

# **The Life and Death of Devasahayam Pillai: A Model in Evangelisation**

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The laity are not just “only belonging to the Church”, indeed “they are the Church”.<sup>1</sup> It is then only natural that one speaks of the *mission ad gentes* of the Laity, because “The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary,”<sup>2</sup> and the missionary activity of the Church flows immediately from the very nature of the Church.”<sup>3</sup> It means that the ministry of evangelization does not belong to the periphery but “reaches the very heart of the Church.”<sup>4</sup> Just as the missionary activity, so also the life of the Laity belongs to the very heart of the Church, because by the Sacraments of Initiation and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, they are fully members of the Church.<sup>5</sup> At the recent meeting of the CCBI, the Secretary to the Commission for Proclamation clearly deposed that without an over-all and committed involvement of the laity, the Evangelization ministry of the Church cannot be effectively and relevantly carried forward.<sup>6</sup> The Servant of God Devasahayam, the only lay candidate to sainthood presented by the Indian Church,<sup>7</sup> is indeed a great gift to the Church in India. As the first Christian martyred in India, Devasahayam Pillai is also a model for the Laity’s involvement in the missionary work of the Church. His relevance is clear today more than any time in the past, in the background of the challenges faced by the Church in India at large and the by the Indian Christian laity in particular. Among the 120 persons killed during the antichristian attacks in 2008 in Orissa and other parts of the country,

only two were priests and one was a nun while all the rest were lay persons!<sup>8</sup> Thousands are still living in camps and thousands are missing, in the sense that no one knows where they went, just because they profess faith in Christ! So, Devasahayam, his exemplary life and brave death have a message for the Church in India today.<sup>9</sup>

## **1. The making of a Hindu Lay Man**

### **His Birth**

The Servant of God Devasahayam Pillai was born in the year 1712<sup>10</sup> in the hamlet called Nattalam of Vilavancode Taluk in the present district of Kanyakumari. His father was Vasudevan Namputhiri, a Brahmin, and his mother Devahi Amma of the Nair Caste. His name was Nilam<sup>11</sup>, also expanded as Nilakandan<sup>12</sup>, both being two forms of the same name of the Hindu God Siva. Because of the tradition of *marumakkalthayam*, which followed a matrilineal lineage of inheritance, the children were identified by the caste of the mother. Therefore, Nilam was also considered to be of the Nair caste, which was considered a high caste, next only to the topmost Brahmin caste. The Nair caste was a belligerent tribe and most of the soldiers of the king of Travancore came from that caste. To this caste belonged almost all nobles and the king himself and the king's family.

### **His Upbringing and Position**

When Nilam grew up in to an adult and had a position in the royal court of the king, people appended the appellation "Pillai" to his name. "Pillai was a suffix added to the names of those born in a high caste and who also rise to a high position in the society<sup>13</sup>. That is how Nilam was also known as Nilam Pillai or Nilakandan Pillai. The family of Nilam was very much rooted in Hindu faith and his father was serving as priest in the Siva temple at Nattalam.

Nilakandan Pillai was faithful to his duties as a Hindu. He was regular to the worship at temples and to the home *puja*. He and his family were great benefactors to the temple at Nattalam and contributed annually to the temple festival.

### **His Career Character and Marriage**

Nilakandan Pillai started his career as a soldier and he did very well in that profession and excelled his fellow soldiers in maturity of judgment and firmness of mind<sup>14</sup>. This being his first profession, later on he was also an official in the Nilakandaswamy temple at Padmanabhapuram. Thirdly he was a palace official, working in the king's treasury. This job later brought him to Udayagiri fort as in charge of accounts while the modernization of the fort was in progress under the efficient leadership of Eustachius de Lannoy between the years 1941 and 1945. Nilakandan Pillai was the paymaster to the construction labourers of the fort. When the marriageable age came, Nilakandan Pillai married Bhargaviammal of the village of Mekkodu. As a person, Nilakandan Pillai was by nature active and committed to his duties. Therefore, he was also dear to his superiors, especially to the king.

## **2. His First Encounter with Christianity**

As a youth the Nair caste Nilakandan was trained in the art of warfare, together with the study of the languages Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit. As a Nair by birth, he spoke Malayalam at home. But he was living in a region where Tamil was the spoken language of the majority. Besides the languages, Nilakandan was, like all the Nair youth of his days, probably taught archery, *varmasastra* (the South Indian martial art based on the science of human physique) and the use of weapons of war. It is possible that some of those who trained him in the South Indian martial art and *varmasastra* were Catholic by religion and it is possible that in

some way he came in contact with Catholic faith in his dealings with them<sup>15</sup>.

### **3. Evangelized by a Dutch Lay Person**

Eustachius De Lannoy was first a soldier in the Dutch army. He later joined the Travancore Army under Marthanda Varma, who made him in charge of modernization of his army and one of the Generals of the army. Almost all the Indian writers of Travancore history speak of him as one of Dutch soldiers apprehended during the famous Colachel war of 1741<sup>16</sup>, whereas the Dutch documents and writers speak of him a Dutch deserter<sup>17</sup>. Whether he was a prisoner of war or he was a deserter, his condition was precarious with regard to his safety. The prisoners of war were given lease of life only on condition that they served in the King's army. On the part of the Dutch army, as a deserter he would have been killed if he returned to his country. His influence with the Maharaja of Travancore was conditioned by these factors.

The work of Nilakandan Pillai brought him in touch with De Lannoy. Frequent high level contacts brought them together and an intimate friendship blossomed between them<sup>18</sup>. They would often spend time in personal conversation which sealed their friendship further. One day De Lannoy observed Nilakandan Pillai to be extremely sad and as a friend De Lannoy enquired about the cause of his excessive melancholy. Nilakandan Pillai then shared with De Lannoy about the losses he had incurred. After many losses, finally, as it were the last straw, some of his best bullocks had died<sup>19</sup>. Nilakandan Pillai wondered whether the gods were angry with him despite the fact that he had been performing all his religious duties. He was also afraid if some persons were against him and had carried out some sort of a black magic against him,

whereas in reality he had no enemies at all. Thus Nilakandan Pillai was beset with a lot of doubts and fears.

Eustachius de Lannoy consoled his friend Nilakandan by sharing with him his own faith as a Christian. He narrated to him the story of Job in the Old Testament. The person of Job stood for him as a personification of unconditional trust in God in the face of unbearable tragedies. Nilakandan listened to him with great consolation. He was impressed by Job's sense of absolute confidence in God which was not evident in his knowledge of the Hindu Faith. He therefore decided to explore this facet of the Christian religion and, if possible, to join the community of Christians. The ongoing discussions between both convinced Nilakandan Pillai of the truths of Christian faith and he decided to get baptized. He expressed his decision to his friend De Lannoy. Here is then an eloquent example of evangelization ministry of a lay person, Eustachius de Lannoy<sup>20</sup>. De Lannoy sent Nilakandan with a letter to Fr. Giovanni Battista Buttari, S.J., who was the head of the Neman Mission and was residing at Vadakkankulam.

#### **4. Catechumenate by the Laity**

During the period of catechumenate which extended for good nine months<sup>21</sup>, Nilakandan stayed often at Vadakkankulam. Staying at Vadakkankulam offered another opportunity to Nilakandan to test his motives for becoming a Christian. The village was infested with caste consciousness between the Nadars and the Vellalas, who were Catholics. Could one be a Christian and practice caste system? Should Nilakandan become a member of such a caste-ridden community? To these questions which swelled in his mind, the catechumen answered to himself that he wanted to become a Christian in the true sense of the word. He decided to

become a true disciple of Christ and put an end to the system of the caste<sup>22</sup>.

For nine months, Nilakandan Pillai went up and down to Vadakkankulam and learned the truths of Catholic faith and visited the community of Christians in the neighbourhood. This enabled him to get to know the customs and the life of the ordinary Christians of those times. In fact the baptismal transformation was already in him. He could not be stopped any more. Gnapragasam Pillai, the lay catechist, who would later stand as his god-father played an important role in catechizing the new convert.

### **5. Witness by Life**

Devasahayam experienced great joy in living out his new found faith. He frequented the sacraments of Confession and Communion, participating at the Eucharist celebrated either by Fr. Thomassini, S.J. at Kottar or by Fr. Barreiros, S.J. at a church of the fisher people outside the fort at Padmanabhapuram. Full of joy and peace, Devasahayam was eager to share his faith with others. Moved as it were by an irresistible force, he sought to bring others to the Christian faith<sup>23</sup>.

Returning to Padmanabhapuram, the Neophyte Devasahayam wanted to be enlisted in the Christian army of the king which is the battalion consisting of Christian soldiers<sup>24</sup> (The Travancore king enrolled Christians in his army to attack and kill the Brahmin soldiers of the enemy's army, since the Hindu soldiers would not kill the Brahmins as they represented God to them). De Lannoy was commanding that battalion and it was only natural that Devasahayam wanted to be part of it. It was reported to the king and the king was surprised to hear that Nilakandan Pillai had

become a Christian and wanted to enroll himself in the Christian militia.

As transformed into a Christian, Devasahayam resumed his duties in the palace he became an eyesore to his co-workers, especially to the Brahmins. His new way of life offended their eyes. He stopped attending the religious rituals conducted on a regular basis in the temple attached to the palace. He had no hesitation in moving freely on terms of equality with the so-called low caste people. Table fellowship, the praxis of Jesus centuries ago, is the best expression of equality among human beings. Devasahayam chatted and ate with people of all castes and communities.

What irked the court authorities most is Devasahayam's mingling with the people of the low castes. The Brahmins and the Nairs who were caste conscious could not accept him back into the court, not only because he had refused to worship the gods and observe the practices of the ancestral faith, but he had become polluted and contaminated by moving with the untouchables<sup>25</sup>.

## **6. Witness by Word**

Devasahayam felt his first and foremost duty to make the same baptismal transformation take effect in his own wife. Her immediate reaction to Devasahayam's suggestion was one of horror. She could not comprehend or visualize how like her husband she could also be counted among the Christians who were considered as the lowest in the society, among the wretched of the earth. She consulted also her mother. The mother in law of Devasahayam was even more resistant to the idea of baptism for her daughter. She opposed it tooth and nail. Finally Devasahayam won over his wife and she was ready to become a Christian. Both

of them went to Vadakkankulam and Bhargaviamma was baptized and given the name "Gnanapoo" the Tamil rendering of "Theresa".

Devasahayam succeeded in converting some soldiers and others. He also won over to the faith in Christ some of his companions in the military, who decided to fight under the sign of the Saviour, to acquire not an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly kingdom. By becoming Christians, they lost the nobility of their tribe<sup>26</sup>.

## 7. Witness by Blood: Killed for Faith

A Christian martyr is one who has been killed for his Christian faith. The perpetrators of the assassination have done it because of *odium fidei* (their hatred of Christian faith). All the writers of the biography of Devasahayam have asserted that he is indeed a Christian martyr who was killed because of his Christian faith.<sup>27</sup> The teaming thousands who visit the places connected with the life and death of Devasahayam Pillai do believe that he shed his blood for his faith in Christ.

But since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century some have raised doubt about the reason of the death of Devasahayam. First among them is Nagam Aiya. Nagam Aiya, commissioned to write the history of Travancore by the order of the King of Travancore had one important duty to prove "the praiseworthy tolerance of the Native Government from remote ages" and "from the remotest ages... the wise and tolerant policy which has always characterized its Native Governments"<sup>28</sup>. It is in this background that we should understand what Nagam Aiya says about the cause of the execution of Devasahayam. What reason Nagam Aiya and some others give for the execution of Nilakandan Pillai?

Nagam Aiya does not state any reason as definite. He gives a reason which he qualifies as “probably”! Therefore, it is only a guess work. He says “Probably Neelakandan Pillai was detected tampering with political secrets. On the strength of this action must have been taken against him years after he was converted to Christianity.”<sup>29</sup> This is doubted by Nagam Aiya himself as he himself brings it forward only as a theory. Secondly, what should have been those “political secrets”? If there were some political secrets, they should have been about the military expansion or about the diplomatic relationships with the Dutch, the French and the English. Devasahayam’s friend De Lannoy played a key role in all these and De Lannoy was a loyal servant of the King. So, who was to benefit from those secrets? Therefore, the theory of tampering with political secrets has no basis at all.

A.K. Perumal, while stating at length that the main reason for the arrest of Devasahayam Pillai was the hatred of the king’s court for the Christian faith, makes one remark: “Cutting and transportation of Teak wood was yet another reason. Paranjyotinathar Swami, the parish priest of Vadakkankulam had sent a letter asking for Teak wood for the construction of the church and Devasahayam Pillai felled Teak trees and transported them from Kadukkarai Hills and transported them to Vadakkankulam through Aralvaimozhy. This came to the knowledge of Ramayan Thalavai, who reported it to the King”<sup>30</sup>. The author proposes this reason after stating many other reasons consonant with “*odium fidei*”. Since he fails to indicate any source, the suggestion cannot hold. However, if the author had consulted the earliest sources, he would have found out the reality in the “Teak Wood” case.

The Italian notes of Buttari, early biographies of Devasahayam and other sources including almost all traditional

dramas which precede the biographies have this to say: Fr. Buttari was in need of timber for a church building and he wrote about that to Devasahayam. The latter approached the Divan, Ramaiyan Dalawa for orders to have the necessary timber. Dalawa who was waiting for an opportunity to trap and bounce on Neophyte Devasahayam, rose to the occasion and approached the Maharaja for action against Nilakandan Pillai who had not only become a Christian but was living as such and propagating his new religion.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, the real cause of persecution of Devasahayam was his Christian Faith. Lietenants Ward and Conner who surveyed Travancore between the years 1816 and 1820 state the following describing the already existing church at Aralvaimozhy:

“It was built in memory of a Nair, high in office, who became a Roman Catholic, and though his friends and connections endeavoured to persuade him to renounce Christianity, he adhered to Christianity and died as a martyr, having been hanged on the above spot by the Government, to dissuade the Nairs from becoming Christians”.<sup>32</sup>

The manner of execution was, in reality, by shooting and not by hanging. That small discrepancy need not distract the honest searcher from the fact of real martyrdom. The witness of Ward and Conner with regard to the cause of execution of Devasahayam “by Government” is important. First it is a government witness. Secondly it is a witness from secular and lay source. The surveyors were neither Catholic nor interested in the martyr’s Cause for Canonization. But they provide enough material for the Cause too: both the cause and the motive behind the valiant death of the Servant of God Devasahayam. Therefore, as Mackenzie, another government witness rightly concludes our point: “A Travancore

convert... revered as a martyr... Devasahayam... he was imprisoned because of his change of religion and after three years of imprisonment he was shot in 1752 by order of the Raja at Aramboly.”<sup>33</sup>

### **8. A Missionary Even in Chains: “We cannot but speak”**

The Servant of God spent long time in prayer and meditation. A lot of people came to meet him and to ask for his prayers. One of them was his own jailer, the executioner. The jailer had no issue. He and his wife came to the Servant of God asking for his blessing and prayers. He spoke to them of trust in God and assured them that God would hear their prayer. Their prayer was eventually granted. This made the executioner very kind and sympathetic towards the Servant of God.

By the kindness of the soldiers, Devasahayam was able to meet some priests in the prison. One of them was Fr. Pimentel, S.J., the head of the Madurai Mission. Devasahayam shared with him the great joy he experienced in the grace of having to suffer for Christ<sup>34</sup>. Fr. Thommaso de Fonseca, S.J., the parish priest of Kottar came to meet him at night and administered to him the sacraments of Reconciliation and Communion.

The prison guards were so kind to Devasahayam him that they offered him an opportunity to escape and even told him to avail himself of the opportunity to run away. The Servant of God consulted De Lannoy and Fr. Buttari. Both of them were of the opinion that it was cowardice to escape and bravery to face death for one's faith. Devasahayam was encouraged by their response and decided in prayerful discernment to face the challenge of death in joyful expectation<sup>35</sup>.

To the people who came to meet him, Devasahayam spoke on the passion of Christ. He made one person from the coastal area read the Bible to him and to the people. Since hundreds of people started visiting Devasahayam daily at Peruvilai and the place of imprisonment was turning out into a place of prayer and meditation, the king was disappointed that the purpose of the tortures inflicted on Devasahayam was not only being defeated but on the contrary it gave Devasahayam more and more opportunity to bring more people to Christian faith and therefore he ordered that he be taken to Aralvaimozhy and be shut up in prison there.

### **9. "Blood of Martyrs is the seed of faith"**

The Christian people regarded Devasahayam Pillai as a saint and his death was for them a martyr's witness to his faith in Christ and his gospel. It is this consciousness of people that made the Church accord to his mortal remains a solemn Christian burial and a place for his tomb in the heart of the most famous church of the area. Soon after his death the places connected to the life and death of the Servant of God became important places of pilgrimage by all people. In his memory, churches were constructed at Kattradimalai <sup>36</sup>(Our Lady of Sorrows) and Puliyoorkurichy (St. Michael) and Kuzhimaikadu. Of these, Kattadimalai and Puliyoorkurichy have turned out to be important shrines in the district and people from all over Tamil Nadu and from south Kerala frequent them in great numbers.

Devasahayam Pillai was taken from village to village on buffalo in a shameful manner, beaten in front of the people and inflicted various kind of tortures just to instill fear in the minds of the people and warn them against conversion to Christianity. All those villages: Madathattuvilai, Appattuvilai, Peruvilai,

Puliyookurichy, Kakkurichy, Pullani, Palliyadi, etc. witnessed heavy conversions following the death of Devasahayam Pillai. If the mission work of St. Francis Xavier was the main cause of conversions of the people along the coast, the phenomenon of Devasahayam Pillai is the main ingredient in the process of conversion of the people living in the interior villages. True to the message of the life of the Servant of God, those who are so positively affected by the life and martyrdom of Devasahayam do not belong to any one particular caste. There was almost a 100% conversion of washermen (dhobis - *vannars*) of the district, though some have gone back to Hindu religion. The generations of *chettiyar* people in Kil-Asaripallam have been devoted to the Servant of God, as a result of their ancestors' contact with Devasahayam Pillai when he was in Peruvilai.

### **His Cause: Promote of Lay Christian Missioning**

Declaration of martyrdom of a person is proclamation of genuine faith in God which that person possessed. It is the acknowledgement that the Church gives to the bold witnessing of that person for truth and justice. But it is not a declaration against any person or against any religion. Secondly, the process itself is much different from a criminal proceeding. The process of declaration of martyrdom does not look for a culprit but the search for a hero. A hero of genuine faith in God is a saint for people of all faiths and indeed for all people of good will.

The Servant of God Devasahayam was indeed a person who understood his Christian faith as a challenge in the caste ridden society in which he lived. Nilakandan Pillai embraced Christianity in a time when casteism and even slavery was very prevalent. Caste was present (and still is) in the Church as well. But Devasahayam's faith in Jesus Christ helped him to see humanity as one family.<sup>37</sup>

We shall conclude this section with words from the historian Dr. J.R. Narchison: "In seeking to honour Devasahayam, we wish to uphold to the modern, still caste-ridden society of our days, the ideal of human equality for which he had to die. Devasahayam was not, therefore, any individual martyr, but the dreamer of a new society to be born in Christ."<sup>38</sup>

### **The Method: A Redefining**

The methodology that flows from the life, martyrdom and their impact today could be summarized in terms of "A Mission by the Laity, for the Laity and of the Laity"

#### **Mission by the Laity**

It is striking to note that the life conversion and martyrdom of Devasahayam reveal the full involvement of the lay persons: It is through the Laity that Christianity is introduced to Nilakandan, during his formation as a youth. It is a lay person who evangelized him to Christian faith. It is again the community at Vadakkankulam and the lay persons that catechized him. The devotion that started at the place of his execution was a spontaneous response by the laity. The Cause of Devasahayam Pillai was initiated by the laity. All these underline one important aspect of missiology: that the Laity are not just objects of the Church's mission; no, indeed they are the agents of evangelization. Rightly did the Council underline the fact that "laymen have countless opportunities for exercising of the apostolate of evangelization and sanctification".<sup>39</sup> Since the laity are in the midst of the "world", only they can "seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering these in accordance to the will of God".<sup>40</sup>

### Mission of the Laity

Because of their involvement and tasks in the midst of the world there is a definite characteristic of the mission of the laity. The church's mission cannot be understood only as only preaching in words, but also as doing something, as a preaching in action for the good of humanity. In this area, it is the laity who are indeed capable of effectively and competently doing. There are some things that only the lay persons can do, since only they can enter everywhere. They are competent in their own fields. Therefore the Church warns that the clergy should not think that they have to do everything by themselves.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, there is one particular aspect of the mission of the laity. Though the Church says that the laity could exercise their apostolate singly or in groups,<sup>42</sup> the life and martyrdom of Devasahayam shed light on what every lay person can do singly as an individual. The pertinence of this point will be clear if we see the situation in which the lay persons find themselves. Except in our institutions, the Catholic laity who are engaged in multifarious activities and jobs find themselves alone in the midst of others who are mostly non-Christian. There they are called to "exercise their apostolate singly". Naturally, then, like Devasahayam, every mission conscious lay person is also exposed to insecurity and danger. But 'when God calls, a man must reply without taking counsel with flesh and blood (cf. Gal 1:16) and give himself fully to the work of God'.<sup>43</sup>

### Mission for the Laity

The laity are also the "*terminus ad quem*" or the point of arrival of our mission. The quality of the laity in any Christian community could be counted as an indication of the effectiveness

of the evangelizing mission of the Church. The council clearly states that where the laity are not involved in the life and mission of the Church, where the laity are not doing things together with the Clergy, there the Church cannot even claim that the Gospel has been proclaimed.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the creation of an active and fully involved laity is certainly an important aim of the mission of the Church.

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**(Footnotes)**

<sup>1</sup> *Christi Fideles Laici (CFL)*, 9, quoting Pius XII, *Discourse to the New Cardinals*, 20 Feb. 1946: AAS 38 (1946), p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> *Ad Gentes (AD)*, 2

<sup>3</sup> *AD*, 6

<sup>4</sup> *Redemptoris Missio*, 62.

<sup>5</sup> *CFL*, 33

<sup>6</sup> Mysore, 14 Feb. 2009, Vijai Shantiraj, Unpublished Report, p.2

<sup>7</sup> The Cause obtained the *Nihil Obstat* from the Congregation for Saints on 23rd November 2004 and the Diocesan Phase was completed during the Final Session held at St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral, Nagercoil, Diocese of Kottar, on 7 September 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. Bernard Dugal of the diocese of Bhubaneswar, Orissa and Swamy (Fr.) of the diocese of Bareilly and Sr.

<sup>9</sup> The Plenary Assembly of the CCBI passed a resolution on 17 Feb. 2009 at Mysore requesting the Congregation of Saint to speed up the Cause of Devasahayam Pillai referring to the situation of martyrdom today.

<sup>10</sup> Documents give only the year of the death of Devasahayam as 1752. Since they mention that year as his fortieth, the year of birth is said to be 1712. Cf. Clement Joseph, S.J. Bishop of Cochin *Ad Limina Visit Report*, 15 Nov, 1757. Vatican: Secret Archives of Vatican, S. Congr. Concilii Relationes, 237, F. 69. Hereafter referred to as *Ad Limina Visit Report*, this is the most important of our documents and for the second part of the life of the Servant of God, we rely most on this contemporary account, together with the writings of Giovanni Battista Buttari, S.J.

<sup>11</sup> *Ad Limina Visit Report*, F. 68. Buttari, Giovanni Battista, *Vita del Padre Giovanni Battista Buttari della Compagnia di Gesù*. Loreto: Tipografia dei Fratelli Rossi, 1844, p. 128 gives Nila Pilejo as the original name. "Pilejo" probably stands for Pillai.

<sup>12</sup> Thommanthirumuthu, *Vedasachiyin Thuyaramana Padugal* (The Sorrowful Passions of the Martyr – Tamil). 1752. Location : Family Archives of Amalagiri Antonyuthu, Kottar. This poet who was with Devasahayam in prison for a short while, names him as Nilakandan, so also all the historical dramas. We might conclude that "Nilakandan" was the popular version of the name Nilam.

<sup>13</sup> "Pillai" was certainly a caste title for the Nairs of Travancore. The *Ettu Veetti Pillaimar* were all nairs. See Mark De Lannoy, *The Kulasekhara Perumals of Travancore: History and State Formation in Travancore from 1671 to 1758*, Holland : University of Utrecht Library. 1997, p. 202.

<sup>14</sup> *Giovanni Battista Buttari Vita del Padre Giovanni Battista Buttari* (hereafter mentioned as Buttari, Vita). Loretto (Italy): Tipografia die Fratelli Rossi, 1844, p. 89

<sup>15</sup> Amalagiri Anthonimuthu, *Vedasatchi Devasahayam Pillai: Virivaana Varalaru* (Detailed History of Martyr Devasahayam Pillai – Tamil). Nagercoil : Nanchil Offset Printers, 1988 (Second edition 1996), pp. 8-11. This work was the first publication of the Beatification Committee.

<sup>16</sup> See P. Shyngoonny Menon, *History of Travancore from Earliest Times*. New Delhi, Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1998, (First Published 1878; first reprint: 1985; second reprint: 1998). Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1999 (Reprint. First Printed 1906, pp 342-343. S.T.K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*. Vol.I. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1996 (First printed 1940), p. 306.

<sup>17</sup> Galetti, A., & Van Der Burg, A.J. and Others, *The Dutch In Malabar*. Madras: Usha 1984 (First Published, Madras: Government Press, 1911), p.236. Mark De Lannoy, *The Kulasekaraperumals of Travancore*, p. 167, Cf. also p. 156

<sup>18</sup> Rosario Narchison, *Martyr Devasahayam*, pp. 56-57

<sup>19</sup> Dahmen, S.J., *Devasagayam Pillai's Conversion and Martyrdom from Contemporary Accounts*. Trichinopoly : St. Joseph's College Press, 1908, p. 2. Dahmen has done a great thing in doing a faithful translation of one of the contemporary writings on Devasahayam by Buttari. Good use of the same could be seen in this brief biography.

<sup>20</sup> Rosario Narchison, *Martyr Devasahayam*, p. 57. Devasahayam is the only lay person among the present list of the "Servants of God" in India and hopefully the first lay person to be raised to the honour of the altars in India. Very fittingly, even the initiative for his was taken by the laity of the diocese of Kottar.

<sup>21</sup> Buttari, *Vita*, p. 129.

<sup>22</sup> Pa Visalam,, *Umai Oligavendru Paadavoe?* Coimbatore : Vijaya Pathipagam, 2000, pp. 154-160. Pa Visalam is a Marxist writer. This work of hers is a novel the plot of which turns around the theme of the life and death of Devasahayam Pillai. The author who states, "Every thing in this book is fiction except the historical fact", makes an original contribution to the study of the message of the Servant of God.

<sup>23</sup> *Ad Limina Visit Report*, F. 67. Cyrr, S.J., *Vedasatchiyana Devasahayam Pillai* (Martyr Devasahayam - Tamil). Pondicherry : Mission Press, 1858, p. 13. This is the first full biography Devasahayam and it is in Tamil.

<sup>24</sup> *Ad Limina Visit Report*, F. 67.

<sup>25</sup> Buttari, *Letter of Buttari on Persecution* (Italian – Microfilm). 1752. Location : Jesuit Madurai Province Archives, Shembaganur, Tamil Nadu. Shelf 207, File : 37/920, Christians are people who are poor and unclean of this world. They are ignoble, they do not wash themselves, and they are intolerable. The chief among them is Devasahayam who mingles with people so vile and unclean and he is living in the Kings court dealing with people as clean and noble as the Brahmins.

<sup>26</sup> Buttari, *Vita*, p. 129.

<sup>27</sup> The first full biography was published as early as in 1858, by a Jesuit Priest, *Vedasatchiyana Devasahayam Pillai*. Pondicherry:Mission Press 1858. This saw a reprint in 1892.

<sup>28</sup> Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore Manual*, Vo. II, p. 115.

<sup>29</sup> Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore Manual*, Vo. II, p. 130

<sup>30</sup> A.K.Perumal, *Vedasatchi Devasahayam Pillai* (History of Martyr Devasahayam Pillai – Tamil). Chennai: Uniter Writers, 2004, p. 26

<sup>31</sup> Buttari, *Vita*, 130-131. The document says that the land for the Church had been a gift from the crown Prince, who later, after succeeding Marthanda Varma, was kind to Christians and was called "Dharma Raja".

<sup>32</sup> Ward and Conner, *Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States*, Vol.II. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1820, Second Edition 1994, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> G.T. Mackenzie, *Christianity in Travancore. Trivandrum*, 1901. Internet copy, p. 137.

<sup>34</sup> Buttari, *Vita*, pp. 89-90 reports this from the notes of Pimentel himself. Besides on page 146 Buttari too speaks about it.

<sup>35</sup> Zaleski, L.M., *Les Martyrs de L'inde. Lile – Paris – Rome – MCM*, Chapitre LXXV, "Devsahayam Pullay 1752", Desclée, Debruwer et CIC pp. 309-310.

<sup>36</sup> Ward and Conner, *Memoir of the Survey of the Travancore and Cochin States*, Vol. II, p. 13. Thiruvananthapuram : Kerala Gazetteers Department, 1820 (2nd Edition 1994) says this about the church at Aralvaimozhy: "About ¾ of a Mile S.W. of the gate is a Roman Catholic Church on a plain, the only edifice of the kind in the district. It was built in memory of a Nair, high in office, who became a Roman Catholic, and though his friends and connections endeavoured to persuade him to renounce Christianity, he adhered to the faith and died a martyr, having been hanged on the above spot by the government, to dissuade the Nairs from becoming Christians." This is one of the government source's reference that we have on Devasahayam.

<sup>37</sup> Pa. Visalam, *Unmai Oligavedru Padavoe?* (Should we sing that truth should sign? – Tamil). Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathipagam, 2000, p. 159-160. Pa Visalam is a Marxist writer. In this book which is a novel having the story of the martyr as a background story, the author highlights the message of Devasahayam's life and death as an avowal to commit oneself for the creation of a casteless society.

<sup>38</sup> J.R. Narchison, *Martyr Devasahayam: A Documented History*, p. 91.

<sup>39</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem (AA)*, 6

<sup>40</sup> *Lumen Gentium (LG)*, 31

<sup>41</sup> *LG*, 16

<sup>42</sup> *AA*, 15, 16

<sup>43</sup> *AD*, 23

<sup>44</sup> *AD*, 21