mere traders<sup>1</sup> of spices but practically they were not confined to that one mission alone but also began to pour interest in winning the indigenous St. Thomas Christians under the Roman hegemony. With the capture of Constantinople by the Turks the land route to the east became a sheer impossibility. Hence, the King of Portugal sponsored the discovery of new lands for trade by sea route. As a result of this type of support by the King, new lands were discovered by many explorers. On one such expedition, Bartolomeu Dias earned the fame of reaching the Southern tip of Africa and named it Cape of Good Hope which meant that the route south of Europe by sea via the right coast of Africa to its South then taking the left route from Africa's tip was a clear route to reach the Indian Sub-continent. Vasco da Gama another adventurer from Portugal followed the route first discovered by Dias and reached the shores of Calicut in the year 1498 A.D. They were received with a warm welcome by King Zamorin of Calicut and an estimated number of around three thousand Christians. The Portuguese at their arrival on the land of the Malayala were shocked to see these St. Thomas Christians who were totally different from the Christians of Rome & Europe. In India, St. Thomas, one among the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ landed on Indian shores in 52 A.D in a place called Kodungallore. On his arrival at the sea shore he witnessed few Brahmins offering morning prayers to the sun god by way of taking handful of water and pouring it down into the sea. St. Thomas interrupted their ablutions and requested them to offer the water in the atmosphere and make it stay there for some time in the name of the sun god which did not succeed and St. Thomas asked them to believe in the god he worshipped if the same act done by him was successful in the name of Jesus Christ. The Brahmins agreed without any reluctance. Finally, the same act was performed by St. Thomas with the miracle taking place and this incident marked the sowing of Christian religion in India as the Brahmins believed and were converted to this faith. The growth of

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<sup>1</sup>Rao, G. Niranjan. "Traders of the 'Medieval Orient.'" *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 40 (October 5, 2002): 4121–22.

Christianity in India was thus initiated in 52A.D itself and the converted Christians maintained their rich religious tradition and culture for centuries to come.

The spread of Christianity in the first century A.D is also attributed to the outreach of the Jewish population to different parts of the world. The avenues for the spread of Christianity outside the Jewish population became open with the baptism of Cornelius at Caesarea by Paul who made it clear that the good news of Christianity or the Gospel was not confined to the 'born-Jews' but to all those in the Roman empire who came together owing allegiance to the Church of Israel. This was followed by the death of Stephen as a result of persecution that made the withering of Christians from Jerusalem with a message of Jesus to be spread to different places. This initiated the Church in Antioch which remained as a central medium from where the chief leader was to proceed for the spread of Christianity. Asia Minor, Greece and Rome witnessed Christianity through Paul and those men who were inspired by him. The responsibility of the spread of Christianity to Egypt and to the East is not clearly identified according to A.S.Peake and R.G.Parsons. To quote them, "the seed of Christian conviction, however tiny seemed at first its outward envelope, had within itself a vital energy which communicated to common men and women so that they too were witness bearers. As has been truly written: "It was not merely confessors and martyrs who were missionaries, it was characteristic of this religion that everyone who seriously confessed the faith proved of service to its propaganda"<sup>2</sup>.

In the course of the rise and spread of Christianity, the people who received the gospel and accepted its teachings were not considered as secluded individuals who were also applicable to their thought process which was obviously not secluded. The writing that was to constitute the bulk New Testament in the second half of the first century conveyed the 'belief and preachings' of Christianity. The community of interests contributed by the people from the Christian Churches was a result of their own passion to cooperate heeding to their inner voice and not due to any kind of compulsion from outside. This self-willingness in participation exhibited enough flexibility which did not demand

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<sup>2</sup> Peake A.S. & Parsons., "An Outline of Christianity The Story of Our Civilization", Edited in Five Volumes, Vol.I. The Birth of Christianity, The Waverley Book Company, Ltd, London, year not mentioned, pp. 340, para1.

external coercion and authority. According to Peake and Parsons, “Here were faithful believers, bound together not by authority but by agreement, welded into a society of mutual sympathy, cherishing each one for himself and for one another the ideals which had come to them in the name of Jesus, responsible as Paul had charged them, “to admonish the disorderly, encourage the faint hearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all”<sup>3</sup>.

In the first century the civilization of Rome even consisted of different groups in the form of ‘guilds and human groupings’ which never witnessed such a new type of fellowship under Christianity where there were no constructed differences between a male and female, Jew and a non-Jew, slaves and Lord, whose privileges were considered as challenges before the supreme sovereign Jesus Christ. The communion of Jesus Christ was equal for all the people with a common mode of worship, common living, with a care for the needy and the downtrodden and in extending a shelter for any stranger and above all, such overall responsibility for those who accepted Christianity.

The firm grasp of Christianity to its witnessing places can be thus compared to the roots which mustard seed according to Peake and Parsons “sent out were of sturdy fibre and wherever they gripped the ground the living growth which they supported could not be dislodged by any ordinary storm of opposition from their world”<sup>4</sup>.

The Jewish Synagogues acted as existing disseminators of Christianity. The Jews were concentrated in every part of the civilization of Rome. As per the exact assessment of the existing Jews it is studied that those living in Palestine were only a fraction when compared to the overall number of which claimed the inheritance of Israel, Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor and Rome also witnessed their concentration in millions.

Jewish Synagogues (The Prayer House of Jews) played a great role in the spread of Christianity during the first Century AD. This was made possible due to the dispersion of Jews to any country which also paved the way for their organized form of worship in the Synagogues. *The Book of Acts* provides testimony to the fact of the spread of Christianity through Jewish Synagogues as a result

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp 341 para2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp 342, para1.

of which the first contacts were made with the population beyond Palestine by the Christian Missionaries. But with regard to conversions these Synagogues did not provide any congenial atmosphere. The hostile feeling of the members even took the form of an outbreak of riot that also included in it the attempt made to assassinate Paul who was considered guilty in abandoning his religious faith. Nevertheless it can be rightly maintained that the Jewish Synagogues though unwilling had indirectly played a prominent role in the spread of Christianity. It was due to their efforts that the gentiles were familiarized with a 'pure and lofty monotheism'- by which the understanding of Christian faith was not considered as only a 'ritual and sacrifice' but it was also closely connected to a perfect moral code or law. They also elaborated the pattern of worship which paved the way for the future Christian generations to follow which can be explained as "a worship of prayer and praise, instruction from the sacred writings, and exhortation"<sup>5</sup>. It can therefore be assessed that the germination of Christianity did not lack any nourishment in its growth process.

The decline of the heathen religions had generated a broken vacuum in the question of providing no support to the blossoming of a new faith. Christianity thus filled this vacuum space with its good news and positive message which would enable it to drift favourably in to the future. Thus, the rise and spread of Christianity from the first century A.D till the medieval period can be cited as one of the reasons along with economic benefits that ignited the spark in the royal monarchs of Portugal for sponsoring the geographical discoveries in the medieval period. It is therefore necessary to comprehend the condition of Portugal and Malabar as put forward by R.S.Whiteway.

R.S.Whiteway's "The Rise of Portuguese Power in India", portrays the detailed account of the background condition and situation of European Nations and the trade relations that paved the way for the discovery of New Sea-routes which were also given boost by the European royalty as a part of Missionary enterprise. Indian Sub-continent remained an unknown entry upto the end of the fifteenth century. A general picture of the non-involvement of few countries like Africa due to the lack of men interested in seafare, India bound by its religious dictum of not crossing the sea and the Chinese ships which sailed till the Euphrates before ten centuries did not even sail beyond the Malabar coast in the

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<sup>5</sup> Page 342 para 2.

first half of the fifteenth century. All such reasons in addition to the mastery of trade by the Arabs kept the Christian Nations at bay. The main importance to the discovery of the sea-route lies in the fact that it gave a death blow to the Muslim trade monopoly. The Portuguese even checked the Muslim merchants ships stationed at Calicut and wiped them out completely from that coast. Though the discovery of Cape of Good Hope and the succeeding events was a great turning point in world History, it was certainly not a peaceful development as Portugal suffered equal losses with regard to the number of people and the number of Ships. After the discovery of the New sea-route and then the route to India, the Portuguese witnessed the might of the Arabs who were extensive traders trading across the Indian Ocean. These Muslim merchants not only traded the goods to other countries but also sold the same goods to the consumer on land. Whiteway cites a good instance of this activity as “when Duarte Pacheco had in 1504, to defend Cochin from the attacks of the Samudri and the Muslimtraders whom he patronized, one of his first difficulties was that all the stocks of grain were in the hands of Muslimdealers, who could have caused a famine had they opposed him that country does not grow sufficient rice to support its population and the people only bought enough to last them for a few weeks consumption”<sup>6</sup>. Political independence though it was never important for the survival of their own community, they were willing to absorb the interested to their faith by means of conversion. They mostly accepted the prevailing political condition on the Indian coast. Therefore it can be factually understood as Whiteway maintains, “The great Muslim states of India have been founded from the inland by armies marching over the land, not by armies carried by the sea”<sup>7</sup>. These Muslim merchants were referred to as ‘Moors’ by which they were popularly distinguished. The histories of these Moors stand different in Africa and further East. On the African coast they are confronted with simple societies who had no set form of government and so they had to function as self-governing institutions. In Further East they came into contact with partially advanced Malays whose behavioural patterns equalled that of Indian people’s. The Indian set up was such that the outcaste people were the ones who were easily absorbed into the Muslim faith which guaranteed them equal status in society in sharp contrast to their own religions higher caste the Namboodiri Brahmins-who practiced

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<sup>6</sup> Whiteway .R.S., “The Rise of Portuguese Power in India 1497-1550”, Janaki Prakashan, Patna, 1979, pp-3

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp-3

purification rituals once confronted with the outcastes. This enabled the conversion of few Indians from the upper strata while conversion in large numbers among the ruling elite along with the ruled under them was witnessed in the Malay region.

The geographical setting prior to the arrival of the Portuguese is given in detail by Whiteway. There existed many Malabar principalities on the west coast to the South of the Vijayanagara Empire. Pepper was cultivated and the rule of Samudri in Calicut extended in reality to Cochin and Southern regions. The Portuguese also thrived well on the enmity between the Calicut King Samudri and the Raja of Cochin. The King of Cranganore most popularly known as Perumal who was ruling over the Malabar regions as a whole in the Ninth Century converted to Islam and left to Arabia and perished there. This Perumal had divided his country among numerous Chiefs before leaving and after many centuries towards the close of the fifteenth century the Raja of Cochin became his direct representative who “preserved the sacred stone at which certain ceremonies had to be performed before the sovereign rights could be claimed over the southern municipalities”<sup>8</sup>. The Samudri over a period of time displaced Raja of Cochin. The port of Cochin outshined as the best port among all other ports on the Malabar Coast.

The societal structure of Malabar is described by Whiteway as “highly artificial”. The Nair caste occupied the ruling and military positions. Brahmins continued to be priests. The rank of the Nair socially was equal to that of the Shudras but was high. The Nairs proved to be quite a faithful character to their employer and taking advantage of this, the Portuguese had appointed them as ‘Jangadas’(a guide on a journeys and to guard property). Jangada was appointed for every fort by the Portuguese. The entry of the Portuguese on the Indian scene was at a time when the Hindus and the Muslims were at war with each other. The Portuguese remained as masters over the sea and did not interfere or oppose any groups of India and they were only keen in carrying on trade and also defended their factories and forts during times of trial.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp-10

According to R.S. Whiteway, the brave attempts of the Portuguese in order to discover new lands might have made the Portuguese in India as a successful power only if their able and qualitative governors like Albuquerque, Afonso Mexia, Simao Botelho were appointed as “a body of government servants instead of isolated individuals”<sup>9</sup> from time to time.

A short background history of the prevailing condition of Portugal is very much apt taking into account their dire need among other European nations to take up the task of venturing out through sea-route to discover new lands for trade purpose. The history of Portugal was similar to the rest of the Spanish Peninsula which was overthrown and taken over by the Moors in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It was only in the year 1095 A.D that Portugal existed as a separate country as it was given as dowry for Theresa the wife of Count Henry of Burgundy. The wars with the Moors continued for two hundred and fifty years and stopped only in the mid-half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The post 14<sup>th</sup> century period for the succeeding hundred years due to the keen interest of Prince Henry of Portugal popularly known as ‘The navigator witnessed many untiring annual expeditions which were sent to find out a new sea-route to the East. These continuous persistent efforts of Prince Henry and King of Portugal blossomed in 1487 A.D. with the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope by Bartholomew Dias that would in future bear fruit of realizing the Portuguese commercial interests in the East. One or two ‘travellers quotes’ that R.S. Whiteway has quoted in this book from the best ones that give an insight into the prevailing condition of Malabar before and after the arrival of the Portuguese as they have witnessed in this country with their own eyes. During this time itself in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century is Zain –al abidin himself a Muslim whose work Tuhfut-ul –Mujahideen is accredited as a valuable work maintains that “the prosperity of the towns was much increased by the activity of the Muhammedans, but he goes on to point out that the Hindu rulers abstained from all oppression and, although they and their armies were pagans, paid every consideration to the prejudices and customs of the Muhammedans, and that, although the latter did not number one-tenth of the population in difference to them Friday was respected throughout Malabar, a death-sentence on a follower of their

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp-13 2<sup>nd</sup> para.

religion was never carried out without their consent and converts to their faith was not molested”<sup>10</sup>. The main two quotes of the views put forward by the Persian traveller Abdur Razzak and Italian traveller Varthema visiting Calicut in the year 1442 A.D. and 1505 A.D. respectively is given as follows:

“In 1442, 56 years before Da Gama reached it AbdurRazzak visited Calicut. As a Persian and a Muslim he hated the place, and he appears too to have been treated with scant ceremony by the Samudri. His description inspite of all is pleasant reading, and a good corrective to the continued abuse of the Portuguese. “The town is inhabited by infidels and situated on a hostile shore. It contains a number of Muslimwho are constant residents who have built two mosques and meet every Friday to offer up prayer. Securityand justice are so firmly established in this city that the wealthiest merchants bring thither from maritime countries considerable cargoes which they unload and unhesitatingly sent to the markets and the bazaars, without thinking in the meantime of any necessity of checking the accounts or keeping watch over the goods. The officers of the custom-house take upon themselves the charge of looking after the merchandise, over which they keep watch night and day. When a sale is effected they make on them a charge of one fortieth part; if they are not sold they make no charge on them whatsoever... But in Calicut, every ship, whatever place it may come from or wheresoever it may be bound, when it puts into this port is treated like other vessels, and has no trouble of any kind to put up with”<sup>11</sup>. Varthema’s view about Calicut is almost similar to that of Razak’s statement. “Varthemapraises the administration of justice and the probity of the merchants,- this too, inspite of traces in his book that he wrote with an eye to pleasing his Portuguese patrons”<sup>12</sup>.

In conclusion, the Portuguese discovery of new lands for trade through sea routes gave a death blow to the Muslim trade monopoly. The hatred towards the ‘Moors’ on Malabar Coast was a repercussion of the fatalities they suffered for more than two and half centuries when Portugal was overthrown by the ‘Moors’. Portugal’s prevailing situation in economic and religious spheres

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp-25.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp 26.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp-27.

furthered its explorations for a commercial exploitation of lands in order to fulfil their Crown requirements. The commercial exploits by the Portuguese are described in detail by Eugene F.Rice.

Eugene F.Rice and Anthony Grafton focus their main argument on the reflection of the background of European situation that naturally boosted the Portuguese venture. Portugal's geographical placement in the continent of Europe portrayed itself as a bird perched on a tree or in other words its free outlet to the sea enabled its venture out for further discovery of new lands under the auspices of the King of Portugal. This led to the European expansion conquering new lands almost into three major continents of the globe spanning the Africa, Asia and Far Eastern countries. These explorations extended the European influence in the political and religious spheres of their colonized areas though their prime focus being to foster trade and commerce between Portugal and the new found lands. This also resulted in their domination of economies of their trading areas by the use of force. The Portuguese aptly applied religion, economy and polity for the realization of their means. Eugene F.Rice quotes Hegel according to whom "the owl of Minerva flies only as dusk is falling" which can be clearly understood in the words of Rice as 'only toward the end of a historical process can we grasp its full significance'<sup>13</sup>. Thus, only at the end of few centuries of European domination of the world that the prime importance of discoveries is unveiled. Thus labelled the European Age of World History brought about an unmatched era that never existed prior to it. History consisted of Ages marked by Dictatorship, Wars & Peace, Dark Ages, Monarchy, Anarchy, Oligarchy, Ages of faith and Reason. All the above mentioned ages existed within their characteristic period and confined to their own boundaries. While the European age truly transformed World History by affecting the changes that had originated from within the continent to its neighbouring continents. The discoveries marked a new beginning in the colonization of areas in the countries they traded in, which paved the way for future countries to follow. But the true fact remains in the inert aim of the Portuguese during the initiation of their discoveries: the quest for gold in Africa being the underlying factor while the conquests were being made under the propagation of Christianity with a missionary motive under the slogan of Crusades.

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<sup>13</sup> Grafton Anthony & F.Rice Eugene, "The Foundations of Early Modern Europe 1460-1559", second edition, W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 1994, pp.32 para 3.

The in depth analysis of Portuguese explorations can be dated from the year 1415 when they sailed down to the African coast of Ceuta and conquered it. The Conquest of Ceuta exposed the prime motive of the Portuguese in its hostile attitude towards Islam. Ceuta was the prime area of conquest on account of finding enough gold for the Portuguese but its capture became “at once an episode in the long struggle of Christianity and Islam”<sup>14</sup>. Prince Henry the Navigator (1394-1460) was ‘the younger son of King John I of Portugal’ who primarily, diverted his interests in order to measure the power of Muslims in Africa. Secondly his interests were also diverted towards involving Prester John into a Christian alliance who was the ruler over many areas and prominently ‘identified with Negus, the Emperor of Ethiopia’ in order to ensue a war against the Muslims. After this the immediate priority of the Portuguese was to embark on a mission to convert the non-Christians to Christianity in an existing indigenous Christian population in the land of Kerala the establishment of which was by St.Thomas the Apostle of Christ in the first century A.D. Though conversion also was an important factor it could be truly realized only through effective finances to fund their missions. Thus, their success in commerce paved the way for their further endeavours in expanding European influence to other continents.

Their first commercial enterprise began in Africa for gold. Gold in Africa became well known after a map of Africa was drawn in the year 1375 by a Spanish Jew. The map pictured the figure of a black monarch with a sceptre in one hand and nugget of gold in the other and its legend read as follows “This Negro Lord is called Musa Mali, Lord of the blacks of Guinea. So abundant is the gold which is found in his country that he is the richest and most noble king in all the land”<sup>15</sup>. It can be maintained that the cartographers information is attested as rightly stated as a result of the same information from other relevant sources. According to these sources, the King’s original name was Mansa Musa. The immense wealth of his land was displayed during his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1321 which also surprised the Egyptians of Cairo. His Kingdom was also well known as it was one among the many organized states situated near the River Niger and the kingdom’s finances were well received from the profits they gained in the trade of gold. This trade in gold had began from the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid , pp.33

<sup>15</sup> Ibid , pp.33,para 3.

ancient past and by the tenth century the Mediterranean regions received powdered gold from The West African Sudan and also from regions of Ashanti which was situated to the north of the Gold Coast. In ancient period, the local people collected gold from 'river gravels' and sold it for salt which was scarce in their land to the disenchanted black Moslems. These Moslems traded this gold in Sahara's south fringe markets namely Niamey, Mansa Musa's Kingdom of Mali's capital and city of Jenne` renamed as a significant trade and culture centre and upto the Niger and also to Walata and Timbuktu-which were well known prosperous commercial centers which became a congenial meeting point of the southern merchants with their 'co-religionists from the Northern and Eastern African regions'. Thus the trade of gold was initiated by land route on camel caravans through the Sahara into the Maghrib – Algiers, Borre and Tunis- the famous ports of the Mediterranean. Therefore, for many years the Barbary Coast witnessed the continuous trade of 'merchants from Venice and Genoa, Marseilles and Barcelona' wherein the goods were carried through the desert from the far off 'countries of the blacks' famously known by the name Guinea. This trade monopoly of the Moslem blacks in the Mediterranean regions was targeted by Prince Henry whose further sponsorship of navigational activities mainly aimed at tapping this gold trade from its root itself and to overtake the Moslem merchants who traded in the Maghrib and Sahara and win them over the control of trade.

Prince Henry's primary objective to acquire the monopoly of gold lay in the fifteenth century scarcity of precious metals with specially gold in Europe which on acquisition by the country of Portugal would boost its power and the gains that would accompany it, would act as an added feather in the cap. Therefore the explorations sponsored by Prince Henry were not to be considered with less importance. But serious navigational activities required necessarily a good knowledge about navigation and cartography and advanced methods and techniques to be newly developed for an effective ship building and naval purposes. All these included the interests to venture out through widening of their knowledge horizons. Knowledge of early Africa was vested in them by a prior group of international scholars and seamen who were engaged in Prince Henry's service-to mention the names of these groups, they were 'Christians, Jews and Moslems' who mainly sought for the Guinea blacks, of their gold.

The royal support in Prince Henry's interest enabled the initiation of the Portuguese in geographical discoveries. The African coast was continually visited through the voyages they manoeuvred in. Prince Henry's death in the year 1460 made these sailors to travel off the Guinea Coast. The years between 1460 and 1480 witnessed exploitation of the areas commercially. And King John II ruling from 1481- 1495 took up the title of Lord of Guinea as an 'enthusiastic expansionist'. They also extended their contacts with other Kings of West Africa. The establishment of many forts and trading stations took place. All these concluded in The Portuguese attaining mastery of the trade monopoly over the African Moslems at a point of drawing to an end of the century. As a result of this, gold travelled by sea directly to Europe's cities of Lisbon and Antwerp instead of the prior desert caravan routes of reaching Algiers and Tunis leading to Genoa and Venice.

The sixteenth century therefore marked the prosperity of Portugal while the cities of Maghrib witnessed 'severe economic depression'. To the end of 1440's mention was made of Crusado the 'first national gold coin' that was issued as a sign of Portugal's worthy command of gold. According to Rice, "by 1502, an ordinary shipment of gold weighed two thousand ounces and normally twelve or fifteen ships arrive every year, each bringing a similar quantity. But gold was not all".<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the focus of the Portuguese shifted from gold to obtaining slaves. The Portuguese colonization of San Thome Island situated off the Cameroon coast witnessed the engage of black slaves to work in the estates planted with sugarcane with the idea of shipping sugar to Europe. The Portuguese traded quite economically. The best items of trade for example that can be sighted were the acquisition of costly 'Ivory, Ebony wood and Melegueta Pepper' in return for their cheap goods for sale like 'colored fabrics, rings, bracelets and copper dishes'. As rightly assessed by Eugene F. Rice and Anthony Grafton the Portuguese were more keen on the trade in slaves more than any other commercial sales. This became transparent with the shipment of a thousand slaves from Africa to Lisbon in the second half of the fifteenth century. The slave trade was continuous for many centuries that followed as it was considered with great gains only next to the gold and silver of Mexico and Peru respectively. Thus, it can be maintained that till the year 1530 gold was considered an important item for trade than

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid pp 35, para2.

slaves while the post 1530 period witnessed the importance of slaves more than gold concentrated on the Guinea Coast which emerged as an important source of forced labour in Africa by the colonists of the 'New World'.

The relevance of India in the travel diary of the Portuguese who were mostly interested in gold and slaves is to be studied with more seriousness. The shift of focus from gold and slaves of Guinea to the Spice of India had taken place at an unprecedented time span that cannot be easily comprehended. The ardent wish during Prince Henry's last years of his life was to be fulfilled by the Portuguese once their main aim in exploitation of the Guinea Coast had become 'continuous and efficient'. After this aim had been realized, the Portuguese diverted their future interests to venture into the East. There was tremendous progress in their efforts of sailing down the Coast of Africa during the 1480's. The year 1487 bore fruits as a result of their continuous efforts when Bartholomieu Dias reached the Cape and named it "Good Hope, for the promise it gave of finding India, so desired and for so many years sought after". The realization of this promise took a delayed period of ten long years. And in the year 1497 under the royal authoritative King of Portugal's dispatch, necessary arrangements were made for four ships to sail for discovering new lands and spices. This resulted in the arrival of Vasco da Gama at the coast of Calicut on May 20, 1498.

Eugene F.Rice cites the prevailing background of the Europeans in the variety of food products which was in deficit in their land. The fresh fruits and green vegetables were found only during the season and there was no 'rice, corn, potatoes, little cheese or butter at all in Europe. Another important product in dearth was sugar. The autumn season witnessed the availability of fresh meat in plenty on account of massive slaughter' during the season. Salt was used in meat in a comparatively higher proportion as the meat was not of a good quality due to it being extracted from 'excess work animals'. Therefore the normal diet of the Europeans according to Rice was mainly "bread and gruel enlivened by pickled cabbage, turnips, peas, lentils and onions. The entire art of cookery lay in the sauce and the piquancy of the sauce lay in its spices. Men wanted spices because they teased their palate, disguised the disagreeable or dull, gave variety to the menu. They wanted them for medicines and drugs, for perfumes and for use in religious ceremonies. The result was a most

powerful demand for camphor, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, maze, cardamom and above all, for pepper and cloves-all products of Asia and excessively rare in Europe”.<sup>17</sup>

The Portuguese on their arrival at Calicut witnessed a flourishing and organized trade between Europe and Far East with regard to spices which was a continuation from the ancient period. Malacca was the meeting point between the spices that came from Canton and the East Indies and the ships of Moslem merchants who controlled the Indian Ocean trade. The spices then reached the Malabar coast of Calicut, the second important port of redistribution and from there it travelled through two ancient routes to the Mediterranean - one through the entrance of the Persian Gulf i.e. Ormuz through the Euphrates river upto ‘Aleppo and Beirut’, or the other route to Aden through the Red Sea which went over land upto Suez and Alexandria. The Venetian Christian merchants for the first time received these invaluable cargo goods at Alexandria and Beirut. Therefore the close of the fifteenth century witnessed the monopoly of spice trade in the Mediterranean being ‘successfully enforced’ by Venice already imposed by it during the Middle Ages. Thus, the old trade routes engaged in the extended chain of spice trade had benefitted all the merchants and countries that were a part of it especially ‘the Moslem merchants of the Indian Ocean to the Sultans of Egypt and Turkey and the Venetian traders’.

This smooth flow of spice trade traffic was given a death blow by the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese threatened the Muslim monopoly of trade and used strategic methods to divert spice trade to be shipped directly to Lisbon voyaging around through the Cape of Good Hope.

The year 1509 witnessed the invalidation by the Mameluke Sultan of Egypt of a mass assembly with the collusion of Venetians. The tenure of Alfoso de Albuquerque (1509-1515) witnessed the destruction of Calicut and the Conquest of Ormuz and Goa, Goa being made ‘the trading centre of the Malabar Coast’. By 1511, the very famous commercial centre (i.e.) Malacca also saw its failure. The Portuguese firmly established its commercial roots as the basis for the foundation

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid pp 36, para2.

of its empire in the Indian Ocean in the beginning of two decades of the sixteenth century. Under their auspices the spices directly went to Lisbon which was then transported to Antwerp. These developments were a series of continuous process that began in the year 1501 and 1504 and which resulted in the complete establishment of European imperialism in the East by the year 1520.

Finally Rice concludes his observations of rekindling the importance of European domination of the world initiated through its medieval inquisitive discoveries. According to him the Portuguese also came to claim a major share in the European market. Pepper was only to be purchased in Lisbon even by Venetians by the year 1515. The diversion of the trade route by the Portuguese through a 'direct sea route to the Indies' did not completely result in the cessation of the spice flow along the old routes. The Portuguese therefore succeeded in breaking the monopoly of the Moslem merchants of the Indian Ocean but at the same time they did not succeed in establishing their own monopoly in trade. As Aden fell in 1538 to the Turks making the Red Sea also a Turkish Lake. In conclusion Eugene F. Rice and Anthony Grafton observes the effects of Da Gama's voyage of which they maintain that "In 1560 the amount of pepper and other spices that reached Alexandria and the Mediterranean was till as great as the amount that reached Lisbon. The ultimate triumph of the Oceanic route was inevitable; and Da Gama's voyage initiated the shift of Europe's centre of gravity from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, from Italy to the Netherlands, England and France. But the triumph was long delayed. Economic preponderance did not shift decisively to the North until the seventeenth century".<sup>18</sup>

This book ventures in depth into the Science, Technology and the discoveries that enabled the Economic expansion of Europe which was also affected by the Renaissance society and Humanist Culture. The Portuguese Empire in Asia need to be evaluated from a contextual perspective as its influence spreads over East Africa, Asia and Japan without isolating its position in the European context. Therefore a detailed study of the political and economic history along with its population statistics of Portugal in Europe in comparison to Asia that also effected in the initiation of discoveries is discussed by Sanjay Subramanyam.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp 38, para 2.

The “Empire” of the Portuguese earned fame during the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries with the initiation of the geographical discoveries under the patronage of the Kings of Portugal. Though the influence of the Portuguese did not last long in most of the above mentioned countries, it definitely bore fruits in the centuries of its inception and the preceding ones. According to Sanjay Subramanyam the year 1974 marked the final departure of the Portuguese from its colonial possessions in Africa, Timor was also taken back from the Portuguese by the Indonesian Republic and Macau remains awake in the light of the rule of the Portuguese empire.

The period between 1500-1700 witnessed the Portuguese trials in expansion through geographical discoveries to the establishment of power beginning from the Cape of Good Hope in the African Continent extending beyond Asian continent upto Japan. The Portuguese attempts to build and maintain such a vast empire under its control was bound for a necessary change as it was clearly characterised with instability. In order to perceive this unstable pattern of Portuguese control over the Asian platform, this assertion needs to be thoroughly scrutinised before arriving at a firm conclusion.

A detailed study of population analysis of Asia is recommended by Sanjay Subramanyam. Asia accounted for about a population of 300 million from the world population of 500 million. A century later in 1750 too Asia recorded sixty percent of the world’s population accounted to around 700 million. In the mid-fifteenth century population estimates were difficult to be obtained owing to the Black Death that spread over Eurasia and recovery from this in the post mid-fifteenth century period resulted in a drastic increase of population where the Portuguese presence in the continent witnessed the doubling of Asia’s population over a period of two hundred years from 1500-1700. At 1500 Asia’s population was estimated between 200 and 225 million. Asia’s population was not characterised by an even distribution. Japan the farthest limit of the Portuguese “Empire” estimated a drastic population increase from 1500-1700 than in the fourteenth or the eighteenth century. In contrary to these are the estimates of South East Asia which is marked by only a gradual increase in population from the period 1600-1800. This estimate does not clearly explain the period of sixteenth century in particular. The other two countries that seek mention about population figures owing to its geographical situation being closer to Japan and South East Asia are China and South West Asia

respectively. China's population witnessed an increase from 60 million in 1400 to 180 million in 1750 while South and West Asia's population estimates appear doubtful according to Sanjay Subramanyam until the eighteenth century. Therefore, the balance in population shift can be credited from the 'South and West to North and East over the period'. The period that spans Asia's population shift can also be characterised by the unification and decline of great urban centres. This shift cannot be fully perceived as an 'urban phenomenon' but the pressure of population, the expansion of cultivated lands which boosted the economy of manufacturing production sectors mainly in India and China resulting in an estimate of half of the world's textile production during the seventeenth century. Therefore, it can be finally assessed that most of the above estimates to quote Sanjay Subramanyam, "do not support the idea of a static Asia that had to confront a dynamic and expanding Portugal"<sup>19</sup>.

The fifteenth and sixteenth century changes in Asia need to be carefully studied in order to perceive the success and failure of the ruling political elite in diverse empires of Asia. The emergence of the Mughals and the Saffavids in Southern and Western Asia also witnesses the power of the Ottomans. The success and decline of the Vijayanagara political system is also witnessed in Southern India. Similarly there were many changes to be noted in the success stories of the political systems of South East and East Asia. "In the former case, Aceh, Arakan and to a lesser extent Mekanor are three remarkable sixteenth century success stories, while in the Far East, the turmoil's of the sixteenth century eventually throw up a lasting institution in the Bakufu- the 'Curtain government of the warlord house of the Tokugawas in Japan, who ruled behind the facade of imperial sovereignty until as late as 1868"<sup>20</sup>. Though changes took place they only resulted in the overthrow of one regime by the automatic replacement of another. However certain theories like the 'Asiatic Mode of Production' and 'Oriental Despotism' characterised the Asian societies and the states that ruled over them'. According to Subramanyam early Modern Asia had two types of States with different characteristic features the first type being the agrarian based economy that characterised empires like the Ottomans, the Saffavids, the Vijayanagara, the Mughals, the Ming in China, the Mataram in Jawa, the second

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<sup>19</sup> Subramanyam Sanjay., "The Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500-1700 A Political and Economic History", Longman Group, UK Limited, 1993, pp 10 para 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp 11, para1.

type being based on trade due to their situation on the coasts, the states namely Kilwa, Hurmuz, Calicut and Melaka were characterised with a trade based economy.

Therefore, the Empires like the Ottomans and the Mughals thrived on the revenues from 'land' than from 'trade'. While Calicut under the rule of the Zamorin (Samudri Raja) derived its major revenue from tax on trade. Subramanyam compares Calicut to similar other small kingdom states in coastal areas 'like Kotte in Western Sri Lanka', where the rulers delegated the management of trade to certain communities like the Muslim Mappilas of Malar, or foreigners (paradesis) 'from as far as Baghdad and Shiraz'. Subramanyam maintains that landed aristocracies wielded more political power and autonomy when compared to the urban trading class.

The Portuguese arrived in Asia at a time when it witnessed certain changes in the commercial sphere, the direction of trade being east-west. And in the years following 1300 the direction of trade was north-south i, e with South East Asia and South-Eastern Africa. The growth of this trade mainly depended on the tropical products namely spices, woods and minerals 'against manufactures-Chinese porcelains and silks and Indian cotton textiles'. The late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed a prominent expansion in bulk goods that of food grains and other such items in the port centered states of Aden, Hurmuz and Melaka. According to Subramanyam though the phase of commercial expansion was credited to the 'Arab dominance' of Indian Ocean trade, the participation of the following groups cannot be underestimated as well. These Asian merchant groups were "Gujrati Vantias and Bohras, Tamil and Telugu Chettis(Known in South East Asia as Kelings), Mappila and Maraikkayar Muslims from Southern India, Chinese from Fukien and other provinces of the South East in the Celestial Empire"<sup>21</sup>. It remains an undenied fact that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed the growth of Islam on the 'Shores of the Indian Ocean'. The introduction to Christianity to quote Subramanyam, the centuries immediately preceding the arrival of the Portuguese in Asia therefore saw a redefinition of the religious map of the continent and the expansion of Islam, and to a lesser extent Theravada Buddhism, religions that laid greater stress on the individual and individual salvation.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp 29 para 2.

Portuguese introduction of Christianity in Asian continent at the same time coincided with other religions that took roots in the recent past as a result 'of trade relations and acculturation' and not by mere conquest. Subramanyam further elaborates the prevailing condition of Portugal during the 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D in his chapter titled Portuguese state and society, 1200-1500. The history of the Portuguese was one with "a series of oppositions: interior versus coast, north versus south, city-dwellers versus rural-based nobility, the court-nobility versus the territorial nobility and so on"<sup>22</sup>. The hatred to the Muslim merchants by the Portuguese at the cost of Calicut was a continuity that took roots in their native land itself a few centuries ago. Till the late fifteenth century, there existed a colony of Muslim residents in Lisbon. But from 1170 A.D dated after the Christian conquest, the Muslim community in the city 'had received a letter-patent specifying its rights and dues in respect of the majority Christian community and the Crown. Moreover the Muslims were not fully recognised as citizens as they were subject to capitation fees and professional taxes. It can also be inferred that most of the Lisbon's Muslim settlers were not merchants but artisans. They were potters, blacksmiths, glass-makers, carpenters, etc. But the position of the Jews, another minority community was not the same in Portugal.

The Jews also were mostly artisans like the Muslims, in addition to being 'men- of letters, physicians and surgeons, and merchants of substance'. Portugal had been more tolerant to incorporate the increasing population of the Jews in the late fourteenth century as a result of persecution in Seville and other Spanish cities in 1391. Even Jewish traders required royal permission to engage in maritime trade. And the request for such a permit was put forward to Ferdinand and Isabel by Dom Joao II in 1481 to protect the Portuguese Jews involved in maritime trade. Therefore the economic statuses of the Portuguese Jews were better than the small Muslim colonies in the fifteenth century. Dom Manuel's edict of December of 1496 included "a feeling against all non- Christian peoples, something that scarcely augured well for a nation that was about to make direct contact with Asia and its tiny Christian population"<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp 36 para3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp 32 para 3.

It was an expulsion order of 1496' which was not agreed by all in the King's council due to religious tolerance and also for certain other reasons such as the Jews advising the Moors 'on what is necessary for them against the Christians, and also teach their mechanical officers mainly in making of arms' etc. Thus, the Jews human and financial capital was to be ensured in Dom Manuel's Kingdom. But the existence of Jews in Portugal would draw an unfriendly attitude by other European states against Portugal and hence Portugal had to finalise the Jewish expulsion. The Jewish expulsion was not an easy task as Portugal very well depended on their skills in seeking their advice in significant matters such as Dom Joao II took the advice from Abraao Zacuto, Jewish astronomer while planning the first voyage around the Cape of Good Hope'. Therefore as the expulsion order was promulgated as early as December 1496, Dom Manuel tried to prevent the expulsion of the Jews by the end of the same month through his demand to the Jews to convert to Christian religion. In this process of conversion the Crown had 'seized the ornaments and possessions of all synagogues and mosques'. Thus the Church of Lisbon known as our Lady of Conception was infact the great synagogue of Lisbon. The converted Jews of Portugal came to be known as the New Christians. In the post conversion period 1496-97 the Christian Portuguese bourgeoisie played a prominent role in the rivalry between the Christian and Jewish artisan groups and also in the imbalance resulted by the 'influx of Castilian Jews'. The period 1500 to 1700 in Medieval Portugal was marked by contradictions and oppositions. According to Subramanyam "the turning to the sea of Portugal may appear logical, in view of its strategic location, and its relatively limited agrarian resources. It also involved both conscious choices and a measure of serendipity and was cast in terms of a nationalism determined in a matrix: on the one hand, the opposition Christian versus Moor, on the other hand Portuguese versus Castilian".

The prevailing condition of Portugal as a nation had limited agricultural resources economically and socially had internal dissensions with the Muslims and Jews. This also paved the way for their hatred towards the Muslims in India too. Thus they aimed for a complete monopoly of trade by eliminating the Muslim traders off the Malabar Coast.

In conclusion, Sanjay Subramanyam portrays the dual perspective of Portuguese arrival both to their advantage in fostering trade relations and also spreading Christian faith thereby with a view to establish their supremacy and subdue the conquered lands politically under the rule of the King of Portugal and religiously to bring the new converts to pay allegiance to the Pope in Rome. Thus their voyage to India had economic and religious motive which gave birth to their political ambition of establishing an empire. Therefore a detailed contextual background is apparent in their initiation of the royally sponsored voyages. These voyages were in practical not an easy task to be accomplished. The various hardships and difficulties encountered beginning with Vasco Da Gama in the year 1497 and other continued expeditions till the year 1517 under King Manoel are described in detail by Henry Major, Richard F.S.A in “The Discoveries of Prince Henry The Navigator and Their Results” in Chapter XV.

In Chapter XV, titled Results Eastward from the year 1487-1517, the discovery of Bartholomeu Dias of Cape of Good Hope in the year 1487 bore fruit in living the path for a new discovery by Vasco Da Gama after a decade. Being given the order by King Manoel to undertake the voyage to India passing through the newly discovered Cape of Good Hope. The King took special care in working the best preparations for the new journey such as the construction of four small ships to enable sea travel without much difficulty. The best wood was selected in the building of Ships “in a solid manner” the largest one weighing not less than twenty tonnes and it was also “well fastened with iron. Every ship was equipped with three times supply of all necessary items, including the most well known and best pilots and sailors was sent along with Vasco Da Gama who set out on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1497 from Restello- a chapel constructed by Prince Henry who also appointed certain friars who belonged to the order of Christ to receive and administer confessions and Holy communion respectively to the outward bound sailors. After about four months of sea voyage their fleet landed in the Bay of St.Helena on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November situated on Africa’s West Coast. Here they came to be acquainted with the Bushmen wherein they halted to take some water and also to make use of astrolabe for astronomical observations. After 12 days had elapsed, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November Vasco Da Gama sailed past the newly discovered Cape as they proceeded south on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November.

This cape was given the title of Good Hope by King John II in thought of achieving that which was about to be accomplished. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of November they had entered San Bras bay, the name of which was given by Bartolomeu Dias. The fleet of Da Gama left San Bras bay on December 8<sup>th</sup>. On 15<sup>th</sup> December they spotted the Santa Cruz Island in Algoa Bay. On the 17<sup>th</sup> they passed the Rio do Iffante known to be Dais's extreme point of discovery and here Da Gama came to an encounter with a serious current. To his good fortune the breeze was in his favour which enabled them to sight a land on Christmas day to which was named Natal.

On Jan 10<sup>th</sup> 1498 they passed by a small river and the very next day they landed in the country of the Caffirs<sup>24</sup>. This country was called by Da Gama as Terra Da Boa Gente, or the country of the Good People and he called the river Rio Do Cobre due to the amount of copper exchanged by the natives for linen shirts.

The fleet of Da Gama reached a large river on Jan 22<sup>nd</sup> where he also met with two Mahometan merchants who looked richly dressed. It was from them that he gathered important information about the sea route to India. A pillar under the name Padrao of Sam Rafael was erected by him here and he also named the river Rio dos Boos signaes, or River of Good Signs.

On Jan 24<sup>th</sup> they set sail and on March 10<sup>th</sup> they reached the island of Mozambique. They were welcomed and treated kindly by the King of Mombaza on 7<sup>th</sup> April they were also assured of the supply of anything they were in need off and the fleet was conferred with good presents by the King. Da Gama continued his journey though with a little wind on April 12<sup>th</sup>. On 15<sup>th</sup> April on Easter day they landed at Melinda where they found out from their captives that there were four Indian Christian Ships there who could also help them, providing them with Christian pilots.

On April 22<sup>nd</sup> when the King of the land came on board, they send a Christian pilot as a result of the promise made by him to Da Gama who then released the hostage he had kept with him. Finally on April 24<sup>th</sup> they started for Calicut under the guidance of Malemo Canaca their pilot.

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<sup>24</sup>F.S.A Richard, Henry Major., "The Discoveries of Prince Henry The Navigator and their Results", Gilbert and Rivington Printers, London, 1877, pp.246.

On May 17<sup>th</sup> 1498 Da Gama was overjoyed as he sighted at a distance the land of India the end product or the result of so many years of untiring efforts. Vasco Da Gama anchored at Calicut on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1498. Samoudri Raja (The King of the Coast) a Hindu ruler, ruled over Calicut the most prosperous capital on the Malabar Coast. The name of the ruler Samoudri was renamed by the Portuguese as Zamorin. The Prince granted audience with Da Gama with pleasure but the success of the meeting did not last long on account of the Prince not being bestowed with gifts that was normally due for an Eastern ruler. This situation in addition to the ill-feeling of Arab merchants who flooded the harbour with their ships considered with anxiety of any competitors in the flourishing trade of spices which resulted in total failure. In this prevailing situation Da Gama thought it best as a part of his duty to establish a factory appointing Diogo Dias as its head who was the brother of Bartholomeu Dias who first discovered the Cape of Good Hope. Diogo Dias and his men were captured and confined as prisoners at the provocation of the Arabs. In an opposing act twelve Hindoos were captured who were on a visit to the Portuguese ships and kept hostage by Da Gama. At the release of Dias and his men only six of Hindoos were sent back retaining back the remaining six. Da Gama was ready to set sail on August 29 when the natives rushed for the release of their countrymen; Da Gama did not pay heed to their requests, sensing their motive to be dangerous he asked them to maintain distance. Da Gama let the natives of the land know that he would return back at the earliest by which time they would come to understand the true identity of the Portuguese to be thieves or not as they were made to be believed by the Arabs. The capture and imprisonment of Diogo Dias and his men were done completely without the knowledge of the Zamorin and when he came to know of it he not only released him but also gave him a letter to be given to Da Gama addressed to the King of Portugal which was hand written by Dias conveys the following-“Vasco da Gama, a nobleman of your household, has visited my kingdom which has given me great pleasure. In my Kingdom there is abundance of cinnamon, cloves, ginger, pepper and precious stones in great quantities. What I seek from thy country is gold, silver, coral and scarlet”<sup>25</sup>. The only intention of Da Gama in not releasing the remaining six Hindoos was to take them along to Portugal only to return with an additional assistance from their side paving the way for an easy friendly relationship between Portugal and India.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp.252.

Da Gama was ignorant of the caste of the hostages which would not allow their travel to Portugal by crossing the seven seas and they would prefer to be killed instead of travel to Portugal. It was a fact that most of them would sooner or later perish. On 30<sup>th</sup> their ship was surrounded by around seventy boats full of people who were driven away by their artillery. This went on one and half hour when for their good fortune a storm arose and carried them to the sea which also made the boats realising their powerlessness returned back. The voyage was continued by Da Gama on September 10<sup>th</sup> though with a little wind and also put one of the captives to the shore “with letters to the Zamorin which was written in Arabic by a Moor who had come with them”<sup>26</sup>. Da Gama while on his return journey and at quite a mile far away from the shore landed into a few islets on 15<sup>th</sup>. It is here on one of these shores that Da Gama erected one pillar named Santa Maria the last of the three that the King had ordered him to erect. The first two pillars namely Sam Rafael and Sam Gabriel were erected at Rio Dos Boos signaes and at Calicut respectively. From then onwards the people of that place came to be identified with the name of Santa Maria due to the Pillar being erected at that place. The people of this place were very happy at the pillar with a cross on it being erected on their island. This was mainly because they were Christians and hence were happy to meet the people of the same faith. The journey of Da Gama was continued. He sailed towards North to reach an island called Anchediva<sup>27</sup>. Da Gama and his fleet had to confront pirates attack who tried to win the Portuguese mind in the guise of building up cordial friendship and hence when drew nearer one of the ships named Sam Rafael fired at them. These pirates intended to dominate the ships if found weak but later found that Da Gama could not be taken for granted so they retreated to the shores only to be followed by Nicholas Coelho for some time. The very next day Da Gama’s fleet witnessed many presents by different people but they were not given that warm reception. This time Da Gama spotted a neatly dressed man with a turban tied perfectly fit on his head was also well versed in speaking Venetian language. He introduced himself as a person from the West where he stayed during his Childhood and presently was living under the command of a Moslem King (which could have been assessed as the Rajah of Goa). He also related that upon hearing the news of the arrival of travellers from the West he requested the King to allow

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<sup>26</sup>ibid., pp.253.

<sup>27</sup>ibid., pp.254.

him to visit the fleet upon which his King also gave a message to be told to Da Gama that he was willing to place his ships or whatever materials they needed from his territory at Da Gama's disposal. And also gave a secondary choice of his willingness to offer his country for stay if Da Gama agreed for the same. All these stories were reduced to ashes with Paolo Da Gama's inquiries which brought out the truth of this man that he was the leader of the Pirate gang who had disturbed this fleet a day before, Da Gama had this man beaten up for confessing what he was upto by creating the false stories he had told about him while he was introduced to Da Gama. His confession brought to light the truth of him being a Polish Jew from Posen, but his family was forced to move to Palestine in 1456 due to the prevalent ruthless persecution. His family then moved to Egypt, and Alexandria stands as his birthplace. As he was a deserving intelligent and experienced man he acquired the knighthood which would also provide him with pensions and other amenities that would offer him a respectable living under King Manoel after he was taken to Lisbon by Da Gama and converted to Christianity and was named as Gasparo Da Gama. He was of great help to Da Gama on his return journey mainly at Melinda.

Da Gama resumed his journey and left the island of Anchediva on Oct 5<sup>th</sup>. It took three months and three days to sail past Africa due to the unfavourable storms in the sea. During this time around thirty men on board collapsed on account of getting affected with scurvy. This made the commanders decide to sail back to India but to their deem of luck a strong and favourable wind took them to a land which was thought to be Portugal on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1499. The very next day they found themselves far away from Magadoxo while they kept their search for Melinda. On the following Monday Jan 7<sup>th</sup> they moved away from that town.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January, a Friday they started their voyage, halted their ships off the Ilas de Sam Jorge i, e the St.George islands, Mozambique and erected a pillar on this island on account of their remembrance of having first heard the mass on their beginning journey. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1499, a Sunday, Da Gama's fleet arrived at the Bay of San Bras. Here they gathered sufficient quantity of sea food for their return journey. As the winds were favourable, their sail was at ease and to quote

Richard Henry, “They doubled the Cape of Good Hope on Wednesday, the 20<sup>th</sup> of March”<sup>28</sup>. Those onboard the ships had regained their health. Finally after a long voyage Da Gama and his fleet of few ships arrived at Lisbon during the month end of August or the first half of September. Their return was welcomed with great pomp and pleasure. The King ordered that this successful discovery by Vasco Da Gama had to be celebrated in every city with popular fetes and general entertainment gathering in public was to be repeated in most of the major cities around his kingdom. Though the voyage of Vasco Da Gama was confronted with more losses, of his brother, more than half of his ship crew some damaged ships but still the few gains that he brought back were the news of the discovery that was a great answer to a major problem, the discovery of which would boost his own nations prosperity in the future years to come.

The following year after the return journey of Da Gama, Pedro Alvarez Cabral at the recommendations of Da Gama was given the responsibility of a next voyage to Calicut in order to build up cordial relations with the King of that country which really intended to extend commercial interests. Cabral’s fleet consisted of thirteen ships well armed with necessary military equipment and good number of presents to be offered to the King. Cabral had the best men in Bartholomew Dias, Nicolao Coelho and Gasparo, in addition to them were men who were administratively wise in order to take valid decisions in matters regarding their commercial policy which if effectively implemented will result in their establishing a factory on the coast of Malabar. However though Cabral’s fleet was a well planned and well equipped one it faced rough weather calamities on its starting voyage which left behind one of the fleet ships under the command of Luis Pires as it could not pace up with the other ships of the fleet. Cabral’s fleet therefore located a rounded topped mountain which was pre-supposed to be an island and as they were nearing it during the time of Easter this mountain was named Monte Pascoal. This mountain was part of the Chain Mountains of the Aymores, in Brazil. The country here was named as Vera Cruz later known as Santa Cruz. From this country came the dyewood of the ibirapitanga which made the place to be called Brazil. The coast was carefully studied by Nicolao Coelho. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> and on the following day 24<sup>th</sup> they halted at the bay named Porto

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp.257.

Seguro. The official subjugation of this country to Portugal was celebrated on May 1<sup>st</sup> with the setting up of a large cross on the coast. Gaspar de Lemos was sent to the King of Portugal in Europe to announce the discovery of Brazil. Cabral's fleet continued their journey, but on May 22<sup>nd</sup> when a devastating storm struck four of Cabral's fleet vessels, Bartolomeu Dias, who had earned a lot of fame in discovering the Cape of Good Hope, finally was lost in the Cape of Storms. Though such great losses occurred Cabral continued his voyage and reached Quiloa on July 20<sup>th</sup>. Then he proceeded to Melinda and renewed the relations that Da Gama had maintained with the sovereign of the country. Cabral's fleet finally arrived at Calicut on September 13<sup>th</sup> and bestowed its King with many presents through his interpreter Gasparo Da Gama. These presents filled up the wounds that Zamorin had with Da Gama.

They were also granted permission to set up a factory at Calicut under the direction of Ayres Correa. But all these positive activities were short lived with the attack of Mohammedans resulting in the murder of Christians along with Correa. In retaliation to such an attitude Cabral befriended the King of Cochin, the rival of King of Calicut and King of Cananor. Cabral thus returned to Portugal with remaining of his ships heavy laden with most valuable possessions they could carry with.

The fleet of Cabral again faced misfortune when one of his most heavily loaded ships was destroyed by hitting a reef near Melinda. The King of Mombaza meanwhile tried to extract the guns while the crew escaped after burning the ship. At Cape Verde in the month of June they came into contact with another Portuguese fleet consisting of three ships which started from Lisbon on May 13<sup>th</sup> under Amerigo Vespucci in order to make new discoveries on the Brazil coast. Vespucci in one of his letters to Lozenzo di Pier Francesco de' Medici explained the discoveries of Cabral as interpreted by Gasparo da Gama wherein one ship belonging to Cabral's fleet under Pedro Dias which was believed to have been lost in the stormy Cape rejoined the fleet at a later period after it reached till the entrance to the Red Sea and after many hardships sailed back to join the two remaining ships from Cabral's total fleet of thirteen ships. These three ships reached Lisbon on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1501 and the merchandise that characterized the three ships with heavy laden capacity according to Vespucci's account were, "an immense quantity of cinnamon, green and dry ginger, pepper, cloves, nutmeg, mace, musk, civet,

storax, benzoin, porcelain, cassia, mastic, incense, myrrh, red and white sandal wood, aloes, camphor, amber, canne (Indian shot, Canna Indica), lac, mummy (Portions of mummy that had been prepared with bitumen were in those days used as a drug. It is now used as a pigment), anib (The Aniba is an aromatic wood from Guyana, with which Vespucci may have made acquaintance in the West, and perhaps without sufficient precision have mentioned it among these eastern products), and tuzzia (or Thuja, Indian cypress), opium, Indian aloes, and many other drugs too numerous to detail. Of Jewels he knew that he saw many diamonds, rubies and pearls and one ruby of a most beautiful colour weighed seven carats and a half, but he did not see all”<sup>29</sup>. The reception and the rewards conferred on Cabral and his family respectively shows an exception as he had brought along with him those fortunes that benefitted mainly his country.

In the year 1501 on March 5<sup>th</sup> before the return of Cabral, King Manoel sent out four ships under the command of a noble Galician, Juan de Nova. De Nova in the course of his expedition discovered the Island of Ascension. De Nova halted at San Bras on July 7<sup>th</sup>, a watering place that was far beyond Cape of Good Hope. De Nova first reached Cananor from there on his way to Cochin he had to confront with the fleet of King of Calicut which was successfully defeated by De Nova. This success of De Nova awaited a warm reception at Cochin and the King of Cochin fulfilled that which De Nova had desired. De Nova on his way back halted at Cananor for completing the loading of his ships with heavy cargo after which he sailed back to Portugal. The discovery of the island of St. Helena is also credited on his return voyage from India to Portugal which was henceforth placed as a watering station for the ships that came back from India on their way to Europe. In the year 1502, De Nova reached Portugal on September 11<sup>th</sup> where he was also given a grand reception for his merited service credited for his country.

In the following year 1504, Socotra that was not spotted by the Portuguese before was used as a winter spot by Diogo Fernandes Pereira. The year 1505 marked the great expedition of Dom Francisco de Almeida with a larger fleet of twenty two ships consisting of a total number of fifteen thousand men sent by King Manoel. Almeida under the authority of being the first Viceroy of India

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pp 262.

had to follow strictly the royal instructions of constructing fortresses at Sophala and Quiloa and also to give freedom to the Portuguese commerce in India which was going through a lot of hardships. Almeida was successful in his ventures and as a valid evidence of his success eight ships fully loaded with spices were sent to Portugal under Fernam Soares 'in the beginning of following year'. The return voyage also bore fruit in discovering on February 1<sup>st</sup> the east coast in the island of Madagascar. Almeida in his further advances succeeded in the Conquest of Quiloa by dethroning its King as he refused to pay the tribute that was due and who also maintained hostile relations with the Portuguese. A new King was enthroned and crowned with solemnity. A fort named Santiago was found there, by Almeida. The forts of Anchediva and Cananor were founded by Almeida on his arrival in India. The King of Cochin was crowned solemnly by Almeida with a rich crown of gold that was sent by King Manoel. The terms of alliance and friendship which was extended by the King of Narsinga and others resulted in Almeida receiving Ambassadors from the same.

The year 1505 also witnessed the discovery of Ceylon by Almeida's son Lourenco but this country was already referred in overland writings. The King of Porto de Galle was made an ally of Portugal who had to pay four hundred bahars (three hundred pounds each) of cinnamon. The King of Sophala was also obliged to pay a tribute to Portugal by Pedro de Anhaya in the same year who also laid foundations of a fort on September 21<sup>st</sup> 1505. Joao Gomez d'Abreu was credited with discovering the west coast of Madagascar named as San Lourenco as it was discovered on August 10<sup>th</sup> (i.e.) St. Laurence's Day.

In 1506 Francisco de Almeida was to be succeeded by Affonso de Albuquerque after the formers governing tenure was about to expire. The Strait of Babel-Mandeb was explored by Affonso de Albuquerque. Maldives was discovered in the following year by Lourenco de Almeida. The fort of Mozambique was also founded by Duarte de Mello in the same year. The King of Ormuz was made to pay a tribute to Portugal as a result of the exploration of Affonso de Albuquerque on the Arabian and Persian coasts and the foundation was also laid for a fort named Nossa Senhora da Vittoria on October 24<sup>th</sup>. The year 1508 was another landmark year for Portugal as Malacca was discovered by Diogo Lopes de Sequeira who was sent by the King. Malacca thus became a great storehouse of the east to

which the commodities were brought and secured from different places like cloves from the Moluccas, nutmegs from Banda, sandalwood from Timor, Camphor from Borneo, gold from Sumatra and Loo Choo, and gums, spices, and other such items from China, Japan, Siam, Pegu, etc. Diogo Lopes de Sequeira had also been instrumental in setting up a factory at Malacca.

The year 1510 marks the tragic end of the famous first Viceroy of India Francisco De Almeida who was slain on March 1<sup>st</sup> on his return voyage to Portugal as a result of a conflict with the natives of Agoada de Saldanha near the Cape of Good Hope.

In the same year towards the end of November dated 25<sup>th</sup> Affonso de Albuquerque built a fort after the Conquest of Goa. A municipal government was also organized where measures were adopted for the conduct of a wise administration that would ultimately result in Goa being the capital of Portugal's eastern empire.

In 1511 Malacca was conquered by Albuquerque who also sent expeditions to Siam, Birmah, and East India Islands. The Island of Amboyna was discovered in 1511 and 1512 by Antonio de Abreu. The Mascarenhas islands in the years 1512 or 1513 might have been discovered by Pedro de Mascarenhas who is said to have also sailed to India in 1511 and remained for a longer time in Mozambique in the year 1512. The year 1517 witnessed the sail of Fernam Peres de Andrade to China who also maintained commercial relations with the governor of Canton. The year 1519 marks the return of Andrade to India.

This chapter on Results Eastward mainly portrays the numerous ventures that were sent out by King Manoel whose interest in navigational discoveries reaped heavy benefits for Portugal though undoubtedly Portugal suffered heavy losses through shipwrecks which also resulted in the loss of renowned navigators and thousands of Portuguese men who were capsized in the drowning ships. Da Gama and Cabral's exploration to India was a landmark. Results Eastward clearly explains in minute detail the expeditions carried out under the auspices of the King of Portugal from the year 1487-1517. This chapter also details down to the efforts and innumerable expedition to the East and the various discovered Islands and territories that are conquered, exhibit the supremacy of the

Portuguese power which succeeded in most of the conquered territories except India and China. Most of the secondary sources mention Portuguese as a failure power in India while this chapter throws light on the tremendous successes achieved by the Portuguese. The prevailing condition of Malabar that enabled the free entry of the Portuguese is portrayed by K.M.Panikkar in the book “Malabar and the Portuguese”.

K.M.Panikkar in his chapter titled “Malabar Before the Arrival of The Portuguese”, mentions the politico-social and economic condition of Malabar before the arrival of the Portuguese. The geographical isolation of Malabar with the Western Ghats severing its relation with the people on the eastern coast has developed a trend of trade through the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea to the Euphrates valley extending to Mediterranean countries like Europe. The earliest date available of trade with Malabar is 1000 B.C wherein mention is made of the articles brought from Ophir in Solomon’s ships. There was extensive trade, the monopoly of which was held by the Egyptians and Asiatic Greeks. The Roman trade with Malabar increased once it became an imperial power. This is evident from the presence of many Roman coins that the trade flourished from all ages beginning from the Age of Augustus which continued for the coming centuries. The Roman trade was carried on in the same commodities that formed the trading priority for the Portuguese as well at a later period. The commodities of exports from Malabar were pearls, pepper and gems while the imports to Malabar consisted of coral, lead, tin, stibium, etc.

The medieval period of Malabar witnessed the transfer of trade to Mahomedan merchants. The Malabar port also gained due importance as it served as a link between Arabia and China. The emergence of ‘Venice as the great maritime power of the Mediterranean’ had also paved the way for maintenance of trade relations with Europe. According to Panikkar, “The prosperity of Venice, resulting from her trade with India, was a matter of extreme jealousy to other European powers and one of the chief motives that led the Genoese and the Iberian nations to enterprises of maritime

exploration, leading to Vasco da Gama's discovery, was the desire to get direct to India without the intervention of Venice or Egypt<sup>30</sup>.

The political and social conditions of Malabar by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> C is elaborated by Panikkar according to whom Malabar presented a picture of a division of states from Cannanore to Cape Comorin into a number of small principalities 'ruled by a Raja of less important Chiefs all of whom rarely acknowledged the sovereignty of major rulers. At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> C, only three major rulers who exercised full sovereign rights were the Kolathiri or the King of Cannanore, the Zamorin or the King of Calicut and the Tiruvadi the King of Venad. Panikkar quotes from Tofut ul Mujahideen which mentions, with regard to the Zamorin, that "whenever he commenced hostilities with any of the considerable chiefs of Malabar after subduing them, it was his practice to return to them their possessions, and the restitution, although sometimes delayed for a long time, he made always in the end"<sup>31</sup>. This clearly portrays the independence of the chiefs. Though the Nair lords were like feudal barrons in the act of equipping the sovereign ruler with soldiers in times of war with other rulers. Therefore Panikkar maintains that "Malabar Law did not recognise the right of the sovereign either to depose a rebellious Chief or to confiscate his property"<sup>32</sup>. This also establishes the fact that Malabar did not practice the feudal principle as the landholders were independent of the ruler's power and they never maintained the land for the ruler.

Thus, the Malabar polity which had the absence of royal authority underwent a rather slow change by the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. The Great Hindu Empire of Vijayanagara's establishment and their influence spreading to the borders of Cannanore also influenced Malabar's political conditions. The Zamorin of Calicut grew to be the most powerful ruler due to the trade with the West that also made the Zamorin the wealthiest among other major rulers. Thus the Zamorin in the century before the coming of the Portuguese had exercised his royal power by extending his ruling authority from Cannore to Procaud, but the religious polity under the local traditions of Malabar prevented the Zamorin from becoming an autocratic monarch on the lines of the Kings of Vijayanagar. It can be

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<sup>30</sup>Panikkar K.M., "Malabar and The Portuguese", D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., Bombay, 1929, pp. 7, para2.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp 8.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp 8.

noted that powerful Nambudiris never acknowledged the political supremacy of the Rajahs and the massive revenues from temples were also managed by the Brahmins alone and the Rajah had no right to temple revenues. Thus, due to the established power of the landed magnates along with the religious authority's highhandedness, a proper central government framework was more a myth than a reality in Malabar as the Rajah's supremacy was not accepted by the above two groups. Therefore, Zamorin's authority expanded on account of adequate support from the Moors and 'to the borders of Procaud when the Portuguese arrived on the scene'<sup>33</sup>.

The Portuguese at the time of their arrival in Malabar witnessed a divided population vertically as well as horizontally. Vertically Malabari population was divided "into the Hindus, Christians, Mussulmans and Jews while horizontally into Nambudiris, Nairs, Tiyas and other castes among the Hindus, Moplas and the Arabs among Mussulmans and White and Black Jews among the followers of Judaism"<sup>34</sup>.

Panikkar also throws light on the 'position and internal organisation' of Nairs in Malabar at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese. The Nairs were recognised more as a community than a caste. According to Panikkar, "The Nair community consisted of three main divisions: The Samantas or the ruling castes, to which the leading royal families such as that of the Rajahs of Calicut, Vadakkumkur, Mangat and the vast majority of minor chiefs belonged; the large classes which constituted the militia of Malabar, and the lower classes such as barbers, washermen, potters and weavers"<sup>35</sup>.

Nair families were mostly characterised by the Matriarchal system and military organisation. The Nairs were only next to the superior positions of the Brahmins. The Tiyas came next to the Nairs in the hierarchical order. The Tiyas were mostly agricultural labourers who were exempted from the 'Civic and Political life of Malabar' and were also oppressed by the Nairs<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp 18.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp 19.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp 20.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp 21.

The Christians being converts from high caste Hindus – the Brahmins and Nairs, had later inclusions from even the lower caste Hindus. The Christian community also enjoyed many privileges. Their occupations were primarily ‘commercial and agricultural’ and they were also trained in the art of warfare by some Chieftains<sup>37</sup>. The Christians enjoyed complete religious freedom and also were bound to enjoy communal privileges. Their own Metrans or Bishops governed them. Apart from these social privileges they also enjoyed political influence to some extent. Traditions maintain a Rajah from Villiarvattam family as a ruler amongst the Christians. This royal family had become extinct well before the Portuguese had arrived. Panikkar states that the settlement of Christians were in groups in various places like Cranganore, Kunnamkulam, Udayamperoor in Cochin territory, and along the Valley of Pampa river and at Quilon<sup>38</sup>.

The Jewish settlements were confined mostly in Cranganore. The Black Jews and the White Jews were the two divisions of Jews. The Black Jews were of a mixed descent. The Jews had to migrate to Cochin on account of their life being unsafe in Cranganore due to the struggle between the Portuguese and the Zamorin.

The Moors formed the next important non- Hindu community as Panikkar cites, next only to the Nairs in political power and influence. Both the Arab settlers and Moplas of mixed descent combined to form the Moorish community who were settled at Calicut which being an important centre of Moorish trade. The Moors played a vital role in commanding the Naval forces of the Zamorin and also through their military aide the Zamorin was successful ‘in vanquishing his rivals’. The Moors had ‘the complete monopoly of seaborne trade’. The Moors were an extremely rich community. The amicable relationship between the Nairs and the Moors was based on ‘mutual tolerance’ and recognition that in social matters each community should be allowed to live its own life<sup>39</sup>. The Malabar Rajas also encouraged the Moors to establish their trade centres.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp 22.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp 22.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp 24.

Panikkar concludes the situation of Malabar at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century as “leading a comparatively happy, though politically isolated life. In many ways, her organisation was primitive; but she had evolved a system in which trade flourished, different communities lived together without friction, and absolute religious toleration existed<sup>40</sup>. Though there were many petty Kings and Rajahs, there was dearth of centrally effective royal authority to bind the Nairs into a single union. The preceding two centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese was oriented towards the increase of Zamorins power in order to bring the entire Malabar confederation under his sovereign rule. This process had its own outcome in the form of evolution of jealousies and feuds.

In conclusion, the absence of a royal authority in Malabar provided the Portuguese an opportunity to establish themselves in Malabar to pursue their trade benefits for Portugal. Though the Portuguese efforts in trade were directed for Crown benefits, the changes they brought about due to their involvement with different sections of Indian community is discussed by M.N.Pearson in his book New Cambridge History of India.

The arrival of the Portuguese and their motives behind discovering the sea route is explained in detail by M.N.Pearson in his book titled ‘The New Cambridge History of India I.1.The Portuguese in India’. This book highlights the role of the Portuguese as the only country of Europe that took the initiative to the discovery of new lands. While this is a general understanding, the background to this act of theirs lies in the European setting itself. They came to change the Indian people but their administration politically and religiously resulted in a failure. It was only in the Portugal that Prince Henry the Navigator also took the initiative to boost the discovery of new lands through sea route. The Portuguese main purpose, of its arrival in India was for trade but in their own words when asked the question, “What brought you here?” by a man in Calicut on their reaching the shores their plain reply was ‘We seek Christians and Spices’<sup>41</sup>. This answer reflects the fifteenth century norm as the Kings

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp 25.

<sup>41</sup> Pearson M.N., “The New Cambridge History of India I.1.The Portuguese in India”, Cambridge University Press, Orient Longman, 1987, pp-5 para3.

also addressed their letters with an explanation that the discoveries were designed so to fulfil their purpose to ‘serve God and make profit for ourselves’<sup>42</sup> .

Pearson in his book titled “The Portuguese in India” tries to give a positive outlook to the Portuguese Empire in India. Though history forms a hardcore reality wherein the Portuguese though arrived on the Indian subcontinent with an aim to bring drastic changes in India, could not accomplish the same like the complete success which the British had achieved. But as Pearson studies the impact of the Portuguese in most of the areas concerning Indian administration to be a minor one and their presence in India was that of a coexistence and interactive attribute than a purely dominating rule. The Portuguese activities should not be seen in isolation but it was a reflection of their own European point of views.

The chronology of attempts made by the Portuguese from the dawn of the early 15<sup>th</sup> century is clearly explained by Pearson. According to him the initiative year was in 1415 A.D which marked the conquer of the Moroccan city of Ceuta. By the 1420’s and 1430’s the islands of Madeira Azores respectively were settled by the Portuguese. By 1434 the deceptive Cape Bojador was rounded. This encouraged their attempts in 1480’s to round the Cape of Good Hope in 1488 by Bartolomeu Dias. After this achievement there was a good amount of gap when Da Gama sailed off from Lisbon in the year 1497 with a small fleet of three ships. These ships after reaching Indian coasts in the year 1498 sailed back and reached Portugal in the following year 1499. They were welcomed back with great pomp and celebrations. Within a short period of time preparations were in full swing under the royal auspices of King D. Manoel (1495-1521) in order to carry on further expeditions for the benefit of trade. Thus, the second expedition under the command of Cabral was authorized to set sail with a large fleet of thirteen ships and one thousand two hundred men in the year 1500.

According to Pearson, the urge of the Portuguese in discovering new lands is only seen as an economic drive. But in delving into the history of Portugal in the fifteenth century is pictured as a country that was insufficient in grain production and hence grain was regularly being imported to

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.,pp-5, para 3.

Portugal. This insufficiency provided the Portuguese with an impetus to find settlements in the Azores and Madeira resulting in the vast expanse of the production of cereal and sugar. Similarly North Africa was utilized for grain production under the auspices of Portugal. North Atlantic completed Portugal's search for new fishing grounds in order to get dual advantage from fishing as well as maritime training. In addition to the above reasons was the drop in the feudal income that made the Portuguese drive political in search for new spaces wherein to quote Pearson, "bastards, younger sons, and other disadvantaged nobles received land on feudal terms in the Atlantic islands, and could gain glory even Knighthoods, fighting on the North African frontier"<sup>43</sup>.

The flourishing of trade required gold for its sustenance and this was received in good quantities from West Africa in the 1450's. There was also a demand for labour with the expansion of production in sugar and this resulted in the flooding of Portuguese islands with slaves from West Africa after 1443. In sharp contrast to such a situation with regard to spices the 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe as a whole was well sufficient in spices through the traditional routes from the "Red Sea, to Alexandria and also to Venice"<sup>44</sup>.

The initiation of Portuguese discoveries in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century was the result of a series of causes that culminated with such explorations that changed the history of Europe as well as India. The prime cause among them was the coming into power of the Ottoman Turks in Eastern Mediterranean who affected some of the traditional Genoese investment areas. This was compensated by the Genoese bankers when they diverted their investments to Portugal which helped them to meet the expenditure of their discoveries. Portugal also witnessed drastic increase in its population which emerged as an answer to the prevailing "Black death" that threatened Portugal. The fifteenth Century Portugal was characterized by poverty consisting of a population of only almost a million people. This enabled the migration of excess rural population into urban areas. This type of migration weakened the authority exercised by nobles owning landed estates. This reduction of labour effected the nobility which was also being effected by the monarchy from 1385-1580 where the royal Conquest was also influenced

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. pp 6, para 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp 7, para1.

by the events in 1385. The year 1385 marked the victory over the Castile army which witnessed the establishment of the new dynasty by the Portuguese King. During this time majority of his nobles had been sentenced for execution or exile for supporting the foreign invaders. Thus in both places i.e. in their own villages as well as in the Royal Courts their position was unstable. Their fears were given vent with the execution of the top most noble, the Duke of Braganza for treason in the year 1184. In addition to the above chief causes the zeal for discoveries by Prince Henry Navigator whose interests in navigation were directed as a means of crusade against the Muslims played a major role in the initiation of Portuguese discoveries. This interest of Prince Henry blossomed in the establishment of a school towards the South- West part of Portugal for mariners and navigators. One after another different expeditions were sent down the West African coasts due to their subsequent success which they bravely carried forward with the 'Cross of Christ on their sails till according to Pearson it sunk below the horizon'.

The interest shown by the Prince and the role he played in the education of navigators and scientists stands out as his exceptional quality due to the fact of himself being not that educated. As was said for a Prince's responsibility even Prince Henry was responsible in managing large estates and also the economic interest of Portugal in soap making being his main monopoly. Though his interests to extend patronage to the voyages for discovery was guided by his religious faith or some other mystical thinking , the gains he received from it were handsome imports of 'gold and slaves'. Therefore, it can be concluded that whatever might have been the guiding force behind Prince Henry's navigational interests one thing that can be clearly perceived is that there was a central role played by the crown which provided the necessary impetus and direction to the merchants both Portuguese and foreign whose sponsored capital in addition to the ships that was to be set for sail.

The death of Prince Henry in the year 1460 highlighted the importance of the direction that was to be provided for the upcoming discoveries taking into account the prevalent conditions of Portuguese influence on the Atlantic Islands and African coasts. In the words of Pearson "the Atlantic Islands were producing a debased chivalry could perform its barbarous rituals in North Africa, and trade with West Africa was flourishing. The southern end of Africa seemed no where in sight. It was only a new

royal push, this time from the future Joao II (1481-95), which led to further progress southwards. The way in which this was done encapsulated exactly the whole merchant-King nexus which produced the discoveries. In 1469 after some years of stalemate a merchant was given wide ranging concessions. In return for a five year monopoly on the trade in gold and slaves, he had to discover hundred leagues of West African coasts a year. Thus were linked the merchant's search for profits, and the crown's desire, at least partly also with a view to profits, for further discoveries"<sup>45</sup>.

The background of Portugal that provided the required impetus to carry forth future discoveries resulting in their successful endeavours is best explained by the historians under various causes. They can be listed as follows. Firstly, the geographical situation of the country of Portugal to the extreme south west part of Europe contributed as a prime cause for the initiation of discoveries. The travel writings of Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville's most popular book "Travels" lighted a spark in the European minds about 'the idea of discovery and foreign Travel'. In addition to these the tradition of the Portuguese in seafaring as a result of fishing along the coast extending upto the north of Atlantic can be attributed also the foremost cause for them being the beginners into the expeditions that was carried out in future.

The seafaring tradition of Portugal does not necessarily make the then existing Portuguese as a thorough seafarer people. This understanding leads us to the main occupation of the Portuguese people who formed the major community of peasantry who were not well versed in the activities of the sea which also denies their economic dependence on the sea. In order to cite an example of their incompetence in navigational activity at the beginning of their expeditions in the year 1415 to conquer Ceuta, the Portuguese fleet faced a lot of difficulty in crossing the strait of Gibraltar. This situation of incompetence did not continue for long and soon they were to become masters of the sea not only in the manufacture and perfection of the ships ready for sail, but also the new navigation techniques that were acquired by them enabled their journey into the unknown seas down south.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.,pp 8, para 2.

According to Pearson the main drive of quest for these discoveries is tough to be confined to one or two motives. As from an economic point of view these discoveries were direct quest for gold and slaves and for attaining prosperity in agriculture. These discoveries can also be explained as a religious drive under auspices of Prince Henry. The discoveries on the other hand were initiated on the search for wealth according to Pearson. But the Portuguese were adept in the building of Churches and constant in missionary work of conversion in their trading areas especially in the sub-continent of India in Kerala. Even the Portuguese Kings extended their whole support as, they considered this activity of Portuguese discoverers as a service to God and profit for themselves'. Religion also played a major role in their trading or settlement areas. Da Gama and his fleet received a warm welcome by the Muslim ruler of Mozambique who had a preconceived notion of his guest Da Gama belonging to the same religion as of his. But later, when the truth was revealed great hostility developed on account of the background during the yester years conflict that was prevalent in North Africa and the Mediterranean which witnessed the emergence of crusades. The Portuguese also renewed the anti-Muslims fight which was first initiated as crusade in North Africa.

According to Pearson the Portuguese as claimed by many historians were not the first Europeans to set their foot on the Indian Soil. There were many Europeans who travelled to India belonging to different countries by land for trade mainly the Venetians, Italians and one among the Portuguese also in the year 1487 who was commissioned by the Portuguese King D.Joao II to report back to Portugal about the conditions prevalent in the Indian Ocean. Trade contacts paved the way for good communication skills even by Muslim merchants of India who were well versed in European languages on account of their trade area being in the Mediterranean where they came in contact with Venetians and Italians while they had spent time in North Africa too. Da Gama on his arrival at Calicut witnessed the communication in Castilian and Genoese by two Tunisian Muslims and Hebrew, Venetian, Arabic, German and little Spanish by a Polish Jew. The Portuguese in fact as Pearson observes had no prior knowledge about the Indian Ocean before 1498 as had been claimed by Da Gama. The ignorance of Da Gama about the Zamorin of Calicut was revealed by the absence of gifts which as a part of salutation had to be offered to the ruler of Calicut. The religion of

Hinduism was so an alien concept to the Portuguese that at first they mistook the Hindu Temple for Christian Church.

The Portuguese voyages of the 15<sup>th</sup> century necessitate a keen perception of their significance, whether their arrival by sea had made any positive impact, if yes whether in Europe or India. The answer blankly lies in Europe as the Portuguese discoveries had freed Europe from a 'geographic and mental cell' as quoted by a recent historian of Western Colonialism [D.K. Field House, the colonial Empires second ed. [London, 1982] P.4]<sup>46</sup>. Pearson maintains with regard to Eurasian trade that the alternative route was provided through the Cape while the influence of Europe on Asian trade was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. So then it can be concluded that the Portuguese can be regarded as the rightful precursor who paved the way for later Europeans who emerged successful in Asia, as they came with a determination of not only expansion but also the total subjugation or dominance of the countries they were trading in. The purpose of trade that was the prime motive of the medieval seafarers had been transformed to that of a settlement pattern of foreign powers in less weaker countries for taking up the control of their administration which ultimately resulted in the total submission of the weaker country under the foreign ruling power. The Portuguese as an expanding power of Europe cannot be rightly portrayed as the forerunner to the forthcoming Europeans in Asia in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This expansion was a result of the developments in science and technology which were an offshoot of the industrial revolution. These scientific developments might have been the main cause for the concept of dominance by the West European powers while rounding of the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese two and half centuries earlier did not produce such major effects. Therefore, it can be stated according to Pearson that "The Portuguese navigational triumphs in the 15<sup>th</sup> century must be seen as strictly a tour de force"<sup>47</sup>. The Portuguese were generally considered as the most effective alien people that had made a deep impact of Christian Religion in Asia. They were a people of different country, culture, complexions, etc revealing the type of society they belonged to.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp 13, para3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp 14, para2.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese population witnessed the separation of Jewish Community. But during the previous century, the Jews were never seen in isolation. This is attested by the fact that the Portuguese clothes, food, medicine and entertainment can be completely attributed to the influences that the Jews and the Muslims had on Portuguese society which practiced tolerance. The main cause for the isolation of the Jewish community was their expulsion from Spain in the year 1492. These Jews witnessed their total persecution from the country on account of the royal marriage between two Portugal Princes with Spanish Princesses wherein they had to abide by the marriage contracts which dictated the observance of intolerance and bigotry towards Jews. Further, the decree of D.Manuel in 1496 that those Jews and Muslims who refused to convert to Christianity were to be expelled from Portugal and it is also maintained that the goods seized from the expels were utilized in financing Da Gama's explorations. D. Manuel however did not carry forward a planned campaign of persecution. But instead D.Manuel made conversions to exist only as a formality where the converts were known as New Christians formally. These New Christians were given a period of twenty years as instruction time in order to get themselves acquainted with Christian religion. This type of tolerance practised by Manuel witnessed a very significant role played by the Jews in matters of trade, commerce and finance of the Portuguese. But during the sixteenth century, the Jews also faced threat from the Counter-Reformation movement which was based on a drive for Catholic purging or purity in addition to the Inquisition which though established in Lisbon in 1536 was practiced from 1547.

The years between 1569-70 in Portugal was affected by the worst plague which characterized the countries demographic feature with low life expectancy. Pearson quotes a modern estimate of Portugal accounted with "50,000 deaths in Lisbon, a city of about 100,000, during this epidemic. Even D.Manuel's thirteen children from his three wives did not survive till a complete life span as four children died before him and remaining nine children died before attaining forty years.

The Portuguese society of the sixteenth century was also characterized by religio-political and military conflicts which build up in their minds an anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiment of an extremely violent character. The period during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also included an

intellectual tendency of excitement, the vast new knowledge, produced by the explorations and discoveries owed most of its allegiance to the Renaissance spirit.

In the sixteenth century the static position of the Portuguese elite is questioned on account of different opposing influences. The elite was not static as the sixteenth century was marked as a period of confusion and change in religious and other intellectual aspects. In case of military matters the period from 1450-1530 witnessed “improved fortifications, the use of artillery in Naval warfare, the use of infantry, the development of hand-held guns”<sup>48</sup>, etc such series of fundamental changes in Europe. In addition to these above changes there is also a change found in the nature of the Portuguese state under King D.Manuel (1495-1521) where the establishment of a bureaucratic and mercantilist state is witnessed, characterized with the reduction of further power of the nobility and the beginning of regulation of crafts and also ‘to provide a minimum atleast of social service’. In this respect the PortugueseKings mostly neglected the people as embodied in Cortes quoted by Pearson they otherwise ruled through their dependent and subservient advisors<sup>49</sup>. Though all such above aspects were at work it was working within a small elite group wherein each one was known to one another where the degree of relation was also maintained.

The sixteenth century Portuguese society also witnessed the diverse existence of different types of groups. One group was that of the courtiers who had allied with the nobility to become close associates of the King or went overseas in order to prove themselves. The nobility can be broadly accounted to around 20,000 people who maintained contrary interests internally. The diverse interest can be segregated as lawyers and bureaucrats and the specially designated fidalgos (sons of somebody). Apart from the courtier-nobility merger group, the Portuguese society also witnessed the gentry (a rank below the nobility) merging with the merchants among them the New Christians based on their interests of the gentry commercially. The New Christians position had no improvement based on the category laid down by Britain or Holland. The New Christians continued to be under strict persecution and confiscation. The middleclass in Portuguese society was effected due to want of

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp 19, para1.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp 19, para1.

capital and an imbalanced competition they faced from the King and nobility who had mercantile interests. Therefore, the incapability of the merchant class to rise to the level of mercantile capitalists posed as a major failure factor for the Portuguese who could not gain and build up on its sixteenth century successes. The population of Portugal during the sixteenth century is best expressed by Pearson who quotes Braudel according to whom “It was a country rotten at the core, an enormous deadweight of which Philip was to find himself master in 1580”<sup>50</sup>.

A glance of other aspects during the sixteenth century in Portugal were people rarely knew of furniture, spoons and fork. Every household consisted of a bed, a chair if present was exclusively segregated for use only by the head of the house, while others used the floor after the Muslim practice of being seated on the floor. During the fifteenth century the most common utensil that was brought with a meal was a knife. The pre-Counter Reformation period in Portugal witnessed societal immorality where adultery and partnerships not legalized by sacraments resulting in the production of illegitimate children became a common plight in addition to prostitution and homosexuality. The Counter Reformation brought about a drastic change in this outlook and in the sixteenth century matters concerning legitimacy and sex were considered with a strict formality. But this strictness was confined only to the creamy layer of the society or the elite group who mostly conducted the weddings legally which was performed by a priest. Pearson also observes the notion of modesty that was in vogue during the fifteenth century wherein a man through his clothes mostly revealed much more when compared to women who were mostly veiled and therefore were adorned with less revealing clothes.

The question on whether Portugal was a nation in the sixteenth century discloses revealing facts by many historians who maintain the concept ‘nationalism’ to have been more appropriate instead of ‘patriotism’. According to Pearson “at the least patriotism was well developed in Portugal”<sup>51</sup>. This can be assessed from the fact of the reconquer of Portugal from the Muslims and fixing its own boundary

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp 20, para 2. Pearson quotes Fernand Braudel, “The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the age of Philip II (London, 1972-3), Vol. I pp 585-91.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp 22, para 2.

with Spain during the mid-half of the thirteenth century. This boundary fixation credited Portugal as being the oldest state in Europe.

The assessment of the Portuguese impact on India and the Indian impact on the Portuguese would have been incomplete only by delving into the Portuguese background. Hence the exposure of the Indian scenario should also be considered as important.

The population of India in the year 1600 was approximately 140 or 150 million which portrayed itself as a bulk estimate before the Portuguese. The fact here is that this vast population was neither concerned nor effected by the Portuguese as a whole. In order to clearly perceive that section of the Indian people who were affected by the Portuguese a clear explanation on the political and the economic situation in the Indian Ocean and the coastlands is considered feasible.

The year 1500 is rightly demarcated as a year of Arab dominance. As Muslims were the community who owned, manned and controlled the bulk trade. The revealing fact here is that the Muslims were internally diverse based on the place to the country they belonged to. To make a mention about them, some hailed from the Middle-East belonging to the Red Sea and Hadramaut areas while majority Muslims belong to the recent converts from Gujarat, Malabar and Bengal. It cannot be a denied fact that even the Hindus belonging to different castes also took active participation in trade. To mention a few are the Vantias (Gujarat Hindu or Jain merchants), the Chettyars of Coromandel and accompanied by a rather different group from the South-East India known as the Chulia Muslims. Fishing was also mainly indulged in by the lower caste Hindus hailing from Malabar and Gujarat.

The main commodity of Indian trade was cotton fabrics from Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal some being costly while majority of it being coarse material for everyday wear from Gujarat. Here there is also evidence of the system of the prevalence of Barter system where between the Portuguese and the suppliers, the price of spices was fixed in cloths instead of money. The trade goods that went to Europe through the Red Sea were 'cotton, indigo, spices and drugs, and in return received European woollens, silks and bullion'. Pepper came from Malabar through Calicut and cinnamon came from Sri Lanka while Malacca's trade in pepper, mace, nutmeg and cloves which were received from Indonesia

were exchanged for clothes from India and bullion from Red Sea. From China materials in silks and porcelain were traded.

Thus, trade flourished well during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries between the foreign trading powers and the Indian merchant groups but this never included the involvement of any major dynasties of India like the declining Lodi Sultanate, the newly established Mughal empire which were strictly land based empires which derived the vast bulk of income from land revenues and other land based sources like 'various tolls and transit fees'. This was the situation of North India. It can almost mean the same in the case of Southern India too where the collapse of the Bahamani Kingdom paved the way for small independent principalities established by the Muslim elite of the Deccan in the late fifteenth century. These states had a struggle among themselves and at a later period their struggles continued with the Hindu Vijayanagar of the South and after 1565 they tried to expand over the ruins of the Vijayanagar Empire. The interest of the Muslim rulers in encouraging the Hajj pilgrims to travel to Mecca and Medina was with a prime motive to impress the faithful subjects under their rule and absolutely with no diversion of interest for maritime activity. Even in the case of the Indian political elite they were only involved in private trading activities relating to maritime affairs with the exception of certain nobles or the ladies belonging to the harem had their agents who took over the task of sending goods off on the account of their masters (noble or harem ladies) who had employed them. These political elite also lend money to the sea traders confining themselves to only such activities related to the sea on a small scale rather than a large scale involvement directed towards maritime affairs. The income from maritime trade and affairs were derived by only few 'state officials or quasi officials' thus forming an exception in focusing their incomes on sea which could have been received by them or vice versa. In middle strata one section of people who were basically land based derived part of their respective incomes from taxes on those goods that were to be part of the exports by sea. The other section numbering to mention only a few were 'customs collectors and governors of port cities'. These were only a part of the common section of people who were interested to derive their revenue from sea trade hence being sea oriented. The above discussed officials were in the service of a large sphere political leadership. A different scene is portrayed regarding the southern

rulers who ruled the seaboard states mainly focused their interests to port cities. To cite a few such rulers of the states as examples in Malabar are ‘the Zamorin of Calicut, Rajas of Cochin, Cannanore, Quilon and rulers of various such other port cities. Here these rulers derived comparatively less revenue from land and a major share of the State income was the direct and indirect profits derived from sea trade. Customs duties and port charges were quite evident here but it cannot be denied that land revenue was also derived from the main production areas of spices. Therefore, these few political elite who only focused on their own gains from sea trade some being independent others engaged in a tribute relationship to their rulers were the only ones who seriously pursued their orientation towards seafare activities of India in the year 1500. They mostly played a passive role where no active policies were pursued with regard to trade on sea as they fostered interests in trade on their own accounts and not a full fledged utilization of their political power that would include huge areas of trade on behalf of the state or themselves.

In sharp contrast to this Indian mentality, the Portuguese were credited with the introduction of politics in the sea. This attitude of the Portuguese necessitates a note on the prevailing condition of Indian seas during their arrival. The condition prevalent was that of a peaceful commercial competition where each trade route in the sea was dominated by a specific merchant group. The trade between Coromandal and Malacca under the Chettyars and the Chulia Muslims, the Western Indian Coastal trade under the Guajarati’s who also actively participated in other routes, the Calicut to the Red Sea route under the Middle East Muslims. Though piracy still prevailed as a black mark in the Indian Ocean, it can be assuredly maintained that the year 1500 witnessed a maritime trade that was free from state control.

The Portuguese arrival at this right time to such an existing situation was to exploit the prevailing conditions of the Indian Ocean to their advantage. They therefore tried to use military force in order to benefit their state and themselves. Their two fold objective was “to try and monopolize the supply of spices to Europe and to control and tax other Asian trade”.<sup>52</sup> Their policies were determined to be executed by way of force. This resulted in the establishment of forts for the effective control of trade

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp 30, para 2.

by the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. A total of fifty forts, its neighbouring fortified areas, and a fleet of around hundred ships of different sizes were stationed in different areas by the Portuguese. Such vast number of fort acquisition by the Portuguese was made possible only by the method of Conquest. During the sixteenth century the Portuguese were also active competitors with the Ottomans as both these powers had diverted interests for expansion in the Indian Ocean. Pearson rightly quotes Denison Ross according to whom "it is quite conceivable that if one of their fleets had succeeded in driving the Portuguese out of their fortresses on the Indian coast, the establishment of the Christian power in India might have been indefinitely postponed"[E. Denison Ross, 'The Portuguese in India, 1498-1598', in the Cambridge History of India, Vol.V, Delhi, 1968, pp.27]. Pearson attests Ross's statement and opines that though the Portuguese and the Ottomans were on equal verge competitors the victory of the Portuguese can be attributed to the fact of their arrival at the place ahead of the Turks many years before. In addition to this the diverse interests of Turkey as it was engaged in an 'endemic war' with Saffavids in Iran and the various campaigns it carried out in the Mediterranean and the Balkan regions made the impact of their concentration on the Indian Ocean only as a 'side show' with little or least importance being attributed to its activities.

Pearson clearly describes the rule of the Portuguese in their 'far-flung empire'. According to Pearson the rule of the Portuguese "at first sight seems to be marvellously articulated and centralized"<sup>53</sup>. In Portugal after 1580 in Madrid the King occupied the top most position with officials to assist him. The state of India under the Portuguese rule was governed by a Viceroy or governor as its head. The Viceroy enjoyed a comparatively higher status than the governor who resided at Cochin and later Goa after the year 1515. The civil and military governments 'from East Africa to the Moluccas and Macao' were under their responsibility. The governor at Goa had a council which was not properly organized or institutionalized.

The Council of State had evolved by 1563 which was more of an institutionalized system. The members constituting this council of state included the Governor as its president, the archbishop of Goa, the chief inquisitor, two or three of the older fidalgos resident in Goa, the head of the High

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp.34 para3.

Court, the Captain of the city of Goa, and the Vedor da Fazenda, or Chief financial official'. Therefore, a clear distinction was made between the different areas of authority. This authority can be broadly classified under four heads-the Vedor or later the conselho da Fazenda exercising authority over financial matters, clerics in religious affairs, High court in legal matters and the municipal council exercising authority over the local government. The prime motive of the Portuguese in the construction of forts and in the organization of the council of state on proper guidelines was purely directed to achieve their various economic aims as follows "a monopoly of the spice trade to Europe; a monopoly on the trade between various specified ports within Asia; the control, direction and taxation of all other trade in the Indian Ocean; private trade, done on their own behalf by most Portuguese living in Asia"<sup>54</sup>.

The Portuguese thirst to gain monopoly over spice trade to Europe stems from the fact of its background being that of a poor country which owing to its size would not have even hoped to make a great impact on the territories of Asia. But in order to sustain its empire the Portuguese exploited the Asian seas by controlling and taxing sea trade. This fact is clearly evident from the comparison of estimates of revenue in Goa itself being around 60 percent with the revenue derived from the whole empire being closer to 65. The additional revenues derived by the Portuguese from sea trade and its control were good amounts of booty from the Asian ships which were captured by the Portuguese due to their involvement in 'illegal trade'. This was achieved as the Asian seas were not claimed under any foreign authority before the arrival of the Portuguese who rightly declared themselves as the Lords of the Sea in Asia. The Portuguese therefore provided a license to all the ships that travelled on the given passage which was known as Cartaz (Pass). Thus according to Cartaz rules those ships without providing valid details of the ship and its crew or travelling without a crew were immediately confiscated and its goods were seized by the Portuguese. Another effective method of trade control was through the cafilas (a convoy of small local merchant ships guarded by a Portuguese fleet). Pearson maintains the two main advantages under which the cafilas system was at work was to reap the profit for the Portuguese customs houses and protect the native traders. Therefore, according

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.,pp-36, para 3.

to Pearson 'the escort fleet had two functions; to guard the merchant ships from pirates and to make sure none of these same merchant ships slipped away to trade outside the Portuguese system'.

Pearson also makes mention of the Nestorian Christians who were actively involved in the cultivation of pepper sold it to the usual Muslim merchants who were well versed in this trade as they were frightened of the Portuguese and their inquisition. These Muslim traders then sold this pepper to the Portuguese in Cochin as well as to other exporters. Later Malabar and Coromandel became a part of private trade for the Portuguese.

The tomb of St. Thomas was found in Meliapur by 1517 and from 1545 it was renamed as Sao Thome in present day suburb of Madras. The finding of this tomb was a result of a preliminary expedition sent to Coromandel in 1507 by Viceroy Almeida in order to study the prevailing situation and also search for the tomb of St. Thomas.

The Portuguese impact on Indian society according to Pearson did not try to effect any generic change; instead the existing patterns were casually altered or redirected. The decline of the Portuguese by Pearson is best explained by a quote from a seventeenth century French traveller who "noted with, with considerable personal reservations, how contemporaries attributed the decline to want of zeal for Religion. They say that the Portuguese's entering India with a Crucifix in one Hand and the Sword in the other, finding much gold, they laid aside the Crucifix to fill their Pockets; and not being able to hold them up with one hand they were grown so heavy, they dropp'd their sword too. Being found in this posture by those who came after, they were easily overcome"<sup>55</sup>.

Therefore in conclusion it can be said that the arrival of the Portuguese on the Indian sub-continent did bring about certain changes that effected different sections or communities of the people of India. Though their prime motive was trade which they initiated as a part of intrusion into the Asian sea borne territories it later took the form of a religious introduction (i.e.) Christianity and on the other side continuing their prolonged warfare with the Muslim community which bred enmity for Portugal. However they excelled as the best Europeans traders but they did not succeed in establishing a firm

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<sup>55</sup> Sen, S.N., "The Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri, p. 198, New Delhi, 1949", pp.132 para 3.

administrative control that lasted for centuries like their successors the British. Pearson rightly maintains their limited impact on the everyday life of Indians to be comparatively on a lesser extent than is most widely perceived. While the Portuguese exercised limited impact on the everyday life of Indians, their planned plots to establish their firm hold on Malabar soil is elaborated by K.M.Panikkar.

K.M. Panikkar portrays the plots of the Portuguese in relation to the Kings of Kerala. The Portuguese initiation through a treaty made by Cabral with the Raja of Cochin created an internal dissension in the relationship between the Cochin Raja and the Zamorin. This treaty promised the Cochin Raja to take over the reigns of the Kingdom of Malabar independent of the Zamorin. The clauses of the treaty was no longer valid around 12 years later during the time of Albuquerque who succeeded in seeking peace with Zamorin instead of hailing the Raja of Cochin who was made to believe that he would be made the sovereign of Kerala with the support of the Portuguese. The Zamorin knew the result of allowing the establishment of the foreign intruders which was a true warning to the independent rule of the Malabar princes. Therefore, the Zamorin ordered the surrender of the 'newcomers' and owing to the interest of the Rajah of Cochin asked for their 'expulsion from Cochin'.<sup>56</sup>

However the Cochin Raja refused to heed to the Zamorin's orders of Portuguese expulsion from Cochin territory though his own 'officers, nobles and leading generals' were willing to comply with the Zamorin's request.

The Cochin Raja's refusal to the Zamorin's orders of Portuguese expulsion resulted in the initiation of war efforts on Cochin by the Zamorin. The Zamorin with the support of his main allies in the Raja of Idappali whose state was two miles away from Cochin and a Brahmin nobleman who held the reigns of Trichur, the Zamorin could march with ease into the Cochin territory. The war between Calicut and Cochin began in the year 1503 March 1<sup>st</sup>. The fort of Idapalli was defended by the Cochin forces due to the support of Lorenzo Moreno. This gave an initiating success to the Raja of Cochin. But the Zamorin attacked both from sea and land which proved fatal to Cochin wherein its whole army was wiped out killing three Cochin Princes and also its commander in chief who was the heir

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<sup>56</sup>Panikkar, K.M., "Malabar and The Portuguese", D.B.Taraporevala Sons & Co., Bombay, 1929, pp. 56.

apparent. The Rajah of Cochin after once again failing in his attempt by forming another army to charge against the powerful army of Calicut took asylum along with the Portuguese allies in a temple.

The Rajah of Cochin incurred the wrath of the Zamorin a second time after he refused the Zamorin's request to expel Portuguese from Cochin. Therefore, the Zamorin carried out attack on Cochin again by the use of 'fire and sword' and retreated to Calicut only after he had established a 'strong garrison' at Cochin. The Zamorin had to be in Calicut for the following three months due to the arrival of monsoons. During this period, the Zamorin understood that the foreigners could be subdued only by the use of their own 'superior weapons'.<sup>57</sup> Pannikkar therefore maintains that the Zamorin also had two Italians by the name Pero Antonio and Joe Maria employed under him "to cast cannon for him and to teach his soldiers the use of it."<sup>58</sup> Thus, the warfare methods used by the Zamorin never allowed the Portuguese to gain victory over him. But certain policies followed by the Portuguese proved advantageous to some extent. The retreating monsoons witnessed the arrival of 'three small squadrons from Portugal.'<sup>59</sup> The first under Francesco d'Albuquerque, the second under Affonso Albuquerque and the third under Antonio de Saldana. The first Portuguese fortress was built in Cochin by Francesco Albuquerque after driving out the 'Zamorin's garrison'. The Rajah of Cochin unaware of the Portuguese policies in establishing their hold had given complete support in building the fortress and it was named after Dom Manuel. As a mark of gratitude to the Rajah of Cochin, the Portuguese had gifted 10,000 Crusados and also extolled him for the support and defence provided to the Portuguese refugees during their period of trial.

The allies planned their revenge soon after the forces of the Zamorin retreated from the neighbourhood of Cochin. The Portuguese with the help of the Raja of Cochin plundered and destroyed many villages. In this attack the Rajah of Idappali was mainly targeted. After the settlement of Zamorin back in his own territory the Portuguese insisted on the Rajah the importance of tactfully dealing with his own chiefs. Thus, the treaty with the Anchi Kaimals was signed wherein the "Kaimals accepting definitely the Rajah's suzerainty over them, swore allegiance to him and his

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp.57.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp.57.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.,pp.57.

family, and agreed to hold their estates for him”<sup>60</sup>. This treaty marks the initiation of the Portuguese policy of aggrandisement of their power with these Cheiftains ‘ under cover of a nominal suzerainty of the Cochin Rajah’.

Another war was declared with the Zamorin. But before long wait the Portuguese attacked the boats carrying pepper and other merchandises belonging to Calicut subjects and therefore war was declared again. Albuquerque knew the preparations made by the Zamorin due to the information brought to him by a Muslimspy. Though Albuquerque was prepared to fight the Zamorin’s army, he had to abruptly leave to Lisbon by delegating his authority to Duarte Pacheco as his soldiers were bent on returning to their native land. Panikkar maintains that “Francesco and his ship never reached Portugal”<sup>61</sup>.

The preparations for an attack had already been initiated by the Zamorin against Cochin. But Cochin had not yet recovered from the devastating effect of the destruction by the Portuguese. Hence, its rice cultivation was the worst effected. Rice was to be imported from Carnatic coast and the trade of rice with Cochin was prohibited by ‘Ismail Marakkar , the head of the Muslim community. The rice crisis was however averted due to the success of Duarte Pacheco's plan of kidnapping Cochin’s leading Muslim merchant along with his family who were kept as hostages for rice supply’<sup>62</sup>.

The Zamorin advanced with his army as far as the river of Idapalli to meet a well prepared army under the command of Duarte Pacheco who was supported by efficient Portuguese army trained in ‘artillery’<sup>63</sup>. Panikkar further gives a detailed explanation of the attack, “The Zamorin’s plan was to attack with boats on both flanks and try and cut down the stockades by a frontal attack. Both these attempts failed. Pacheco defended the ford with heroic gallantry for over three and half months, at the end of which the Zamorin retired to his own territory”<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp.59.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.,pp 60.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp 60.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp 61.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp 61.

The Zamorin's failure proved the superior feat of arms displayed by the Indian army under European command. This course of war became passive with Zamorin retreating back to Calicut and the Portuguese attacks continued 'with an additional strength of fourteen ships that arrived under the command of Lopo Soares'. These attacks were at first targeted towards Calicut, later Soares attacked Cranganore the base of 'Zamorin's operations'. Soares also wiped out many Calicut warships. The Nairs in Cranganore resisted the Portuguese attempts in the plunder of their houses as a result of which Cranganore was burned down under Portuguese orders. The Jews who had settled in Cranganore had made it their headquarters since centuries and its destruction by fire was considered by them as the burning down of their holy city as a result of which they abandoned it and migrated to neighbouring areas and also settled in areas such as Cochin.

According to Panikkar a naval attack was also planned under the command of Lopo Soares against the seventeen merchant ships of the Moors from Pandarini-Kollam which was scheduled for sail to 'Cairo and Mecca'. These ships though guarded by around four thousand men was attacked by Lopo Soares with two caravels and fifteen boats resulting in the burning or sinking of the ships marking the victory of the Portuguese for a second time.

In conclusion, the Portuguese were not masters of either sea or land. They could never establish supremacy as a Malabar power. Hence, their securing the right to trade had enabled their cordial relations with Cochin, Quilon and Cannore in order to promote their commercial ambitions. Ultimately the Zamorin, other Indian rulers and the Moors realised that the presence of Portuguese was indefinitely an added feather in the cap of a complicated Indian political scenario. Therefore, the Portuguese were credited though they had major pitfalls with the fact of a non imposition of political laws and rules strictly on their far-flung empires. In the religious sphere of the St. Thomas Christians, the Portuguese is credited to have initiated certain disturbances. One such remarkable event which shook the staunch faith of the St. Thomas Christians was the convening of the Synod of Diamper followed by the Oath of the Coonen Cross by the St. Thomas Christians as a response to the former.

According to the Oath of the Coonan Cross written by Dr. Varghese Perayil, Archbishop Alex de Menezes was appointed to tame and lead the Christian sheep of India. He was an Augustinian Friar. Menezes considered this as a divine opportunity and patriotic feeling to his country to destroy the generation old St.Thomas tradition and culture and implant the Roman Supremacy under the Pope. Menezes was appointed as the Archbishop of Goa in the year 1595. From this time onwards his administrative methods and policies were completely diverted towards the converting of St. Thomas Christians on the Way of St. Peter which was the order of Rome. Archbishop Menezes continued with many such opposing activities like visiting many churches and local Kings so that religiously and politically the subjects of Kerala would come under the Roman law. With his authority he “administered the sacrament of confirmation: Menezes main aim was to appoint a Latin Bishop to be an administrator over St. Thomas Christians. Many local Kings were already on the side of Menezes. Most of the churches of Kerala coming under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa were visited at least once by Menezes and he took all necessary steps and care that no trace of Nestorian influence should remain in any of them. This was programmed by gathering all the ancient books of St.Thomas tradition and burning them thus destroying anything that was left as part of the influence of eastern churches. This would pave the way according to Menezes for the effective teaching or propaganda of Roman Catholicism. Menezes thought it best to convene a Synod to fully impose Roman Catholicism with an iron sceptre that need to be necessarily followed by the St. Thomas Christians and one incident ignited the spark for convening the Synod. Once as he was on his mutual visit the second time he witnessed the reciting of the liturgy in the name of the Babylonian patriarch memorized as the Head of the Indian Church, Menezes could not contain his anger and threatened excommunications to those who repeated the same. With this incident in mind he prepared the contents of the Synod in Portuguese language and summoned the Arch Deacon, church priest and the common people. He then ordered for the Portuguese written draft to be translated into Malayalam.Finally he summoned the Synod at Diamper (Udayam peroor).In order to perceive this malice that was borne by the Nazranis of Kerala let us look into the details of the Acts and Decrees. Dr.Scaria Zacharia maintains that the Synod began on Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> June1599, at Udayamperur (Diamper). The Synod of Diamper was conducted in nine sessions. Under each session many decrees were listed out. Each day there were

two sessions, one in the morning from 7am to 11am and the other in the evening from 2pm to 6pm. At the end of the synod all the participants signed the decrees written in Malayalam. The total number of participants signed the decrees written in Malayalam. The total numbers of participants were eight hundred and thirteen including a hundred and sixty three priests<sup>65</sup>. The most important ones for the purpose of this study that draw our attention can be read as follows.

“-It condemns three heathen errors said to be held by the Syrians-Transmigration, Fate and, that every man may be saved by his own laws.

-It condemns the error, that St.Thomas and St.Peter published two different laws; and maintains that there is but one law for the universal church of Christ.

-It abolishes the Nestorian Saint’s days and substitutes the same with that of Rome.

-It condemns many Syriac books: forbids all Christians to keep, translate, read, or hear them read and commands that they be destroyed.

-It renders null and void all oaths taken not to submit to the Roman Church.

-The Synod resolves to be governed in all things by the last council of Trent.

-It Subjects the Syrians to the Inquisition at Goa.

-All persons speaking, acting or writing against the Church of Rome, to be reported to the Bishop and punished.

-The new forms of Baptism appointed, and the old forms abrogated.

-Holy oils commanded to be used.

-Old Testament and heathenish names to be discontinued, and those of the New Testament to be given instead.

-Children to be called by the names received at baptism.

-Baptismal registers to be kept in all churches.

-Children to be baptized in the order in which they are brought to Church, without any respect of persons.

-All people are commanded to be confirmed.

-All that treat confirmation with contempt to be excommunicated.

-None to receive (Sacrament) before confession.

-The Sacrament (of the Holy Eucharist) to be administered as a viaticum in danger of death.

-Women before child-birth, and travellers before a voyage, to confess and take the sacrament.

-Priests to communicate once a month atleast.

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<sup>65</sup> Zacharia Scaria. Dr., “The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599”, Indian Institute of Christian Studies, Kottayam,1994, pp 19.

- Priests not to receive the sacrament before Confession, nor to say Mass, if they have any scruple of mortal sin on their consciences.
- Directions for saying Mass, and the Syrian Missals to be so rectified as to adopt them in everything to the Roman doctrines.
- The Missals of Nestorius, Theodorus and Diodorus to be burned.
- The Sacrament of Confession, the neglect of which is declared a mortal sin.
- None to hear confessions but priests licensed for the purpose, unless there be an appearance of danger.
- Regulates the sentence of excommunication.
- The use of extreme unction, with directions how to administer it.
- Confessors to instruct the sick in the nature of this sacrament.
- It describes the age and circumstances of persons to be ordained.
- Ecclesiastics forbidden to marry.
- Those who put away their wives are to be restored to their office.
- Wives who refuse to leave their husbands to be degraded in the Church.
- That sons of the ecclesiastics born before this Synod be eligible to the sacred office, but not those born after.
- Marriages to be celebrated in the church, and before witnesses.
- It also laid down the form of solemnization of matrimony.
- Banns of marriage to be published.
- Marriage registers to be entered and kept with care.
- The parties to confess and receive the Eucharist before marriage. None to be married out of church without special reason.
- All marriages void that are not celebrated according to the foregoing decrees.
- Forbids Polygamy.
- Condemns a Judicial ceremony adopted by some Syrians at their marriage.
- For dividing the diocese into parishes, and appointing ministers.
- Children and servants to be instructed in the doctrines of Rome.
- Churches henceforth to be dedicated to none but Roman saints.
- A general license granted to the Jesuits.
- All superstitious customs to be abolished.
- Christians to be distinguished from heathen by their dress.
- Adoption of sons illegal except in default of children.

- Females to inherit in default of male issue.
- If desires the King of Portugal can take the Christians under his protection.
- It also orders all vicars to have a copy of these decrees and for what purpose”<sup>66</sup>.

The above mentioned few decrees are cited in quotes as written in the book, *The Acts and Decrees of The Synod of Diamper 1599* by Dr.Scaria Zacharia who maintains as a prime fact that “The Synod of Diamper (1599) was the first organized attempt to Westernize Kerala Society as part of Colonisation”<sup>67</sup>.Menezes continued his work of ordaining priests without the sanction of the Eastern Church. The priests more than two thirds of those who attended the Synod were the newly ordained ones by Archbishop Menezes. Dr. Varghese Perayil estimates the version of the Roman Catholic historians that 153 priests and 671 representatives attended while the Protestant historians maintained that 153 priests, 20 Deacons, and 660 representatives attended.

The clauses contained in the Synod invited many objections but it was carefully and tactfully passed with the Archbishop’s high handedness. The decree was readout in the native language of Portugal which none of the attended Indians could comprehend. But even though the clauses of the decrees were heard by them in an alien language the St. Thomas Christians were forced to take a pledge and accept the clauses of the Synod of Diamper. As a result of this, dissatisfaction arose among the St.Thomas Christians wherein their allegiance to the Chaldean Church was nullified, their ancient and important religious documents were burnt and most matter of concern was that they were forced to accept the Roman Catholic faith under the Roman law and submit their allegiance to the Pope. The seeds of a revolt were thus sowed in the Synod of Diamper held on June 20, 1599. Perayil further explains the invalidity of the Synod put forward in the opinion of A.M.Mundadan that the Synod was invalid from three angles: “the legal, the documentary and the historical”. One reason under each head can be looked into-under the illegal grounds the Archbishop of Goa had no authority to convene it, under the documentary grounds there was lack of authority in the one who invoked it, and under the historical angle there was lack of integrity in the promulgation of the text. In the words of Dr.Varghese Perayil, nevertheless inspite of all these negative outcomes few positive effects of the

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<sup>66</sup> Zacharia Scaria. Dr., “The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper 1599”, Indian Institute of Christian Studies, Hosanna Mount, Edamattam, Kerala, 1994, pp-65-71.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.,pp-7,1st para.

synod are that it put an end to the feudal system that was rampant at that time in Kerala along with untouchability and communal disparity.

In the years that followed, the religious policy of the Portuguese became intolerable by the non-Christians the Hindus and the Muslims. The Portuguese began to persecute the Hindus and the Muslims by destroying their temple and mosques. Even the Jews were not spared and due to their persecution they left Cranganore and reached different places like, Parur, Cochin, Ernakulam, Mala and Chendamangalam. In 1567 according to A.Sreedhara menon even the Jewish synagogue at Mattanchery was partially destroyed by the Portuguese.

The dissatisfaction sparked by the synod of Diamper in the hearts of every single St.Thomas Christian was out to burst with the Oath of Coonan Cross. The Oath of the Coonan Cross marks first ever attempt to oppose a foreign rule in Indian history which also precedes a post two hundred year old Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 that was generally accepted as the first war of independence in Indian history against the Britishers. The Oath of the Coonan Cross of 1653 was the first war of independence of the St.Thomas Christians of Kerala against the Portuguese.

Menezes continued his work of visiting many churches; purge each one of them to follow the path of Rome under the Pope. He declared the marriage of parish priest to be illegal. Menezes appointed Franscisco Roz as the Bishop of the Malankara Sabha. Franioner Zomei succeeded Roz as bishop due to the former's untimely death. Then Stephen Britto was appointed as the bishop. And finally in 1641 Francis Garcia succeeded Britto as the third Latin Bishop ruling over the St.Thomas Christians.

The main ignition to the spark that lighted the great event the Oath of the Coonan Cross was the coming of Mar Ahatallah believed to be a bishop send by the Patriarch of Antioch in order to rescue the St.Thomas Christians from the clutches of the Portuguese. The Portuguese immediately acted on the arrival of Mar Ahatallah and imprisoned him. Mar Ahatallah sends a letter in Syriac to the Arch deacon in order to save him from the imprisonment by the Jesuits of Mylapore. The St.Thomas Christians in order to receive Mar Ahatallah reached to the port of Cochin to rescue him

from the arrest of the Portuguese to the best of their efforts. In the meanwhile they received news that Mar Athallah was drowned in the sea by the Portuguese. This marked the death blow to the rule of the Portuguese power in India as the enraged St.Thomas Christians numbering around twenty five thousand proceeded towards the St.Mary's Church at Mattanchery. This historic event was on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1653. It was an unanimous Oath of the Malankara Nazranis against the Portuguese Power and Roman Pope. The Oath was clearly meant to sever their connections with the Roman Pope and owed their allegiance only to the Archdeacon for generations to come. This Oath was taken with the help of many ropes held by numerous people tied to the cross as all of them could not touch the cross directly due to their huge number. Hence the cross obtained a tilt in its shape as it was pulled by ropes for all the Malankara Nazranis held it to take this solemn pledge. According to Dr.Varghese Perayil, "The revolt of Coonan Cross was a turning point in the history of the Syrian Christian community in Kerala for it marked the end of the unity of the Kerala church. Those who continued allegiance to the Church of Rome came to be known hereafter as Romo-Syrians and those who repudiated the authority of the Roman Catholic Church as Jacobite Syrian. The former were known as Pazhayakoor and the later as Puthencoor. Marthoma I was recognized as the only Archbishop by the Syrians and they continued their worship under the Syrian rite.

In conclusion, it is observed that the heavy blow to the rule of the Portuguese in India was marked by its convening of the Synod of Diamper and the passing of the Acts and Decrees in it that was to be followed strictly by the St.Thomas Christians with regard to their ecclesiastical sphere. With the passing of this act the freedom that the St.Thomas Christians enjoyed down the years till the arrival of the Portuguese were put to a halt. Therefore the Portuguese brought about a sense of unanimous dissatisfaction amongst the St.Thomas Christians. The mid-seventeenth century in Kerala witnessed the religious disturbances among the St.Thomas Christians of Kerala brought about by the Portuguese involvements in their ecclesiastical administration. At the same time, the developments in Portugal during the mid-seventeenth century are elaborated by C.R.Boxer.

This book gives a vivid picture of the prevailing conditions of mid-seventeenth century. During the year 1499 the Portugal King Manoel I who ruled from 1495 to 1521 took upon him the

title of “Lord of the Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and of India”<sup>68</sup>. The Estado Da India (the State of India) was established by the end of the rule of King Manoel. At first the State of India consisted of around twenty six trading areas in coastal regions which extends from Sophala in South-East Africa to the South China Sea till Macao. This was the position of the State during the time of Joao Da Silva Tello De Menezes while taking over the Viceroyal office at Goa in the year 1640. The Kingdom of Portugal suffered great losses at the instance of the Dutch which had gained Tidore and Amboina in the Moluccas as early as 1605 and also to an Anglo-Persian force which gained Ormuz in the year 1622 while the Portuguese Crown still considered the Estado da India as a valuable occupation under their control.

The post of Viceroy of Goa was a much disputed position which stood on equal par with that of Asian rule and even the Dutch Governor General at the Batavia could not yet assume that equivalent status. However the newly formed Count of Aveiras arrived at Goa on 19<sup>th</sup> September with a lot of “reinforcements” as Boxer puts it. A few weeks later Dutch contributed to the arrival of their “Annual Blockading Squadron of six warships”. Their Governor General Antonio Van Diemen is said to have reported to their Board of Directors at Netherlands on 8<sup>th</sup> January 1641 that these “reinforcements” helped the Portuguese to hold on to their strongholds in Asia for an extended period which otherwise would have been an impossibility taking into account the heavy losses suffered by the Portuguese in preventing attacks by the Dutch on Malacca and Ceylon. At the time of the taking over of the government of Portuguese Asia by the Count of Aveiras from his brother-in-law Antonio Telles De Menezes, the situation he faced was quite a serious one. This was so due to the seizure of Malacca by the Dutch who were also continuing the same attempts in Ceylon. The fate of the Portuguese was sealed at Macao due to its inability to continue the prosperous trade with Japan. In addition to this due to the implementation of a ‘Closed Country’ policy by the Japanese Tokugawa Government the very meagre presence of a ‘Portuguese Embassy’ was also ousted from Macao which was popularly known as “City of the Name of God in China” in the year 1640. The Portuguese also suffered losses due to the destruction of three strong galleons that was built at Marmugao.

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<sup>68</sup> Boxer .C.R., “The Portuguese in India in the Mid-Seventeenth Century”, Oxford University Press Delhi, 1980,pp 1.

However Antonio Telles strained his efforts to replace them but with no success he then atleast made sure to keep one new galleon ready. This situation left the Portuguese with no reserves to face the Dutch attack or invasion in their established “Asian Seas”. This was doubled with the empty treasury of Royal throne of Portugal except for some money that the viceroy had brought along with him which was kept aside for the purchase of pepper by the crown.

On 26<sup>th</sup> February 1640 as one of the last appointments to be made by the Spanish Hapsburgs who took over the crown of Portugal from the time of its conquest by Philip II of Spain in 1580 the Count of Aveiras was appointed as Viceroy of India by King Philip IV of Spain (III of Portugal) at the Royal Palace of Madrid. The period from 1580-1640 was termed as “The Sixty Years Captivity”. Later according to C.R.Boxer, “Portugal and Spain formed a dual Monarchy which was brought to an end by the palace revolution that took place at Lisbon in the year 1640 on December 1<sup>st</sup>”. This incident initiated the crowning of the Duke of Braganza with the title King John IV of Portugal. The continued recurring struggle for freedom culminated in the month of February 1668. During this period of continuous struggle the war between the Portuguese and the Dutch Republic was in full swing not necessarily inside the boundaries of Europe but in their overseas limits. Even the State of India (i.e. Estado Da India) also had many Asian enemies with the Omani Arabs in the lead. This long struggle from 1640-1668 between land boundaries of Spain and Portugal in the words of Boxer extends from “Marantao and Pornambuco in Brazil, through Congo, Angola and Mozambique in Africa, to Macao and Timor in East Asia” affected the reduction of the State of India from the Status of a giant to that of a pigmy. This can be clearly asserted from the words quoted from a Jesuit missionary who wrote in 1665, “When the Count of Sao Vicente assumed the office of Viceroy at Goa on 17 October 1666, the deed of transfer listed only some sixteen strongholds and settlements as compared with twenty-six in 1640 and several of these occupied no more than what lay within range of the cannon on the fortress walls”.

The reasons for this immediate decline of the Portuguese suzerainty are analysed under few points by C.R.Boxer. Firstly, the limits of Portuguese domain extended vastly without any fixed boundary. Secondly, the Portuguese were unwilling to surrender without even a struggle of a portion

of either Lisbon or Goa. Thirdly, the conviction shared by all classes of the Portuguese that salvation is possible only through the Roman Catholic Church and therefore to give up their dominion territories that was considered as those committed to the 'Padroado Real' (Crown Patronage of the Church) in the words of Boxer "To the heretics, to the Muslims, to the Heathen was Anathema" or against the Roman Church. Fourthly, the English and the Dutch were under the notion that the Portuguese that was spread in Asia would be willing to live under the English Crown or under the Dutch Company if they were allowed to liberally follow the Roman Catholic faith. In addition to these on the eve of Portuguese restoration the President from Swally wrote to his Directors at London to protect their country from the Dutch and grant them with the freedom of religion and conscience. The country of Brazil began to be both economically and demographically important to Portugal when compared with the disturbed state of India during the ascension of the throne by King John IV in 1640. The Dutch by this time had laid their seize on Pornambuco a very flourishing country of Brazil. This King is said to have remarked to a French envoy named Chevalier De Jant in the year 1655 that at an instance of France abandoning him he would be sufficiently equipped to fight against Spain for the following five to six years with the English assisting him to remain on this throne if he would give them some of the Portuguese conquered territories in India and if he was ousted from Portugal then he had the choice of retiring to Pornambuco or Goa in Brazil and India respectively where he would stay as a sovereign Prince and enjoy a good salary figure.

This was considered as plain flattery by the King. But no doubt that through his statement it can also be clearly perceived that the state of India under the Portuguese was an invaluable possession on equal terms with Pernambuco, a similar possession from Brazil which was retrieved from the Dutch in the year 1654. The situation of the state of Goa in comparison to Pernambuco was pathetic as it faced many disasters in the form of ship wrecks for the past 14 years. In Jan 1641 the Dutch was successful inlaying it's seize on Malacca. The constant fights between the Ming and the Manchu resulted in heavy loss of trade with Japan and Manila which effected the state of Macao that also suffered due to the destructive effects of the Chinese southern provinces the year 1650, the month of January also witnessed the heavy fortification of Muscat that was subdued unawares by the Imam of

Oman. The seizure of the Pracas of Cambolim, Mangalor, Barcelor, and Onor by the 'Canarins' had made things more worse in the years 1650 to 1654. In the following years the Dutch captured Colombo and forced it to surrender in May 1656. The destruction at Muscat and in Kanara was due to the incapability of those coward defenders and their incompetence. Thus with the contention of limiting with foreign enemies Goa and Macao suffered with a struggle that was purely civilian in character wherein both laymen and ecclesiastics were a part off. Therefore the forthcoming disaster were quite unpredictable as the murder of the governor of the city of the name of God in China by an unfriendly mob in 1646 and the deposing from the Viceroyal position of the Count of Obidos in October 1653 through a Bloodless Palace Revolution, the foremost contender to it being Joseph de Chaves Sottomaior, who was on and off serving as the secretary of state of India in 1641-61. Most of these destructive cases were caused due to crossing the limit of those that were directly involved and the remaining be termed under human caused mistakes that could have been evaluated or prevented. Boxer maintains that "one of the most constant factors was what the Dutch termed the Slofheid Van Dan Vij and the chronic negligence, carelessness and over confidence of the Portuguese"<sup>69</sup>. These drawbacks of the Portuguese were not accepted by the Portuguese themselves. The state condition of Portugal was such that it could be mentioned as pitiable situation where in it became the norm of the time that what can be done in any other country in a span of two hours would consume around two months to be completed in Portugal.

The other draw backs that the Portuguese faced included that only fidalgos were recruited for their land and sea services, the delay in communication in reaching India or Portugal through letters or dispatches owing to the vast distance to be covered through sea between the two countries. Monarchy in Portugal was absolute where the King exercised only limited power. Brazil was preferred to India by King John IV similar to what his predecessor King Philip IV of Castile had opted for. Though this ruler sends yearly dispatches to India, he was not to be blamed for the loss of ships due to shipwreck or incapable commanders. Matters turned out to be more deplorable for Portugal after the deceased King John in the year 1656, by which the rule was taken over by his widow Queen Spanish born Dona

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. pp5, para2.

Luisa De Gusmao as her son was only thirteen years old. But her son Dom Afonso VI was not fit for rule as he was mentally unstable. In the year 1659 the regent Queen sent word to the French Ambassador that there was no information from the Portuguese India since three years. By the year 1662 this regent Queen was dethroned as a result of a Palace Revolution which was taken over by Count of Castel Melhor. This marked the last hold of Portuguese on India. In the words of C.R.Boxer, “It was only saved from extinction by strong French and English diplomatic pressure on the Dutch after the marriage of Catherine of Braganza with Charles II, thus inducing the Republic to make peace with Portugal in 1661-3”<sup>70</sup>.

The Council of State (Conselho do Estado) and the overseas council (Conselho Ultramarino) were the two most important councils among the numerous advisory councils which assisted the Portuguese monarchs. Antonio Telles de Menezes and his brother-in-law Joao Da Silva Tello were the two state Councillors who were well acquainted with India as they were acting Governor General of India and first Viceroy respectively during the late 1640’s. These two state councillors were also credited with their involvement in the peace party who advised King John VI to come to terms with the Dutch either by declaring peace or enter into a compromise with the Dutch as it was an emerging sea power in Asia. In addition to the above two propagators of peace with the Dutch was Padre Antonio Vieira a renowned Jesuit (1607-1689) who supported the sacrifice of Pernambuco by the Portuguese to the Dutch as it was the only way by which the advance of the Dutch invasion to the East could be checked. Therefore most of the classes of people living in Portugal opted for Brazil to be more important than India.

Boxer now dwells into the situation prevailing in India during the Portuguese period. The Portuguese government in India was a direct replica of their government in Portugal. A Viceroy was appointed as the head of government of Portuguese in India. This Viceroy enjoyed Kingly powers in many aspects .He could send patented letters seeking to make war or peace within India or outside for the conduct of their royal service in India smoothly. This was even attested by the Portugal King to carry on the administration of India by the Viceroy effectively. This Viceroy was also given powers to

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp 8, para 1.

remove from service soldiers, bureaucratic officers, commanders of forts, warships if they failed to do their duty. In exercising his financial authority on behalf of the Royal Exchequer he exercised the power to agree or disagree with all transactions, claims or disbursements. Judicially, he could exercise his power on the life and death of men with no right of appeal in his final sentence. This made his power unlimited in theory but in practice it was limited in case the death penalty was inflicted on fidalgo which was scarcely practiced in Portugal. It was also known that at any point of time the Viceroy's decisions may be overtaken by the Crown inspite of its theoretical assurance of uninterrupted support by the Royal throne.

In order to conduct the administration of the Portuguese in India this Viceroy was privileged with the assistance of an advisory council of state that consisted of legal, military, civil and ecclesiastical members. In most of the cases similar to the King of Portugal though at all times the Viceroy did not always accept the majority view of the council, mostly he accepted it.

The qualities those were required to be appointed as a Viceroy counted on this character and capabilities. The aforementioned Antonio Telles de Menezes and Joao da Silva Tello appointed by the Crown as Governor General and Viceroy of Portuguese India respectively after whose death their descendants had to always be a reminder for the promise of the ennoblement which they had to receive for many generations. The Crown thus gave preference to appoint a fidalgo (Nobleman) who lived in Portugal. But at times it also appointed those who already were staying in India. According to Boxer, the practices of sending their illegitimate sons through sea began during rule of King Manuel I himself. In addition to this practice it also became a norm to take along one's own relatives who were expected to get employment. This was mostly true in the case of Governors and Viceroys who brought along with them many servants and most needy people. The Viceroys and Governor Generals wives were left behind with an exception of two or three wives of Viceroys who went along with their husbands for many centuries.

Boxer puts forward two types of Portuguese people Casados and Reinoes who were a part of Portuguese India, had between them lot of tensions. Casados were a term for those Portuguese men

who married and settled in India and Reinos were those Portuguese men who came from Portugal and later went back. In the words of Andre Furtado de Mendoca whose statement in 1609 draws one's attention that " a successful Viceroy or Governor General needed to be one quarter Christian and three quarters Muslims, in order to be able to cope with the Indiaticos"<sup>71</sup>.

The mid-seventeenth century according to Boxer witnessed the initiation of marriage by young Crown Lawyer Bachelors who came to India, with local land owner ladies. But the Crown Judges were under strict grounds prohibited from such marriages in the area of their service by the Portuguese Crown. Though these tensions prevailed between the Reinos and the Indiaticos most of the Reinos remained in India and came under the Indiaticos category due to the religion that they shared in common. Boxer opines that " the spiritual conquests survived in much better shape than the temporal where as pessimism and despair mark many of the Vice Regal dispatches from Goa to Lisbon in 1640 – 1668, the paladins of the Church militant often sound a note verging on triumphalism . Missionary Élan for the most part lost nothing of its vigour in the 'Iron Century' as this period has been termed"<sup>72</sup>. Accordingly Boxer cites two or three Jesuit missions<sup>73</sup>(details on Jesuit mission see Ft.Nt) as an example which proved to be more effective. The Jesuit fathers who tirelessly worked in Japan and North Vietnam bore fruits when they went out with a spiritual mission and made war with the idol worshipper kingdoms and brought under its control the mighty isolated provinces and empires. While a report about the mission in North Vietnam bring to our knowledge that those newly converted became the best Christian human beings they could find otherwise in most of Asia as they totally discarded their prior beliefs and were absorbed in the brotherhood feeling of Christianity which offered Vietnam a new ground for a great future in Christianity.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp 12,para 2.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp 14,para 2.

<sup>73</sup>Županov, Ines G. "“One Civility, But Multiple Religions’: Jesuit Mission Among St. Thomas Christians in India (16th-17th Centuries).” *Journal of Early Modern History* 9, no. 3/4 (August 2005): 284–325. doi:10.1163/157006505775008473.

The Portuguese missionaries were of the firm belief that though Portugal was facing lot of crises in its present situation it was only “experiencing the darkest hour before the dawn”<sup>74</sup>. Due to such unflinching faith these Church militant fathers hoped for complete success with a burning conviction that it was not far behind. But though such militancy was successful in most of the Kingdoms these missions were working in, in the case of India “the church militant of the Portuguese Padroado presented a united front to Heretic, Hindu, Muslim and Pagan opponents”<sup>75</sup>.

Finally, Boxer maintains that in this Iron Age (the mid 17<sup>th</sup> C), the role of Spiritual fathers proved very effective along with a few Portuguese traders from Macao to confront with successive attacks from the Dutch. The mission priests worked towards dissolving the natives to their side thus helping them against the Dutch by which the Portuguese were able to get enough benefits. Boxer concludes his argument that even in Goa and its neighbourhood when the Viceroy assumed his office he acquired all powers theoretically but it turned out to be of less influence when compared to the continuous undaunted power of the Church.

This book explains in detail about the position occupied by the Portuguese position in India which was under a low profile in comparison to the successful activities performed by the Jesuit Missionaries. In other words Boxer’s argument that though the claim of Portuguese to be the Lord of Conquest, Navigation and Commerce was not so in practice, as in the case of Conquest the Jesuit Fathers are credited with the Conquest of many nations with their preachings, in case of Navigation the Dutch outstated the Portuguese in matters of ship maintenance, its building and travel on sea. Even in the field of Portuguese Commerce it was the Jesuit mission and its fathers which played an important role in the effective flourishing of their trade. Therefore the mid-seventeenth century termed as the ‘Iron Century’ witnessed many converts to Christianity also marking the century as the Age of Christianfaith. The eighteenth century was marked by the Age of Reason which is described by G.K.Chesterton.

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<sup>74</sup> Op.cit Boxer C.R. pp 15,para 3.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., pp 17, para 3.

In the book “An Outline of Christianity”, an article by G.K.Chesterton is titled “Anti-Religious Thought in the eighteenth century”, wherein Christian faith is overtaken by the Age of Reason. It is a clash of two major concepts of Faith and Reason. Human beings are bound by both to the extent that his life almost becomes an uncertainty if one among the two is alienated. But with the passage of time both these attributes began to lose its importance one after the other. To quote G.K.Chesterton, “a rationalist is quite entitled to look back to the eighteenth century as golden age of good sense, as the medievalist looks back to the thirteenth century as a golden age of good faith”<sup>76</sup>.

In the succeeding years the concept of faith healing or the power of suggestions is considered with less importance. But the non believers or in that matter the free thinkers would perceive this modern world as a frenzied dwelling. Such individuals find their outlet in a monastery due to their constant search for reason. It is therefore inferred that there was an unquestionable faith in the ancient Christian religion till the Medieval period. The Medieval period marks a shift or division internally in Christianity between Catholic and Protestant Faiths. From the period of demise of Dryden as a Catholic to the time of Newman’s writings which was comparatively less protestant continued with Rationalist thinking in both the faiths of Protestantism and Catholicism. The causes that resulted in such a rational thinking of the eighteenth century may be attributed to the changes that occurred in the preceding centuries in World History. This throws light on the Renaissance which was a setback to the Ancient World of Paganism. This also signals Reformation into limelight which carried with it a negative remark of dividing the unity of the ancient Christian faith. The imbalance between the terrors and pains that took place out of the religious revolts and a totally unreasonable understanding led to a feeling that was completely worthless.

The seventeenth century witnessed more reasoning thought which paved the way for the century to end with a question which did not give a valid conclusion unlike the preceding or succeeding centuries. In the present day we experience a history of 400 years divided Christianity wherein its reunion is expected by us as an “extraordinary event” as the people belonging to the

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<sup>76</sup>Chesterton G.K., “Anti-Religious Thought in the Eighteenth century”- article from,(Peake A.S. & Parsons., “An Outline of Christianity The Story of Our Civilization”, Edited in Five Volumes, Vol.IV), The Waverley Book Company, Ltd, London, year not mentioned,pp-21, para 2

earlier period perceived the disunion of Christianity as an 'extra ordinary event'. From the time that a unified religion dominated the Roman Empire all their rituals and rules were in accordance with some form of unity that arose out of wide "controversy". This would explain from a protestant view where Protestantism subdued Europe as it was conquered by Christianity. As a matter of fact as Catholicism had reconquered Europe more than once, from a Catholic stand point Catholicism needed to reconquer Europe. But in practice nothing of such a sort took place. A long lasting war started between Prussia in collaboration with other protestant nations against Austria which was the succeeding nation in the Thirty Years War. The results of the war were heart rending with no far fetching results. In other words this war did not succeed to make Austria a protestant nation or Prussia a Roman catholic. By the time this realization was effected to the world it began to take a different mode. As Chesterton puts it "the rock had been cloven and would not close up again, and in the crack or chasm a new sort of strange and prickly weed began to grow. The open wound festered"<sup>77</sup>.

The fall of Constantinople paved the way for Renaissance. This enabled the flourishing of scholars and their inquisitive attitude on religious thoughts. There also emerged an endless conflict between Islam and Christendom just as the conflict between Reformation and Counter-Reformation which was also carried on for a long time. These type of conflicts between religions as well as between the same religious faiths resulted in a reasoning mind among the people. This reasoning mentality began with man right from their existence on the face of the earth and during the medieval period it could be compared to be "as old as the Renaissance"<sup>78</sup>. Even great men like Erasmus, Rabelais and Cervantes though were Christian by religion mocked at the way men lived and not at the way a man's life was. This made Montaigne state that the thought of considering puppets to be men was a true statement as men were in fact puppets. Though the war of religions became an endless event people had a clear thought that in order to be human there should be humanity within oneself. The period that followed included the cruelty practiced by different militant institutions. These men never perceived the sacrifice and pious belief that was followed by their predecessors. Thus, they

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., pp24,para 1.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp 24.

were very much ignorant of medieval history which was privileged with the unified Christian brotherhood.

In citing the example of the Spanish Inquisition Chesterton observes that this created an atmosphere of a Spy Fever wherein horrors were put into practice. Spain was reconquered from the clutches of Islam by the Spaniards who fought with a lasting challenge which was ever showed by any men. They also struggled to deracinate a Jewish plot. The humanitarians were ignorant of such perverse patriotism and only knew that the Inquisition still continued. The Christian spirit of this age also helped in suppressing fears of witches or Satanism through the Professors of faith or the chief landed proprietors of that place. Thus there existed an epoch that was rational in character before our own time that was in itself credited with a superior train of thought.

Therefore in conclusion it can be said that as every moment of a living being is only for a short period of time due to nature of his life being mortal every other aspect of an age can also be considered as mortal like rationalism which only survived for a very short period.

Finally it can be said that the rational inquisitiveness on Christian faith was a result of the discoveries of modern world's material science. Men became scientists because they had a reasoning mind and not vice versa.

Chesterton infact provides a new theme Anti – Religious thought in the eighteenth century which was a gradual development from a Medieval Period of Age of Reason. The Age of Reason brought many changes in the outlook of Christianity but as a matter of fact this Age was short lived. But for the Portuguese, Christianity and its spread was only a means for an unrestricted entry to the lands they proposed to trade, as they focussed their efforts in the prosperity of their commercial activities. Portuguese commercial contacts in the Indian sub-continent require an in depth perception. A.R. Disney's Twilight of the Pepper Empire elaborates the detailed analysis of the administration of trade in India directed from Portugal.

The discovery of the Cape route towards the coast of Calicut sparked the beginning of trade contacts of the Portuguese with India after the successful voyage of Vasco da Gama back to

Portugal in 1499. The trade contacts were given boosts by the Portuguese Government with the formation of a consortium for future trade voyages via the Cape route in which both the Crown and private interests participated. Thus annual voyages came to be organized by the consortium for the period of five years from 1499-1504. The crown also aimed at profits to the maximum by following a discriminatory policy. By 1506 the trade with India was carried out in precious metals from Portugal to India while the return cargo to Portugal included pepper and such other spices that were considered as royal monopolies. Therefore the Cape route was utilised by both the private and Crown for trade purposes. The non-monopoly goods like Asian textiles and gems were traded by private interests. The monopoly system continued till the 1560's after which the crown on encountering certain 'liquidity' problems began to encourage the participation by private interests. In 1564 as a result of this encouragement the trade monopoly of pepper was 'contracted' to a 'merchant syndicate'. In the succeeding years i.e in 1570 the trades in pepper and other spices were ordered to be open for free competition by the crown while trading in the same itself and also retained its monopoly in the 'export of precious metals to Asia'. But as this practice could not be carried on for long as between 1576 and 1597 a number of private syndicates of German, Italian and Portuguese 'interests' were formed for a period of five years whose vested interests lay with the pepper monopoly.

The twilight of the Pepper Empire by A.R.Disney delves into the depths of the trade contracts of the Portuguese. According to Disney by "the last quarter of the sixteenth century the monopoly of trades in other spices, the provision and outfitting of India fleets and the collection of freight charges at Lisbon were also farmed out, usually separately but sometimes in combination to same contractors".<sup>79</sup> The contract system failed to provide required benefits for Portugal's cash shortage in Asia trade on a long term basis. This situation grew worse with the English and Dutch participating 'in the sea borne spice trade' towards the end of the sixteenth century ,the private interests became reluctant in taking important further pepper contracts of the Portuguese. Nevertheless, the profits got on freight and customs had enough takers till 1616. The Crown was forced to continue its trade monopoly especially shipping monopoly though the cash shortage had become more severe. These

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<sup>79</sup>Disney .A.R., "Portugese trade in Southwest India in the early seventeenth century",Harward University Press, London,1978 pp. 71 para 2.

circumstances that prevailed in the beginning of the seventeenth century had involved the private capital in 'Official India Trade'. This was followed with the initiation in 1609 a 'Twelve Years' truce with Dutch wherein the Lisbon-Goa trade was to be open to merchants of all nations under the condition to share their profits equally with the Crown. There was another proposal regarding reduced tariffs and offer for free trade to the Portuguese. Though such schemes were proposed, none of them seemed relevant to be put to practice.

Therefore, the Crown took interest in the sponsor of a joint-stock company on the models of the English and Dutch East India Companies. Opinions of historians vary as some of them maintain that a 'short-lived' India company was formed by Philip II in the year 1587 does not stand true to a certain extent. In the early seventeenth century the opening of a joint stock company was taken seriously in Lisbon and Spain only after the English and Dutch companies were successful in their establishments.

By the year 1619 as the Duke of Francavila and Marquis of Alenquer pledged their support, the Iberian crown finally decided to form an India Company, the investments into which were to be publicly encouraged by the Portuguese Camaras. But the following five years saw a great delay in the establishment of the company by the death of Philip III on March 21, 1621 which 'ended the political ascendancy of the Duke of Uceda'. Philip IV became the new monarch at the age of sixteen and hence he delegated the affairs of the state to Gaspar de Guzman, the then count of Olivares who became an 'undisputed chief- minister with authority to create and hamper major decisions of State including Portugal. This resulted in the dismissal of Duke of Francavila as the Viceroy of Lisbon and was replaced by a board of Governors namely Dom Diogo de Castro, Count of Basto and Dom Diogo da Silva, Count of Portalegre who were opposed to the formation of an India Company. In addition to this, the termination of the Twelve years Truce in 1621 increased the enmity with the Dutch. But the fall of Ormuz in 1622 to Anglo-Persian forces advanced financial necessity for defending Portuguese Asia. This led to the demand for finance from the company. Thus, the finance that was invested for the company under the Lisbon Camara (country's most important municipal council) had to be diverted for war efforts. The year 1624 witnessed the revival plan for establishing Portuguese India Company

with the return of Dom Jorge Mascarenhas to court that year. This also resulted in views proposing and opposing the formation of a company. Those proposing maintained that the company would indeed attract private investments while those opposing were of the view that private investments could not be depended on as an effective source of finance for the company. This proved true in practice as according to Disney “the repeated ill success of the pepper and shipping contracts in the three final decades of the sixteenth century had highlighted the risks and generally poor investment prospects of the official Goa-Lisbon trade, and the reluctance of private enterprise to become involved was notorious by the second quarter of the seventeenth century”.<sup>80</sup>

This circumstance led to the proposal put forward by Lisbon Camara in 1625 for the Crown to guarantee the finance invested in the company which served both the corporate and individual interest. The investment in the company was thus chartered out for receiving ‘interest at 4 percent per annum’ and also the rule that finance once invested could not be withdrawn until the completion of a twelve year period with an exception of decision of directors after a lapse of six year period. The company’s accounts were to be published by the Directors in mid-term period and in the case of necessity, the dividends to shareholders were distributed. The purchase and sale of shares were done freely. The company was to be dissolved at the completion of a twelve year period wherein the preparation of final accounts, ‘the distribution of capital and the profits’ reaped by the company would enable the subscriber the option to reinvest in a ‘reconstituted company’. In addition to these, there was further allotments or conferring of grades in the form of honors based on the ‘size of their contribution’. The titles and privileges such as Knight to the investors of 1000 cruzados and the title of Lady to the wives of investors worth 4000 cruzados to the company. The privilege of a gentleman of royal household was given to those who invested 30000 cruzados and membership in military order to those who invested ‘a large carrack, fully armed and provisioned’. Such confer of titles and privileges failed to attain required investors.

Disney in the following chapter titled “The Company Born” dates the founding of the Portugal’s India Company to 1628. This also necessitated in creating a ‘subordinate board of

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<sup>80</sup>Page 81 para 2

administration in Goa'. Unfortunately the creation of subordinate board was an unfinished task due to the delay in communication for several months instead a Viceroy of Portuguese India 'Dom Miguel de Noronha, fourth count of Linhares and head of one of the great noble Houses of Portugal was appointed' in Goa.

Though the Portuguese India Company was founded on the Lines of the English and the Dutch East India Companies, the Portuguese India Company had to 'operate under very different conditions from those which had confronted its rivals'. The Dutch and the English East India Companies differed from the Portuguese Company in certain aspects:

During the establishment of their respective companies the Dutch and the English East India Company maintained no interests or possessions in Asia and to quote Disney "It was therefore possible to concede to the companies not only authority to trade, but sweeping powers to found factories, organize settlements, make war and peace, sign treaties and govern the Europeans and Asians in their trading posts, through officials appointed by the largely independent Boards of Directors in London and Amsterdam. The Portuguese, on the other hand were obliged to graft their company onto a functioning administrative apparatus that had been running an Asian trade empire for a century and a quarter".<sup>81</sup>

Viceroy Linhare's arrival at Goa in 1629 had to confront with absolutely no finance in the treasury and therefore was compelled to take loan from the 'company's supply of silver specie that had arrived on the carracks from Lisbon'. This type of dependence by the company did not have a long functioning impact and hence by the end of 1629, its directors began to concentrate more on the 'commercial operations' that were to follow in the succeeding years.

In conclusion, as is explained in detail by A.R.Disney the establishment of Portuguese East India Company was not an easy going task. Though the Portuguese intended to establish their own company inspired by the Dutch and the English East India Company, the Portuguese could not reap much advantages from the company as their investments in the company was scarce. Thus the

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., pp.87 para 3

Portuguese were not sufficiently equipped with resources to fund their own trading company. Nevertheless the tactics employed by the Portuguese in the conduct of trade is discussed by K.S.Mathew.

The book “Portuguese Trade with India in The Sixteenth Century”, by K.S.Mathew highlights the diplomacy practiced by the Portuguese in trade relations with the Malabar Coast. The Portuguese introduction of the issuing of the Cartaz: “A kind of a safe-conduct or passport (Navicert) issued by the maritime authorities in the East especially in the Indian Ocean, to the merchant ships so that they could navigate and enter the ports to load and unload without any trouble. The following particulars were included in the Cartazes: the name of the vessel and of the Captain, the nature of the cargo, its origin and destination and the name of the authority issuing the Cartaz”<sup>82</sup>. The Cartaz system facilitated the amicable relationship between the Portuguese and the rulers and merchants. The establishment of factories at Cochin and Cranganore marked the stronghold of the Portuguese in safeguarding and diverting trade from Malabar to Portugal and to no other trading powers. The issue of Cartazes also signalled the complete authority of the Portuguese on the trade in the Indian Ocean and the West coast of India. Vasco Da Gama won the confidence of the Zamorin of Calicut who conceded to the demand of Vasco Da Gama according to whom the “Zamorin should not allow anyone else to trade with the ports in his Kingdom and to evict all the Muslim merchants from Calicut.”<sup>83</sup> According to the Portuguese theoretician Joao De Barros an official chronicist maintained the right of appropriation of territories under new discoveries was authorized by the Roman Papal bulls. Thus the Portugal King had taken the newly discovered territories as the possession and property of the Portuguese. To quote K.S.Mathew, “The juridical titles, besides the papal grants for the right to the oriental territories were discovery, usurpation or occupation, conquest and prescription”<sup>84</sup>. According to the Portuguese theoreticians, the Portuguese were rightfully authorized to seize the lands occupied by ‘infidels’ or otherwise Muslims and Hindus whose possession of the lands was unlawful as they did not accept the ‘glory of God, the creator and redeemer of the world’.

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<sup>82</sup>K.S. Mathew- Portuguese Trade with India in the sixteenth century. Manohar publications, New Delhi, 1983, pp 61 para2.

<sup>83</sup>Page 63 para 1

<sup>84</sup>Page 63 para 2

Therefore D.Manuel I became the Lord of the newly discovered land India by which he automatically became the 'Lord of Trade of Spices' that was under the authority of the Muslims. The Portuguese King thus was entitled with prescription as he enjoyed a peaceful and undisturbed possession of these lands without any form of threat from any Christian powers for many years. The Hindus and Muslims were on the route to 'eternal damnation' as their religions did not adhere with the law of Jesus Christ and therefore they had no 'right to the high seas'. The Indian Ocean became a Christian power only after the arrival of the Portuguese. Hence the issue of Cartaz had gained due importance in the trade conducted in the Indian Ocean for the smooth function of trade under the Portuguese. However by the last quarter of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century the Dutch was one Christian power that emerged to challenge the supremacy of the Portuguese in Eastern waters. The Medieval teachings of the Catholic Church were manipulated by interested people to 'serve their own interests'.

Another group of theologians beginning with Hugo Grotius, Thomas Aquinas and the Spanish writer Victoria 'refuted' the arguments put forward by the Portuguese theorists. While Hugo Grotius, the opponent of the freedom of seas disagreed with the theory that Portuguese had the right to supremacy over the newly discovered lands on the East Indies 'on account of the title of discovery'. According to him, in the past for many centuries before the coming of the Portuguese, India was well known in trade purpose as it received merchants from different lands who came 'to India by sea to find a means to escape poverty' and therefore the assertion of Portuguese that they discovered India does not seem appropriate. Though it can be believed that the Portuguese had discovered India, the right to appropriation seemed apt only if the land discovered by them was not occupied by any power prior to their arrival. "The famous theologians like Thomas Aquinas and the Spanish writer Victoria held that on the basis of religious beliefs no infidel could be deprived of his possessions and so the proprietary right of the infidels could not be taken away by the Portuguese"<sup>85</sup>.

The bulls issued by the Pope's were a sanction to the Portuguese to exercise their supremacy over the newly discovered or to be discovered lands. These papal grants were interpreted by

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<sup>85</sup>Page 65 para 3

Portuguese writers like Joao de Barros with significance that provided the Portuguese the rightful authority to conquest and appropriation of the same from the 'unbelievers'. This argument was criticised by Hugo Grotius who maintained that the Portuguese had no right to the newly discovered territories based on the Papal grants. According to Grotius, "The Pope could not have any temporal authority and even granted that he could have, he had nothing to do with the infidels and to appropriate them in so far as they did not belong to the church"<sup>86</sup>. According to Grotius, Indians were by no means to be taken by force for they being infidels nor their conquest to be justified in the pretext of spreading Christianity as the Portuguese were involved in financial gains rather than fulfilling their religious aims. Grotius also refuted the claim of the Portuguese who adorned the title of dominion over the Indian Ocean such as Papal donation, Occupation and Prescription. Grotius therefore maintained that conduct of Portuguese trade and the right to navigation in India and Indian Ocean respectively need not be accepted as the monopoly of the Portuguese but in contrast as open to all. These arguments of Grotius were published and Freitas took up the challenge for the Portuguese and published his *De Justo Imperio Lusitanae Indiae Orientalium* in 1625 from Valladolid. Freitas supported the Portuguese right on the East Indies on account of freedom for the propagation of 'Christian faith in non-Christian areas' which was against the refuted argument put forward by Grotius. According to Freitas though Pope had no direct jurisdiction over Indian unbelievers he would rightfully have indirect jurisdiction. The main argument put forward by Freitas to support the validity of Papal Grants to the Portuguese in regard to their jurisdiction on the infidels of India, the navigation thereof and the commerce with India, were 'that the Pope who had indirect jurisdiction over the infidels and the right to send the missionaries could delegate the power to any particular nation of his choice as he did in the case of the Portuguese and he was empowered to restrict the right of navigation to these areas only to a certain nation as the missionaries were to be taken by ship'. Moreover, the Pope also had the power to assign the monopoly of trade to these people and exclude others since the missionary activities needed money for their survival. In the case of occupation of the Indian Ocean the argument put forward by Freitas was that as Indian Ocean in its own natural way was not subject to occupation or possession under a sole authority or otherwise there is a 'possibility of quasi-

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<sup>86</sup>Page 65 para 4

possession' of the same under the authority of the Pope. The religious supreme for the propagation of faith as Pope's jurisdiction religiously was spread all over the world. Therefore this also explains that 'one could acquire the right to prevent anyone from causing trouble to the peaceful navigation of the occupant of the oceans' paving the way for valid continuity in the issue of the Cartaz. According to Freitas, as there were threatening attempts, from the Arabs who tried to befriend the local rulers and thereby being successful in destroying the property of the Portuguese. Hence the system of Cartazes which also came under the Papal Grant allowed the navigation in the Indian Ocean only with the permit of the Portuguese. This was also done in the light of the Christians who helped 'The Turks and Egyptians and fought with Portuguese'.

The arguments thus put forward by Freitas would prove that the monopoly of trade and navigation by the Portuguese on the Indian Ocean was necessitated on account of fulfilling their duty in the propagation of Christian faith delegated by the Pope to the Portuguese.

The theories above expounded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were in sharp contrast to the practice followed by the Portuguese. Theoretically Indian ruling governance was a 'political vacuum' but in practice the local Kings and rulers were self sufficient with their ancient administrative systems. The Portuguese always had to deal and treat the rulers as equals. Though there were many 'Viceroys and Governors' who represented the Crown of the Portuguese, the Zamorin King of Malabar was keen on a direct maintenance of relationship with the 'The King of Portugal'. This also materialises the fact that the Portuguese theoretical conception of the infidels acknowledged the equal status with the latter and hence 'they had no right over their lands'.

The theories thus can be summed up in the words of K.S.Mathew who quotes C.R.Boxer "that they had a mixed aim, mixture of commercial and religious targets in the discovery of the sea route to India".<sup>87</sup> According to K.S.Mathew the theories on the diplomacy of the Portuguese did not find it being practiced in the 'actual conduct of activities in the East'. The Portuguese with the rightful sanction of the Pope by the issue of bulls and under the pretext of propagating Christian faith was in

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 69, para 2.

fact securing their firm hold on the Indian Ocean by the issue of Cartazes in order to boost their gains in trade of spices from the East. This trade of spices that was directed by the Portuguese thus via the Cape of Good Hope to Portugal had brought about far reaching effects in the following years. The Turks, the Sultan of Cairo along with few rulers from the West Coast of India together joined to uproot the firm hold of the Portuguese from the Indian Ocean. Thus the pre-assumption of the Portuguese that there would be a political vacuum wherein the judicial titles of 'Prescription, Occupation and Papal Donation' could be applied for their enterprising work in the Indian Ocean did not apply as they perceived. They also treated the 'local rulers as equals' and as a result entered into friendly treaties with them. These treaties were 'directed' towards trade only. In addition to this the Portuguese also began to seek 'extra-territorial jurisdiction' that was to be agreed by the local Kings. The Portuguese government thus had its instruments in the Portuguese establishments on the Malabar Coast which later became settlements. The Portuguese settlements expanded under the mixed marriages and also relations with local women outside wedlock. Even though the Portuguese sought to usurp the Muslims from the trade in the Indian Ocean, they married the local Muslim women despite their personal marital status. Thus, K.S.Mathew maintains that "some of the characteristic features peculiar to Portuguese Colonialism began to take shape in the diplomacy of the Portuguese trade on the Malabar Coast".<sup>88</sup>

In conclusion, the diplomacy of the Portuguese regarding the conduct of trade in the Indian Ocean remained an exceptional theory that was to be practiced by them but in practice they could not do so and hence their assumption and pre-supposed notions like political vacuum in India and to oust the Muslims and Hindus in order to propagate the Christian faith and thereby to fetch the lost Christians from among the infidels were in sharp contrast to the existing condition on the Indian sub-continent wherein there was no political vacuum and the local kings followed ancient administrative systems, while they maintained cordial relations with the local rulers of the Malabar Coast thereby treating them as equals.

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 71 para 1.

The Portuguese arrival at the coast of Calicut was a result of the geographical discoveries in the medieval period sponsored by the Crown. But their claim to be the first Europeans on the Indian soil is refuted by many writers, as European Renegades had come to India independent of the Crown sponsorship.

G.V.Scammell throws light on such European renegades and exiles through the following article titled "European Exiles, Renegades and Outlaws and the Maritime Economy of Asia C.1500-1750" by G.V.Scammell gives a vivid picture of the service rendered by the rejects or exiles from the European countries. This was due to their conceptual understanding from legends and stories of the Orient which was famous for its extravagant riches and wonders that truly glued them with anxiety to enable them to journey to the same. Scammell brings to light the presence of Europeans in the Orient long before. The arrival of the Portuguese which is mostly perceived in the History of India as the first intrusion of a foreign presence in India in 1498A.D. only excluding the arrival of European travellers at different points of time. These "Renegades" as Scammell opines, are engaged in the service of the country to which they have arrived. When a few of these Portuguese rejects worked as soldiers in Bengal their occupation varied from one place to another for instance in the Red Sea they were preoccupied with Piracy, as seamen working for Muslim vessels who were preventing the overall control of Portugal in its export of Pepper from the South West Coast of India. Shivaji was also helped by these expatriates in building fortifications and providing for shipping. The Mughals were also at an advantage with the service rendered to them by these expels in supplying gunners, and Pilots were supplied in case of the Chinese, the ruler of Arakan and the Sultan of Atjeh were also supplied with galley commanders and men of war respectively. In the Eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal they made themselves so popular as to set themselves up as Princes.

The basic facts that made them flee their own country according to Scammell was due to poverty, economic disasters, religious disturbances, intolerance, the degree of oppression and lack of opportunity as a result of which they sought asylum in Levant in joining the Ottomans in North Africa, by becoming Muslim Corsairs, to also settle themselves amidst the Africans of Guinea or the Indians of North America. Therefore these expels integrated well into the newly defined duties they

were offered in different countries. Majority of them being gunners by land and sea, the Western guns improved in its quality when compared to the firearms and artillery of Pre-European Asia. This was mainly due to the continuous war they indulged which naturally brushed up their skills in handling them effectively.

With special reference to Malabar though not that much highlighted is considered very important as Scammell maintains that the prime matter of concern in between the Portuguese and the Zamorin of Calicut was the prevalence of these renegade gun founders in Calicut as early as in the 1500s. This was attested by the fact of finding the ships of Atjeh laden with a range of Western weapons such as semi-cannon, culverins, sakers, minions by the English soon after their arrival in the East.

Scammell throws light on the difference of perception about the East by the Westerners. After experiencing for long they were no longer satisfied with their present status which was not recognised, so when they heard about the riches and wealth of different Hindu Kingdoms and mighty Moslem Empires of India like the Vijayanagara, and the Mughals respectively, the Renegades utilized their posts in the best possible manner in order to find favour with their local employers that would fetch them additional honours and rewards from their own countries like the English pirates who retrieved the position of colonial governors, Naval Officers, landed squares in their own country due to the success in their work in different fields in another country.

Scammell also further adds on that, Asia offered much more for such expatriates other than the usual fame of money or rank but they also viled away their lives under alcoholic stupor. Therefore those that became very rich were absorbed by their mother countries with good positions.

This article is on the whole is explained in such a way that both the positive and negative aspects of the benefits and damage caused and inflicted respectively by these expatriates are highlighted. Scammell puts forth his opinion that by serving alien lands these expels also cooperated in an effective transformation of local information. They were also able to open up novel trades in between Indian Ocean and Atlantic America. In one way European technology was melted down by these expels in the countries they settled in, by various means like 'selling arms, building Western- style

ships for local aristocracy etc. Though they maintained cordial relations with the locals of the society in the country they were living in, it cannot be a diminished fact that owing to the difference of their culture these pirates had in their innate selves a cruel some behaviour<sup>89</sup>.

The Portuguese as well the European entry to Kerala from ancient to medieval period though had initiated certain disturbances in the religious sphere of the St.Thomas Christians, these Christians over a short period of time had drawn out their ecclesiastical set up to be followed from thenceforth. Xavier Koodapuzha delves into the socio-political set up of the St.Thomas Christians within the societal caste structure that prevailed in Kerala.

Xavier Koodapuzha in his book “Christianity in India” explains that in a country like India where Sanskrit and Arabic played a major role in the religious tradition of the Hindus and the Muslims respectively, the Thomas Christians considered the use of Syriac in their worship as quite normal. The main aspect that marked the beginning of Syriac liturgy during religious tradition of the St.Thomas Christians was the existence of Jewish Christians in India<sup>90</sup>. The St.Thomas Christians were followers of the “Thommayude Margam” (Law of St.Thomas) which also marked their life-style by being orthodox and authentic prior to the sixteenth century. Xavier quotes P.J.Podipara who defined the Thomas Christians life-style as “Indian in culture, Christian in religion and oriental in worship”<sup>91</sup>.

The assessment of the socio-political life of the St.Thomas Christians within the caste structure that prevailed in Kerala would certainly throw light on the status they retained in society. Some of the rules of caste being observed by the St.Thomas Christians as given by Xavier is elaborated by Placid J.Podipara according to whom “The Syrian Christians of Malabar, moreover, were protectors of seventeen low-castes”. So they were called “*Lords of seventeen castes*”. They could try all their cases and could inflict even capital punishment within a certain territory near

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<sup>89</sup>Scammell G.V., “European Exiles, Renegades and Outlaws and the Maritime Economy of Asia C.1500-1750”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 26, No.4 (Oct 1992).

<sup>90</sup> Koodapuzha Xavier., “Christianity in India”, *Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Department of Publications of Paurstya Vidyapitham, Kerala*, pp. 55 para4.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, pp 66, para 4.

Cranganore. These low-caste people on the other hand undertook to defend their Christian lords and to vindicate their right before Kings and chieftains, first by entreaties and non-violence, and then by inflicting on themselves wounds and even death. During the time of harvest and on occasions of marriages, feasts etc., they were given ample remuneration in the shape of paddy and rice which they claimed as their right”<sup>92</sup>(Placid J.Podipara, Social and socio-ecclesiastical Customs of the Syrian Christians of India, in Eastern Churches Quarterly, 7, (1947), 232; cited BVOT, p. 436.).

The customs followed by the Thomas Christians is explained by Placid J.Podipara as follows. “In former times the Syrian Christians kept the rules of untouchability. They bathed before meals if they happened to touch or go near a low caste man or woman. Low-caste people were kept out of their houses and even courtyards. They took ablutions even before the fasts prescribed by the Church. The touch of a low-caste man or woman was considered break the fast. Tanks polluted were to be emptied and filled again. Pagan kings and high-caste Hindus often sought the friendship of Syrian Christians since it was believed that the touch of a Syrian Christian could purify ghee, oil, and other things polluted by the presence of low-caste people”<sup>93</sup>(Placid J. Podipara, Social and Socio-ecclesiastical Customs...p.231; Cited BVOT, p.444.).

In other words owing to their conversion from Brahmin community, the St.Thomas Christians celebrated the functions followed by high caste Hindus on occasions such as birth, marriages, feasts, fasts, funeral etc with a Christian meaning. Xavier Koodapuzha maintained that the Syrian Christians evolved an unique identity of their own which was clearly evident from the dress code of women in addition to their ‘food habits, professions, social system’<sup>94</sup>.

The St.Thomas Christians performed their socio-religious customs that differed from the Chaldean and Western traditions. In order to maintain their noble unique identity they refrained from any such rituals which had a non-Christian religious element in it. Xavier in this context highlights the privileges that these Christians enjoyed as attested by the royal grants known as Copper plates.

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid, pp 67, para3.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp 68, para4.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp 68,para 5.

Another privilege evident from a Portuguese document dated between 1780 and 1786 throws light on the prominent place occupied by the Archdeacon. “The archdeacon.... is the first among the seventy two princes of Perumpadapil; the said Archdeacon is, according to custom, the man to crown the King in order that the King may be recognised as King; the coronation consists in this that the Archdeacon puts a gold cross on the neck of the King, and he (the King) must wear this for five days before he is called King of Perumpadapil”(Noticias do Reino da Maalabar, Bibl. Nacional, Fondo Geral, 536, ff.1-29, Lisbon cited by P.J.Podipara,PPTC,p.85)<sup>95</sup>. The Archdeacon thus held a prominent place in the society wherein he enjoyed his role in the decision making process ‘in the community and also in their relations with other communities’<sup>96</sup>equal to the role of Princes in a kingdom.

Xavier Koodapuzha further delves into the ecclesial set up of the Thomas Christians which thrived well in the ‘socio-politico-cultural milieu’. It consisted of three levels. They are

1. Palliyogam: At the local level.
2. Archdiaconate: At the community level.
3. Metropolitan and Patriarch: At the hierarchical level.

Palliyogam was presided by the local parish clergy. The members were bound by the assembly decisions with regard to matters in relation to parish activities, election and approval for aspiring candidates for priesthood, Christian way of life among the people, financial matters, ‘punishment for public sinners, reconciliation in times of conflicts,etc which were within the competence of the Palliyogam’<sup>97</sup>.

Archdiaconate is clearly defined and explained by Xavier through a 17<sup>th</sup> century document recorded by an Italian Carmelite priest Giuseppe Sebestiani OCD, who was an Apostolic Commissary, points out the unique position of the Archdeacon among the Thomas Christians.

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., pp 69,para 4.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp 69,para 5.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., pp 71,para 3.

“Among the Christians of St.Thomas the position of the Archdeacon is next to the Archbishop. It is a very ancient privileged position which comes down in succession from the same family. It is a great dignity as it is according to the Greek Church. There is no other indigenous dignity neither secular nor religious, greater than the Archdeacon who is considered to be the prince and Head of the St.Thomas Christians”<sup>98</sup>. (Archives of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, Rome, Scrittura riferiti nel Congr., General., Vol. 233, f.111.)

The Metropolitan was also known as ‘The Gate of All India’. Xavier opines that “In the tenth century according to the treatise of the Law of Christians of Ibn Attib, it seems that their Metropolitan was elected by the people in the presence of Suffragan bishops. He was expected to get the approbation of the Patriarch”<sup>99</sup>. Xavier also highlights the significant position the bishops held among the congregation owing to their learning spirit of renunciation and ascetic life.

In conclusion, St.Thomas Christians occupied a position of esteemed presence in the Hindu societal set up wherein their customary observances were common with that of the Hindu high caste and at the same time they maintained their Syrian liturgy in their worship thus continuing the traditions handed down from their Brahmin converted Christian ancestors.

Conclusion :-

The introduction and continuation of Christianity till the present day in an Indian atmosphere where the country is declared as a secular state which assimilates different types or branches of religions to co-exist and flourish independently following their individual rules and norms. Religion thus as a matter of fact has been affected a long way due to the mutual enmity between the brethren of the same country but belonging to different faith. Though the St.Thomas Christians wanted to preserve and carry on the same faith, they were disturbed in terms of their practices and customs by an alien trading power, the Portuguese .European continent witnessed a tremendous change as a result of the initiation and success of the Portuguese explorations. Europe witnessed the emergence or

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., pp76 para2.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., pp78 para2.

formation of an early Modern State, the Revolution and Reformation in the Church, the problem of authority and conversion. The Portuguese owed allegiance to the Roman Supremacy of the Pope who considered St. Peter as their Patron Saint. Hence the Portuguese attempts to revive the St. Thomas Christians from their allegiance for the East Syrian Church to be diverted to the Western Church received very less response as only few St. Thomas Christians agreed to follow the Latin custom and liturgy of the West but a majority of them still maintained their firm ancient faith that was handed down to them by St. Thomas. The political motive of the Portuguese is clearly seen hidden under their commercial relations. But though politically or commercially they were not able to influence these Christians or subdue them which were the strong work of the Portuguese missionaries on religious basis which in the long run had no far fetching results so as to establish a Portuguese empire in India to administer the Indian nation. Portugal thus stands out unsuccessful in this mission.

It can be rightly assessed that during the introduction of Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D there was no 'other' (no Jews and Muslims). The hatred to the Muslims back in Portugal was reflected in the Portuguese main aim at their arrival to end the Muslim monopoly of trade on the Malabar Coast. The Portuguese ideas of Christianity has evolved as one of the ideas in Kerala, wherein the Portuguese had introduced the idea of 'other' (Muslims) which was used as a model in Kerala. In Europe the 'other' of Christianity in the medieval period was Muslims during Crusades followed by the Jews and the communists in the modern period. Thus, the othering was an idea that was brought under European impetus and which suited the absolutist state in Europe and the discourse that flowed from there particularly 17<sup>th</sup> century Portugal.

## Chapter 4

### **Kudumbayogam and the Creation of Family Histories**

Family History can be explained in other words as tracing the lineage of any present Syrian Christian family to their first converts dated to A.D 52 from the seven Brahmins converted by St.Thomas, The Apostle of Jesus Christ. These seven Brahmins are believed to be the Indian forefathers of Syrian Christian religion who successfully handed their own traditional knowledge down the generations. Hence even in the present day Syrian Christians, there is a slight reflection of Hindu religion in their customs and rituals to some extent which is followed with almost the same purity. The writing of a family history is initiated by a family member who records the historical narration based on oral traditions. The findings referred by him as a matter of fact could be true or vice versa. A meeting is convened in order to attest the previously mentioned narratives and every family member from different family branches who belong to that single family name are bound to attend the meeting. A general background history is also explained to everyone and then those that are present need to introduce themselves and their family. After all these, this meeting will be concluded with a Love feast in the afternoon. The family history committee members then make a detailed survey of the individual, innumerable nuclear families present over there and verify their relations to the main family name. The book that is published under this type of authorised committee will have a presiding secretary. The history will also include the positive role that is played by this family in the course of Kerala's evolving history.

Mostly history of Medieval Kerala is written using sources from Hindu landed magnates which also give an insight into other histories of the contemporary period. This study will be focused on using sources like family histories, travel writings in addition to the usage of usual sources like the primary sources and secondary sources.

Structure of Family Histories:-

Family Histories vary in their structure with reference to their narrative strategy that differs from one family history to another. One of the oldest and recent well renowned family histories of

Kerala dated back to the medieval period and which forms the primary focus under my study is the Kaniyanthra Family History and Elanjickal Kudumbayogam respectively, the structure of which consists of a foreword and a message before an introductory chapter on the beginnings of Kerala Christian history followed by the settlement patterns of the respective families down the generations. The role of the Patriarchal heads of the respective families at the time of initiation of writing the family history is mostly eulogised. The status of the concerned family at the time of their history writing with reference to their occupation and the transformation that took place during the successive generations is also highlighted in a family history.

Explanation of titles:-

The titles of Family Histories are the house name they carry which will also reveal the place of their settlement. For instance Kaniyanthra Family is based at Trivandrum (South Kerala), while Elanjickal Family is based at Kottayam (Central Kerala). A few other examples of family histories can be cited like: the Parekattu Family, the Mukkathu Family, and the Kallumpattu Family based at Chengannur (Central Kerala).

Review of literature:-

The study of family history in the present chapter would probably reckon an introduction to the understanding of family as a whole, its structure, its function, the origin of family and so on. Nevertheless, family flourished as a social institution from time immemorial and has even continued its nature till the present day though it had attained changes in its structure of functioning.

The family originated as an authorized form of development of an individual in a given societal sphere. Family to quote, Goode, "is the only social institution other than religion which formally developed in all societies". The term 'social structure' in anthropology is often used to mean the family and kingship structure. The family is the fundamental instrumental foundation of the larger social structure in that all other institutions depended on its contributions. The role behaviour that is learned within the family becomes the model or prototype for role behaviour required in other segments of the society. The content of the socialization process is the cultural traditions of the

society; by passing them on to the next generation. The family acts as a conduit or transmission belt by which the culture is kept alive”<sup>1</sup>.

In order to clearly define the structure of family histories let us first study the structures of Family in a global scenario. According to Goode, “Almost all the world’s population lives in family units, but the structures or forms vary not only from one society to another but also from one class to another within the same society. These variations result from many accidental, idiosyncratic and normative factors. The various forms of the household have a number of implications for family interactions. They help to determine for example, the chances of more or less intimate social relations among members of the kinship group. These structural patterns shape in part the process of strain and adjustment among relatives.”<sup>2</sup>

The definition of a Family as used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Allen, Fine and Demo (2000) can be defined as “characterized by two or more persons related by birth, adoption, marriage or choice. Families are defined by socio-emotional ties and enduring responsibilities particularly in terms of one or more member’s dependence on others for support and nurturance.”<sup>3</sup>

According to the Source book of Family theory and Research it has become a necessity to arrive at a number of ‘theoretically relevant distinctions, involving the definition of family’. They are as follows.

Firstly, individual family member’s definitions (“insiders definitions”) of who is (and who is not) in their family may differ from those of others (eg, “outsiders”), including researchers who attempt to define who is in another individual’s family. Thus, they are both “subjective” and “objective” definitions of family, and we believe that depending on the goals of the inquiry, each type of definitions of family has its merits.

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<sup>1</sup> Goode William J. “The Family”, Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi , 1975, pp.4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp 44-45.

<sup>3</sup> Bengtson Vern L. , Acock Alan C, Allen Katherine R., Anderson- Peggye Dilworth, Klein David M., “Source book of Family Theory & Research” Sage Publication,2005. Pp 120 para 1.

Secondly, “household” needs to be distinguished from “family”. The term household refers to a residential unit and the individuals who live in that specific home. A family may extend across multiple households and in some circumstances, not everyone in a household may be considered to be in the same family.

Thirdly, a distinction needs to be drawn between individual-level and family-level definitions. At the individual level, definition of family can differ for members within what outsiders may consider to be a family unit. For example, one child in the unit may consider her mother to be a member of her family whereas another child in the unit may consider that same mother, who is a step mother to him, to be outside of his family. Thus the family may be constituted quite differently for different members of the unit. At the family level, because of the different meaning of family for different individuals within the unit, it’s difficult to categorize families into types or categories that have the same meaning to all individuals within that unit.

Fourthly, individuals who are physically absent for reasons such as a non resident parent or a deceased family member will still be psychologically present in the minds of at least some individuals within the unit can have important influence on individual and family functioning.

Finally, membership in a family is not restricted to individuals who have harmonious relationships with others in the unit. Family members may have conflictual and distant relationship with each other but they may consider themselves to be members of the same family nevertheless because their lives are intertwined in important ways. A person’s family may extend across generations, households and marital, legal, and blood ties.<sup>4</sup>

The definition and meaning of family is quoted by Tandon as follows “The word ‘family’ has been taken from the Latin word ‘Famulus’ which means a servant. In Roman law the word denoted a group of producers and slaves and other servants as well as members connected by common descent or marriage. Thus, originally family consisted of a man and a woman with a child or children. The meaning of family can be explained by the following definition. Tandon quotes Bugess and Locke

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp 120

who defines family as “Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture “<sup>5</sup>.

Dr. Ruchi Tandon Analyses the functions of a family as put forth by Talcott Parsons. Parson argues that “families are factories which produce human personalities. He believes that family is essential for this purpose since primary socialisation requires a context which provides warmth, security and mutual support. He can conceive of no institution other than the family which could provide this context. Once produced personality must be kept stable. This is the second basic function of family, the ‘stabilization of other personalities’. Adult personalities are also stabilised by the parent’s role in the socialization process. This allows them to act out childish elements of their own personalities which they have retained from childhood but which cannot be indulged in adult society”<sup>6</sup>.

The approaches to family are clearly explained by Tandon under the following sub-headings, historical approaches (ie) tradition maintenance, sociological approach (ie) contingency management, the universal functional approach, the structural and the interactionist approach. According to Dr.Tandon, these various approaches can be further interpreted under two main sub-titles.

(a)The Historical and Sociological Approach: This approach is also known as maintenance of tradition and contingency management respectively. While tradition maintenance pertains ‘to those activities that sustains the existing norms and values’. The contingency management pertains ‘to the adjustment of values, norms and tension management mechanisms to changes in economic, political and other institutions in the society’<sup>7</sup>.

(b)The Universal Functional Approach, the Structural and the Interactionist approach: This approach as explained by Dr. Tandon “contribute to the understanding of the operation of family life. As the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp.2.

<sup>6</sup> Pp.13. para 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp 28, para 4.

operations of family involve maintaining traditional patterns of family life, sustaining solidarity among members, establishing liaison with other groups and managing any contingencies that may arise. Thus, this approach has been concerned specifically with the norms, values and techniques of tension management related to solidarity in contemporary family life”<sup>8</sup>.

In conclusion, the family, its definition, functions and the approaches to family gives proper insights into the role and a study of History in family studies. Family thus acts as a model institution in the establishment of a life-cycle of an individual.

The differentiation in family types is clearly explained by Robertson. The family types vary with their size and occupants. As elaborated in definitions, according to Robertson-“Nuclear family refers to a unit consisting of spouses and their dependent children”.

“Conjugal family refers to a family system in which the Nuclear family unit is more or less independent of kin and in which the main emphasis is on the marital relationship (Goode, 1963)”. This type of family is in sharp contrast to extended family. “Extended family refers to any grouping, related by descent, marriage or adoption, which is broader than the Nuclear family (Bell and Vogel, 1968, p.3).

Extended family can also be differentiated under two broad categories(i,e), “classical extended family which is based on the geographical propinquity of related nuclear families, economic interdependence, the authority of extended family groupings over the nuclear family and stress on extra-nuclear kin relationships- and the ‘ modified extended family’ wherein a loose set of kin relationships in which nuclear families, though geographically dispersed and autonomous, value and maintain extra-nuclear kin relationships”.

The term ‘descent group’ is used to refer to a social group based on common descent from a real or mythical ancestor (Abercrombie et. Al., 1984). Such groups commonly contribute corporate groups in that their members act together and form political and economic units.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp 32, para 3.

Finally, as in everyday usage, units which do not consist of a married couple and their children are specifically labelled 'adoptive families', 'one-parent families', 'remarriage families', 'cohabiting units', 'lesbian families' and so on. Common to all these specifications of various types of families is a conception of 'the familial' as referring to social units based on biological reproduction and blood relationships (or stimulated blood relationships, as in the adoptive family).

Robertson also puts forth three main arguments that relate to the role played by human biology in the social organisation of sexual and parental relationships.

"Firstly, the traditional view maintains that the nuclear family and the sexual division of labour arise almost naturally and universally out of the conditions of human reproduction. This mode of explanation assumes that biology limits the variability of family patterns, that some familial behaviour are instinctive and unlearned, and that there is continuity between the behaviour and characteristics of animals, primates and human beings.

The second argument denies biological role in family patterns and stresses on the influence of society on the roles of men and women and nuclear family. According to this argument 'family patterns are shaped by economic, political and ideological processes. It assumes that human nature is pliable and social arrangements variable that the behaviour of humans and animals is discontinuous, and that family roles are learned'.

The third set of arguments suggests that, while there is variability in the needs of the child and in parental and sexual relationships, there are also basic continuities so that both biological and social factors must be taken into account"<sup>9</sup>. In conclusion, it can be seen that the types of family and the different roles that the family involves has been a constant activity that continues irrespective of the occupation or monetary security a family is engaged in. Therefore this would necessitate an in depth perception of the functions of a family.

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<sup>9</sup> Robertson Faith Elliot, "The Family : Change or Continuity ?", Humanities Press International, Inc., Atlantic Highlands, NJ, U.S.A, 1986, pp.15, para 2-4.

The functions of family as elaborated in “Exploring Family Theories” by Murdock (1949) is as follows, According to Murdock the family provides four essential functions for all societies:-

“The first is sexual. All societies have found that this powerful impulse must be restrained in order to avoid chaos. However, it must not be over regulated or personality problems and an insufficient population would result. The compromise found everywhere is marriage. Although sexual relations do occur outside of marriage, most sexual expression occurs in marriage and it is the one context in which sexual behaviour is always socially acceptable.

The second function is reproduction. This follows naturally from the fact that marriage is the primary sexual relationship in all societies. While many children are born out of wedlock, the majority are born according to society’s preference, which is within the family. Such children are usually privileged in terms of acceptance, inheritance and other factors.

The third function is socialization. In addition to producing children, the family must care for them physically and train them to perform adult tasks and adopt the values deemed appropriate by their particular culture.

The final function is economic. This does not mean that the family is the economic unit of production, although it has been in many times and places. In other words, since males have greater physical strength and females bear the children, marital pairs have found that their survival is enhanced if they divide responsibilities according to their capacities.

In addition, the functions of rituals and behaviours within the family are also analyzed. Each culture has its own approaches to birth, parenting, sexual taboos and other matters. A productive way of understanding these family rules is to investigate what functions they each serve for the family and the society at large.”<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, the functions of a family play a major role in the overall development of an individual’s upbringing. Family as a social institution has evolved in India despite of its

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid pp 12-13.

diversity in religion, region, culture and linguistic traits. Chandrasekhar discusses on the representative family whether Hindu family can be considered as representative family as it forms the religion of the majority of the population. The Hindu joint family irrespective of the matrilineal type as seen in Kerala and patriarchal which is practised by the rest of the country is discussed by him in detail<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, as the functions of a family remain static in its nature, the structure of a family mostly is affected with some changes. The structure of family is explained by George Kurian.

According to George Kurian in the chapter on family structure in the Hindu Society of Rural India, he maintains that “the family structure of Indian society is by no means static or uniform. There are two dimensions of variations. First, individual families change. As new members are added to the family, as old members die, and as the social and the economic position of the family in the village, society changes, the family itself changes. During these transitions, a joint family may split into two or more units. Thus an individual may pass through different types of families, e.g. nuclear and joint, in his life cycle.

A second dimension of Hindu family structure is the distribution of families within the society. As the total population grows and the economic or social situation improves or deteriorates, the percentage of joint or nuclear families may also change.”<sup>12</sup>

George Kurian quotes U.R. Von Ehrenfels from the chapter on matrilineal Joint Family Patterns in India that “Kerala Marumakkattayi converts to Christianity, on the other hand, have invariably abandoned Matrilineal and adopted Patrilineal succession and inheritance along with the Christian religion. In Kerala, the powerful example of the patriarchy organized Syrian Christian

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<sup>11</sup> Chandrasekhar.K., “The Family in India”, Marriage and Family Living, Vol.16, No.4, International Issue on the Family(Nov.,1954), pp.336-342.

<sup>12</sup> Kurian George.,”The Family In India- A Regional View”, Mouton & Co N.V. Publishers, The Hagues, 1974.

community, over a thousand years old, encouraged assimilation of new converts to the Syrian Christian, if not European way of life.”<sup>13</sup>

The definition of family as per the handbook of World Families is defined as “Family is fundamental to society, as the society begins and ends with the family because of its special role in the process of biological and social reproduction. The family as a social institution or as a primary group assures a specific significance, especially in the case of a traditional society.”<sup>14</sup>

Bert quotes Karve who defined the traditional joint family as “a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked in one kitchen, who hold property in common participate in certain family worship and are related to one another as some type of kindred.”<sup>15</sup>

Bert maintains the above statement to be “inevitable because they were working and living together on their ancestral property generation after generation.”<sup>16</sup>

According to Robert, “The family is not necessarily the property-holding unit: this may be a wider decent group or a narrower group of relatives or simply the individual. Nor is the family necessarily the domestic unit in the sense of the unit which eats, sleep and works together: several ‘families’ (however defined) may form one domestic unit; a single joint or extended family may consist of more than one domestic unit and the domestic unit may exclude or lack one parent or other relative, at least at times.”<sup>17</sup>

Therefore, Family is an ever continuous sanctioned institution which begins with marriage of a male and female from two different backgrounds with a life-long partnership that rely on mutual trust and understanding, compromises and sacrifices that play a pivotal role in fulfilling their successive generation needs. Thus family over a period of time evolved into one of the most prestigious institutions wherein individual identity was labelled with the family they lived in. In order to get a

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<sup>13</sup> Ft.nt.pp.97, para 2.

<sup>14</sup> Adams Bert N., “Handbook Of World Families”, Sage Publication, (Choose any one Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi), 2005. Ft.nt.pp.129

<sup>15</sup> (Karve,1965,p.8.)Ft.Nt.pp132

<sup>16</sup> Pp.133

<sup>17</sup> Parkin Robert, “Kinship. An introduction to the Basic concepts,” Blackwell Publishers,1997 pp.29

glimpse of what a family owes in terms of its importance in the life of an individual, the examples of families from times immemorial both in foreign lands as well as in India would seem appropriate. The term “Royal Family”, it seems to explain the character and life of the individuals from such a family to be of an equal status with the ruling Kings of the land. While the term “Joint Family”, will indicate the different branches of the same family living together under one roof. The “Nuclear Family” is a modern offshoot of the medieval “Joint Family” system. And so on the list continues with the type of family a state or region inculcates for example the Patriarchal type of family found in general which advocates the transfer of household authority from the father male to the son male, while in the Matriarchal type the authority vests with the female member of the household and is transferred from the mother to the daughter. The history of a family or otherwise known as “Family History” under my proposed study was a major outcome which thrived on the joint family system that prevailed in medieval times. Earlier the rules and customs of a family or a period was handed down to the future generation through “oral traditions” but with the beginning of family history writing the same was recorded in writing under the respective family name in their family history books. In this process of recording the facts of their family they also highlighted the political, economic, religious and social conditions of that given period to portray the eminent role played by the family personalities in different arena of public life. Let us now look into the definition of a family as explained by Rose Laub Coser and Peter Laslett.

“A family” is not a static entity but a process in time, a process ordinarily so brief compared with historical time that it is unimportant, but which, when history is “full” (i.e. marked by rapid social change), strongly influences the mutual adjustment of the generations. This “span” is basically the birth-cycle the length of time between the birth of one person and his procreation of another. It is biological and inescapable. It would, however, have no effect in producing parent-youth conflict, even with social change, if it were not for the additional fact, intimately related and equally universal, that the sequential development of personality involves a constantly decelerating rate of socialization. This deceleration is due both to organic factors (age-which ties it to the birth-cycle) and to social factors (the cumulative character of social experience). Its effect is to make the birth-cycle interval, which is

the period of youth, the time of major socialization, subsequent periods of socialization being subsidiary”<sup>18</sup>.

The Stem Family: “The integrity of a society, especially that of a nation, depended upon the stability, the simplicity, the immemorial integrity of the family (its time honored virtue- all these phrases recur), and especially on the authority of the family head, the loyalty and obedience of his subjects. A great deal of the actual shape or constitution of the domestic group usually seems to assume a structure for it, a large scale structure”. “The domestic group was of three types:-

The first, the Patriarchal type, was stable in structure and faithful to the family line and to tradition; it kept all sons within the household after marriage.

The second, the famous Stem family, *la famille souche*, was also stable in structure and faithful to the family line, but to traditional values it added a novelty; the parents married off and kept within the group only one of their children whom they nominated successor. The others, being given their shares of the inheritance, went away to found their own households if they wished, but some stayed behind of their own free will even after succession had occurred, remaining themselves unmarried.

The third type, the unstable type, showed little attachment to the family line and was inclined to novelty; it came into being at marriage, grew as birth took place and shrank with successive departures of the children, coming to an end with the death of the parents and the dividing up of the inheritance”<sup>19</sup>.

The above cited explanations on the types, roles, functions and structures of family would also bring under our study the trend of family of how a family can deeply influence and structure an individual to mould him into either a responsible citizen or vice versa for a nation’s all-round development or downfall.

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<sup>18</sup> Rose Laub Coser, “The Family Its Structure and Functions”, St.Martin’s Press, New York,1964, pp 457, Para1, quotes article , Kingsley Davis, *American Sociological Review*, Vol.V (Aug.1940), pp. 523-535.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, *Household and Family in Pastime*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1972, pp 16-17 quotes Le Play, “*Les Ouvriers Europeens (1885,1877-9) I:457*.”

The Trend of Family Life by Annie S.Swan delves deep into the core of a family life. The family an initiation by the 'Creator' who handed over a mate to man marked the beginning of a life together as a result of which the future generations also carried on the responsibilities that a family system offered them with. To quote, Swan "Throughout all the ages, the family has been symbolical of something concrete, satisfying, steadfast, set for all time among the things which cannot be moved. This shrine, common to all people in all ages, has its differing standards. But even among the most savage and elemental peoples some form of family life exists, and the shrine is kept inviolate"<sup>20</sup>. According to Swan, Family life attained few changes beyond the past half a century. The home environment was entirely under the control of the parents. Children were visible but never formed a part of decision making in the household. Strict discipline was the norm and children never rebelled against the harsh treatment meted out to them thus practiced self-control. Such stringent family norms the children endured with also hampered their self-interest in tune with a profession of their choice. The practice of continuing the family profession or entering a profession bestowed on them by the family was looked upon as a credit of parenthood, where parents considered themselves honoured as they succeeded in winning their child to accept the profession proposed by them. According to Swan, this sort of strict parenthood attained a severe change over the years that followed, where children opted for an opportunity of their choice even when their parents did not consent for the same. Swan adds on that such "Spartan family treatment" had its own advantages. The children never went wayward in their fruitful youth period upto their attainment of adulthood. Displays of affections were discouraged causing anxiety and fear by the children regarding their parents. This widened gap in relationship offered that family had its own 'dignity and character'. Swan emphasizes the true relationship of a family that is initiated with the coming together of a man and woman who begin their responsibilities by accepting the vows of marriage welcome children into their family life as heavenly gifts. In such a family life the parents sacrifice their wants to give the best to their children. These parents owe the reciprocation of obedience and respect from their children as their 'reward' as Swan puts it, which often results in the negative causing frustration to the parents. In other words Swan

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<sup>20</sup> Peake A.S and Parsons R.G., "An Outline of Christianity The Story of Our Civilization", Five Volumes, Vol.V, Christianity TO-DAY and TO-MORROW, The Waverley Book Company; Ltd, London (year not mentioned), Pg 15, para1.

maintains that as the saying goes 'as you sow so you reap' stands right in the case of family life too. However the result may be, the dutiful parents have assured to the fullest that the future of their children is safeguarded.

Swan contradicts and compares the present day parents who are a complete 'reversion from the old standard'. Swan maintains that though there was difference of opinions in the bygone family life's it is a matter of fact that the present day family life involves openness in matters spoken between parents and children which were once considered to be most private and sacred. Irrespective of the issue every matter or problem faced in family is highlighted in "newspapers and magazines, and consequently in general conversation, so that nothing is left either to imagination or even to modesty" as Swan puts it. In addition to these Swan maintains that even divorce in the bygone days was considered a very rare attempt as it was considered as almost on par with a criminal offence or a grave tragedy and so the wrongs done on women were patiently endured with quietness safeguarding their honour in society. However such sense of honour and quietness is seldom found in the present day society where cases of divorce are plenty which also marks the instability of 'matrimonial' period too. This also brings into question of even having children as the married couple faces insecurity with continuing their bond till their lifetime. Even if the risk of parenting choice is made, their children in their youth begin to question their parents demanding enough freedom from their exercised control and discipline. This type of adamant behaviour by their children will spontaneously make such parents avoid their responsibility and utilize that time in relishing their own interests. In addition to these the irrelevance of the aspect of faith also contributes to the loss of trust in a family life. Thus, the child brought up in an ideal family environment will grow up to be a qualified citizen of that respective state and country. In sharp contrast to this type is an isolated child left to mend its own destiny will always grow up with criticisms which will mould him to do unlawful things resulting in the loss of a valuable self-righteous citizen for the state. Therefore, to quote Swan "there is no

substitute for the family life. Family life, without a guiding principle and mainspring will not, however, fulfil all the obligations with which it is credited”<sup>21</sup>.

Swan brings forth the relevance of strong spiritual faith in every family the failure of which has seen the “trend of family life decline in honour, integrity and fine results. The family altar has practically disappeared”<sup>22</sup>. According to Swan, God and prayer are sidelined to the secondary place while they ought to occupy the premier position in all the day - today activities of an individual’s family life. In a Christian mind Swan puts forth the blame on the Church which was once the heart of activities. The members attending the Church i.e. the congregation formed one single family unit where every individual shared a common bond with each other but in the present day environment the Church’s influence on an individual life has been less effective. Preaching which was once the boon for the day or the need of the hour has now turned out to be a door to criticism owing to the educated listening lot. Therefore the Church previously addressed as “Fathers House” has emerged as one which awakens the individual listener of their “neglected duty and opportunity”<sup>23</sup>time and again. Hence in the present days young minds often visit the church not for the purpose of worship and submission of their needs to god instead as Swan puts it “to satisfy the pricks of conscience, discharge a duty that has become irksome”<sup>24</sup>. The question put forth by Swan is that who should be held responsible for the neglecting of church services by the youth. In response she slaps the blame on the parents who mould the lives of their children in a family atmosphere. Swan maintains that due to the change of worship from ‘true god to false gods’ the need of the hour is for the parents to bring up their children in the joy and happiness of god by involving the children from their tender age of childhood in church life, the reverse effect would be very crucial in an individual’s family life wherein he would be “careless, difficult to be maintained and wayward”<sup>25</sup>.

Swan concludes that parents must imbibe staunch spiritual faith in children as a result of which they would grow up to be worthy citizens of a nation. The only solution to a responsible family

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pg 21, para3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pg 21, para4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pg 22, para 5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid .,pg 22, para5.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pg 23, para2.

life according to Annie. S.Swan would be to follow diligently the Holy Book 'Bible' which consists all the answers raised to it for a problem free family environment.

The trend of family has indeed acquired lot of changes in the aspects portrayed by Annie. S.Swan. The morals and values which were considered to be the heritage of a nation were upheld by its citizens. Thenurturing thus initiated at home,were replaced by an irresponsible attitude towards the respective nation, this change also found its initiative from the so called neglective family who least considered Bible or had less spiritual faith which resulted in the deceleration of values in family life.

In conclusion, family life practiced down the previous generations would indeed bring out its trend, the detailed study of which will constitute the history of that particular family or in other words the Family History of the concerned family in writing. A general perception of family history is given by Morgan.

In the chapter on family history, Morgan highlights the disputed arguments among various historians. The industrial revolution was a landmark to differentiate the type of existing families which can be labelled as before or after the industrial revolution. To quote Morgan "before the industrial revolution there were traditional families, peasant families, extended families, after which there were modern families, urban – industrial families, nuclear families"<sup>26</sup>.

In a detailed explanation to the varieties of family history Morgan refers to Anderson's outline of four main schools of family history.

“1. Psycho history: This line of family history attempts to merge historical with psycho analytical insights.

2. The demographic approach: This approach emphasises on the detailed collection of statistics from sources such as parish records and the increasingly sophisticated use of computers in the analysis of detailed numerical data.

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<sup>26</sup> Morgan. D.H.J., "The Family, Politics and Social Theory", Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley, 1985, pp.161, para2.

3. Sentiments approach: This approach argues for an overall shift in emphasis in patterns of control and in the relationships within the family and between the family and the wider society.
4. Household economics approach: This approach focuses on placing the household in its wider environment and especially with identifying the structural constraints that confront households in particular regions or localities at particular points of time”<sup>27</sup>.

Morgan delves into what contribution family history could make to a study of social change. According to Morgan, causation has become a question in the writings of recent family historians in the wake of the “relationship between the family and large scale processes such as urbanisation and industrialisation. Morgan also cites the views about family history as argued by Davis, Elder and Kant. Davis argues that family history may enable us to see social change beginning from below, something that is initiated by and not imposed upon, families. (Davis, N.Z., 1978 in Rossi et al.,(eds), pp.87-114).

Elder, similarly argues that the historical approach (or more specifically the ‘life course approach’) may help us to see ‘family’ and kinship as a causal force in history’ (Elder, 1978 in Demos and Boocock, p.8).

Kanter argues that the historical perspective may correct ‘a one-sided picture of the family has helpless victims of the forces of industrialisation’ (Kanter, 1978, in Demos and Boocock, p.321)”<sup>28</sup>.

Morgan maintains that family history provides with a comparative perspective on the present matters than in the case of the past. The social construction of family identities as Morgan states therefore, “must be understood historically, not in terms of some kind of abstract history but of histories and biographies that are intimately connected and felt and understood. At a more theoretical level, family history does not simply provide us with information, to tell us that things were different,

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<sup>27</sup> PP 162 – 166.

<sup>28</sup> PP.174, para 3

or the same, in the past. It provides us with some of the tools to think about these similarities and differences and to work through the consequence of this thought in terms of wider theorising”<sup>29</sup>.

In conclusion it can be said the study of family history can also be viewed as a social reconstruction of family identities not only of the past but also of the present.

Family History is not given importance as a source in writing histories. Family Histories are written by notable individuals based on oral traditions who wish to research their ancestral lineage. Family History writing is an unique cultural practice under the Syrian Christians of Kerala. Family History is written by those families who wish to maintain the details of their family to be handed down to the successive generation. Family History helps in tracing the root identity of a present family to its ancient status.

The context of Medieval Kerala and the typology of sources:-

A family history in its true sense can be compiled only if the new relations are recognised and connected to the main family tree. Here kinship relations form an effective form of writing and compiling the history of a given family among the Syrian Christians of Kerala. In order to understand the kinship relations of Syrian Christians an in depth analysis of Kinship Terminology from the article on Syrian Christians of Kerala can be studied written by George Tharakan C and D.V.Raghava Rao. This article highlights the terms that are commonly used in the expression of language among the relations of Syrian Christians of Kerala. The terms broadly fall under the Kinship system of Southern India. But at the Peninsular South Asian Level these Kinship terms fall under two broad divisions of the North Indian System that owes its allegiance to the Indo-European and the South Indian that is naturally known under the title Dravidian system. But it is a striking fact that the Syrian Christian Terminology does not comprise of either the above explained broadly divided features of the Indo-European and the Dravidian but its features seem to be extending beyond the

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<sup>29</sup> Pp. 181, para 1-2.

above mentioned two boundaries. Such type of numerous extending important features can be explained under few points as quoted in this article. They are:-

- “i) The absence of positive marriage rule and the prohibition of cross-cousin marriage.
- ii) The absence of cognate-affine equation.
- iii) An assimilation of female with her husband’s relatives as he does.
- iv) Incidence of sister exchange.
- v) Tendencies of bifurcate-merging system.
- vi) Tendencies of ‘cross-parallel’ opposition etc”<sup>30</sup>. While the first three features fall under non-Dravidian features and the latter three are believed to be the existing ones from the ancestral fold.

This article basically focuses on the Syrian Christian terminology of their kinship patterns which characterizes itself with having its Kinship features that are non-Dravidian but the terminology being used consists of Dravidian features. The concept of kinship terminology can be basically understood as part and parcel of any language system, the structure and rules of which are understood by any new introductions or deletions in familial ties.

The sources regarding Kerala Christian history are available through–

Literary sources which give elaborate descriptions about the medieval period St. Thomas Christian history are the narratives of Joseph The Indian, the travel writings of the famous Italian traveller Marco Polo, other medieval travel writings of Ibn Battuta, Sig. Pietro Della Valle, Ludovico de Varthema, Dutch Records, Buchannan’s and Dr. Kerr’s accounts of Syrian Christians, Padmanabha Menons’s history of Kerala in the form of notes on Visscher’s letters from Malabar, Malabar Manual by William Logan, and all the literature under secondary sources pertaining to Syrian Christians of medieval period in Kerala History.

The medieval period epigraphic sources such as two stone slab inscriptions dated back to 1494 and 1526 that granted the Christians few tax exemptions and the assurance to fishermen of relief from

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<sup>30</sup> Tharakan George .C & Raghava Rao D.V., “Kinship Terminology among the Syrian Christians of Kerala: An Analysis”, PILC Journal of Dravidic Studies, 11:1 and 11:2/January, July 2001, pp 31.

their then existing execrable conditions by the Travancore King's Unni Kerala Tiruvadi and Udaiyamarttandavarman respectively.

In addition to epigraphical sources, epitaphs (an inscription on a tombstone in memory of the one buried there), also provide relevant information on the medieval period Kerala Christian history. This is clearly evident from the epitaph dated 1701 when Tomma-rajavu of Villaravattam residing at Chenonnam died. This epitaph throws light on the firm establishment of the St. Thomas Christians wherein they had appointed an independent King to rule over them. At the time of Portuguese arrival they were given the royal sceptre by these Christians in order to maintain friendly relations based on the common faith they believed in.

The Copper – Plate records form an important source of historical information regarding the St. Thomas Christians. The earliest copper-plate records dated to 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century highlights the patronage received by the Christians and the Jews under the Chera rulers Sthanu Ravi and Bhaskara Ravi Varman of Kottayam and Cochin respectively. The other Copper-Plate records of the medieval period relate the property transactions by the Hindu landed magnates for the construction of Church and other such purposes.

The context of Family Histories: - Family History writing evolved as a normal custom of recording the contemporary history of the period involving the societal conditions of the period, the religious, cultural practices and the political conditions of the state in making. These details were incorporated in the family books in addition to tracing their lineage from the beginning of the respective Family History writing period. The Kianthra Family History under my study dates back to 1467 A.D. Therefore this history narrates the historical events in its own effectiveness spanning four centuries. Each successive history will include their ancestral history in addition to their own explanation of the present generation as to how and on what basis is the family divided and spread over a vast spatial set up under successive generations that were effected with various factors that caused the spread.

Christianity in Pre-Portuguese period: - The establishment of Christianity in the land of Kerala in its Hindu caste based societal set up was not a free amalgamation of a newly introduced religion

(Christianity) into an already established religious state (caste based Hindu society). The fact that the first converts by Apostle St. Thomas being the Brahmans, brings to the core the acceptance of the newly converted St. Thomas Christians on an equal basis with the Brahmans in terms of their status in the Kerala society. This was also visible in the construction of ancient churches which almost resembled that of Hindu Temples. Therefore, Christianity in the Pre-Portuguese period attained an indigenous outlook as it was introduced on Indian soil and not an imposition by force by an alien ruling power.

After the coming of Portuguese: - The Portuguese main aim in the Indian sub-continent was not only commercial based but also religious based. Their religious mission was directed towards winning the allegiance of St. Thomas Christians from the Eastern Patriarch of Antioch to obey the Roman Papal law under the jurisdiction of the Pope. Therefore the coming of the Portuguese had created a dichotomy in the indigenous Christian faith. The formation of the Pazhayakoor and the Puthencoor Christians was the consequence of the involvement of the Portuguese in the existing faith of the St. Thomas Christians. The Portuguese presence on the Malabar Coast also witnessed their hatred towards Muslim merchants on account of their hatred to Islam's reigning power over Portugal.

Reading of Family Histories: - Family Histories in addition to tracing their own lineage to the first converts by St. Thomas also portrays the historical events that were in vogue during the period of their writing the family history. Kaniyanthra, the earliest family history under my study is dated from the mid-fifteenth century to the present surveys the beginnings of the land of Kerala resulting due to geographical features, religious legends and other political factors under the ruling elites. The intrusion of the Portuguese into the religious milieu of the St. Thomas Christians and the trade on the Malabar Coast is also highlighted. The Elanjickal Kudumbayogam also refers to the Portuguese who were effective in causing certain disturbances in the unflinching faith followed by the St. Thomas Christians since the introduction of Christianity on the Indian soil. While the Parekattu Family history does not even make a mention about the Portuguese, The Mukkathu Kudumbayogam refers to the establishment of the Tarisapalli Church by Sabrison which was abandoned by the people of Kollam Korakkeni due to the atrocities by the Portuguese. (This atrocity was mentioned in the Malayalam

newspaper Malayala Manorama in the write up on Kollam Nazranis on page 2). Due to the acquisition of this Church and the continued atrocities by the Portuguese they abandoned the Church and their place of settlement and migrated to Kallada. The Kallumpattu Kudumbayogam mentions the contempt with which the Portuguese traded merely to fulfil their economic requirements of the rare spices that Kerala was gifted with. During the period of their commercial exploits they also intervened in the religious sphere of the St. Thomas Christians. Therefore family histories are not composed based on any common underlying method of writing as it may or may not include certain information. Such types of writings are witnessed in recent family history writings. Mostly medieval period family history portrays the period wise developments or disadvantages in political and religious fields as a result of Portuguese influence after which they also relate their family backgrounds and its initiation in the writing of their family history and the charting of their family tree.

The Structure of the Kudumbayogam: - Family Histories are mostly structured into two or three parts. Each part describing the content-chapters, historical narration of their ancestral family, and the different branches this family spread into, till the present narration. Some of the Family Histories first highlight the number of times this family history book was published and the differences occurring in successive publications.

The Main Patrons: - The main patrons of the family histories are the respective Patriarchal heads of the concerned family households. Their main intention being eulogising their ancestral heads who played a memorable role during their lifetime.

The Process of Composition: - Family Histories follow different pattern of compositions based on the individuals who initiate this process.

Errors and Editing from Family Histories: - Any errors occurred in the editing of Family History writing if identified before the publishing of the same will be mentioned in the concluding pages of the book.

The size of the text: - Each Family History varies regarding its size. The present book Kianantha Family History is the third edition with 352 pages and twenty eight chapters, Elanjickal Family

History consists of 184 pages including messages from various personalities followed by 14 chapters, while the Mukkathu Family History consists of three editions in a single publication with 340 pages, the Kallumpattu Family History consists of two editions with 241pages, the Parekattu Family History consisting of 251 pages and 19 chapters.

Introductory Pages and their content: -Every Family History introduces the beginnings of Kerala Christian History in its first Chapter then continuing with the description of the beginnings of their own family till the present date along with a detailed reference to the initiation of their family tree anda note of apology in the case of any mistakes made in these histories which if brought to notice would be corrected in the forthcoming editions.

The Vision of the Family Histories: - All Family History books are written with a primary aim to trace the family lineage to the maximum period spanning a few previous centuries and connecting their settlement and spread to the present family differences with regard to the distance specifications and such other factors which have evolved over a period of time.

The objective of Family Histories: -The primary objective of compiling a Family History is to trace their Family lineage to their ancestors who were the beginners of their Family tree. This tracing of a few centuries old family related history would help the family members to perceive their present status in society which remained a constant factor with the Family name. This also would imply that the Family name of any individual would predominate in a society when compared to the individual's construction of his image based on his character. The knowledge of the socio - economic and political conditions that these families prospered during the earlier centuries was certainly a ray of hope in terms of their occupation and future well-being.

The type of entries: - The type of entries with regard to dates of concerned family, Chronology, personalities, and the division and migration of families due to the prevailing circumstances can be relied based on authentic evidences in the form of diaries, inscription on epitaphs and oral traditions recorded and preserved from the date of initiation of the family under study. Kaniyanthra Family History provides the history of their ancestors from the viewpoint of a possibility that the succeeding

personality based on the date criteria is not necessarily the direct blood descendant of the former but one among the relatives with the same family name. The Elanjickal Family History records its family initiation based on the place they primarily belonged to and the families that blossomed after their migration to other places.

The content of Family Histories: - The family histories written at different periods of time consist of varying differences in the dissemination of information. Kianthra family history portrays the socio-economic history of the period in addition to the description of their family line beginning from the medieval period. The Elanjickal family history includes many historical and religious developments at different periods of time in addition to the explanation of the role of individual personalities in their respective societies. The Mukkathu Family History records the cultural growth of its family line down the years under the prevailing circumstances. The Kallumpattu Family History highlights the politico-economic history followed by the detailed description to their family tree. The Parekattu Family History throws light on few historical and political developments that took place during their family History writing.

The conclusion of Family Histories:- The Family Histories that have marked the Syrian Christians in realising and recognising their own worth in the present period by the grandiose they cherished in the bygone days have no set conclusions in the end as it is a continuous process for the succeeding generations to continue.

A brief note on each family history is as follows:-

Kianthra Family History: - The first few chapters in Kianthra Family History deals with the geographical explanation of Kerala, the popular legends on Kerala origin, the flourishing of trade in Kerala since ancient period. This background of Kerala is followed by a detailed explanation on the Christian communities of Kerala, the information received from the copper plate inscriptions that throw light on the privileges enjoyed by the Syrian Christians, other churches that followed with their establishment in Kerala. Prior to a detailed explanation on their family origin, family tree and habitats, it projects the customs and festivals followed by the Syrian Christians of Kerala. The Family History

in the following chapters ventures into the role played by the Kianthra Family from ancient times in religious, cultural, political and economic fields.

Elanjickal Family History:- The Family History that is portrayed in the book titled Elanjickal Family and family members begins with a background of the Christian history tracing its establishment to the year 52 A.D and spread during the first century A.D. It gives a very clear picture of the names of places which are related to the churches established by St.Thomas and the priests who were converted from their Brahmin religion to lead the Christian congregation of India. After a brief introduction about Kerala's Christian historicity the book clearly defines the beginning of Elanjickal family its later establishment and how this family made a mark in the pages of Kerala Christian history.

The above two family histories form the core chapter. Nevertheless three more family histories are briefly explained only in this chapter in order to highlight the importance of family history in shedding light on certain historical facts in Kerala Christian history which are rarely mentioned in scheduled history books. These family histories are Parekattu, Mukkathu and Kallumpattu.

Parekattu family history begins with an introduction to the ministry of St. Thomas in A.D52. The Church as religious institution came to be established in the following years. In Malayalam language Church was known as 'Palli' derived from Pali language. The term 'Palli' was used to denote a Buddhist temple. In the first chapter on Kerala Christians, the family history delves into the detailed background history of ancient period. It describes the origin of the Sabha (congregation) from the Tamil word Chavai. It further explores the discovery of trade winds by Hippalus, the Greek navigator who discovered trade winds while he ventured out in search of Malayali shores finally landed at Kodungallore in 47A.D. The discovery of trade winds paved the way for the entry of foreigners for the purpose of trade and St.Thomas to continue his ministry on the Malabar Coast.

The trade of India especially Kerala with the Jews during 10th C.B.C is mentioned as quoted in the Holy Bible. The conversion of Jews to Christianity based on Oral traditions and the migration of Aryan Brahmins from North India to Kerala is mentioned. The presence of 64 Brahmin villages

asserts the dominance of Brahmins at the time of the arrival of St.Thomas. Thoma Parvam and Mar Thoma Charitram Kalyanapattu mentions the economic state of Brahmins and miracles of St.Thomas respectively.

According to this family history since two thousand years of introduction of Christianity in Indian soil, the Aryan Brahmin culture was inherited into the newly converted Brahmin families down the generations. A few examples of such traditions as cited by this family history are Kudumi (tuft of hair tied like a bun hung with a cross to display their Christian identity), Mara Kuda (umbrella made of palm leaves), Thali (designed after Banyan leaf with a cross embedded on it), Manthrakodi (bridal dress), Oil lamp on a stand (signifying the prayer that let Jesus be the life and light in their new family life just as Jesus is the life and light of the world), a measuring vessel full of rice in order to welcome the newly wedded couple into their house. The other cultural customs in the case of women till post delivery period were adopted from Jewish and Brahmin custom. The family history further cites Ramban Pattu, Veeradiyan Pattu and Margam Kali as describing the fruitful ministry of St.Thomas.

It also throws light on the natural calamity that effected Nilackal town as a result of which there was a twist of events in its history. Upto the 14<sup>th</sup> century their ancestors life in Nilackal town was considered to be the golden period. But in the year 1341 A.D ancestors residing in Nilackal town had to flee the place due to the destruction of agriculture by locusts in addition to earthquake and landslide followed by the attack of a leopard. This attack is interpreted by historians as the attack by a Muslim King Fakir Puligar.

In order to establish and trace their ancestral root, the family history elaborates the permanent settlement of the migrated Nilackal ancestors to Kadambanad 60 miles far away, Chengannur 40 miles away, West Champakulam 60 miles, North Kanjirapally 25 miles, 35miles North Aruvithura.

The ancestral family of Parekattu is traced to the Kadambanad settlement to the family of Pallivathikal.

The Mukkathu Kudumbayogam's first chapter on Indian Christianity, the St.Thomas Christians are mentioned as involving in intermarriages with other denominations like Malankara Christians, Syrian Christians and Nazrani Mappilas just like other Indian castes. The Namboodiris and Nairs occupied the highest position in Hindu society.

This family history highlights the migration of Vellala Christians from Tamizhakam to Venad's capital Thiruvithankode. It also gives evidence of Persian Christian settlements in Kollam in the middle of 8<sup>th</sup> C A.D. Syrian Christians came from the cultured people such as Kerala Jews and converted Christian Jews. It is an undisputed fact that St.Thomas arrived in A.D.52 and converted Brahmins. This family history further narrates history of Kollam Christians converted by St.Thomas. St.Thomas reached Kollam and established a church near to it at Korakeni. Many were converted in Kollam. The trade and other social spheres of the converted Christians prospered well. They involved in foreign trade. This family cites an interesting historical fact quoted from a Malayali newspaper pg3: "Maruwan Sabriso came and involved in business settled at Kollam and also built a church named Tarisapally. Ayyan Adigal Tiruvadigal donated more land for that church. Those Persian foreigners who came from Korasan country settled in a town there which came to be known as Korasan Kollam. Persian Christians and Nazranis of Corakeni Kollam mingled well. The family history also throws light on the existence of a strong Christian community the Manigrammakar and Manigramam in Kollam in the 9<sup>th</sup> C A.D.

The ancestral root of Mukkathu family is the family of Unni Ninar from Valiyaveetil in Kollam. The ancestors of Mukkathu in Manigramam took over the responsibility and administration of Tarisapally church. According to the privileges granted in the copper plate inscriptions of Maruwan Sabriso's Tarisapally church, they received land and certain positions.

The Kallumpatu family history in its first chapter titled Kerala Christians begins with the explanation of the foreigner's perception of Indian Christianity. On their arrival they were surprised to find Churches in Kerala and on enquiry whether the Kerala Christians were the Pope's people, the reply was "Which Pope?". The foreign perception of India was a Hindu India.

This family history throws light on certain important events from ancient to medieval period citing few instances from some writers also. Christian faith in Kerala was independent till the 15<sup>th</sup> C A.D and it had to reunite with the Antiochan Patriarch. Due to these circumstances it resulted in the breakup of Malankara congregation. Portuguese trade in Kerala was one with a threatening attitude while the Dutch traded with love and mutual advantage.

King Gondophares rule extending from Afghanistan to Sindh and Punjab from 95 B.C to A.D 50 is considered important as it was during this Kings reigning period that St.Thomas arrived in Kodungallore. The Kushan dynasty put an end to the rule of Gondophares. The coins from different parts of Malabar prove the relations maintained by the Assyrians, Greeks, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Babylonians, Romans and Chinese. These foreigners were attracted by Pepper to Kerala. The discovery of trade winds by Hippalus had reduced the distance of travel.

St.Thomas ministry is explained in Veeradiyan, Thoma Parvam and Margamkali Pattu. A series of important historical events can also be cited as follows: In A.D. 231 Persian Sabha's rule was fixed in a Catholicose. In A.D 325 Nicea Synod permanently confirmed the Catholicate throne. In A.D 345 a trade merchant Knayi Thoma from Edessa arrived in Kerala with 400 people. These foreign Christians were invited by the Chera ruler. These Christians isolated themselves from the local Christians to the south of the Periyar River and therefore came to be known as the Thekkumbaggakar (Southists). In A.D 522 Universal Christian Topography mentions about Malabar Sabha.

Women never addressed their husbands by their names. The parents decided the matrimony of their children. The main occupation of the Christians of Kollam and Kodungallore were agriculture and trade. Foreign trade in pepper known as Black gold was possible as these two centres were open sea ports. After the arrival of the Portuguese, on witnessing the indigenous Christian faith they tried to force the service to be conducted in Latin language. In 1599 A.D the arrival of Archbishop Menezes in Kerala led to the beginning of a series of internal religious disturbances with respect the Syrian ecclesiastical administration. The incidents that followed were the convening of the Synod of Udayamperoor, the drowning of Mar Ahatallah by the Portuguese and finally the Oath of the Coonen

Cross. Those who followed the old faith made Thomas Archdeacon who was ordained as Mar Thoma I in Alangad church. The year till 1765A.D witnessed the rule of Mar Thoma I to Mar Thoma V. Their successor Mar Thoma VI also known as Mar Divanasyius's period was a period of developments. Another incident that is highlighted in this family history is the receipt of Rs10, 000 by Col .Macaulay from Mar Thoma VI in the year 1808 who deposited it in East India Company. This deposit known as Vattipanam was handed over to the government at a later date.

Conclusion:-

Family evolved and flourished as a necessary social institution which moulded an individual into a responsible citizen of the state. Family history acts as a means of transmission of information of the concerned family since the time of initiation of recording and handing over the details of the forefathers in addition to their present status with respect to its division and spread. Kinship relations clearly demarcate the type of family and its functions. The compilation of family history would include the merger of history of the family with respect to logical problem solving solutions, collection of statistical details of family from parish records, shift in patterns of control on emotional basis portraying the relations maintained within the family and with other families in the society. The contribution made by family histories in effecting a social change from below i.e from the unit of family itself is a matter of great concern. Therefore family histories not only provide information about the occurrences of the past but also guide the present incidences through the knowledge of the past. Thus, Family History can be rightly explained as the social reconstruction of family identities. We may thus conclude that the process of creating family histories is a tradition and such a practice sheds light on the family life and kinship of the Syrian Christians and can be used as a reliable source if we weed out anachronisms and interpolations.

## Chapter 5

### **A Study of Family Histories (Kudumbayogams) Excerpts from two main family histories with reflections from three minor family histories for a comparative study.**

The source for writing the history of any period, place or person depended on the availability of archaeological evidences, or messages engraved on inscriptions, coins that attested the ruling King and his reigning period and such other primary and secondary data in the form of engravings on Palm Leaves, Copper Plates and European traveller's accounts, other literary sources respectively.

The practice of Family History writing has evolved over a period of time. This unique cultural practice is credited to the Syrian Christians of Kerala. The history of the bygone days was only a matter of transfer of information from one generation to another through hearsay. This transfer of historical, social, economic and political information took the shape of a recorded matter when private individuals maintained regular diaries of the day to day events and also the oral traditions that were handed down to them by their ancestors. Their successors comprehended the importance of editing the details recorded in diaries and added on fresh information of their concerned period as continuity to it. This gathering of information in writing and its continuity in addition to the information of the spread or flourishing of that one family came to be later known as writing of one's own family history. The evolution of Family History writing in the pre-medieval times is well preserved through the medieval and modern period.

Subject Matter of Family Histories:-

The Family histories under my study are the Kaniyanthra Family history and the Elanjickal Family history. The subject matter of the Kaniyanthra family history is clearly mentioned in its foreword to the third edition 1991. According to this foreword, the content of this book is given in three parts. The first part surveys the origin of the Kaniyanthra family, its traditions and the social commitments of the members of the family in the context of the origin, history, customs and festivals of Syrian Christians of Kerala. The second part describes the early fathers of the family, the Kaniyanthra Champakulam

branch, and the family relationship with St. JohnsChurch, Mepral. The family tree warrants special attention.

The third section of the book includes a detailed description of the 21 family branches and their members staying in different parts of the world. Geographical dispersion of families or immigration to other places is a modern phenomenon found in Kanianthra family, as in families of other communities also. This topic is specifically discussed in this part. The role of marriage alliance in the growth of the family is also made clear in this section.

The subject matter of the Elanjickal Kudumbayogam (family history) is mentioned in its foreword to the third edition 2003. According to this foreword, the content of this family history book is explained under three parts. The first part consists of messages, opinions, reminiscences and letters by 34 important personalities.

The second part includes the subject, consists of an extract from E.J. Johns book titled “Oru Devalayavum Oru Kudumbavum”, translated as “One Church One Family” with additional information.

The third part is the details of the letters, essays and catalogues charted by E.J.John along with certain description about him.

Elements of Family Histories: - The main elements in the composition of Family histories are the individuals who develop an interest to preserve their family achievements in the varied spheres of societal activities.

Multiple context of Family Histories: - Family Histories are region specific spanning a given time period ranging few centuries. They are also at times affiliated to religious institution like the Church.

Historiographical survey: - The Historiographical survey includes sources which are rooted to the land like the earlier inscriptions which describe the ruling realm of the reigning dynasty and other such details that proclaim its predominance over other kingdoms. Inscriptions also reveal the revenue and

military status of the respective ruling domains. Other sources include unearthed coins and such other archaeological findings.

Limitation of sources and the prospect of using Family Histories: - Historical sources are limited in the extent of the information provided which predominantly portray the administrative, financial and religious developments of the respective kingdom. Family History portrays the greatness of individual personalities from the family or the role of that family that mark its significance in their respective societies.

Main themes of concern in Family Histories:- The themes explained below are accompanied with extracts from both the family histories (i.e) Kianthra and Elanjickal Kudumbayogams with their respective Chapter titles as given in the family history books along with their respective footnotes with some interpretations in cases which are the authors. This study takes into account five themes common to both the family histories. They are Family Lineages, Church and Community, Social Patterns, Cultural Life and Indian Christianity.

**Family Lineages:** -A family history's basic theme comprises of giving a detailed analysis of their family origin, the sources attest this fact and their relation to one of the Brahmin families converted by St. Thomas in A.D 52. While the Elanjickal family history traces its beginnings from the first century A.D, the Kianthra family relates its beginnings only from the medieval period i.e the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

The following is an extract from both the family histories the Kianthra (**K**) and the Elanjickal (**E**) family history respectively in order to clearly perceive the history writing with reference to their origin and habitats:

**K:** Chapter – 4 Kianthra Family– Origin and habitat: Niranam tomb stone- Ancient Family—Origin—Migration to Mepral.

Niranam Tomb Stone

There are no historical records as to when and where the family originated, or who started the family. The ancient history of the family is all enshrined in legends. But one thing is clear from evidence that the family has been existing for the last five hundred years or more.

The first historical fact we know about the family is from the tombstone of Shri Thommen Chandy of Kiananthra, which has been embedded in the wall of old Niranam church.

In his book "Christianity in Travancore", the then British resident Mr.G.T. McKenzie ICS (1899-1904) wrote that he found a stone slab embedded in the walls of old Niranam church, on which it was written in old Malayalam "Mepral Thommen Chandy 92Medam, Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> passed away". When the Niranam church was rebuilt, this tomb stone was removed from the wall and kept in the underground godown of the church. Kiananthra Dr. Alexander, Rev. K.J. Alexander corepiscopa, and Mr. K.T. Mathew, IFS, saw the stone and took photographs of it. This tombstone is more than 434 years old. The name Thommen Chandy is the ancestral name of the Kiananthra family and is still the prevailing name of the Kiananthra Kudumbam.

Till 1870, all the members of the Kiananthra family were buried in Niranam church. All those who could pay 16 to 64 panams (a silver coin prevalent at that time) were buried inside the church. This practice was stopped only in 1846 AD by Kurilos Bawa. Ordained priests were buried with their heads towards the east, and ordinary people with their heads towards west.

The tomb stone found in the wall of the Niranam church is the tomb stone of the ancestor of the Kiananthra family. Most probably, since he was a prominent member of the Parish, he might have been buried inside the church. Later the tomb stone was embedded in the wall of the church, when it was rebuilt.

Even though the Kiananthra family settled down in Mepral, Kiananthra family priests had ancestral ecclesiastical and vicarial rights in the Niranam church. This right continued till 1917, the time of Kiananthra Rev. Ninan Kathanar, Vathapallil.

Ancient Family

Rev. Thommen Chandy Kathanar was the 10<sup>th</sup> priest in the family hierarchy of priests. He was born in Mepral in 1787. The other nine earlier priests in the hierarchy might have been priests of Niranam church before the family migrated and settled down in Mepral in the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD. However one thing is known, that one of them was named Thommy Kathanar (priest).

Usually priesthood was conferred in those days, only on members of prominent families of the parish. So to have an hierarchy of 10 priests from the same family meant that it was a leading family of the Niranam parish. Besides, we can also infer that the family might have originated long before its members became priests.

Even though the Kianantha family is a very ancient one, it has only few members. After the family settled down in Mepral, it seems that there was only one male member left in each generation till the time of Kunjummen Valliappen. Kunjummen Valliappen born in 1820 belonged to the 14<sup>th</sup> generation of the family after it had settled down in Mepral. Thommy Tharakan, who was born in 1755, was the first member of the family who had more than one son.

Mr. K.N. Koshy Kianantha has in his custody the “Thaliola Grantham”- a book written on palm leaves- which describes the history of Christianity in Kerala. In it, there is the mention of the role played in the Church by some prominent members of Christian families. Among them, the members of the Kianantha family are included. This Thaliola grantham was with the Kianantha family. It is still so.

Kianantha Thommy Chandy Valliappen came and settled down in Mepral, sometime between 1467 and 1537 AD. Evidences show that a family called Kianantha lived for more than nine generations in Niranam. There were nine generations of priests in that family before they migrated to Mepral from Niranam. They were all Vicars of Niranam parish. Hence we can assume from all these evidences that the family originated at some time between the first century and twelfth century AD.

Origin

There is a legend about the origin of the family. Long ago, Iddinjillam, Perunna, Niranam; now hinterland, were all places on the sea coast. It seems that Perunna was a busy sea port at that time. There was a main traveller route passing through all these places to Niranam. There were famous temples at many places along this route. Karunattukauv, Perunna, Thrikudithanam, Muthoor, and Tiruvella were all renowned temples. The famous Neelamperoor temple was situated north-west of Thrikudithanam. Many famous Brahmin illams were also situated in all these places.

Neelamperoor was the capital of Bana Perumal. He was supposed to have been a Christian King. There is a statue of Bana Perumal with a cross mark on it in the Neelamperoor temple. The statue is still there.

There was a dilapidated Brahmin illam on a small piece of land on the eastern side of the main central road, on the south of Perunna; hence people named the place "Iddinjillam". The legend is that the people of this illam came to be associated with Christians passing between Neelamperoor and Niranam. The result was that the members of this illam became Christians. This invited harassments and ill-treatment from the Hindu neighbours, eventually they could not stand it any longer and left the illam and migrated to Niranam where many Brahmin Christians were staying already. There are three things which confirm this legend.

One is that the Kianantha family settled down in a piece of land near the church on the western side, on the western bank of the river flowing through Niranam. This property till recently was known as the "Kianantha Purayidam". Kianantha Munsiff, late Mr. K.C. Joseph (1847-1912) whenever he went to Niranam church used to go to the well of this Kianantha property and drink water from this well to quench his sentimental thirst.

Another thing is that the illam at Iddinjillam – most probably named Kianantha illam- which Kianantha family left got dilapidated. There was no one to look after it. In course of time, the Brahmins who looked after the affairs of the Tiruvella temple manoeuvred to get hold of this illam. They later gave it as a gift to the family of masons, who looked after the repairs of the Tiruvella

temple. These masons were known as the Kiananthra masons. The descendants of these masons built all the houses for the Kiananthra family at Mepral for generations, till the middle of this century.

Thirdly, the late Dr. Alexander, who wrote the first edition of the family history said in his book that he personally knew the Kiananthra property at Iddinjillam and that there was a dilapidated building on it.

All these are facts connected with the origin of the family. But there are no evidences to show on which date or year the family got converted to Christianity. What we know is that the Kiananthra family stayed at Niranam till the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

There is also another legend connected with the origin of the family. Till the end of the Kulasekhara dynasty most of the Christians lived in Kodungallore, the capital of the empire, or in its vicinity. When feuds erupted between Chera and Chola dynasties in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Chera Perumal moved his capital from Kodungalloor to Quilon. Many families also moved to the south with him. One of these families known as the Kanikulathu illam came and settled down in Niranam. It is surmised that in the course of time, these people came to be known as “Kiananthra”, a twisting of the original family name. It may or may not be correct. There are no historical data to prove or disprove it. So let us leave it as a legend.

#### Migration to Mepral

Kiananthra family originally stayed on the Western bank of a branch of Pampa River, flowing through Niranam. Generally Christians were good traders and agriculturists. Kiananthra people were also engaged in trade and agriculture. Gradually they amassed wealth and became prominent members of society, with the result, that priest-hood was conferred on the members of the family. There were ten generations of Kiananthra Priests at Niranam church. They were vicars of the Niranam parish. There are no other historical evidences about the family at Niranam.

We should have an idea of the topography of Niranam and adjacent places and aknowledge of the governments and rulers of the kingdoms that existed at that time to understand the circumstances which led the Kianianthra family to migrate and settle in Mepral.

Niranam is on the bank of a branch of the river Pampa. It is one of the important rivers of Kerala. It flows through Kuttanad and joins the great back water Lake Vembanad. This river made its estuary very fertile by bringing the alluvial soil from Western Ghats. In the course of time many villages came up on the banks of the river, especially in the delta area. Some of the important places here are Parumala, Veeyapuram, Niranam, Thalavadi, Edathuva, Peringara, Mepral, Chathenkeri, Muttar, Ramankeri, and Kavalam. Waterways were the only mode of transportation, in this area, in those days; as the whole area was criss-crossed with rivulets and canals.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Kulasekhara empire disintegrated into small kingdoms, and principalities ruled by small rajas and chieftains. The chief kingdoms after the breakup of the empire were Venad, Elayidathu Swaroopam, Designanad, Kayamkulam, Chempakassery, Perumpadappu, Thekumkur, Vadakumkur, Kolathiri and Mangad. Besides these, there were small principalities ruled by Nair chieftains like Moothaedathu Kaimal, Elayidathu Kaimal and others.

In the last part of the period during which the Kianianthra family lived in Niranam, the place was part of the Kingdom of Chempakassery. The northern boundary of this kingdom extended up to the southern boundary banks of Pampa River at Pulikeezh. Chempakassery Rajas were Brahmins and were sympathetic towards Christians. Ambalapuzha and Kuttanad were parts of Chempakassery kingdom.

At this time, there was a notorious bandit called Purakkat Arayan. Under his command, there was an army with a fleet of country boats. This army used to fight for Chempakassery kings. This army under the command of Purakkat Arayan was a terror in the region. They used to collect tax from all the ships that entered the Purakkat Sea. The decendants and followers of this Arayan were the Parayans or Pothans and Palians. These pirates used to go around in their boats in Kuttanad and

Vembanad Lake and capture and ransack all the people and boats that plied in these places. People were afraid of these sea pirates.

One of the descendants of these bandits was one Ittiyathi parayan. He used to burgle houses in Mepral village even during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The parayan's routine was to go around in a small boat at night and threaten people and extract whatever was found. He was a terror. Later he was caught by police and put behind bars.

Pulikeezh, which was on the north bank of the river Pampa, belonged to the Thekkumkur Rajas and the southern bank, to the Chempakassery Rajas. South of the kingdom of Chempakassery was the kingdom of Kayamkulam. River Kollakadavu separated the kingdoms; Chempakassery and Kayamkulam. The southern bank of the river Kollakadavu belonged to the Kayamkulam kingdom and the northern bank and its hinterland to the Chempakassery kingdom.

In the armies of all these kingdoms, there were Christian soldiers and officers. They were trusted and respected by the rajas, and had great influence in the courts of these rajas. In short, Christians were leading members of society. This was the state of affairs till Raja Marthanda Varma conquered these petty kingdoms and annexed them to his Kingdom of Venad.

Members of the Kianthra family were well versed in the use of arms and according to the custom prevalent at that time, moved about fully armed. The military training was imparted at Kalaris by Asans. Nedumpalli Nairs conducted the Kalari at Niranam. They were well renowned and respected by all. At one time in the 15<sup>th</sup> century there were no adult male member in this family to conduct the Kalari. There was only a young boy as the heir of the family. One day this boy was returning home after a bath in the river. Kadapra Pallickel Panicker, who was adept at the use of arms and very proud of his feats, saw the boy putting his tuft of hair to the back. Panicker with a single stroke of his sword cut off the tuft of hair within a split second. He was boastful about his feat; but the boy felt very sad and humiliated at this wanton action of Panicker. He ran crying to his mother and told her, what had happened. The mother was deeply pained and lamented that there were no male member in the family to take revenge for his heinous action and insult to her son. Just at this time, one

of the members of the Kianthra family passed by her. As he had been a student and disciple of her husband, she told him about the shame and suffering this action had caused them. He at once went searching for Panicker. When he met Panicker he asked him to apologize for his mean actions. The war of words that followed ended up in a fight of arms and Panicker was killed.

Killing a person was a great offence. To escape punishment the Kianthra brothers left Chempakassery kingdom immediately and crossed the boundaries and went over to the adjacent kingdoms. One of the brothers crossed the Kollakadav river that separated Chempakassery from Kayamkulam and went over to Kayamkulam kingdom. He went over to his wife's place at Mavelikara and settled down at Thumbumkal. The other brother with his lame brother crossed the Pampa river at Pulikeezh, where it separated the Chempakassery from Thekkumkur. They came and settled down in Mepral, which was in Thekkumkur kingdom and under the rule of Chieftain Azhiyidathu Kerala Prabhu. The law prevalent at that time was that one cannot prosecute a person who had left the country and went over to another kingdom. Thus the Kianthra brothers escaped punishment from Chempakassery Raja by crossing the boundaries of Chempakassery and settling in other kingdoms.

One of the brothers who came to Mepral settled down at Palamittam and the other brother at what came to be known as Kianthra Padinjarae veetil. Thus Palamittath family is an off shoot of the Kianthra family. They stayed at Mepral for generations. But at present most of them have settled down in Trivandrum, Malabar, Coimbatore and other places.

The other Kianthra family member, who went over to Mavelikara, amalgamated with the Thumbumkal family.

No evidence is now available to show or prove the time or the names of the brothers who settled in Mepral. But a very powerful tradition is that the Kianthra KunjummenValliappen who died in 1885 at Mepral belonged to the 14<sup>th</sup> generation of the family which settled down in Mepral. So by calculating backwards we can more or less assume that the family settled down in Mepral between 1475 and 1525 AD. Besides these, there are evidences to show the time of one of the ancestors of the

Kanianthra family as 1467-1537 AD. This Valliappen Kanianthra Thommen Chandy might have been the first person who migrated and settled down in Mepral<sup>1</sup>.

**K: (Family Lineages)Chapter– 5                      Mepral and its People**

Mepral is the place where the Kanianthra family have been living for the last five centuries. Mepral was once a part of the Kingdom of Thekkumkur. It lies on the north bank of a branch of Pampa river, north of Pulikeezh, Peringara, and Karackal. This small piece of land juts into Kuttanad paddy fields. South of Mepral is Chathenkery. Muttar is west of Mepral. Vengal and Swamypalam are east of this place. If you walk north-east along the bunds of the paddy fields you would come across Iddinjillam, Perunna, and reach the small town of Changanacherry. If you walk east from Mepral, you would pass Swamypalam, Kavumbhagam and reach Thiruvella. If you go west you will reach Alleppey; but you have to go by boat.

Mepral belonged to the principality of the Azhiyidathuchira Chieftain, Kerala Prabhu. The place has an area of 1.9 square miles. The Punja paddy fields are in the west and north of Mepral land area; but these paddy fields extend upto Vembanad Lake on the north-west.

Most of our houses in Mepral were built on reclaimed paddy fields. Maliyil, Puthenparambil, Vadakaevila, Vadakaeparambil, Bhanupuram and Kanganamvelil are examples of this. The paddy fields were covered with water during most part of the year, except during the harvest time. Country boats were the only mode of transport, both for goods and passengers in this place.

The main occupation of the family was agriculture. The main sources of income were the paddy and coconut from the landed properties.

In the Karinilams, where the water was deep, paddy cultivation was done only once in three years; whereas in the Punja paddy fields, paddy cultivation was done every year. During December, bunds separating the paddy fields were made or repaired. Water wheels were used to flush out the

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<sup>1</sup>Alexander Joseph K and Ammini Joseph Achamma., "Kanianthra Family: A Socio-Economic History of Mepral and its Kanianthra Family members", Published by Kanianthra Kudumba Charitram Committee, Thiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp20-26.

water from the fields into the canal. They were all manually operated wheels. The first motor operated water wheels were introduced in Mepral only by 1920.

It was like a festival season from the time of sowing to the time of harvesting of paddy. During this time people were all busy, and all had work and money. There were plenty of fish from the fields to eat. Once the harvest was over, all the fields were flooded with water. Thereafter there was hardly any work except manuring the coconut trees. People spent most of the time, catching fish and entertaining themselves with games. The most common games among men were cards, chess and pakida.

Women were proud of their culinary skills and spent most of the time cooking something or the other. Children had many games like “Kutty and Kol”, an early version of modern Cricket, Kudu-Kudu, diving, swimming and many others. There were no schools at Mepral at that time. Except the Kiananthra boys nobody went to school. But there were Kalaris run by Asans. Here the Asans taught the children to read, write and count. Because of its backward socio-economic position the Government decided to build a hospital at Mepral. One building was built; but it was not good enough for a hospital. So, a primary school was started in the building by the Government; in the second decade of this century. It is still known as the Aasupathri Pallikoodam (Hospital—School). It was during the middle of the second decade of this century that Kiananthra Rev. Father Alexander Corepiscopa started both Malayalam and English schools at Mepral. This enabled all the children at Mepral to get education.

When there was water in the fields, fresh water fishes like Karumeen, Varal, Tiger prawns, and many others were in plenty. Everyone had their own nets for fishing. The rich used to fish as a past time, while the not so well off used to catch fish for their livelihood. Mepral prawns were renowned all over central Travancore. Some of them used to weigh half a kilogram. These prawns were often sent as presents to one’s relations in other places.

The dependants of Kiananthra family were mostly Pulayas, (a scheduled caste) and a few Christians. These dependants helped the families in cultivating paddy fields. They stay in small huts

on the outer periphery of their master's land. There was a strong bond between the masters and their dependents. During harvest time more people were needed to carry out the work. So labourers used to be recruited from far off places. At the time of harvest, masters also stayed in the fields, in small portable huts called "Madam". The fields were alive with activities day and night during harvest. The paddy grains were harvested, thrashed, wafted, winnowed and dried in the fields itself. Till the paddy was dried, measured and stored in the barns of the respective land owners, the whole place will be bubbling with activities. The paddy would be stored to be sold at a later time, when the prices would be good. Everybody heaves a sigh of relief after the paddy was stored, safely in the barns before the rains.

In course of time, due to political and trade union activities, many changes took place. The wages were increased so much that it was not profitable to cultivate the paddy fields. This affected the life style of the land owners. They gradually turned to other means for livelihood. But even today life in Kuttanad is more or less the same as in those days.

Coconut trees formed the only other cash crop at Mepral. But in the course of time, the trees were affected with diseases and the yield became very poor. The other trees found in Mepral, were jack fruit trees, Anjili, Punna and screwpine bushes. But now we cannot find any such trees in Mepral. Now there is hardly any village greenery. Since Mepral is a low lying area it is now flooded twice or thrice in a year during heavy rainy seasons.

The animals usually found in Mepral are dogs, cats, squirrels, frogs, crabs and water snakes. As for birds there were ducks, fowls, mynahs, parrots, crows and teals that used to come all the way from Siberia, every year during the sowing season.

The Kianthra family, who came and settled down in Mepral in the 15<sup>th</sup> century gradually, became wealthy landowners. But they were kind and humane and shared in the joys and sorrows of the people around them, particularly of the poor in the society.

They were three Christian families in Mepral, when the Kianthra brothers migrated. The families were Kolan, Plamoodan, and Panagodan. The prominent Hindu families at that time were

Ericatt Pillais, Puthupally Nairs, Vechur Nairs, Kailath Kurups and Vallathu Nairs. Besides these, there were two prominent Ezhava families at Mepral. They were Valiaparambil Panickers and Pullucatt Panickers. There were also two Brahmin Namboothiri families at Mepral. They were the Kizhaka Illam and Padinjarae Illam. Though most of the families are still at Mepral, in the course of time, Kianthra family members bought most of the properties from the former settlers. This can be made out from the names of the properties that are with the Kianthra family. The Kianthra people were honest in their dealings with others. All the families lived amicably in Mepral.

But as time advanced, agriculture in Mepral became not a profitable occupation. So the families at Mepral, including the Kianthra family members went out into the wide world. Most of them did well in different parts of the world. There are hardly a few Kianthra families just now left at Mepral<sup>2</sup>.

**E: (Family Lineages) 2. Elanjickal Family: Kodungallore, Kothamangalam, Niranam (Translated Version of Malayalam Kudumbayogam Chapter by the author)**

The beginning of Elanjickal family is from Kodungallore. Elanjickal family marks its beginning along with the beginning of Christianity by St Thomas at Kodungallore in 52 AD. After 1500 Elanjickal family moved out from Kodungallore.

Presently Elanjickal family lives as Latin Christians at Kara region in Kodungallore, as Catholics of the Syro Malabar at Kothamangalam and as Orthodox Christians at Niranam. One part of Niranam's Elanjickal family can be seen at Kattanam also.

Kodungallore Kara:

T.M Chummar, a well known writer in his book writes as follows

“St Thomas on account of spreading Christ faith had also sown the seeds of Christianity in India. Those who had accepted the gospel spread by him and went forward in Christ ways then are believed to be the ancestors of present day Kerala Christians. After the arrival of Portuguese

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<sup>2</sup>ibid., pp 27-30.

missionaries in Kerala and their subsequent transformation led to one part of the old Christians merging in Latin Reethand from thence forth Latin Catholics congregation came to be known by that name till today.”

In central Kerala a handful number of Christians in those days belonging to Varapuzha and Kochi diocese of Latin Catholics reversed back to Latin Reeth faith and they are believed to be the oldest St Thomas Christians of India. Among the series of St Thomas Christian families one such family centered at Kara in Kodungallore is Elanjickal family.

Archbishop Cornelius Elanjickal belongs to the said Elanjickal family. This Archbishop is the son of Kunjawara Vaidyan an Arya Vaidya doctor hailing from Arya Vaidya family (Ayurveda doctors ) famous for their handing down through many generation the Arya Vaidya tradition which being customary they carried out with due respect .

Kothamangalam:

Kothamangalam through its centuries in a book written by Kothamangalam Elanjickal V. Joseph writes as follows:

“Due to the destruction of Kodungallore town Nazranis moved out among which Elanjickal family is also one among them.”

“This incident is dated to 1550 A.D. Elanjickal family owes its allegiance to true Brahmin families as their ancestors who were also expert in weapon war and tradesman ship”.

“Old city towns namely Kodungallore, Palayur and other places witnessed the dwelling of Jews who stayed in groups .In 1545 A.D a war broke out between the Jews and followers of Mohammed in which the Jews and the Nazranis sided with them were completely defeated .”

“Kodungallore, Palayur and other towns were burned up. The name and fame of Kodungallore through centuries was raced to ashes.”

As a result of this destruction the Nazranis were forced to move out. After moving out from Kodungallore they first settled in Muzhi Kulathu and then at Udayemperoor. It is believed that from there one family head came and settled in Kothamangalam and the other settled at Niranam.

“In olden days training in weapon warfare was a compulsory activity in case of a war and also for self-defence. In every place there were Kalari (place of learning warfare without weapons) people who practiced Kalari along with their masters.”

“Elanjickal Panickers were one among the famous Panickers well versed in the field of Astrology in Kerala History. They established a Kalari at Kothamangalam where Kacchaketti thiruma, Valpayettu, Vettum Thadayum, Chavitumora, Vadithalle and such other weapon warfare and other body warfare activities like Vadi Veeshal, Amanameer were being taught. Along with this it is important to take note of the Elanjickal Vaidya (Ayurveda treatment). Elanjickal family members were good Vaidyans as well as excellent in their marmani treatment (Nerve joint treatment). In treating broken body parts and healing injuries without hurting the nerves none has surpassed them in this feat. According to the Ayurveda tradition of herbs red marmani tablet is of the best quality. More special is the red marmani yogam mentioned in the Palm leaves book belonging to the Elanjickal family as is believed by specialized Vaidyans. The traditional Vaidyan granths (Medical Books) belonging to Elanjickal family history mentions about their use of panacea and such other ways of making specialised herbs for healing. This book also consists of methods with regard to the treatment of Elephants.”

Elanjickal family members were well versed in the field of Nokku marmavidya (a type of magic). There are many stories related to this.

Niranam:

Late N.S. Krishna Pillai M.L.A a resident of Niranam writes about Niranam as follows.

“Elanjickal family stands first among the ancient Niranam family households. None can deny this. Their oldest family settles at Kothamangalam. This is not my opinion. This opinion comes from

Elanjickal Tharithukunji Thomman who having deep knowledge in Sanskrit was also a great thinker and scientist. I was a friend of him. When I was a Commissioner at Devikulam I had been to his house many a time. He had been writing the Elanjickal family history and he states Niranam's Elanjickal family and Kothamangalum's Elanjickal family once upon a time to be one family and due to some reason one branch moved away and stayed at Niranam was his suchinithavum (good thought) and firm opinion. In the beginning all were members of Malankara Congregation. In 16<sup>th</sup> century one division of Elanjickal family joined Catholic congregation. They were the people who settled at Kothamangalam. The remaining family members firmly rooted themselves in Malankara Congregation. They moved to Niranam and settled there as it was believed to have the footsteps of St.Thomas the founder of Malankara Congregation. It is their descendants that are presently seen nowadays<sup>3</sup>.

#### E :( Family Lineages) 3. Elanjickal Family at Niranam

The beginning of Elanjickal family is said to have been at Kodungallore and from there moved away to Muzhikulam, Udayamperoor and later the division that merged into Catholics moved to Kothamangalam and those belonging to Malankara Orthodox division settled at Niranam. Many families continued to settle at Kara, a region adjacent to Kodungallore. They belong to Latin Catholic division.

From the beginning itself the Elanjickal family at Niranam had its stronghold in Malankara congregation and no one can deny the fact that since 16<sup>th</sup> century they were at Niranam.

In 1665 (i.e.) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century during Mar Thoma I ordination at Niranam (Valiapally) church it can be seen that an important role was being played by the head of Elanjickal family. It is also believed that among the important leaders in the village he occupied a prime place.

From 1728 to 1765(i, e.) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the period of Mar Thoma V who was the pride of the Malankara. Due to lack of money Mar Thoma V was captured by Dutch and kept under

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<sup>3</sup>John E.J., "Elanjickal Kudumbavum Kudumbangalum: A Collection of Writings", Published by Elanjickal Publishers, Kottayam, 2003, pp 111-113.

bars in a place called Turungi and in order to release him Peetama Thangi, a lady from Elanjickal household extended help by handing over her gold ornaments in the same period only.

In 1792, when Elanjickal Church was built, Elanjickal family was proclaimed as a famous family.

In 1876, in 19<sup>th</sup> century Mulunthuruthy Synod set to be the first association of Malankara congregation and those representing Niranam Church attending the meeting were four priest and five laymen (aimeni). From among the laymen, the name of Elanjickal Mathu Chacko is said to have been mentioned first according to the written sources. Not only that in the congregation the committee that came to be known as the first managing committee elected by the Mulunthuruthy Synod includes only eight priest and sixteen laymen from Malankara congregation among who Mathu Chacko can also be seen as a member. Elanjickal family head occupied an important place in congregation and society.

In the book Jeevitha Smaranakal (Memories of Life) written by K.C.Mammen Mapila the beginning of Elanjickal family as mentioned in the first chapter is as written below.

“It was during the prosperous period of Elanjickal family that my mother grew up there and got married. During that time high households pride and prestige was seen clearly in Elanjickal family. Chunden, Odi, and Paranthuvalan such playboats, coloured tent boats, elephants to begin with were all included in that. Elanjickal family employed many daily workers like carpenters, blacksmiths, washermen, etc who were made to stay in their farmlands. In such period of prosperity in terms of wealth along with the luxurious way of living making the family status famous, it was during this time that my mother was married. Both the marriages were performed together. Both the brides were the daughters of brothers of Elanjickal family. But for one Kumari her own father was no more. That was my mother”.

“According to the financial status and prosperity of Elanjickal family customs, celebratory (traditions or rituals) were most grandly arranged. All the ornaments that were to be adorned by both the would be brides were ordered and made without any blemish by their goldsmiths”.

“Towards the adjacent corner areas bordering Elanjickal house two huge tents were erected and it was beautifully decorated by experts from Alapuzha or Cochin. In both the tents separate platforms were arranged for drama performance. In both two famous drama troops were invited respectively”.

Among the three sons of Mathu Tharakan the eldest son Chacko’s daughter Achamma was one of the bride. Chackochen also had two sons. The eldest son was Mathuchan and the younger one John Vakil.

Mathu Tharakan’s third son Philipochen’s only daughter Mariamma was the other bride. Philipochen married according to the Thayyil Datt (adoption, authority, law) avakasam. At a younger age he passed away. Mariamma was the mother of Sri K.C.Mammen Mapila.

The entire responsibility of the marriage activities of Achamma and Mariamma was headed by the then family head Chackochen. Elanjickal family thus lived as a joint family.

The bridegroom Elias married to Achamma was the first son of a famous property dealer belonging to a branch of Velur family of Kottayam known as Kochupurackal family. Cheriachen married to Mariamma belong to Velamkulatha Kandathil family. Mariamma was the only heir to the Thayyil family. Cheriachen also became an heir to the Thayyil Datt (avakasam).

In Kerala Elanjickal family was among the leading members in social, cultural and political fields. In olden days Elanjickal family members showed special interest in boat race and such other activities. They owned and preserved different types of play boats. The songs about Elanjickal church, other boat race songs, folk dance (margam kali) that were composed was used for boat race songs and other programmes. Below few lines are added from one of the songs of this type.

“Atarike Nilakalum Elanjickal Vasikunna

Mayaaya Valiya Thopan Kathukolane!”

“Nalle Chuttum Mathil Undu-Nadukoru Palli Undu

Athinullil Vanarulum;

Mayaaya Valiya Thopan Kathukolane!"

The meaning of the above can be translated for a general perception as "By the river side the one dwelling in Elanjickal, illusioned grandfather guard us. Four sided wall with a church in the middle, within that resounding illusioned grandfather guard us".

In later days the passion towards play boats reduced due to many reasons. I remember in my childhood days one Odi boat was taken and kept to the western corridor of the house. We children used to climb and play boat songs on it. The saying playing boat on the bank became a reality.

Later that boat was handed over to a nearby priest from Purackal family by my father. That time the priest had joined Malankara Catholic denomination. The priest had renovated the head and body of the boat and used it as travel boat.

Like in the political activities and social services the affairs of Malankara Sabha was bravely taken up as a stand in protecting its independence for which the services extended by the Elanjickal family members is accounted as valuable. As in the previous year even till today the keen interest shown in matters of sabha by most of the family members who still continue their services is considered as a matter of pride. Mathu Chacko was selected as a sabha managing committee member to start with, in the Synod of Mulunthuruthy and it continued from then till now that presence of the Elanjickal family in the managing committee is also a matter of pride.

Elanjickal family members also had a position of Tharakan. Business being their main occupation they were known as Tharakans.

Chacko Tharakan was a shining star in the galaxy of Malankara Sabha. The Coonen Cross Oath, the arrival of the Jerusalem Patriarch Mar Gregorious, the ordination of Mar Thoma I at Niranam church, etc and to all such important events Chacko Tharakan maintained a string relationship being a foremost lover of society. Perumal Tharakan was the son of Chacko Tharakan. Amidst the love for society and (Abhijatyam) ancestral royalty that lifeline descended through

generations Chacko, Iticherian, Perumal Chacko (Elanjickal church was established during his time), Perumal Kochu Chacko through them arrives the famous Mathu Tharakan.

Mathu Tharakan had three sons Mathu Chacko, Mathu Perumal, Mathu Philipose. The activities of the household advanced considering father having one son. From the time of Mathu Tharakan, branches and population began to increase<sup>4</sup>.

**Church and Community:** -Ancient families irrespective of their religious identity were affiliated to the religious institutions for effective administration of their community. The Church represented the united life of a community. As a united community was responsible for the establishment and construction of a new church, the church became an institution which catered to the religious needs that promoted a family life. Beginning with baptism of a child to be brought up in the faith of their Godparents, the next stage i.e marriage is conducted under the church guidelines and finally their demise, all these three stages of an individual's life is recorded in Church registers for future family requirements. Therefore the Church had great significance in the continuity of a community. The following extract from both the Kudumbayogams would attest the above fact:

**K :**( Church and Community) Chapter -8 MepralSt.Johns Church and Kudumbam Day

It is interesting and worthwhile to have a glimpse of the history of Mepral Church. The belief is that the Syrian Christian church of Niranam was established by St.Thomas himself. He converted many people of Niranam also to Christianity. Their descendants fanned out to neighbouring places like Kalloopara, Thiruvella, Changanachery, Chengannoor and so on. During the course of time people in all these places built their own churches. The rulers favoured the Christians, because they were traders who brought wealth to the Kingdoms and Rajas. So the Rajas helped them in building churches, by giving the land free and even conferred special privileges on Christians.

Till the demise of Vathapallil Kunjuthommi Ninan Kathanar in 1917, Kianianthra family priests had the privilege of being one of the vicars of Niranam church.

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<sup>4</sup>ibid.,pp 114-117.

Kolan, Plamoodan and Panangodan were the three Christian families of Mepral at first. Later, Kianianthra, Poothicodan and Panacha families migrated and settled down in Mepral.

Even though Kianianthra and Poothicoote families had priests like Kianianthra Ouseph Ninan Kathanar and Poothicoote Idycheria Kathanar, Mepral did not have a church of its own. Due to the practical difficulty of attending the Niranam church every Sunday, especially during rainy seasons and also for conducting marriages and burials, the families at Mepral decided to build a church of their own. They started looking for a suitable site to build the church, so that it will be convenient for the neighbouring places also. Eventually they located a property on the bank of “Pallithod”, a canal of Pampa river, where the church now stands. This property called “Kuppaedath” Purayidam belonged to Puthenpurackal, KuruvillaCherian and Kunjakonda. But one Ezhava family was staying in that property. They were persuaded to shift to another property purchased for the same.

Azhimukhothu Karnavar, Elavirahil Kochoonju, Plamoottil Chummar and Kianianthra Kizhakaaveettil Kunjuthommi Kunjoommen were entrusted with the task of getting permission for a church from the Government. They got the permission and a temporary shed was erected for the church at Mepral. The first Holy Qurbana was offered in this temporary shed by the Metropolitan Maramon Palakunnathu Mathews Athanasios on 19<sup>th</sup> of Vrichikam 1861.

At that time the Kianianthra family had Padinjaraeveettil Ninan Kathanar as priest and Poothicote family had Puthenpurackel Deacon Thomas to conduct and assist in the Holy Qurbana. But the task of offering Holy Qurbana for the first 41 days in the new church was entrusted to Kottayam Edavazhickal Achen, Niranam Pallimuckil Achen, Vennikulath Kakkuzhiyil Achen, and Pulikeezhil Achen. The local members of the church were grieved at this. They went to Yuvakim Kurilos, a foreign Bishop residing in Malankara and complained about the deeds of Palakunnathu Methran. They then invited him to lay the foundation stone of the Mepral St. Johns church on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Makaram, 1861 A.D and the Methran entrusted Kianianthra Ouseph Ninan Kathanar to conduct the Qurbana regularly. Thus he became the first Vicar of the Mepral church and its parish.

One might wonder why Palakunnathu Mar Athanasios did not ask Kianianthra Achen to offer the Qurbana for the first 41 days in the church. At that time there was a feud between Palakunnathu Methran on one side and Mar Yuvakim Kurilos and Cheppad Mar Dionysius Methran on the other side, as to who was the Malankara Metropolitan. Both had put forth their claims to this position. So Palakunnath Thirumeni might have been afraid that if the Kianianthra Achen who was inclined towards Mar Dionysius was allowed to conduct the Qurbana at Mepral church, he might swing the church and its members to the side of Mar Dionysius.

Later in 1883, parish members built the present St. John's Church made of bricks and roof tiles. In those days Syrian Christians from the neighbouring places like Chathenkery were all members of this nearby church. Further down in history they also made their own churches.

The two prominent families of Mepral are Kianianthra and Poothicoote. Kianianthra family came from Niranam and the Poothicote family came from Kuravilangad. There is a story that Poothicote Valliapen from Kuravilangad first settled down in Changanachery. Later one member of that family migrated to Thiruvella and became the founder of the Chalakuzhi family. Another person of the family came to Mepral and started the Poothicote family.

Both Kianianthra and Poothicote families were on good terms and there were many inter marriages between them. But as far as church matters were concerned, they were on opposite sides. These differences still continue. Kianianthra family are Orthodox Syrian Christians with Catholicos as the head of their Church; but Poothicote family belongs to a faction which accepts the Patriarch of Antioch, a foreigner as the head of their Church. This difference in view has caused many feuds between the two families.

We must know the history of our parish church to understand this feud. During the time of Pulicottil IInd Joseph Mar Dionysius, (1865-1909) he became suspicious of the activities of Poothicote Puthenpurackel Thoma Kathanar. He had reasons to believe that Poothicote Kathanar was a follower of Palakunnath Thirumeni and his reformation. So in 1904 he suspended Poothicote Kathanar. This led to many skirmishes at Mepral between the two families. Pulinthara Shri Mammachen was the

leader of the Kianianthra group. These skirmishes finally ended up in a court case. The magistrate ordered the church to be closed. Kalathil Ouseph Valliappen conducted the case on behalf of the Kianianthra family. In the end the court decreed that both the factions can worship in the church on alternate Sundays.

Again in 1907, Poothicote Thomma Kathanar tried to offer Holy Qurbana according to the reformist rituals of Palakunnath Abraham Malpan. This led to a still another confrontation between the two families. Kianianthra Ninan Kathanar and Valiaparambil Kalathil shri Ouseph Ouseph as plaintiffs filed a new case against Poothicote Kathanar. The gist of the case was that since Poothicote Achen had been suspended from the Orthodox Church, he had no right to offer Qurbana in the church.

Later this case was amicably settled by both the parties. In the meantime Poothicote Thoma Kathanar and some of his relations, prompted by Konat Malpan tried to bring the Mepral church under the Patriarch of Antioch, Mar Abdulla. Kianianthra Achen opposed this move. Patriarch Abdulla who was in Malankara at that time suspended Kianianthra Ninan Kathanar from offering Holy Qurbana. This led to another case in the court and Mepral church was closed again. This case ended in 1910 and the church was reopened. The verdict was again, that both the factions can offer services on alternate Sundays.

Kianianthra Vathappallil Ninan Kathanar was getting old and he wanted to be relieved from active service. At this juncture the family and parish members insisted Deacon Kianianthra Pullucat Alexander to become a priest to take up vicarship of the church. Respecting the wishes of the family and parish, Deacon Alexander discontinued his studies in Calcutta Bishop's college and came. On his way he stopped at Mangalore and was ordained as a priest by Methran Mar Julius Alwaris of our Church. Thus Rev. Fr. Alexander came to Mepral and conducted his first Holy Qurbana. He officially took charge of the church and became vicar for two Sundays of every month.

After the demise of Poothicote Thoma Kathanar, Poothicote Chathanthara Fr: P.M. Abraham became the vicar of the Patriarch faction at Mepral. During the time of these two priests, they cooperated in conducting the affairs of the church amicably. So the church and parish prospered.

In 1912, the headquarters of the Catholicos of the East was transferred from Tigris to Malankara. Kandanad Methran Paulose Mar Evanios became the first Malankara Catholicos.

There arose a case in 1938, as to whether the Patriarch faction or the Malankara Catholicos and his people were the rightful heirs of St. Thomas tradition. This was the “Samudaya” case. In 1958, the Supreme Court of India gave a verdict in favour of the Catholicos faction. This had its repercussions on the Mepral church also. It came under the Niranam Diocese of the Catholicos and the priests for the Mepral church was thus being appointed by the Niranam Metropolitan. By this time the two Achens of Kianthra and Poothicote passed away.

About this time Poothicote Paikandathil Shri George’s son Deacon George Kurian got ordained as a priest by Kandanad Methran Paulose Mar Philexinose. He was appointed as Mepral parish priest by the Bishop of Niranam Diocese, H.G. Thoma Mar Dionysius. Since there was peace between the two factions at that time he offered service at the church on all Sundays. But Kianthra Shri Thomas K. Cherian, the trustee of the church for the Kianthra Parish kept their accounts separately. Paikandathil Achen took an active interest in the development of Mepral.

By 1972 the rift between the Catholicos and a small smouldering Patriarch faction in the church widened. In 1974, without being selected by the Malankara Association and even without the knowledge of anyone, Paikandathil Achen, who was a part of this small group went secretly to the Patriarch of Antioch and got ordained as Methran Kuriakose Kurilos. Then in the early hours of a day he came to Mepral, opened the church by force and offered Holy Qurbana. He also occupied the parsonage of the church without the permission of the Bishop of Niranam Diocese. This episode once again disturbed the peace of the Mepral church. Confrontation between the two factions started again. Eventually Methran Kurilos was prevented from entering the church.

During this time Shri Thomas Cherian shifted his residence from Mepral to Malabar and in his place Vadakaeparambil Shri Joseph Punnen became the new trustee of the parish.

In the meantime Kianthra Arumapettiyil Shri Job Thomas, a member of Thabor Dayara was ordained as a priest. Catholicos Ougen 1<sup>st</sup> made him the Vicar of Mepral Church. Poothicote Methran

and his family members were still trying to insist on their privileges in the church. Meantime they made a temporary chapel and started offering Holy Qurbana. The feud continued. After some time by police mediation Poothicote Methran wrested a right to offer Qurbana in the Church on all Sundays. Both factions are now thus allowed to offer services in the Church on all Sundays; one faction offering it first on alternate Sundays. Thus two Qurbanas are conducted on every Sunday.

It is more than a century, since we have established the church at Mepral. It is dedicated in the name of St. John, the Baptist. The “Church Day” is celebrated on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January every year. It used to be a very big and important day for the whole community and was celebrated with piety and pomp.

#### Kanianthra Kudumbam Day.

Kanianthra family members decided to have 20<sup>th</sup> of January as their Kudumbam Day.

The Mepral Church is dedicated in the name of St. John, the Baptist. January 20<sup>th</sup> is the perunal or festival day on which we all pray for intercession of this saint. Since St. John is the Patron saint of our church, he is the Patron saint of our family too. So we decided that 20<sup>th</sup> of January in every year shall be celebrated as our “Kudumbam Day” by all the members of the family. Wherever they are, our family members are expected to assemble in a house, or common place or church in their respective locality or region to thank God for all His blessings on all of us including our forefathers. We are also expected to treat this day as a fraternity day and a day for re-union.

The family day gives the members of the family an opportunity to meet together and renew their acquaintances and relationship. Besides it inculcates the feeling that all of them belong to the same family and the members can depend on one another in times of adversity and prosperity.

We want the family members to be proud of being a member of the Kanianthra family and of its traditions, and be thankful to God for His concern and care for each and every one of us, throughout our history. So it is our duty and responsibility to organize the Kudumbam Day without fail<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>Kaninthra pp.38-42.

**E: (Church and Community) 5. ELANJICKAL CHURCH ESTABLISHED IN 1792**

The spiritual seat of His Holiness Abdul Jaleel Mar Gregorious is stationed as a church in the front yard of Elanjickal ancestral house. The reason for construction of this church has a well known historical story.

In 1665 His Holiness Mar Gregorious by the church established at Niranam St.Marys Valiyapally by St.Thomas performed the coronation ceremony of Mar Thoma I there. A major portion of the expenses of this ceremony was taken up by Elanjickal family head. In those days Elanjickal family was at its fame at Niranam. The deep spiritual love between His Holiness Mar Gregorious and Elanjickal family still continued.

His Holiness Mar Gregorious after attainment of heavenly abode in the year 1681 at north Paravur St.Thomas Church. After the burial also, every year Elanjickal family members on April 27<sup>th</sup> on his remembrance day went to north Paravur St.Thomas Church and attended his memory service routinely.

Not only that in relation to business activities when Elanjickal family head and others went to Northern regions visited the burial place of His Holiness Mar Gregorious at north Paravur Church conducted prayers and received blessings. This routine was performed by them without any breakage.

K.C.Mammen Mapila in his book Jeevitha Smaranakal explains in detail about Elanjickal family and Elanjickal church. In the fourth chapter titled one church a detailed explanation is given about the legendary establishment of Elanjickal church.

“In those days every villagers occupation at all levels were limited to their village only as a routine (padiv). But then Elanjickal family did not have this limitation as these family heads moved out to many far directions where they carried out their business whose wealth surplus and fame surprised the village standards in those days. Elanjickal family had a chapel in front of their ancestral house.”

From 1789-1790 the soldiers of Tipu Sultan attacked Cochin and North Travancore. This took place during the period of Mar Thomas VI. They reached North Paravur and tried to break open the burial place of Mar Gregorious inside St.Thomas Church. They believed the burial place to consist of many valuable belongings and treasures (Bhandangal and Nikshepangal). That time the burial place was placed to the south of the altar room.

During this time Elanjickal family head reached North Paravur due to business purpose when the attackers were trying to break open the burial place and make it unholy it was by chance that Elanjickal head reached the church and was involved in prayers. He made the Muslims soldiers understand the truth that it was the burial place of the Holy Saint and it did not contain any valuable belongings (nidhi) treasures and it should not be destroyed was the most humble request made to them. Not only that the silver coins that he preserved in a bag after selling pepper and other items along with those that was kept aside for business purpose were taken and handed over to them, pleasing them diverted their efforts from this attack.

During those days Elanjickal family head travelled in a boat to Northern regions for business purposes. Though he had given away the entire wealth at his hand to the soldiers of Tipu Sultan, being totally satisfied with the fact that the burial place of Mar Gregorious was not broken up he started by water route in the evening towards Niranam.

On the river bank a person in the guise of the Metropolitan called the boatmen Thoma by his name and asked him to bring the boat closer to him. A free place was secured at the front part of the boat after heeding to the information "Son I am also coming with you." After he disembarked the boat someone brought a bag and kept it in the boat. The door of the boat was covered with his own white cloth by the family head. Normally two nights and one day journey was required but as a part of surprise the boat reached Niranam shore the very next day. Inside the front part of the boat the person was missing and only the bag was seen. When the bag was checked the wealth that was handed over to the soldiers of Tipu Sultan for not breaking open the burial of Mar Gregorious was seen in it. The

bag was preserved in a room inside the house. This became news in the village and understood it as a strange happening.

As a result of this many miracles began to take place in Elanjickal family. In the night the cattle tied to the manger began to roam untied, the tied boats on banks rowed smoothly, the servants sleeping in Verandas and other places woke up in the front-yard and such other things were seen.

According to the custom of the village to know the reason of these happenings an astrologer was called and the problem was put forth to be found out.

It was believed that the soul of the buried Metropolitan at North Paravur Church came to Elanjickal with the family head and a holy sanctuary need to be built there according to sources. Immediately a room in the house was made ready for prayer, the lamps were lighted, family prayers from then were conducted in this room. After this miracles never took place.

As a result of this, a decision was taken to establish a family church. At such an instance a very major flood occurred. A wood floated through the Pampa River which was dragged to the shore by many and in order to know the type of wood and when a part of it was chipped off blood was seen, so it was again pushed back into the river. It became news in the village. This wood drew near to the shore near Elanjickal ancestral house. A stream flowing from Pampa River to ManimalayarRiver known as Kolar River flows in front of Elanjickal ancestral house.

Again under the pressure of villagers and others advice from astrologers was taken. Using this wood it was understood that a church had to be established. It was in this manner that the Elanjickal Chapel was constructed. This wood and the wealth acquired from a bag in the boat were used for this purpose.

It is accounted that the establishment of churches legally had to be under the names of those saintly figures who had been beatified with the saintly status. Hence this chapel was inaugurated under the name of Mar Baselius Mar Gregorious. Mar Thoma VI Known as His Highness Mar

Devanasius who had made a permanent stamp of his personality (insignia) in the history of the congregation conducted the inaugural ceremony of this church.

His Holiness Parumala Geevarghese Mar Gregorious Metropolitan in the year 1877 after he settled in Parumala often took interest in the Holy Eucharist of Elanjickal church offered some advice and after some minor works it is also seen that he also conducted a ceremony.

In 1916 when advocate E.J.John renovated his house this chapel was also renovated. His Holiness Vattaseril Geevarghese Mar Devansiyus Metropolitan conducted the inaugural ceremony of the renovated church.

His Holiness Abdul Jaleel Mar Gregorious Bava is the Guardian Father of Elanjickal family. The Elanjickal family members and other village believers came to address this father as ValiyaThopan or Valioppan.

The Holy Eucharist service is being conducted every Sunday in this church. Not only the Elanjickal family members but also due to convenience the nearby Orthodox believers were also taking part in the Holy Eucharist service and other services. The parish church St.Mary's at Niranam Valiyapally was one kilometer east.

In recent years under the auspices of the Elanjickal church not only a Cross Tower in the Elanjickal junction they also constructed towards the west of the church a building, a hall that was to be utilised for ceremonial festival days, other special programmes, etc which became a great achievement. All these were a contribution of Elanjickal family.

This Chapel was established when Chacko Tharakan was the family head. Due to his old age Perumal Tharakan helped in the construction of the church. Perumal Tharakan and son Kochu Chacko Tharakan took special interest in the activities of the church. Peethama Thangi, famous in history for

extending help in freeing Mar Thoma V was the wife of Perumal Tharakan. The famous Mathu Tharakan was the son of Kochu Chacko Tharakan<sup>6</sup>.

**Social Patterns:** - Family histories reveal clearly the social conditions prevailing during their period. The social conditions were based on the positions the families occupied in the society. The society was divided into four castes based on the Varna system under the Hindu society. In addition to this the social patterns include the dominance of a female line under the Matriarchal family. Joint family was the norm which in the following years paved the way for nuclear family. Therefore for a detailed perception of the social patterns the following extract from Kianthra family history would be ideal:

**K: (Social Patterns) Kianthra Chapter I-Keralam- Our Motherland**

*Location and legend-Cosmopolitan Society-Political background-Social background-Festivals of Kerala.*

Let us have to look at the land, which has been the abode of several past generations of our family. No reliable documentary evidence is now available as to the origin or the very early history of the Kianthra family. But from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, some prominent members of the family are seen mentioned in the socio-political history of our land. For over 500 years this family with the name Kianthra has been in existence. A Knowledge of the land and its socio-economic and political background, particularly of the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D, is essential to get an insight of our habitats; Iddinjillam, Niranam, Mepral and other places.

Location and Legend

The emerald green Kerala with its lush vegetation is a beautiful strip of land at the tail end of the sub-continent of India. This land is bounded on one side by the awe inspiring dark green forests of the Western Ghats and on the other side by the warm waters of the Arabian Sea. The very pleasant climate, landscape, greenery, the innumerable lakes and rivers, the wild life in the hills, make Kerala a

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<sup>6</sup>Elanjickal pp122-125.

paradise. It is nicknamed as “God’s own land”. Besides, Kerala was known all over the world for its exotic spices and timber.

The legend about Kerala is that Rishi Parasuraman in order to atone for all his sins, which he committed during his many conquests, threw his axe from Gokarnam (Goa) to the south into the sea. The axe fell somewhere near Cape Comorin and a strip of land rose from the sea; from where he stood, to the place where his axe fell. This land he gifted to the Brahmins. There is no historical evidence for this legend. But according to geological evidences and research it seems that once there was a long fresh water lake extending from Cannanoor to Cape Comorin. Due to some natural phenomenon like an earth-quake or movement of the earth plates, the land separating the lake from the sea sank. It is considered that the islands of Mala dweep and Laksha dweep are the peaks of mountains of the land that sank into the sea. After centuries due to another such phenomenon part of the sunken land came up over the sea again.

It seems that as late as first century A.D, the sea extended eastwards upto Kottayam, Changanacherry, Vazhapalli, Perunna, Niranam and other interior places. When St. Thomas came to Kerala it was possible that he came upto Niranam, Perunna, Quilon and other; now interior land, by ship.

There is also no historical evidence as to when Kerala came to be inhabited by the people. But there are evidences of burial stones to show that Kerala was inhabited by people from atleast a thousand years before the first century B.C. The people then were nature worshippers. Later Buddhism and then Jainism came in; but most people remained worshippers of nature represented by Sun, Moon, Wind and Snakes.

Cosmopolitan Society

Kerala was renowned all over the world for its “black gold “Pepper-and other rich spices and exotic timber. It was these rare commodities that lured traders and people to Kerala.

The Phoenicians during the time of Solomon, the Syrians under Seleucids, the Egyptians under Ptolemy's, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Chinese, all came to Kerala in search of its rare wealth. Many of them even settled down in Kerala to carry on this lucrative trade. There were pockets of these foreign settlers in many parts of Kerala. There was a thriving community of Jews till recently in Kochi.

St. Thomas an apostle of Jesus Christ came in 52 A.D to preach Christianity to the Jews and others in Kerala. He converted many to the Christian faith.

Aryans in their southward movement from North India trickled into Kerala even perhaps before first century A.D. But their considerable movement to Kerala happened more particularly in the fifth and sixth centuries. With the coalition of Dravidian nature worship and Aryan Gods emerge Hindu religion. Aryans also introduced the caste system in Kerala. The idea that education and learning are the privileges of only the higher caste also came in vogue. They also suppressed the high social status enjoyed till then by the women of Kerala.

The Arabs from the Middle East had been trading with Kerala for many centuries. They brought Islam to Kerala, even before it came to North India. The Muslims built their first Mosque at Kodungallore in the life time of Mohammed himself. (570-632 A.D.)

The Chinese under Tangs' came to Kerala in search of black pepper-the King of spices-and established a trading post at Quilon. They in turn helped the Keralites to design the roof of buildings; to build river crafts and Chinese fishing nets. Cheena Chatty, Cheena Jars, Cleavers, Plates, Mugs are all souvenirs of their connections with Kerala.

Thus Phoenicians, Greeks, Egyptians, Romans, Jews, Buddhists, Jains, Christians, Dravidians, Aryans, Chinese, Muslims; all lived together amicably. Keralites inherited a cosmopolitan culture, tolerance for one another, and a life of communal amity and peace.

## Political Backdrop

Kerala was ruled by Ayya, Chera and Nanna rajas till the fifth century A.D. Vanchi was the capital of Chera Rajas; Ayyakudi was the capital of Ayya Rajas and Eazhimala was the capital of Nanna Rajas.

Kerala was ruled by the Kulasekhara dynasty from 800-1102 A.D. There were much cultural, social and religious progress during this time. Sankaracharya was able to rejuvenate the Hindu Religion. So also Kollam Era was started during this period in 825 A.D.

The last century of Kulasekhara dynasty saw wars between the Cheras and Cholas. The result was that the Kulasekhara dynasty was destroyed and Kerala was divided into many small kingdoms and principalities of petty rajas and chieftains. These chieftains and Brahmins became very powerful; Brahmins because they were the owners of Brahmaswam and rulers of Devasom lands.

It was during this period, that in 1498 A.D the Portuguese adventurer Vasco-da-Gama anchored his ship at Kozhikode. Kochi Raja helped him and the Portuguese traders in many ways. This prompted them to establish trading posts in many places in Kerala and slowly able to establish their supremacy. Even though the Zamorin of Calicut and his naval commander Kunjali Marikar resented these intruders and tried to check them, the Portuguese remained in Kerala till the Dutch captured Kochi in 1663.

The Dutch tried to establish their supremacy in Kerala during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries; but it was thwarted by the famous Travancore Raja; Raja Martanda Varma. Martanda Varma between 1729-1758 conquered all the small principalities and expanded his kingdom upto Vadakumkoor. Sakthan Thampuran of Kochi made his kingdom strong. But in Malabar due to the conquest of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, the native kingdoms were all destroyed. Later, the English defeated Tipu and Malabar came under British rule.

The British traders who came to Kerala in search of spices and other commodities established trading posts at Vizhinjam in 1644, Anchuthengu in 1684 and Tellichery in 1694. Gradually with

treaties with kings and chieftains and conquests they became overlords and ruled India till we got independence in 1947.

Modern Kerala as a political entity emerged at the close of the British regime. After independence, when linguistic states were formed, Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore were joined together on 01-11-1956 to form the present Kerala.

Kerala is comparatively very advanced in education, newspaper circulation, standard of living, longevity, and other achievements. The physical quality of life of Keralites is today on par with many developed societies in the world. But it is deficient in food crop production and backward in industrial development. This is a paradox. The state has a very high level of unemployment. Hence educated people go outside Kerala seeking employment for their livelihood and send the money to Kerala.

The universal literacy, high physical quality of life, high level of educated unemployed, developed mass media, a high level of political insight, a continuous process of grouping and regrouping of left and right wing political parties and formation of their ad-hoc governments are the features of present day socio-political fabric of Kerala.

### Social Background

Before the advent of Aryans there were no caste distinctions in Kerala. It was only after the 8<sup>th</sup> century under the powerful influence of Aryans that caste distinctions were created on the basis of the nature of the traditional work of each person and family. Namboothiris and Brahmins formed the top rung of the hierarchy-the intellectuals; Kshatriyas formed the warrior class; Vaishyas were the traders; Sudras were temple dependants and sub servants of Brahmins. The tillers of the soil were the Ezhavas, and the scheduled castes.

Namboothiris and Nairs exercised complete control over the land, the former being the landlords and the latter rulers and warriors. In the caste society of Kerala, the Nairs remained a

dominant caste. They followed the matrilineal system of inheritance. Under the system all wealth belonged to women and their children. The members of a family are the descendants of a female. The family unit is called Tharavad. The oldest male member would become the Karanavan, that is; he would be the manager of the Tharavad. His own wife and children are not members of this tharavad; but of his wife's tharavad. This system was followed by the chieftains and Rajas too. This made the Nair woman relatively more powerful than women in the other classes. Men practised polygamy and the women, polyandry. But the Brahmins and others followed the Patrilineal system.

The Tharavad as a joint family system slowly disintegrated over time and was replaced by nuclear family system. It was the passing of the Nair Act of 1925, which enabled each member to claim share in the Tharavad. So youngsters after having got their shares began to start nuclear families. But children still belonged to the family of their mother.

In the old days, the respectable dress for Keralalites for all occasions was white. Princesses and peasants and even temple priests used to wear only white dress. While the Christian and Muslim women wore blouses, the women of other communities went about bare breasted, or wore briefs, or tied a long piece of cloth over the shoulders.

The Namboothiri women practised purdha, by holding a big umbrella made of Palmyra leaves to cover them, while going out. So also the Muslim women practised purdha by covering their heads with a piece of cloth.

Bonded labour (Adians) was prevalent in Kerala, even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These persons were associated with the agricultural land. When a piece of agricultural land was sold, the bonded labourers connected with the land were also transferred to the new owner. Men fetched hundred panams (silver coins then in use) and women seventy panams. Even Christians practised this system. Kaniyanthra family had many bonded labourers. This system totally disappeared because of the pressure exerted by Christian Missionaries. The Government of India passed an Act in 1843 abolishing slavery in British India. In Travancore the pressure of the missionaries continued and finally the Raja issued a

proclamation liberating all slaves on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1855. But bonded labour system continued for another hundred years and came to an end only in the 1950's.

Thus the theocratic feudalism with Brahmin and Janmi supremacy, caste system, child marriage, purdha system, slavery and polygamy were some of the important socio-economic features in the 16<sup>th</sup> century A.D, when Kaniyanthra Christian family thrived in their original habitat at Niranam.

#### Festivals of Kerala

Certain festivals are considered as ethnic or regional festivals and celebrated even today by all irrespective of caste or creed. Onam is the most important of all of them. There are many other festivals in Kerala like Vishu, Christmas, Easter, Ramzan etc but Onam is considered as the Kerala festival and celebrated by all. It goes on for ten days and culminates on Thiru Onam day. It falls in sometime between August and September.

The legend is that once an Asura king called Mahabali ruled over Kerala. He ruled well and people were very happy and everything was in plenty. The Gods became jealous and feared him. So they appealed to Brahma to destroy him. Brahma agreed to their request, and came as Vamanan; a Brahmin sage to the court of Mahabali and requested him to give three steps of land to build a house. The king graciously consented. Then suddenly Vamanan changed into a huge person and measured the earth and heaven with two steps. There was no place for the third step so to honour his word, the king showed his head and requested Vamanan to measure the third step on his head. Vamanan put his foot on Mahabali's head and pushed him down into the nether world. But before he was pushed down, the king requested Brahma to allow him to visit his subjects once in a year. This request was granted. So people believe that on Thiru Onam day Mahabali comes over to see how his subjects are faring. Hence on Onam day everyone is happy and wears new clothes and enjoy feasts and games.

Another important festival in Kerala is Christmas. On Christmas day Christians celebrate the birth of Christ. Christmas is celebrated with pomp. Many delicious dishes are made for this occasion. It is a time when most of the family members and relations try to gather in their ancestral homes. All have good food, and a happy time before they disperse.

The Muslims of Kerala celebrate Id with pomp and gusto. These are some of the most important festivals of Keralites<sup>7</sup>.

**Cultural Life:** - A family's absorption into a society is complete only if they involve with the society's cultural obligations. Most of the culture has been handed down through their practice in successive generation. Following the customs and traditions are considered important for the family's continuity in that society. The family histories in detail discuss the cultural life during the medieval period:

#### **K :( Cultural Life) CHAPTER – IIICUSTOMS AND FESTIVALS OF SYRIAN CHRISTIANS**

Occupation – Dress- Customs – Marriage and Burial- Festivals

Members of the Kianthra Family had made their homes all over the world. Many have neither seen their motherland nor their mother tongue – Malayalam. We have written about Kerala and Syrian Christians through the ages, so that the family members can have an idea of the background in which their ancestors lived and thrived.

Now let us have a glimpse of the customs and culture which helped to mould our forefathers, before we start on the Kianthra Family history.

The Christian converts of St.Thomas continued to follow many of the customs and traditions of the Hindus among whom they lived, till the Portuguese came to power in Kerala. At the assembly of Christians at Udyamperoor in 1599 AD organized by the Portuguese Bishop Menezes, the Kerala Christians were forbidden to follow the Hindu customs and traditions. Even though the Christians were very lax in following this command, it had some effects.

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<sup>7</sup>Kianthra pp1-7.

During the over lordships of British in Kerala, the English missionaries tried to modernise the local Christians by changing their old customs and traditions. Even though the Syrian Christians adopted a few English customs they still retained their traditions and customs of their forefathers.

#### Occupation

The chief occupations of the Christians were trade and agriculture. Some of them were engaged in chitty business and money lending. But they were honest and straight forward in their dealings. Their morals were also of a high standard. In a land of polygamy and polyandry, they adhered to the principle of monogamy.

#### Dress

They usually wore simple clothes. Men wore white dhoti around their waist. When they went out, they had an upper cloth on their shoulders, which varied with the status of the person. On special occasions, rich members of the community wore long shutcoats and caps on their heads. Women wore a long white cloth around one's waist with a tuft like a fan at the back. They wore white blouses with long sleeves when going out and an upper cloth over the blouse; the texture of it depended upon the status of the person and the occasion. They covered their heads with the upper cloths while attending service in Church. At home these women, instead of the blouse, used to wear a small upper cloth to cover their bosoms. These Christians lived simple lives.

#### Customs

In olden days in accordance with the customs prevalent around, they got married very early in their teens. The dowry for women consisted mainly of jewellery and a small amount of money. Once the girls got married, they had no claim nor rights to their paternal family properties.

#### Marriage and Burial

It is worthwhile having a glance at the marriage and burial customs prevalent in those day. The bride would be covered with ornaments. It could be even borrowed ones. The bridegroom would come either on horseback or on elephant.

During the marriage ceremony, the bridegroom would tie the “minnu” and put the “Manthrakodi” on the bride; as is being done even today. Putting the ring as a marriage rite came much later; an imitation of the British custom. After the wedding, all the people who participated in the wedding ceremony gathered at the bridegroom’s place and had a sumptuous lunch.

The newly married couples would be welcomed with lighted lamps at the threshold of the bridegroom’s house and given something sweet to drink. After the guests and hosts were fed , the poor were fed. The couple would stay in the bridegroom’s house for four days. On the fifth day they would go to the bride’s place. Before they leave the house the bridegroom would distribute presents to the close members of the family.

Similarly some Hindu customs were followed at burial too. There was mourning for 40 days. Lamps were kept burning for all these days at the place where the deceased was laid. On the 40<sup>th</sup> day there was a Qurbana at the Church and prayers at the tomb for the soul of the departed. The lamps which were kept burning for 40 days were extinguished after the ceremony.

Prominent lay members of the parish were buried inside the church. Kings and Priests were buried in the Sanctum near the altar, as mark of respect and honour. They were no coffins at that time. Bishops were buried dressed up their official robes and insignia sitting on a chair, as it is being done even today. The mortal remains of the Bishops were taken in a farewell procession through the town or street in full glory sitting on this throne, before the body was buried. This ceremony is known as “Nagari Kanickal”- bidding farewell to the town.

## Festivals

The important festivals of Christians are Christmas, Easter and the Patrons day of the parish. Christmas is celebrated with joy and pomp. The twenty five days before Christmas was observed as a

period of lent. On the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> December, Church bells ring and call all the devotees to assemble in the Church. They participate in the ceremony which will be over by about 5 O' clock in the morning. Then all go home and break the lent by having a sumptuous breakfast. All wear new clothes for Christmas and have a grand feast for lunch.

Easter is another important festival of the Christians. There is fifty days lent before Easter, and all Christians observe this. On Good Friday, there is a daylong service at the church. The trial and judgement of Christ and his journey to Golgotha bearing the cross with a crown of thorns on his head are recited and enacted in great piety. After the service, kanji (rice gruel) is served to all the people assembled at the Church. During this Passion Week, Christians are supposed to observe sadness and spend the time in prayer and devotion and not be gay. On Sunday morning after all the ceremonies are over at the church, the lent is broken by a non-vegetarian sumptuous breakfast.

So also parish day is celebrated with pomp and gaiety by the members of each parish. Parish day used to be a big event in the community.

Christians also celebrate Onam day as it is a Kerala festival day for all Malayalees.

In olden days all these festival celebrations were done in a very elaborate way. The community used to look forward to these celebrations. It also used to be a reunion of families<sup>8</sup>.

#### **E: (Cultural Life) 6. Elanjickal Church Festival**

Every year Elanjickal Church festival is conducted on April 29<sup>th</sup> with great pomp. The programmes are conducted on the days of April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

His Holiness Abdul Jaleel Mar Gregorious attained his heavenly abode in the year 1681 on April 27<sup>th</sup>. His memorial festival conducted on April 27<sup>th</sup> at the St.Mary's North Paravur Church

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<sup>8</sup>Kanianthra pp17-19.

where he was buried. It is understood that according to the arrangement made in the earlier years Elanjickal Family members in order to attend this memorial festival in the Elanjickal Church after returning back on April 29<sup>th</sup>.

With regard to the Elanjickal Family members this festival has become a main celebrative tradition. In earlier years on the eve after the evening prayers and procession, bursting of crackers and storytelling was also conducted. Presently bursting of crackers and art programmes were made limited. But then the procession was arranged from the church to the Cross Tower at Elanjickal junction.

From Alanthuruthy junction on Tiruvalla to Mavelikara road coming to the west beside duck farm the road to the bridge towards the south of Alanthuruthy from kadapra junction to west in front of Niranam Church road joining together is called the Elanjickal junction. Road from there goes west to Viapuram.

It is a matter of pride that a beautiful cross tower was built in the Elanjickal junction. Among the eight sides of the cross tower seven consisted of display of photographs of not only Bava but also Holy Mary, St.Thomas, St.Gregorious, St.Vattaseril, St.George, Mar Baselius Mar Gregorious.

In the morning of the festival day, the conduction of the Holy Eucharist at three altar rooms in the same church, community love feast and in the afternoon procession are among the main programmes. After the procession the elder male members in the Elanjickal Family take part in the meeting that is convened in the presence of the Elanjickal Family head elder where annual report and accounts were considered and other important decisions were take in the church itself.

In the love feast not only Elanjickal Family members, people from all castes of life attending it calls out for the love, cooperation and happiness of the believers and villagers. The church building and hall are spacious enough to be utilized for the festival feast.

The festival is celebrated as an offering by Elanjickal Family. The female members including other members deserve this. According to a routine the family members registered their names. This is

recorded in a special book. According to the record of 2003 the festivals upto 2043 are already booked (i, e) for the next 40 years.

Before construction of a separate church building and hall a charitable person staying adjacent to the church used to conduct it in his own house or far relatives conducted it in the nearby houses as a routine. All dishes together making it a Kerala feast was served till now. At the least below said items are sure to be there. First white appam and chicken curry along with plantain is served. After that rice and other curries rice with dal, pappad, fish curry, fish cooked in coconut, beef, raita, vegetable cooked in coconut continued with another curry called pulisherry, sugar mixed with rice and plantain is used. The food is served on banana leaf. Nowadays instead of banana leaf plastic leaves are also used.

The chicken for every chicken curry is given as an offering by believers on the eve of the festival as a routine. The remaining chicken after its utility for feast is given in an auction. Though no money is spent on the purchase of chicken for chicken meat a good amount is spent for the feast. In the early years, though many workers were there who were dependent on Elanjickal family, they and few villagers participated with cooperation in conducting. The festival, they faced no problem in matters regarding the preparation and serving of the feast. The attempts for this were understood as an offering. After this as a routine wages was paid for preparing feast. In recent years, the purchase of all items preparation and serving of the feast were undertaken under contract basis.

It is a common understanding that though there were orders that came up to abide by catering contract that were used in marriage and others, due to the availability of sufficient chicken given as an offering the old ways of festival feast was continued.

Valiappan in Elanjickal church is taken as a blessing as considered by the villagers from all castes of life. As a routine the relatives staying at far off places reach here at this period of time as a compulsory activity. Everyone attending the festival considered it as a blessing.

The offering money that was received on the festival day itself in the afternoon was calculated and entered into the account book in a meeting convened after the procession. Half lakh rupees are accounted from this.

A good amount from the church fund is spent on the construction of house for the poor, assisting in the marriage of girls and for the treatment of sick people.

His holiness Abdul Jaleel Mar Gregorious is considered as a saintly figure by the believers especially Elanjickal family members also consider him similarly. Relying on this father as a mediator blessings are being sought. This saint is considered as the guardian Father of the Elanjickal family.

We and the saintly figures are the everlasting members of the congregation which is the body of Christ. They stand for mutual relationships. This forms the basic principle of celebrating the festival and conducting of the memorial service of the saintly figures.

The saintly figures were the ones who loved Christ and who laid their life for him. They are filled with the love of Christ. They are the dear ones of Christ, loved by him. Christ respects them their memorial is excelled in heaven and earth by him. It is our duty to celebrate the memorial service of such saintly figures.

Through the celebration of the memorial service of the saintly figures their life-path model, firmness in faith love for Christ helps in spreading it to our life also. Through their mediation Grace of God and Strength is acquired by us with their help.

These opportunities can be used for thanking God for the good things that were acquired to the congregation and the world through the saintly figures<sup>9</sup>.

**Indian Christianity:** - Indian Christianity derives its roots from the converted Brahmin ancestors. Religion is defined as that which expresses in life the relation between man and the supernatural

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<sup>9</sup>Elanjickal pp126-128.

world<sup>10</sup>. Therefore in the Indian context the introduction of Christianity enabled its new converts to continue and maintain its independent identity in addition to maintaining partial affiliations with the Antiochan Patriarch for leadership which the newly converted St.Thomas Christians were lacking. The following extract from Kaniyanthra and Elanjickal gives a detailed explanation on the relations maintained by the St.Thomas Christians with other churches in India and abroad.

**K:** (Indian Christianity) Chapter – 2 Syrian Christians of Kerala

*St .Thomas—Brahmin Customs—Copper Plate –Inscriptions—Christians- Elite and Indigenous— Foreign Relations of Kerala church—Roman Catholic Church—Church of Antioch—C.M.S Church— Mar Thoma Church—Church Cases—Catholicate Throne.*

It is worthwhile to have a glimpse at the Syrian Christian community of Kerala and their culture and customs before we go into the history of Kaniyanthra family.

### **St.Thomas**

St.Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ came to Kerala in 52 A.D to preach Christianity. He travelled throughout Kerala and was able to convert many including Jews, Brahmins, Buddhists and Jains to Christianity. He also established seven churches and a chapel in Kerala before he left. The churches were at Palayur, Kodungallore, Paravoor, Kothamangalam, Niranam, Quilon and Nilackal.

Some of the Hindu families who accepted Christianity were: Sankarapuri, Pakalomattom, Kalli, Kalikav, and Maliaekkal. St.Thomas selected some members from these families to become priests. There is an oral tradition that he also ordained the son-in-law of the Raja of Kodungalloor to be the first Metran (Bishop) of the Syrian Christian community of Kerala.

On his travels from Kodungalloor, to the south of Kerala, St.Thomas accidentally met a Brahmin youth belonging to the Maliaekkal family. He accepted Christianity and was among the first to

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<sup>10</sup>Iyer Krishna L.A., "Social History of Kerala", Vol.I-The Pre- Dravidians, Book Centre Publications, Madras, 1968, pp 135 para1.

embrace Christianity. When St.Thomas reached Niranam, he planted a stone cross at the temple premises of Trikapaleswaram. Brahmins around the temple got angry at this. They plucked the cross and threw it into the river. It seems the cross, instead of going down in the water, floated along in the waters of the river and came to a standstill in some bushes. The old Niranam Church was built at this place, where the cross came to a standstill.

#### Brahmin Customs

Even though some Brahmin families started settling down in Kerala, 350 years before A.D, they came to have socio-economic power only after the eighth century A.D.

There is much similarity in the customs, costumes, and culture of the Brahmins and Christians. For example, the Thali that is used for marriage, the manthrakodi that is given to the bride at the time of wedding, the naming ceremony of children, the custom of piercing the ears of men, and most of the customs and rituals connected with the burial of the dead are more or less the same for both. This may be because either some of the people converted by St.Thomas to Christianity were Brahmins or other sections of Aryans; or Christianity enjoyed the same super social status as the Brahmins due to the special privileges conferred on them by the rulers. We surmise that atleast some of those converted to Christianity might have been Brahmins, because they alone had the learning to comprehend the message of the new religion.

#### Copper Plate inscriptions

Christians were respected by the rulers and ordinary people. The rulers conferred many privileges, honours and titles on the Christians. The privileges and honours were all written on copper plates known as “Chembu Pattayam” or “Chepaedukal”. Some of the Chembu Pattayams came into, the hands of the Portuguese in A.D 1650 and were thus lost to the Kerala Syrian Christians. But copies of these Chembu Pattayams are preserved in the archives of Cambridge University. Some of them are still in the archives of our Churches in Kerala. The first Chepaedukal was given by King Veera Raghavan Chakravarthy to Eravi Korthan, a trader conferring on him certain privileges.

Knai Thommen the famous Syrian trader, with a retinue of 472 families came to Kerala and settled down in 345 A.D. It seems that Christian families from Syria came away due to the harassment of the Persian King Sapor II. Cherakon Perumal of Chera Dynasty ruled over Kerala at that time. The King welcomed these Syrians; who landed at Kodungalloor (Cranganor) and allowed them to settle down on the western side of the Kodungalloor Street. They were also given a number of privileges inscribed on copper plates. These are known as Knai Thommen Cheppeedu. Later in the 10<sup>th</sup> century some of these Knanites came down south and settled down in Kuttanad; Chingavanam, Kallisseri, Ranni and other places.

These Knanai Syrians try to keep up their identity even today. They do not even intermarry with other Christians. Later some of these families became Roman Catholics. They have now a Bishop of their own at Kottayam. The rest of these Syrian families are now a section of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Kerala. The Knanai Christians are usually known as “Thekumbbagar”.

In 774 A.D along with Bishop Thomma another set of Christian families came to Kerala from Persia. Again nearly after 40 years, in 820 A.D along with Maruwan Sapeer Easo, another 40 families came from Persia and settled down in Kerala. In course of time these Christians from Persia mingled and merged with the local Christians.

These Christians under the leadership of Sapeer Easo helped to rebuild a new Quilon port and town, as the ancient port of Quilon was destroyed by some natural phenomenon. In gratefulness for the help rendered, the King gave them certain privileges. These privileges and rights were engraved on copper plaques known as the “Thareesapally Cheppaedukal” (820 AD). This Chembu Pattayam had three plates. The first one is preserved at the Head Quarters of Marthoma Sabha at Thiruvella. The second plate is at Devalokam, the Head Quarters of Catholicos of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Kottayam. The third plate is lost.

There was another Chembupattayam given after 820 A.D. The first, second and third plates of this are preserved at Devalokam at Kottayam. The fourth plate is with the MarThomite Church at Tiruvella.

All these evidences show that there had been periodical immigration of Christians from Syria, Persia and adjoining areas into Kerala. The Christians in Kerala enjoyed freedom of worship, respect and certain rights and privileges and were an important section of society.

#### Christians – Elite and Indigenous

Even though many Christians from Persia and Syria came and settled down in Kerala, the majority of Kerala Christians were local converts and their descendants. So Malankara Christians is an indigenous Church inspite of the Syrian appellation.

They had prominent positions and played vital roles in society during the time of Kulasekara Dynasty. During the 11<sup>th</sup> century AD the Kulasekara dynasty came to an end. This empire was broken up into many small kingdom and principalities.

Since there were wars with their Chola Kings and feuds among the small Kingdoms and principalities; military service was compulsory. The military strength of the rulers came to depend partly upon the number of Christian soldiers each of them had. Hence they kept the Christian community happy by giving them special privileges and rites. It was with the advent of Portuguese and Arabs in the northern areas of Kerala. The Christians lost their hold on export trade and their status in society. Many families from these areas migrated to the south and settled down at Travancore and Cochin. These families gradually became prosperous and thrived in the profession in the local trade and agriculture; and became prominent members of society.

There is an ancient legend that in the distant past, there was a Christian Kingdom in Kerala called Villiarvattam. It is believed that this kingdom extended to the north and south of Udayamperoor. One of the princesses of Villiarvattam fell in love with a prince of Kochi called Rama Varma and married him. The Kochi Raja became very angry at this and banished the Prince from the Cochin state. The Princess Mariam became very perturbed and sad at this development and died soon after. With the Princess's death the Villiarvattam dynasty and Kingdom came to an end. One thing we

can surmise from all this is, that from ancient times, there were Christians all over Kerala and they held a prominent position in society.

Christians were directly under the administrations of the Kings. The local Chieftains did not have any administrative powers over them. All the disputes among the Christian communities were settled by their Bishops or by their own elders.

Just like the Brahmins, Christians had the privileges of travelling on elephants, the right to wear gold ornaments, to construct 'Padipuras' ( gate house), to sit along with Rajas, to sit on silk cloth, and so on. Christians were entrusted with the task of commanding and looking after the welfare of the communities of craftsmen like masons and blacksmiths. The Christians were also allowed to raise Armies of their own. They raised soldiers from the Channar community. The Christians were also allowed to arm themselves with swords and spears and even with guns. It was customary for male members of Christian families to undergo military training from the age of eight. The Christians used to lay down their arms in the Padipura at the entrance of the Church before they entered for worships

#### Foreign Relations of Kerala Church

The Christian community established by St.Thomas in Kerala kept its identity and ethos for centuries, Foreign Churches knew about the existence of this Christian community in Kerala and came to their help whenever needed. In A.D 190 Panthenose, a great learned man came to Kerala, at the request of the Christian community in Kerala to have discourses with Bramins about Christianity. So also in A.D. 205 Bishop of Basra came to preach Christianity in Kerala. In A.D. 325 Mar Yuhannan represented both India Persia at the Christian Synod (Assembly) at Mikha.

The languages prevalent in Kerala at the time of St. Thomas's visit were Tamil, Sanskrit and Prakrit. Syriac was the language of traders and hence it was easy for St.Thomas to preach and spread Christianity in Kerala.

There was inter - communion between the Persian and Kerala Churches. The Five Persian Pahlavi Crosses at Valiya Palli at Kottayam, Kadamattom, Mylapore, and Muttuchira Churches bear

witness to the association between Persian and Kerala Churches. Thus Syriac became the liturgical language of Kerala Church.

#### Roman Catholic Church

There was no connection with Roman Catholic Church of Rome; though records say that Roman Catholic Missionaries visited India in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. It was only in 1599 A.D. that the Portuguese Bishop Menezes of Goa Diocese established the over - lordship of the Catholic Church over a section of the Kerala Christian community.

This happened as follows: - Bishop Menezes forced Mar Gee Varghese, Archdeacon of Kerala to join the Roman Catholic Church. When he refused to do so he was threatened and with the help of the Raja of Kochi the Portuguese Bishop called a Synod of the representatives of the Syrian Church at Udayamperoor and established the overlordship of the Roman Church. At the synod of 1599 AD the Portuguese burnt all the records and books of the Kerala Syrian Christians. So also forbade all Christians from practising any Hindu customs. They made a new Diocese for the new Christian converts at Kochi and another Diocese at Angamaly for the Syrian Nazranis.

The Kerala Syrian Christians resented the over- lordship of the Latin Roman Catholic Church. So in 1652 AD they sought the help of the Syrian Church in Persia. In response to this, the Syrian Church sent Bishop Ahathulla to Kerala. But the Portugese imprisoned him, took him to Goa and burnt him alive according to the judgement of the court of Inquisition.

A rumour spread all over Kerala that Bishop Ahathulla was drowned in the CochiSea by the Portugese. The Christian community was furious. In 1653 AD they assembled at the place of the old cross at Mattanchery. They tied a long rope around the cross and allthe Christians held onto the rope and took the oath, that they would no longer be under the yoke and suzerainty of the Roman Church and declared Independence. Thus by this oath at Mattanchery the Kerala Syrian Christians re-established their Independence. This proclamation of the Syrian Christian community of Kerala in 1653 AD is known in Church History as the famous “Koonnan Kurushu Sathyam”. Rev Mundadan an authority on Kerala Roman Catholic Church history says that the representatives of all Kerala

Christians except 400 families participated in this oath ceremony. Thus after 53 years of Roman Catholic suzerainty, the Syrians of Kerala threw the yoke away. Thomas Archadiokon was ordained as the Marthoma I, Bishop of the Syrian Christian Church. His grace looked after the affairs of the re-established Syrian Christian Church as an independent body.

In 1661, the Pope of Rome sent Bishop Joseph Sebastiani to Kerala to recapture the lost Syrian Christians again into the Catholic hold. The Bishop tried his best and was able to win over Parambil Chandy Kathanar, Panamkuzha Chandy Kathanar and a few others. Parambil Chandy Kathanar was ordained as their Bishop.

#### Church of Antioch

Even though Thomas Archadiokon was looking after the affairs of the Malankara Church, he was not consecrated as Bishop. So Thomas Archadiokon wrote to the Churches of Babylonia, Alexandria and Antioch to send a Bishop to ordain him as the Bishop of the St. Thomas Church of Kerala. In accordance with the request the Patriarch of Antioch sent Bishop Mar Gregorios to Malankara (Kerala). He came in 1665 and consecrated Thomas Archadiokon as Bishop Mar Thomas I, Metran of Malankara Syrian Church. Thus the Malankara Church for the first time got consecration link with the Church and Patriarch of Antioch. After Marthoma I, four Marthoma Bishops headed the Malankara Syrian Church. During the time of the Marthoma VI (1765-1808) the Syrian Christians of Malankara Church made an attempt to be friendly with the Roman Church. A delegation consisting of Kariattil Joseph Malpan and Paremakkal Thomas Kathanar went to Rome to negotiate the union; but it did not succeed. A noted Syrian Christian Thachil Mathu Tharakan of Roman Catholic faith became very angry at this failure and tried to harm Marthoma VI. But the Kianianthra family spear headed the movement to protect the Metran and saved him'

#### C.M.S. Church

During British rule in India Church Missionary society of England sent Rev Norton, Benjamin Bailey, Joseph Fenn and Henry Baker to Kerala. With their help a seminary (Pazhaya Seminary) was started to teach the priests of the Syrian Christian Community. The reigning Maha

Rani of Travancore, on the advice of Col Monroe gave land free of cost to start the seminary. Thus the teaching of English was started in Travancore in 1816.

During the time of Rev. Pete and Rev. Wood Cock, there rose a dispute about the contents of teaching in the seminary. Philipose Mar Dionysius, Cheppad (1825-1855) of the Syrian Church of Malankara realised that the teachings at the seminary was against the cardinal teachings of the Malankara Christians and the missionaries foremost aim was to get the Syrian Christians into their fold. The dispute between the two factions increased and at the assembly of the Christians at Mavelikara, the C.M.S Missionaries severed their link with St. Thomas Church. A few Syrian Christian families also went with them and formed the nucleus of the C.M.S Church in Kerala. Properties held commonly at Kottayam were also divided between the two Churches.

#### Mar Thoma Church

The teachings of the missionaries affected the thinking of certain leaders of the Malankara Church. Rev. Abraham Malpan at Pazhaya Seminary was the foremost leader among them. He with the help of English and the reigning King sent his nephew to Antioch and got him ordained as a Bishop. This Bishop Palanmunnathu Mathews Mar Athanasios (1842-1877) was proclaimed by the Raja in 1852 as the Bishop of Malankara Church. The Malankara Christian Community got annoyed at this. They sought the help of Antioch Church and got down Bishop Kurilos to Kerala. Later Patriarch Patrose III of Antioch himself was brought to Kerala in 1875. He with his influence with the British Government in London was able to cancel the proclamation of the Raja. By that time Bishop Mathews became old and hence ordained his brother's son Thomas Mar Athanasios as Bishop of Malankara Church. So the real Malankara Metran Pulikottil II Joseph Mar Dionysius (1865-1909) filed a case against Bishop Thomas Athanasios in 1879. This case was decided in 1889 in favour of Bishop Pulikottil Joseph Dionysius V and is known as the "Royal Court Judgement". All the properties of the Church were thus restored to Bishop Joseph Dionysius. The faction which lost the case separated from the parental Church and formed a New Church in 1889AD. They named the new

Church as “Marthoma Sabha “This faction of the Syrian Christian community was henceforth known as “Marthomites”.

#### Church Cases

Patriarch Patrose of Antioch wanted to have more temporal powers and control over the Malankara Sabha. He wanted each and every parish church building of the Malankara Sabha to be held in his name. In view of this he formed the Malankara Church Association and Church Managing Committee and their meeting were held at Mulunthuruthy in 1876. Bishop Pulicottil II Joseph Mar Dionysius was made its President. Because of the Metrans objection and opposition the Patriarch could not carry out his wishes. The Patriarch in retaliation reduced the power of Bishop Pulicottil II Joseph by dividing the Malankara Church Community into six Dioceses and ordained a Bishop for each. After doing this the Patriarch went back to Antioch.

After the demise of Patriarch Pathrose, Mar Abdulla became the Patriarch of Antioch. He came to visit the Malankara Church in Kerala. By this time Pulikottil Joseph Mar Dionysius had passed away and Vattaseril Mar Gee Varughese who was ordained by the Patriarch of Antioch himself became the Bishop of Malankara.

Patriarch Mar Abdulla tried to fulfil the Bishop Patriarch Patrose of establishing the suzerainty of Antioch over the Churches of Malankara. Vattaseril Metran and the Malankara Association vehemently opposed it. The Patriarch hence suspended Vattaseril Metran and appointed Bishop Kurilos as the Metropolitans trustee, (1911) and returned to Antioch.

A dispute arose after words as to who was the legal authority to receive the interest of the 3000 poovarahans, (gold coins) loaned by Bishop Pulicottil Joseph Mar Dionysius to the British Government. This dispute is the famous ‘Vattipanam Case’. The verdict given by the Trivandrum High Court in 1925 was that Vattasseril Gee Varughese Mar Dionysius was the legal heir and he alone can receive the vatti (interest). Meanwhile the constitution of the Church was passed in 1934 by the Malankara Association of the Church. In 1938 the Patriarch faction in the Church filed the ‘Samudaya’ case, claiming that they are the ‘legal heirs of the church’. The dispute finally went up to

Supreme Court which gave the verdict in 1958. According to this verdict Vattaseril Thirumeni and his successors were declared as the real heirs of St. Thomas tradition and the 1934 constitution of the Church is the real valid document.

#### Catholicate Throne

From 1665 the Kerala Syrian Church had recognized the consecration link and supremacy of the Patriarch of Antioch. But the manoeuvres of the Patriarch group to give the Patriarch, temporal powers over the Malankara Church, were opposed by the Malankara Christians. They wanted freedom in the administration of the Church. To achieve this, the Malankara Christians wanted to transfer the seat of Catholicose of Persia considered to be on par with the seat of Patriarch to Kerala. This seat was then vacant with nobody to carry on. So this Catholicos seat was transferred from Persia to Greece, during the supremacy of Nestorians in Persia. After sometime the seat in Greece also became vacant, as there was no one to carry on. Hence Vattasseril Tirumeni and Kerala Christians sought the help of the former Patriarch of Antioch Abdul Mashiha. He was brought to Kerala. The Malankara Association was summoned and in 1912 with the consent of everyone concerned the seat and the throne of the Catholicos was transferred and established at Kottayam in Malankara. Thus religious and temporal powers became vested in Catholicos of the Malankara Church in Kerala. In this way the Malankara Syrian Christian Church of Kerala became autocephalous.

H.G. Mar Baselios Paulose became the first Catholicose of the Malankara Church. He was succeeded by Mar Baselios Gee Varughese I, Baselios Gee Varughese II, then by Baselios Ougen I followed by Baselios Marthoma Mathews I and now by Baselios Marthoma Mathews II as Catholicose.

After the judgement of the Supreme Court in 1958, the Catholicose gracefully accepted the Patriarch faction and their Bishops as members of his Church. Peace in the Malankara Sabha came with the union of the two factions. After 12 years the union broke up. Some of the erstwhile Patriarch factions abetted by Patriarch of Antioch again regrouped and consecrated their own Catholicose and Bishops. Again a new case was fought in the Courts by the two factions. The Supreme Court once

again finally ruled in 1996 that Baselios Marthoma Mathews II is the rightful head of the only and the single Church and the 1934 constitution of the Church is the valid document by which the whole Church and all Parishes are to be governed. Some members of the Patriarch factions known as the Jacobite Orthodox Church are still not reconciled to this situation.

Even when the civil suits were being fought in the Courts, the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church was marching forward with vigour and vision in all directions. Hundreds of new parishes were established all over India and other parts of the world. It also established many educational institutions, hospital, rehabilitation centres for all kinds of disabled persons and charitable institutions. It has also translated its liturgy to other languages to suit the needs of various congregations.

At present in Kerala, there are many off shoots of the Church originally established by St. Thomas. These include besides the original Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, others like Jacobite Orthodox Church, Roman Syrian Catholic Church, Church of South India, MarThomite Church and many others including non episcopal congregation<sup>11</sup>.

**E: (Indian Christianity) Chapter -1 Elanjickal Kudumbavum Kudumbangalum**

Christianity in India, Arrival of St Thomas

St .Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ is believed to have arrived at Kerala coast in 52 AD, As a result of his arrival Christianity was spread in India in the same century as its introduction and spread was effected after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ministry of St.Thomas was from 35 to 72 A.D. After the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the following second year, St.Thomas started towards eastern regions beginning with Parthia, Medya and other places. St Thomas was given Parthian regions for spreading the gospel .After the resurrection of Jesus Christ according to his will for the attainment of Holy Spirit all the eleven disciples were waiting for it, and Mathias replaced Judas Iscariot who had lost his discipleship. After the day of the Pentecost beginning with Stephen, seven were nominated and ordained for deaconship.

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<sup>11</sup>Kanianthra pp8-16

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ the first church congregation to be formed was the Jerusalem church and so from hence forth Jerusalem church came to be called as the mother of all Christian congregations. It was noted in the acts of apostles that on the day of the Pentecost when all the disciples gathered together, the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire descended on all who were gathered there. It is believed that beginning with Parthia, Medya, Elemya and other places big gathering was present there and more than three thousand people believed in Christ were baptized to become members of Christianity.

After the day of the Pentecost believed to be the birthday of Christian congregations, Christian congregation spread to many other regions and took shape. And from among the oldest regions that which stand first with their centre at Edessa like Parthia, Medya and India are believed to have been established by St Thomas as Eastern Orthodox congregation.

Christianity is believed to have been established in Kerala in 1st century A.D itself and St. Thomas is believed to have promoted Christianity in Kerala as has been noted in history worldwide. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister himself has pointed out the above aspect of Christianity with pride while discussing about goodness and variety of Indian culture in his works.

In India, Christianity comes under minority category and there are around 200 lakhs of Indian Christians among which those enjoying its presence and freedom more are in Kerala totalling around 70 lakhs Christians as per census. Among them major parts proclaim their own historical beginning of faith to St Thomas gospel.

In the last two thousand years the presence of Christians in India has boosted the spiritual and cultural world of Indians undoubtedly. Christians have offered much in education, social, cultural, medical fields to such an extent that no one can deny it. This resulted in a new vision of life and also helped in laying a valuable foundation in society (Helped in sowing firm roots in society)

St. Thomas reached Kodungallore and through his preaching's brought many Christians to adopt Christian faith. Muziris was the old name of Kodungallore. From one place after establishing a

church he moved to another new place .like this seven churches north to south Palayur, Kodungallore, Paravur (Kottakavu), Gokamangalam, Chayal (Nilackal), Niranam, Kollam, and in addition to this Thiruvithankode – a half church making it total seven and half churches were believed to be established by St.Thomas.

A total of 8 churches were established according to oral history.Different type of lists are still available there. In one list only four churches are present. In a list only six churches are present : Maliankara, Kottakavu, Edappally, Gokamangalam, Niranam, Thiruvithankode are said to be those six churches.

Thiruvithankode is believed to be the half church from among the seven and half churches established by St Thomas and the one among the total eight churches as believed from ancient days .It can be seen that there is a change in the names of many places.It is noted by all historians that a church was established at Niranam.

Priests were ordained from the four families of Pakalomattom, Sankarapuri, Kali, and Kaliankal to give spiritual leadership to those who had adopted Christian faith. In India, those who had adopted Christ faith were known as followers of Nazranis meaning Nazr air later called Nazrani.

According to legends around eight churches were established by St Thomas during his propagation of the Christian gospel in Kerala, Niranam church being one among those eight churches. At Niranam two Namboodiri families Thayyil, Pattamuki and two Nair families Mangi Madathilel accepted Christian faith according to oral history.

In continuation to the above conversation to Christian faith, other Namboodiri families at Niranam handed over their important document and main papers regarding property matters in a box to a popular village Nair leader (Kaimal) and left the village according to oral history. This Nair was later called as “Niranam Petti Kaimal” who stayed to the north of Niranam Church.

After laying the foundation of Christianity in Kerala St Thomas went and spread the gospel to other countries like China, Malacca and other places for many years and later again came and stayed

in India at Mylapore in 72AD and died due to the pierce of an arrow and became a martyr and his bodily remains are believed to be buried at Mylapore. Then in 165 A.D his bodily remains were taken to Uralia (Edessa) according to historical belief.

St.Thomas bodily remains were taken from India to Edessa as holy thing and in 394 A.D were kept in St.Thomas Church at Uralia (Edessa).

St.Thomas was pierced with an arrow on December 18 and after two days attained martyrdom on December 21. According to the belief of the Malankara Orthodox Church July 3<sup>rd</sup> marks the taking of his remains to Edessa as maintained by the Orthodox Church.

In 1964, a relic belonging to St .Thomas was found during the breaking of a wall as part of renovation work being done in a church named after St.Thomas at Mosul in Iraq. In 1965, Yakub III Patriarch along with Augen Bava visited Mosul church and brought St.Thomas relic in a box to Malankara. This relic is specially preserved near the main burial places of the highest Metropolitans at Devalokam Catholicate Bishop House in Kottayam.

Niranam is a fertile place between Manimalayar and Pampa rivers. Neerman was the old name of the place and later it came to be known as Niranam in 54 A.D. In olden days sailing ships coming from depths of the sea reached these coastal areas of Niranam and Nakida to take back with them spices like pepper, ginger and other goods in order to sell the same in foreign countries. Coastal areas in those days later came to be known as Kadapra. In course of time it is understood that the sea had receded. It is assumed that in 1341 as a result of floods. Lot of difference came up on the surface of the earth.

In 54 A.D it is believed that the church established at Niranam was renovated four times. The present church at Niranam was renovated in 1921. In 1259, the renovation work is visible from a stone sculpture.

Niranam church was the head church of all other churches in central Travancore. Over a period of time, many churches like Changanacherry, Edathwa, Champakulam, Chengannur, Kalupara,

Chennitala, Paliakara, Puthiyakavu moved away from Niranam church and independently established themselves.

A huge stone cross believed to be 30 feet tall based on the ancient Persian model stands to the west of the church. This is believed to be made in the 12<sup>th</sup> C. A.D.

Once upon a time Niranam's golden cross became a famous Kerala idiom. It was made after Gold was fried and waste thrown away to make it 10 1/2 carat pure gold of art. In 1916, a famous dacoit chief who was also a gold smith named Kollappan had stolen it. After this another golden cross was made that is presently seen at Niranam church.

With its relation to the Malankara congregation, Niranam church stands witness to many historical events. In 1665, ordination of Marthoma I and in 1912 the establishment of the throne of the Catholicose and the ordination of the first designate to the throne of the Catholicose are major historical events. In 1686 Marthoma II and in 1765 Marthoma V were buried at Niranam church. In 1962 and in 1974 Malankara Syrian Christian Association meetings were conducted at this place.

In ancient and modern times Niranam stands as the birth place of famous social works<sup>12</sup>.

Statistical Errors and Limitations:-

Family History writing cannot be presupposed as a complete form of dissemination of information as it is written by individuals who are interested to keep up a record of their family for the knowledge and benefit of future generation. There are certain statistical errors made in charting out the family history's. A few errors, limitations are quoted from both the family history's which are as follows:-

Kianantha Family History:

\*"Kianantha Thommen 1467- 1537A.D.

The first person we hear about in the records was one Kianantha Thommen.

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<sup>12</sup>Elanjickal pp107-110.

We do not know how many generations of the Kianthra family prior to Thommen Valliapen stayed in Niranam.

Nobody know from where this Thommi Valiappen married, nor how many children he had”<sup>13</sup>.

Limitation :- The records are limited to only some authentic source of information like the Thaliola Grantham.

\*In the same chapter titled Our Ancestors 1467-1810 A.D the ancestral line is not clear.

“Kianthra Thommen 1467- 1537 A.D.

Thommen Chandy 1507- 1567 A.D.

Kunjummen Ouppen 1585-1665 A.D.

Chandy Nina Tharakan? - 1774 A.D.”<sup>14</sup>

Limitations: Though the above dates are valid to the extent that they are taken from Thaliolas and Niranam Grandhavari the continuity to the ancestry line is not clearly mentioned.

\*Another error that can be identified is the lack of minute information regarding the women who are married off from Kianthra while the details of men are accurate. The following attests to the same fact:-

“XII.CHANDY-KUNJU THOMMY THARAKAN 1765-1822 A.D

PALLIKADAVIL ANNAMMA

CHILDREN:XIII 1. THOMMY CHANDY, (died young)

2. THOMMY KUNJU THOMMY KIZHAKAE VEETIL.

3. THOMMY CHANDY KATHANAR NIRANAM.

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<sup>13</sup>Alexander Joseph K and Ammini Joseph Achamma., “Kianthra Family: A Socio-Economic History of Mepal and its Kianthra Family members”, Published by Kianthra Kudumba Charitram Committee, Thiruvanathapuram,2000, Chapter-9, pp 54-55.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid pp 54-57.

4. THOMMY OUSEPH PADINJARAE VEETIL.

5. ACHIAMMA

6. ACHAMMA

7. KOICHEETHAMMA”<sup>15</sup>.

Chandy Kunju Thommy Tharakan lost his first three children very young. There is no reference to the fourth son. The details of two daughters are given as to whom they got married while the third daughter’s marriage is mentioned as Kocheethama got married to Karukayil family. And none of the daughter’s details are dated.

Limitations: The authenticity of the dates and information as given in family history should be considered as the memory or record of an interested family member and therefore it can be considered true to some extent. The relations regarding the female line are not described in detail when compared to the male line as the system of family was under the Patriarchal head in a joint family.

Elanjickal Family History:

\* Chapter 1 Christianity in India Arrival of St Thomas

In ancient and modern times Niranam stands as the birth place of famous social works.

Chapter 2. Elanjickal Family

Kodungallore, Kothamangalam, Niranam

The beginning of Elanjickal family is from Kodungallore. Elanjickal family marks its beginning along with the beginning of Christianity by St Thomas at Kodungallore in 52 A.D<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.,pp 61-63.

<sup>16</sup>John E.J., “Elanjickal Kudumbavum Kudumbangalum: A Collection of Writings”, Published by Elanjickal Publishers, Kottayam, 2003,opcit., pp.110-111.

Limitations: The conclusion of chapter one does not carry a continuous beginning in the following chapter will mean that the chapters outlined in family histories are independent in the theme they want to portray which will imply that no set criteria is outlined in the writing of any family history. Therefore family history writing is underlined by the free discretion on the individuals involved in writing.

\* From 1728 to 1765(i, e.) in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the period of Mar Thoma V who was the pride of the Malankara. Due to lack of money Mar Thoma V was captured by Dutch and kept under bars in a place called Turungi and in order to release him Peethama Thangi, a lady from Elanjickal household extended help by handing over her gold ornaments in the same period only. Peethama Thangi, famous in history for extending help in freeing Mar Thoma V was the wife of Perumal Tharakan.

Limitations: The Elanjickal family history does not give any information before this chapter about the Female Jewel Peethama Thangi except on an important occasion only in chapter 9. Therefore mostly family histories shed light in detail on men's histories rather than on women which is rather only just mentioned or explained in brief.

\*In the year 1884 Elanjickal family property was distributed. Till then they lived as joint family.

Limitations: The date given above does not necessarily explain the medieval period property status of Elanjickal property the details of which is yet to be retrieved. The given date signifies the division of property in the modern period. Medieval period property issues are not highlighted.

Conclusion:

The writing of most of the family histories cannot be marked with an exact beginning date as it is a record by private individuals who may or may not include the date they are writing from. Family history thus has evolved as an important source in highlighting the important events of a place, role of individuals in various spheres, the respective family role in religious and cultural activities, etc. Though family history writing can be inferred to have been initiated from the ancient period itself, the

Kanianthra and Elanjickal family history belong to the pre-medieval and post-medieval times respectively.

Though the structure of family histories vary their subject matter mostly will have the same contents beginning with the establishment of Christianity in Kerala, an explanation on Kerala Christians and the connection of their family name to the first Brahmin converts by St.Thomas and later the spread of their family into distant lands on occupational basis and finally the family lineages explained in detail under each family branch.

Kanianthra family lineages extol the family as it had a hierarchy of ten priests from the family. It also elaborates the family beginnings from the place of Niranam. The migration of the family to Mepral throws light on the Mepral church established by Kanianthra family members. The beginning chapter on Kerala throws light on the geography, legend concerning Kerala origin, trade with countries abroad both in B.C and A.D, arrival of St.Thomas, the Aryans in the first century A.D and other foreign countries for trade like Arabs, Chinese, Jews, and Buddhists etc convey the advantages of Kerala geography favouring its trade purpose. The coming of the Portuguese followed by the Dutch and finally the British marked the evolution of modern Kerala.

The Kanianthra family history clearly puts forth the prevalence of caste system in Kerala which will also include the practice of feudalism, child marriage, purdha system, slavery and polygamy in the medieval Kerala society. The festivals mentioned irrespective of the religion also convey the secular nature of Kerala society. The cultural lives of Keralites reveal the adoption of Hindu tradition in a Christian household with regard to marriage and burial traditions. The chapter on Christianity enlightens the reader with a detailed background to the establishment of Christianity by St.Thomas and the relation of the Christian church of Kerala with churches of other denominations.

Elanjickal family history portrays the families from Kodungallore, Kothamangalam and Niranam as the beginnings of their ancestral line coinciding with the arrival of St.Thomas at Kodungallore. This family history highlights the importance of settlements of these Christians from one place to another based on the prevailing circumstances. The excellence of Elanjickal family members in different

fields like Astrology, Kalari (warfare without weapons), Vaidya (Ayurveda Treatment), Nokku Marmavidya (a type of magic) and their medical books also explained the use of panacea and the making of specialised herbs for healing and the ways to treat an elephant. Playboats belonging to Elanjickal family revealed their family prestige.

Their settlement at Niranam also brings in certain important historical reflections of the role played by the Elanjickal family members in Kerala Christian history. The role played by Elanjickal family head in the ordination of Mar Thoma I and a layman of Elanjickal family to be named the first among the five laymen who were to represent the Niranam Church at the Mulunthuruthy Synod. Even the role of a woman belonging to Elanjickal family is also highlighted due to her act of handing over her gold ornaments for the fulfilment of payment of dues to the Dutch in freeing Mar Thoma V. The building of Elanjickal Church elevated the family status as a famous family. The financial status of the family is highlighted in the owning of different types of boats and the employment of different tradesman in their family. The story behind the establishment of the Elanjickal Church reveals the importance of the family in the active participation of the religious developments of their society. The Church festival celebrated in memory of His Holiness Abdul Jaleel Mar Gregorious by the Elanjickal family members in organising processions, the love feast, the offering made by the Elanjickal family members also attended by people from all walks of life give a glimpse of the glory enjoyed by the family in the medieval period. The chapter on Indian Christianity relates the establishment of churches under St. Thomas not only in Kerala, but also in other countries like China and Malacca. It also highlights the importance of Niranam Church.

The present study of one or more than one family histories reveal it as a relevant source material for exploring the facts of history in detail which is otherwise not mentioned in scheduled history books. The relevance of a church on account of the patronage it received from a particular family is clearly portrayed. The projection of the family role in important historical events at different periods of time forms another factor in highlighting the importance of family history. Families form the foundation of an individual's future. Most of the successful personalities owe their achievements to the support and help provided by their own respective families.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

History begins to be interested in the past when human beings first appear on the scene. History's essential concern is with human experiences and actions. It is true, of course, that history records not merely what human beings did and suffered, but also a considerable number of natural events in the past- earthquakes, floods, droughts, and the like. But its interest in these events is strictly subsidiary"<sup>1</sup>.Not only is it true that each generation finds it necessary to rewrite the histories written by its predecessors; at any given point of time and place there are available differing and apparently inconsistent versions of the same set of events, each of them claiming to give, if not the whole truth about it, at any rate as much of the truth as can now be come by. The interpretations of one historian are indignantly repudiated by another, and how to reconcile them is not apparent, since the disputes are not merely technical (over the correct interpretation of evidence), but rather depend on ultimate preconceptions which in this case are emphatically not universally shared<sup>2</sup>.

It was the Jews, and after them the Christians, who introduced an entirely new element by postulating a goal towards which the historical process is moving-the teleological view of history. History thus acquired a meaning and purpose, but at the expense of losing its secular character. The attainment of the goal of history would automatically mean the end of history: history itself became a theodicy. This was the medieval view of history. The Renaissance restored the classical view of an anthropocentric world and of the primacy of reason, but for the pessimistic classical view of the future substituted an optimistic view derived from the Jewish-Christian tradition. The rationalists of the Enlightenment, who were the founders of modern historiography, retained the Jewish-Christian teleological view, but

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<sup>1</sup> Walsh.W.H., "Phjilosophy of History', Harper and Row Publishers, New York,1960,pp.30.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,pp.98.

secularized the goal; they were thus enabled to restore the rational character of the historical process itself. History became progress towards the goal of the perfection of man's estate on earth<sup>3</sup>.

History begins when men begin to think of the passage of time in terms not of natural process-the cycle of the seasons, the human life-span-but of a series of specific events in which men are consciously involved and which they can consciously influence. History is the long struggle of man, by the exercise of his reason, to understand his environment and to act upon it. But the modern period has broadened the struggle in a revolutionary way. Man now seeks to understand and to act on, not only his environment but himself; and this has added, so to speak, a new dimension to reason, and a new dimension to history. The present age is the most historically-minded of all ages. Modern man is to an unprecedented degree self-conscious and therefore conscious of History. He peers eagerly back into the twilight out of which he has come, in the hope that its faint beams will illuminate the obscurity into which he is going; and, conversely, his aspirations and anxieties about the path that lies ahead quicken his insight into what lies behind. Past, present, and future are linked together in the endless chain of history<sup>4</sup>.

The early Christianity was mentioned or referred in the pagan sources as well as the Christian sources. Under the pagan sources a traditional view of Christianity maintains that the religion of Christianity is the creation of a single man Jesus Christ. According to Karl Kautskysy, the first mention of Jesus by a non-Christian is found in the Jewish Antiquities of Josephus Flavius. The third chapter of the eighteenth book which treats of the procurator Pontius Pilate says, among other things: "About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man. If he may be named the man, for he achieved miracles and was a teacher of men, who gladly accepted his truth, and found many adherents among Jews and Hellenes. This man was Christ. Although Pilate then had him crucified on the accusation of the most excellent men of our people, those who had first loved him remained faithful to him nevertheless. For on the third day he appeared to them again, arisen to a new life as God's prophets had prophesied this and thousands of other miraculous

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<sup>3</sup> Carr E.H., "What is History?", Penguin Books, London, 1961, pp.110.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp.134.

things of him. From him the Christians take their name; their sect has since then not ceased”<sup>5</sup>. These words by a Non-Christian Jew and Pharisee are considered as authentic as he lived in Jerusalem and was born in the year 37 AD. His testimony is considered with much esteem by the Christians for its information relating to Jesus Christ.

From among the Christian sources “the epistles of St.Paul constitute the oldest literary products of Christianity”. In its primitive stages the Christian congregation was considered as embracing proletarian elements making it a proletarian organization. The less information we have now on the early phase of Christianity cannot be owed to reason of it being of proletarian character. The advocate of this primitive phase might have been chief persons who were not well versed in the art of reading and writing. This type of arts was quite strange in the day to day life of the people than it is in the present day world. Therefore in the succeeding years, the most popular way of Christian teaching about the history of its own congregation was confined to oral transmission, which handed down “reports of events witnessed by only a small group and which was not investigated by the mass the population”. It was only when well-read men from a higher social stratum followed Christianity the beginnings of written fixations of its tradition were made.

When we use the term family history, it means the history of a social institution consisting of individuals who are knit together. The ideology of the cultural gain and loss of each generation period inspires and gives away of suggestion and in a large way to the subsequent generation .Therefore when we say a family history; we consider the progress of the family like a tall and prominent lighthouse. The successive achievement of prosperity in body, blood, mind and flesh determine the total sum of ancestral families mind and body. Considering the value of body and mind, the high and low positions are not deliberated. But it is difficult to ignore the high and low position in the course of living of the growing family, in way of body, mind and culture. Kindness, fondness for dependants , gratitude, magnanimity,

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<sup>5</sup> Kautsky Karl., “The Foundations of Christianity, A Study in Christian Origins”, International Publishers, New York, 1925, pp.24.

strong faith of morally good life, forgetfulness of offence, faithfulness to the spouse, moral consciousness all these are proud success in the cultural growth of a family<sup>6</sup>.The foundation of human beings is family. Generation after generation each family gets separated which also lessen the love between them. For this purpose, for the future generation to understand their family relations family history writing would serve the purpose<sup>7</sup>.

Family History in Kerala or Kudumbayogams can be explained in other words as tracing the lineage of any present Syrian Christian family to their first converts dated to A.D 52 of the seven Brahmins converted by St.Thomas Apostle of Jesus Christ. These seven Brahmins are believed to be the Indian forefathers of Syrian Christian religion who successfully handed their own traditional knowledge down the generations. Hence even in the present day Syrian Christians there is a slight reflection of Brahman religion in following certain customs and rituals with the same purity.The writing of a family history is initiated by private individuals who are interested to record the day to day happenings of their respective families for the knowledge of the future generations. A meeting is conducted every year headed by an elected committee, the members of this committee would comprise of senior members as well as juniors with respect to the post they hold in being the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and such other office bearers from that single family spread over different areas and the meeting will be attended by all branches of family members who belong to that single family name. This type of meeting that is conducted has been initiated in the recent past. Till then family history continued to remain in the personal diaries of different individuals. A general background history is also explained to everyone and then those that are present need to introduce themselves and their family. After all these, this meeting will be concluded with a Love feast in the afternoon. The family history committee then makes a detail survey of the individual, innumerable nuclear families present over there and verifies their relations to the main family name. The book that is published under the auspices of a family history

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<sup>6</sup> Foreword to the Mukkathu family history.

<sup>7</sup> Foreword to Parekattu History.

committee will have a presiding secretary. The history will also include the positive role that is played by this family in the course of Kerala's evolving history.

Though the Syrian Christians, Muslims, Jews had diverse reasons for their settlement in the largely Hindu populated region of Kerala, their mutual co-existence independently maintaining their own identity was an exceptional feature of medieval Kerala society. The economic identity of the St. Thomas Christians was established through the flourishing of spice trade. The caste system that reigned the Hindu society in the medieval period was affected with its decline as the 'lower castes' converted to religions like Christianity and Islam in order to liberate themselves from the rules of 'pollution'. Kerala witnessed the summit of slavery under its feudal polity during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries wherein the landed magnates considered their slaves with the value of not more than a commodity. Both matriliney with the role of women gained importance and patriarchy with the male member as the head of the family marked the Kerala society at different periods of time. The medieval period in Kerala also witnessed monogamy, polygamy and polyandry under the Christians, Muslims and Nair households respectively. Trade received royal patronage in Kerala as the public revenues of the kingdom also depended on the commercial duties. By the early centuries of the Christian era the Roman trade had established their settlements in Kerala and later witnessed the punishment settlement of the Jewish and Christian Communities. The sixteenth century sources portray the Kerala Muslim community to be mercantile in character but does not explain the influence of the spiritual elites' like the Ulama and such other local imams or institutions that have enhanced the conversion thus developing an indigenous Muslim community in Kerala. Islam therefore occupied an equal status with Hinduism, Christianity and Jainism. The new religions maintained their identity without completely dissolving into the Hindu fold; however it cannot be denied that the disappearance of Jainism and Buddhism from Kerala had left an indelible mark on the architecture of the construction of the Hindu temples. While the Hindu conversion into Islam had provided a mark of dignity from the rigid caste system prevailing in Kerala. In the case of Christianity the fact that the Apostle St. Thomas had converted seven families from Brahmin household to Christianity also elevates the status

of St. Thomas Christians in a Hindu society where the rules of pollution were not applicable as they were considered equal to the high caste Nairs of Hindu society. The occupations that most Syrians specialised in comparison to other major castes of Kerala were mostly land holders and traders.

Religion, thus as a matter of fact has been affected a long way due to the mutual enmity between the brethren of the same country but belonging to different faith. Though the St. Thomas Christians wanted to preserve and carry on the same faith, they were disturbed in terms of their practices and customs by an alien trading power, the Portugese. European continent witnessed a tremendous change as a result of the initiation and success of the Portuguese explorations. Europe witnessed the emergence or formation of an early Modern State, the Revolution and Reformation in the Church, the problem of authority and conversion. The Portugese owed allegiance to the Roman Supremacy of the Pope who considered St. Peter as their Patron Saint. Hence the Portugese attempts to revive the St. Thomas Christians from their allegiance for the East Syrian Church to be diverted to the Western Church received very less response as only few St. Thomas Christians agreed to follow the Latin custom and liturgy of the West but a majority of them still maintained their firm ancient faith that was handed down to them by St. Thomas.

The political motive of the Portuguese is clearly seen hidden under their commercial relations. But though politically or commercially they were not able to influence these Christians or subdue them which were the strong work of the Portuguese missionaries on religious basis which in the long run had no far fetching results so as to establish a Portuguese empire in India to administer the Indian nation. Portugal thus stands out unsuccessful in this mission. It can be rightly assessed that during the introduction of Christianity in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D there was no 'other' (no Jews and Muslims). The hatred to the Muslims back in Portugal was reflected in the Portuguese main aim at their arrival to end the Muslim monopoly of trade on the Malabar Coast. The Portuguese ideas of Christianity has evolved as one of the ideas in Kerala, wherein the Portuguese had introduced the idea of 'other' (Muslims) which

was used as a model in Kerala. In Europe the 'other' of Christianity in the medieval period was Muslims during Crusades followed by the Jews and the communists in the modern period.

Family history acts as a means of transmission of information of the concerned family since the time of initiation of recording and handing over the details of the forefathers in addition to their present status with respect to its division and spread. Kinship relations clearly demarcate the type of family and its functions. The compilation of Family history would include the merger of history of the family with respect to logical problem solving, collection of statistical details of family from parish records, shift in patterns of control on emotional basis portraying the relations maintained within the family and with other families in the society.

Family history thus has evolved as an important source in highlighting the important events of a place, role of individuals in various spheres, the respective family role in religious and cultural activities, etc. This study focuses on reconstructing the history of Christianity in pre-modern Kerala using family histories. It also deconstructs the Portuguese influence and assesses their impacts on the reformulation of Christianity in Kerala under Portuguese influence. It also highlights the influence of the absolutist monarchies ruling in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth century having a strong impact on the ruling powers outside Europe in general and in India i.e. Kerala in particular and how the narratives were influenced by the developments in Europe.

The present thesis also brings out the importance of the study of family history writing that has also existed and is underutilized as a very important source material with the help of which Kerala history can be written as this form of writing gives more importance to the important happenings in day to day lives from times immemorial that is given less importance to in other major sources. This is also a departure from conventional sources. An understanding of family history is appropriate only by the content it encompasses.

The narratives reveal wide range of topics, themes concerning individual personalities, family property, social patterns, religious developments and culture with respect to the medieval households. The family history is composed by a group of male elders hence patriarchal values are reflected. Though the Nazranis adopted most of the social and cultural traditions from their Brahmin counterparts, the family type that was followed in medieval Christian family was patriarchal. Since many values are borrowed from Hindus, ideas reveal dominant ideas of women and social life of Kerala society. The role of women, their active participation in the religious and cultural activities of society and in household is also reflected. Though there was relation with the Western Church they did not celebrate that relation. They only had idea about the West Asian church but they were not interested in emulating the same. Thus they were indigenous in following their Indian Christian faith handed down by their ancestors. The institution of family was important for the transmission of Christianity. The study of family histories also reveals the numerous foreign relations maintained by Kerala from the ancient period till the modern period in detail. This would also explain that Christianity in Kerala did not develop in isolation and its nourishment from the parent churches enabled its firm establishment as an indigenous religion India with adopted foreign features in terms of its liturgy, priestly robes, certain cultural customs and in some form of Church architecture.

Family history also gives evidence of how rituals and traditions are transmitted. The coming of the Portuguese brought a type of Christianity that was anti-Muslim. They also tried to effect change in the church orders of the St. Thomas Christians. Every family history has errors based on lack of current information of their other widely spread branches. These errors are to be correctly entered in the future editions with more information on the history or any important events during that one year. These family histories cannot be concluded at any point of time as it is continuity in itself just as the family continues through the next generation its history is also bound to continue as a record of the different branches of the same family.

As the knowledge of history forms an important foundation in the present and future endeavours of a country, state and place, the knowledge of family history would be a source of enlightenment adding to the family's present position in society as a privileged lot. Therefore family history is credited as a significant source of recorded information not only of a place country and state but also includes the role of private families and individuals in the making of history.

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