
HINDU-CHRISTIAN COMMUNALISM, INTERACTIVE TRADITIONS AND INTERRELIGIOUS HARMONY IN THE DISTRICT OF KANYAKUMARI, TAMIL NADU

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Abstract: The face and the swell of violence in today's Indian society are indeed horrendous and alarming. Recent decades have witnessed a steady growth of communal violence in different parts of India in which religion has a substantial share. While North India is known for Hindu-Muslim communalism, South India has witnessed Hindu-Christian Communalism, evidenced in particular in the district of Kanyakumari. In the context of religious communities and individuals opposing violence in society and initiating movements and measures for peaceful cohabitation, this paper presents the dynamics of Hindu-Christian communalism of Kanya kumari district and highlights how the youth function as peace brokers in engaging themselves in various kinds of dialogue and inter-faith activities promoting Hindu-Christian harmony and peace as a case study and further explores into few luminal sites of religious experience.

Keywords: Hindu-Christian Communalism, Interactive religio-cultural traditions, interreligious harmony

Introduction: The face and the swell of violence in today's Indian society are indeed horrendous and alarming. Recent decades have witnessed a steady growth of communal violence in different parts of India in which religion has a substantial share. While North India is known for Hindu-Muslim communalism, South India has witnessed Hindu-Christian Communalism, evidenced in particular in the district of Kanyakumari. In the context of religious communities and individuals opposing violence in society and initiating movements and measures for peaceful cohabitation, this paper presents the dynamics of Hindu-Christian communalism of Kanyakumari district and highlights how the youth function as peace brokers in engaging themselves in various kinds of dialogue and inter-faith activities promoting Hindu-Christian harmony and peace as a case study and further explores into few luminal sites of religious experience.

An Appraisal of Hindu- Christian Communalism: There exists a common belief that South India is free from communal tensions and conflicts. But a period of history from 19th century witnesses the fact of Hindu-Christian communal tensions and conflicts in Tamilnadu including the district of Kanyakumari. Kanyakumari was formerly known as the granary of Travancore. Hindus and Christians are numerically majority community comprising Hindus 51.27% and Christians 44.47% in the district[1]. Here, Hindu Christian communalism did not erupt all of a sudden. Rather, it began gradually from the conversion of natives into Christianity from 17th century onwards. The work of Christian missionaries during the closing years of the 17th century witnessed the conversion of many Hindus. Among different caste groups, the Mukkuvars and Paravas of coastal land were fully converted into Christian faith by Catholic

missionaries. Among the other caste groups who lived inland, majority belonging to the caste of Shanars were Christianised by both Protestant and Catholic missionaries. When the district was formed in the year 1956, Hinduism and Christianity became the two majority religious following.

The recent history of Kanyakumari reveals the fact that it is communally sensitive due to the aftermath of Mandaikadu Conflagration of 1982. The reasons for this Hindu-Christian communalism are many, not all of which i can go into this limited time. However, I point out few important reasons.

First and foremost, there is the supposed superiority of Christians[2]. According to the social history of Kanyakumari District, conversion into Christianity gave the people education, social and economic advancement as Christian missionaries established schools and colleges, with sound organisations and considerable resources. This advancement in the educational, social and economic spheres created a kind of aggressiveness and feelings of religious superiority among the Christians, which made them to call themselves "wise" and the non-Christians as "non-wise". This also created an inferiority complex among the Hindus. This was further accelerated by Christians' attempt of constructing churches in Hindu dominated areas, looking down upon the local Hindu customs as evil, superstitious and demonic, and preaching Christianity as the only way for salvation. As Christians prospered in economic life due their advancement in education, there emerged an atmosphere of economic competition between Hindus and Christians.

Secondly, when the Tamil Speaking areas were merged with the state of Madras after the Tamil Integration Movement, there was autonomy for the people. The merger weakened the hands of the

landlords belonging to dominant caste group, and the farmers began to acquire lands to cultivate them for themselves.[3] A sense of identity came into existence among the depressed classes. Later non-caste Hindus and Christians began to play a dominant role in the affairs of the district[4]. So the disappearance of dominant castes from the hectic socio-economic and political roles to a temporary oblivion created unrest among them. According to many scholars, the conflict in Kanyakumari district was nothing but the return of the dominant caste for active social and political roles under the guise of religion[5]. At certain point, they made use of non-caste Hindus (Hindu shanars in particular) as a scapegoat for their comeback.

Thirdly, the religious fanatics or fundamentalists of both religious communities spread rumours and polarised the people with religious symbols and institutions. For example, in the year 1963 when a memorial for swami Vivekananda was planned on a rocky island of Cape, Christians spread a rumour that there was already a cross in the rock, erected by St. Francis Xavier.[6] Further, Hindus spread a rumour of Christianizing the district with the name Kanni Mary District. Rumours, as Paul Brass call it "Fire Tender" [7] kept the embers of communal animosities alive by bringing to the notice of the politicians, the authorities and the public situations that are known to be sensitive in the relations between Hindus and Christians. More than that, conversion specialist who is part of a political group played a pivotal role in turning a mere local incident into one with riot or violent potential by inciting a crowd and giving a signal to the specialists in violence to let loose the violent action. Conversion specialist did not engage in violence, but instigated others to do so when the political contexts favour it. Many Hindu-Christian Violence that occurred on and after 1982 witness to this fact.

Fourthly, Violence was triggered by controversy surrounding religious symbols and religious institutions either when the rival community tampered them or when a particular community used them without regard for others. The road side shrines and temples created subterranean threats to the other community.[8] For example, in the year 1981, when temple accessories like *Vel* and *Pillayar* was removed from the temple of Murugan Kundram, violence triggered out.

Further, the Leaders of the church have played an active role in shaping and sharpening the political consciousness of the people. In many general elections, the bishops of the Christian churches openly asked Christians to vote for candidates who were sympathetic to their religion, which created a suspicion among Hindus resulting in a divide

between Hindus and Christians.[9]

1.1. **Mandaikadu Violence**[10]: The Hindu-Christian communalism impacted negatively in Mandaikadu Conflagration that took place on 1 March 1982, during the time of the festivity of Mandaikadu Amman Temple, where six fishermen folks were shot to dead by police, which triggered the violence between Christians and Hindus taking away many lives, and properties in and around the coastal villages like Dharmapuram, Rajakkamangalam, Ethhamozhi, Senthurai and Pallam of Kanyakumari District.

1.2. **Religious Polarization**: Following the Mandaikadu violence, the district passed into a grip of religious animosity. The verdict of assembly and civil elections showed that communal conflict entered into the field of politics also.[11] And the youth are mobilized by using religion as a source. Among various factors identified for communalism, religious identity becomes a prime factor in group mobilization which keeps the youth communally sensitive. In many incidents the youth of both religious communities are used as scapegoat, and have become victims. They are mobilized based on their religious identity. According to post-modern thinkers, religion is a site of expression of issues and a powerful source of cultural identity.

According to Ravindra Kaur, the very first step to create a viable community network is to introduce recognizable and popular sacred symbols around which individuals can mobilize. He is of the opinion that each act of community mobilization does not necessarily results in act of violence; rather, mobilized communities may be invoked to silently approve, or actively aid and sustain violence when it occurs. But groups motivated on the basis of religion are drawn to violence in an attempt to address their religious grievances and pursue their 'religious' goals.[12]

Vincent Kundukulam highlights the three processes that interact in the perpetuated construction of communal identities.[13] According to him, first, there are everyday practices of neighborliness often marked by discrete stereotypes in the communities about the other. The second factor that forms the communal identity is the narratives, rumours and experiences of riots which perceive the other community as the source of absolute evil and brutality. Wandering stories are recycled again and again during riots. The proliferation of these narratives demonizes the other community and suspends the normal parameters of honour and humanity. The third dimension of the complex reproduction of communal violence is the organization and dissemination of an inferior political identity that creates self hatred and a sense of castration.

These kinds of communal identities are created among youth through religious and communal mobilization and polarization. Both Christianity and Hinduism play their part in mobilizing the youth systematically. Religious mobilization of one group creates suspicion about the other. For example, some of the important dramatic texts used by Hindu fundamentalists to mobilize the youth are: *Kadavul*[14] (God), *Bharatha Thayin Pillagal*[15] (Children of Bharatha Matha) and *Oru Chinna Mistake*[16] (A little Mistake). *Kadavul* portrays that God is one in many forms, but strictly not in the form of any other religious deities. Many negative remarks on beliefs and sentiments of other religious traditions are spelt out in it. *Bharatha Thayin Pillagal* stresses that they alone as children of this land, so they need to be aware of proselytisation done by Christians and Muslims. *Oru Chinna Mistake* talks of the Christian's attempt of giving admission to only those who accept Christianity and also changing the name of villages into Christianised one. For example, Peyankudi into perinbapuram; Ramaputhur into Carmel Nagar. Further, these youth are also mobilized through songs like "purappadu thambi purappadu..." , and "Kanniyakumariyada, punniya poomiyada...".[17] These kinds of mobilization are taking place among both religious communities due to their feeling of other doctrines and beliefs are a threat to their own. Youth becomes victims and they are used by the fanatics of both religious traditions. Scholar Appleby[18] is of the opinion that religious violence and atrocities are committed against other religious groups in defense of the principle that other doctrines are a threat to their own. The important elements that contribute to religious identity and groups violence are: religious pseudo-speciation, religious texts and traditions, religious sites and territory, role of religious leadership, collective religious history, skewed political participation, economic disparity, historical grievances, internal and external alliances, demographic factors, mistrust and suspicion,, insecurity, negative communication and media portrayal.

2. Civil Society and Interreligious Harmony- a case study: In the context of Hindu-Christian communal sensitivity, the youth of good will, who want to build a peace-filled society are engaged in grass root civil society movements and actively participate in inter-religious dialogue and activities. The form of dialogue they undertake is predominantly Dialogue of Life. As members of this group, the youth are from ordinary folk, their religiosity is latent religiosity or not flagrant as they share fluid boundaries of identity.

They are involved in celebration of common festivals and events, performing folk arts, conducting games

and sports during religious festivals irrespective of religion, participating in other religious festivity and etc. These practices that operate in the everyday lives are often interactive. They create a space where the members of both religious communities can interact. This kind of religiosity is known for hybridization[19] and reciprocal relationship. Francis Fukuyama[20] and Robert Putnam[21] call the reciprocal relationship between friends and groups "social capital". Reciprocal relationship creates social network, and social networks that are formed in small associations that generate trust in the society at large. Further it makes possible connections among people, establishing bonds of trust and understanding. Varshney also proposes this kind of community or association model for building strong neighbourhood. According to Varshney, everyday forms of engagement and associational forms of engagement promote peace. Associational networks cut across many boundaries in the context of religious and political polarization.[22] With the words of Vincent Sekhar, interaction in associational networks form the best civil society by which a strong neighbourhood is built.[23] Individuals and groups associate with one another, discuss about their life-context, enter into deeper dialogue concerning their life and their life in constructing peace filled society. The youth of ordinary folk play a role in trying to understand conflicts, preventing their spreading, providing neutral ground where people can meet and dialogue, focusing on issues on which people can concentrate upon instead of getting lost in peripheral matters that add heat but not throw any light upon any kind of resolution.

The youth of Ammandivizhai civil society movement who comprise of multi-religious representatives, come together once a week and have a formal dialogue and engage in inter-religious meetings and dialogue. They practice inter-religious prayers, celebrate festivals of all religious traditions. They have identified some of the common activities which can be adapted by all without any hesitation in to their movement. One of those attempts is calling the Divine "Truth". They all accept that there is divine or ultimate reality and the presence of divine everywhere, this presence, they call as "Truth".[24] That truth makes its presence in little creatures as well as in the creatures of whole cosmos. That truth is addressed by different people with different names. They strongly believe and portray that human beings as belonging to one community though they have different cultures; all religions originated based on the necessities of their respective historical context. They have as their motto 'One Sky, One Earth, One caste, One Justice, One community, One God, One religion, Love is religion'. This civil society group

aims to establish various centres for interreligious dialogue and engaging in interreligious dialogue they can establish kingdom of God, Ramrajya and Dharmayuga.

They use inter-religious prayers. One of their prayers shows their understanding of divine as one who is called by different names by different people. Besides this, they also perform Inter religious worship by incorporating different elements from various religious traditions. During the time of festivals like Christmas, Pongal and Deepavali, they have a joint celebration and feast together. The members of this group practice and teach yoga too. They not only practice this kind of practices, but also conscientise the youth with these new ideas of religious inclusivism and pluralism.

More than that they become agents in creating awareness of what is true and what is not true during communal flare-up. They conduct sports, games during the festivities from afar, youth come together and their bias e driven out gradually. Recently one youth group invited a Hindu *villupattu* folk artist to perform *villupattu* during the festivity of Christmas. This led to some Hindu youths performing *Kalial* along with Christians during Christmas. These initiatives create an atmosphere of friendship among youth so that they can create a trust among each other and live in peace. This is happening at the grass root level, which need to be enriched and if the same kind is practiced in different parts of the district, the district can experience inter-religious harmony and peace.

Thus, in any context of communal sensitivity, when the state and the legal machinery cannot put conflict prevention and resolution, the role of civil society becomes much more important. And if the civil society is comprised of youth of good will, belonging to different faith communities with commonly agreed affirmations and actions, then the movement would be dynamic in its action establishing trust, peace and communal harmony.

3. Interactive Religio-cultural traditions and Interreligious harmony: In the practice of religion, what gets usually highlighted is the role of those who occupy a conspicuous place in a particular religious world or of those who are at the centre of any religion. In a multicultural society like India, on the one side, people depend on these priests, ritual experts and theologians who occupy the centre of particular religion, which often becomes the factor responsible for the emergence of religious bigotry or religious extremism. But in actual situation, the majority of the practitioners of religion do not fall into the above category instead they are ordinary people who practice religion more as they themselves are uninitiated, less indoctrinated, ritually and

theologically ignorant but occupy a predominant space when it comes to the observance of religion. It is these at the periphery that dominates the religious world numerically. According to me, it must be these people who need to have a legitimate voice on the credibility of a religious system or on its public representation. It is only when the religiosity of these people is represented or brought to light, it can be said that the reality of religious practice in our land is factually and empirically understood.

It may be said that these people of the latter category occupy a space of liminality[25] in a religion. Their religious identity is less and less marked out and they take the freedom to participate in the religious practice of other religions, including undertaking pilgrimages to other religious holy places. They are those who inhabit a frontier terrain in any religious world. They are least counted when it comes to the classical exposition of religion, but however due to their numerical strength, they cannot be dismissed as insignificant practitioners. They occupy so to say a neither here nor there position. They are neither a serious entity with regard to the doctrinal aspect of a religion nor a dismissible lot when it comes to the existence of that particular religion. This situation of liminality engenders a condition wherein certain religious cultural and social mutuality emerges. The condition of liminality seems to offer certain freedom that allows the liminal personae (the people who represent liminal situation) to remain in a state of equipoise to different religions. It maintains them in a state of mutuality to different religions. The corollary of their equipoise, that is, their being in a stat of neither here nor there is another potent aspect that sustains a solicitous attitude to different religions.

This religious mutuality seems to have a positive correlation with the cultural and social mutuality of a people in a given situation. The open mindedness with regard to a religion introduces certain accommodative outlook in cultural and social behaviours. The practice of partaking in different religions serves to create mutuality. It may be said that this open mindedness develops into an inter-cultural amity too. It enables people to view the cultural practices of different people more in harmony than in conflict. This attitude of cultural amity impacts upon the social behavior of the people and tends to produce acceptability rather than rejection, co-habitation rather than isolation, soberness rather than fanaticism etc in the social world. This is very much evident in the religiosity or religious practices of the liminal personae of Kanyakumari District.

3.1. Kanyakumari: A Site of Religious Liminality and Religious Mutuality: The district is also known

for many liminal sites where different religious people interact and perform their rituals. Among the many liminal sites found in the district of Kanyakumari, the author wishes to highlight only four important sites that serve as liminal space for liminal personae paving way for more interaction and interreligious participation.

They are: Sri. Bhagavathiamman

Temple, Mandaikadu; St. Antony's Shrine, Vettuvanni, Peer Mohemmand Appa Dargah, Thcakalay and Shrine of Palliyappa, Palliyadi. These sites are located in rural set up at the region of communal sensitivity. Some of the identified salient interactive rituals practiced in these liminal sites are interreligious worship, performing rituals on other religious centre, participating in other religious festivals, and participation in inter-dinning and Vow-Making.

Mondaikadu Bhagavathi Amman temple[26] is known as *sabarimalai* of women where women devotees take pilgrimage with *Irumudi*, a bundle containing puja items. This site is a liminal site where both Christian mukkuvars and other Hindus participate and interact. Christians spread salt and peppers, offer husk, donate rope and flowers for flag hoisting during the festivity of Mandaikadu temple. It is found that it is an age old practice. One of the respondent during the in-depth interview stated that, "it was the original custom for the fisher-folk to offer their first sale of fish as an offering to Mandaikadu Amman temple"[27]. Another folklorist has stated that "Kolunthu Flower is offered as an offering to the goddess, and the same is used by Christian women during Mandaikadu festivity"[28]. There exists a tradition of calling Mary and Bhagavathiamman as sister. They also have a story associated with this tradition. As a result, Christians perform rituals at Bhagavathi Amman Temple, while the Hindus offer their offering to St. Mary at St. Lucia shrine located very near to this temple. This common folk belief Mary, St. Lucia and Bhagavati Amman and cult woven around that simple faith in the forms of festivals and beliefs and the cultural deep rootedness is stronger among the people of ordinary folk. For these liminal personae, the divine is mother equates people of all castes and religions. The divine is beyond distinction and differences wishes the welfare of all and blesses who revere and worship.

Crusadies are Christian liminal and popular sites in the district of Kanyakumari that attract other religious people too to participate in worship and rituals. In the crusadies the devotees pray offer offerings. Some of them take pilgrimage to certain crusadies. One such crusadi is located at the place called Vettuvanni. This crusadi is ascribed to St. Anthony of catholic Christian tradition. Here large number of Hindus participates in worship on every

Tuesdays and Fridays. The important ritual practiced in this liminal site is inter-dinning. People also undertake pilgrimage to this site in fulfilling their vows.

Kanyakumari district has minimum presence of Muslims. However, *Peer Mohammed Appa Dargah* is a renowned pilgrim centre that attracts many from Tamilnadu and Kerala where liminal people from other religious traditions also perform rituals such as participating in the inter-dinning called "Nei Soru".

Recently a new religious phenomena has emerged from the site of Hindu-Christian Communalism as "*Palliyappa Shrine*" which has no religious buildings, priests, but only religious symbols of three different religions known for interreligious violence in India. Here each religious people worship according to their own respective tradition at the same sight calling god as "Ammaiappan". This site is known for inter-religious harmony where the Supreme deity is called as Palliyappa with the meaning of "*Palli Konda Appa*" (Divine whose presence is experienced). The same divine is referred as light. The worship of divine as Light and Ammaiappan promotes the philosophy that god is formless but s/he is seen as Jyothi who should be worshiped in the form of an effulgence of light through true love and devotion.[29] Moreover, this site has only the symbols of three major religious traditions namely Christianity, Hinduism and Islam are placed in between two black stone pillars to emphasise the equality of all religious traditions. The unity of all religious symbols at Palliyappa shrine denotes the practice of joint worship. Adherents from different religious traditions worship at the same ritual site. Here, devotional practices had become quite eclectic and religious institutions respond to that eclecticism by incorporating cults from outside its own tradition. Inter-dinning welcome many.

The same kinds of practices are found elsewhere in Tamilnadu and India as well. The study done by Francis Gonsalves describe in the context of north India how multifaceted and complex the history of Christianity in India is when you pay attention to the micro histories of the local people as found in their conversation stories and narrative that describe their rites and rituals, celebrations and religious experiences.[30] Other works of scholars like Clarke[31], Rowena Robinson[32], Susan Bayly[33], Jose Maleikal and James Ponniah[34] also analyses the folk elements and their interaction from different historical social context.

3.2. Religious Pluralism of Ordinary Tamil Folk:

The above mentioned interactive religious traditions of the liminal personae reveal that they are religiously pluralistic in nature. Christians, Hindus and Muslims at the grass-root in spite of their religious affiliation take active part in the worships and celebrations of

other religious traditions. They do not follow any rational understanding of the divine; rather experience the divine in their life-context. This religiosity is a kind of Post modern form of syncretism – in which a person looks upon various religions as a supermarket from which like a consumer, one selects at one's discretion and pleasure whatever myth and doctrine, ethical practice and ritual, and meditation and healing technique that best suit the temperament and needs of one's body and mind, without regard to their truth values and mutual compatibilities. This is a kind of spirituality as it is a personal quest for meaning in a secular world. [35]

On the popular level, these ordinary people have multiple religious belonging[36]. They go to pray and worship in temples, shrines and churches without much consideration given to what religious these sacred places belong to, but depending on whether the local deity or spirit is reputed to grant a favour tailored to one's particular needs and circumstances. Thus, it gives way for a reciprocal relationship in which multi-faith worship, prayer, scriptures and rituals are used.

Above all the religiosity/spirituality of these ordinary people is known for inter-religious Dialogue at the grass root level. It is a process in which individuals and communities come together willingly to participate in search for meanings of life and of God. Only through dialogue at grassroots can many of the religious and communal issues be addressed and the communities are brought together to work towards peace and justice establishing communal harmony.[37] According to Daniel F. Pilario[38], "religious discourses should be brought back to the rough grounds". Religion is not a separate sphere merely composed of abstract doctrines and esoteric beliefs. It is a way of life. Like all ways of life "it is lived everyday together with...cultural practices as this specific community comes into contact with other cultures, ideas and influences". He says, religion existing in abstract can only become fundamentalist. But when it strikes the grounds it could not but negotiate, adjust, accommodate, respect, dialogue.

Thus, the religiosity and spirituality of liminal personae evident in the interactive religious traditions, practiced in different religious shrines, inter-religious dialogue is spontaneously created and continued by the people. Hindu, Christian and Muslim devotees converge in the same shrine not only spatially by performing rituals as one entity of devotees of a particular deity but also culturally as Tamils by performing the same type of rituals. In these sacred places of worship the common fold demonstrate their newly-found shared identity as the

devotee of St. Antony, St. Mary, Peer Appa, etc that transcends their regular identity as Hindus, Christians and Muslims. Thus they explore sameness, solidarity and identification with people of other faith rather than difference, diversity and separation. This kind of identity blurring and ritual hospitality shared between Christians and Hindus and Muslims in the liminal place of the shrine can extend beyond the places of worship and find its new forms of the identification with the deity.

These interactive traditions and rituals associated with them, and exchanges bring about mutations and alterations in people's perceptions about themselves, their religious identity and their relationship with religious others. The religious other is no more a hostile stranger and an alien, but a co-pilgrim as a member of one's ritual household and fraternity. As a result, dialogue on the ground or grassroot level emerges, through interactive religio-cultural traditions, inter-religious encounters and exchanges between Hindu, Christian and Muslim ordinary folk that take place in the domain of popular deities and interactive traditions associated with them. These interactive religio-cultural traditions found among ordinary people can become a melting pot for religious diversity in the Indian context. Thus, the study on these interactive traditions proposes a new model of interreligious dialogue that is already emerging on the ground and spontaneously brought about by people in their participation and performance of interactive traditions.

Conclusion: We live in the society which is multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic. We have experienced conflict in the past, sometime in the very recent past. Many experts from different religious traditions have emphasized the necessity and importance of interreligious engagement at different level. There are many proposals given by people of good will to join hands to make our region as one in which shared values of peace, compassion, justice and harmony truly come to shape and characterize our societies. People at the grass root live in peace and harmony, because of participating and performing rituals in mutual. As they themselves are religiously liminal people, they make use of the liminal space for interaction. In this context, the religious liminality of these non-experts becomes resources for peace-building as they themselves are already involved in inter-religious engagements of exchanging, acculturating, assimilating many beliefs and practices through many interactive religious traditions. This needs to be enriched, so that interreligious harmony would be experienced at large level.

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31. Cf. T. Sundararaj, "Hindu Christian Conflict in Kanyakumari District", in J. Alasiar (ed) *Christianity in South India*, Kulithurai: Annie Joseph Publishing House, 2008.
 32. Cf. Ravindra Kaur, *Mythology of Communal Violence*, p.29
 33. Vincent Kundukulam, "Religion, Violence and Civil Society", paper presented on the National Seminar on Religion and Civil Society, Dept of Christian Studies, University of Madras. *Hindu Dharma Vidhyapeedam*, "Kadavul" in Nalla Nadakankal, Kanyakumari: Vellimalai Sri Vivekananda Ashramam, 2009.
 34. *Hindu Dharma Vidhyapeedam*, "Bharatha Thayin Pillaikal" in Nalla Nadakankal, Kanyakumari: Vellimalai Sri Vivekananda Ashramam, 2009.
 35. Alankottai Ganapathy, *Oru Chinna Mistake and Uyir Katha permumal*. Munjirai: Alankottai Ganapathy, 1987.
 36. Author has participated while this song is sung by the youth at Vellimalai Ashram.
 37. R. Scott Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000, p.11.
 38. Nancy T. Ammerman, "Introduction: Observing Modern Religious Lives", in Nancy T. Ammerman (ed.). *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. P.8
 39. Francis Fukuyama, "Social Capital and Civil Society", paper prepared for IMF conference on Second Generation reforms, 1999.
 40. Robert Putnam, "The prosperous community: Social capital and Public Life", in *The American Prospect*. Spring 27-40, 1993 b. and Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: Civic Engagement in America*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.
 41. Ashutosh Varshney. "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society", *World Politics* 53 (April 2001), 362-398.
 42. Cf. Vincent Sekhar, *Building Strong Neighbourhoods: Religion and Politics in Secular India*, Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 2008.
 43. Interview with Joel Chelladurai Liminality is a concept elaborated by Victor Turner in his work *Forest of Symbols*, a well known social anthropologist. He identifies that which is a frontier or borderline space in the social, cultural or religious world as liminal space. People who occupy that space are called liminal personae, this space is characterized by him as something 'between and betwixt'. See also Victor W. Turner, "Between and betwixt: The liminal period in Rites de Passage", *The Proceedings of the American Ethnological Society*, (1964), a symposium on *New Approaches to the Study of Religion*. Pp 4-20. Cf. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, New York: De Gruyter, 1995.
 44. There are different versions existing about the history of the shrine. One reads: His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya was performing Srichakra Puja with his Kerala disciples here. One day the Chakra did not turn back after the puja was over as usual. The Acharya stayed here itself and attained Samadhi. It is on this spot where the Srichakra existed and the anthill began to grow. Children playing this side and hitting the anthill were injured. Marthanda Varma, the king of Kerala came to know of these developments and built a temple and performed pujas regularly. Gradually, the temple assumed significance among the devotees.
 45. Another version reads: Mandaikadu Bhagavathi amman is nothing but a Nadar Woman who was killed by her husband. A Writer Sugumaran, narrated the story claiming that "Mandaikadu is the place where a Nadar Woman (wife of Anadadhan Nadar) called Ponnammai Maanda Kadu" – it is the place where Ponnammai died". The existing popular story is, there was a "Panaiyeri" whose knife fell on his wife's head and died, on whose samathi (tomb) now worship is done. Later during the period of Dewan C.P. Ramasamy, it was hinduised by high caste people. Thus, it was made by high caste people as Devi. The land Mandaikadu belongs to Paruthivizhai Nadars who are Christians. Now they are the members of CSI church at Kariyavizhai. Even now they offer ropes for flag hoisting, Flowers for pujas

- and other things related to the festivity to Mandaikadu Bhagavathi Amman Temple.
46. Face to face Interview with Ponneelan in August 2008
 47. Face to face interview with Wilson in August 2008
 48. The same kind of belief is expressed by Ramalinga Adigal. Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, "The light House for Religious Harmony and Peace – Vadaloor Saint Ramalinga Adigal" in Narayanaswamy ed. *Religious Pluralism and Peace Culture*, Chennai: ICSA Books, 2007.
 49. Cf. Francis Gonsalves, *God of our Soil: Towards Subaltern Trinitarian Theology*, Delhi: ISPCK/VIEWS, 2010.
 50. Cf. Sathianathan Clarke, *Dalits and Christianity*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.
 51. Cf. Rowena Robinson, *Conversion, Continuity and Change*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998.
 52. Cf. Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddess and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society 1700-1099*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
 53. Cf. James Ponniah, *The Dynamics of Folk Religion in Society: Pericentralisation as Deconstruction of Sanskritisation*, New Delhi: Serials Publications, 2011.
 54. Cf. Peter C. Phan, "Multiple Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church", in *Theological Studies*, 64, 2003. P.497.
 55. To know more about multiple religious belonging see, Michael Amaladoss, SJ. "Double Religious belonging and liminality: An Anthropo-theological reflection".
 56. Cf. Anugrah Ramble and Joshuva Raja, "Towards a Christian Theology of Dialogue Communication at Grassroots in a Multi-religious Context", in *Rethinking Mission*, October 2009. P.6.
 57. See Daniel F. Pilario, "Back to the Rough Grounds: Interreligious Dialogue beyond the Classical Paradigms", in *Asian Christian Review*, Vol.5 No.2 winter 2011, pp. 10-29. Daniel F. Pilario makes an attempts to study Interreligious Dialogue beyond classical paradigms. He describes three classical paradigms as Ecclesiocentrism/exclusivism;
 58. Christocentrism/Inclusivism; and Theocentrism/ Pluralism. Then he describes two contemporary attempts that go beyond these paradigms: Inclusivist Pluralism or Plualist inclusivim of Jacque Dupuis and Religious cosmopolitanism of Felix Wilfred. Further he goes on argue and propose a model of Dialogue at the Rough Grounds.

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